

33. ANTIRACIST RE-READINGS: THE RIO DE JANEIRO VACCINE REVOLT AND A REMINDER OF WHAT POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY DOES AND WHAT IT CAN ACHIEVE



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Norman R. Madarasz¹

"I don't wanna die; I want another life".
- Lima Barreto.

The disproportionate vulnerability of continental African-Americans to Covid-19 and official narratives justifying the daily violence suffered by them flows through a process similar to the negation of truths. One of the uncanny effects of a truth is the negationism it also produces, the stress here being on a psychological side effect and not on negation, objection or refutation. As far as pandemics are concerned, history shows in a timely manner how truths are often negated before acquiring broader acceptance. Yet negationism is one thing, willful omission of crucial information is another. The moral effect these stances play on undermining truth is equally devastating.

With the pandemic caused by Sars-CoV-2, the circuit linking omission to negationism has entered another round. As for racism, philosophy can certainly attest to how assertions on its conceptual inexistence often projects veils of ignorance over its concrete workings. A constant buzz of white noise obliterates what is tirelessly asserted by victims of racism, namely that the world is not the same place for those who suffer from it as it is for Whites. The explosion of Antiracist movements in Brazil and the U.S. has concentrated public attention on the homicidal violence committed by the police forces of these countries against Black and Brown persons. It has sparked deep preoccupation at the militarization of the chain of command of police forces. And

¹ Associate Professor in the Graduate Programs of Philosophy and Literature and Linguistics at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul (PUC-RS), Porto Alegre, Brazil.

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it has also channeled calls to defund the inflated budgets paid to the sector at the expense of crucial social investments, especially in racially distinct communities. The overlapping of the pandemic with Antiracism forces the scene of political philosophy, if it expects to maintain its intellectual legitimacy, to go *local*.

This “local” has little if anything to do with relativism. Instead, it talks to a structural dynamic by which a truth emerges, pointing to the productive drive of philosophical analysis itself. The local is what opens up as a conceptual situation, one that can be analysed thoroughly by means of the resources of history, sociology and economics. Thinking the local implies correction. It can be what leads the traditionally exclusionist logic of political philosophy to surrender to what is manifest. Without focusing on how injustice is committed locally, philosophy’s search to analyze the structural variations and conflicting relations constitutive of human societies can end up missing crucial undercurrents. A case in point: the way in which nature and society enter into conflict in moments of pandemics has caught political philosophy unprepared.

As a result of underreporting and under-analysing the effects of previous pandemics one questions whether political philosophy, let alone historiography, is looking in the right direction. As the number of Covid-19 fatalities soared in the U.S., political philosophy remained silent about how in 1968-1970, 100,000 U.S. citizens died from the H3N2 virus, the so-called Hong Kong flu.² AIDS in richer countries and malaria in poorer ones follows the same fate when left in the hands of theorists, they who tend to deem these epidemics to be non-causal factors on political conflict, let alone on ethnic and class cleansing, and thus condemn them to oblivion.

What type of structural resistance makes political philosophy focus only on macroscopic causal agents? For all the microphysical turns carried out to refine its findings, most political philosophy still seems to lose sight of the structuring power of the epic literary form it regularly applies to achieve discursive, if not always scientific, coherence. At any rate, if one takes into consideration the way economic policy decisions have set the priorities for research over the last four decades, the unpreparedness of political philosophy to understand the opportunity pandemics present to racist, authoritarian governments comes as no surprise. Health care and

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: 1968 Pandemic (H3N2 Virus). <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/1968-pandemic.html> >. (Last accessed on September 7, 2020.)

medicine themselves, with thousands of its front-line workers and professionals succumbing to Covid-19 around the world, seem to exempt themselves also with great difficulty from this disorganization.

Political philosophy seems to perpetrate an ethical flaw when failing to postulate, by means of *apriori* synthetic judgments, the irresistible temptation authoritarian leaders have to instrumentalize epidemics and pandemics, whether in liberal or post-colonial governments. Although it occurs in the theoretical blueprints political philosophy is known to produce, such omission becomes the symptom by which the art of governing is distorted into cynical demographic engineering. On the tables where deadly policy decisions are made, the pandemic phenomenon clearly leaves the confines of nature. By the intentional passivity shown by our governing bodies when faced with this contagion, a pandemic tends to exceed most other catastrophes. It in fact shares ranks with the most mortal technologies created by competent decision-makers.

Now, technology is not only the product of human creativity, although it most clearly expresses the arrogance of exceptionalism. Even if one can frequently read how there are few theoretical domains in which the *exception* is as valued as in political philosophy, what is less written is how exceptionalism is almost always linked to inequality and racism. First, as it regards the source: inequality and racism against scientists, intellectuals and artists perpetuated by police and military power. Second, regarding its conditions: economic and social inequality as well as racism toward persons left on the margins by financial capitalism and the central banking elite. Their executives control more than ever the democratic mode of government beyond even the means of production and financial valuation reproducing the sacrosanct right of private property.

While exception grows on the surface of political philosophy, racism is often isolated in a discourse that seems to have only historical value. By contrast, when that exceptionalism fragments, political philosophy manages to integrate antiracist struggles hand in hand with the very exploitation of the environment that has caused the current pandemic. The need to include history to understand its own scientificity makes it crucial for political philosophy to break with its recurring habit of honouring the literary form of epics and the “great men” narrative structure.

Meanwhile, the modeling of exception seems to bind theoretical attention to figures of government and governance while leaving the critique of demographic engineering on a second plane. Beliefs may then emerge about the latter having no causal force over growing social malaise. But false beliefs in theory can perpetuate inequality on the conceptual plane, whilst conceptual instability comes to structure political philosophy itself. The proof of this is in the omission of a debate on the causal force of epidemics regarding the conceptual structuring of philosophy itself. The drawbacks were overwhelming for our craft at least until the Sars-Cov2 pandemic. Since then, they risk becoming disastrous.

In hindsight, we researchers need to face up to our collective failures due to a desire to avoid the implications of epidemics on the way in which we think the political and the historical alike. Epidemics seem to trigger mental illness in many liberal theorists with a degree second only to determinism. Political philosophy has still yet to accept how its purpose is to submit to real social transformation, instead of integrating it in order to preserve its own prestige. Still, we discover that the representation of the political consequences resulting from epidemics leads directly to the ethical question as to the ends and directionality toward which political philosophy itself tends. One wonders how conceptual analysis of epidemics faces off with the goal of a just society. In face of so many devastated lives, what justifies the theoretical resignation to the continued existence of poverty even while we pontificate over the normative principles of sound governance? In other words, what theoretically justifies how political philosophy conveniently washes its hand of the inequality reproduced by the asserted necessity of private property?

Should there be any doubt as to how a political philosophy that justifies inequality feeds into racism and contempt for the climate crisis; how a theoretical pursuit obsessed with justifying the privatizing of lands feeds into the removal of public safeguards that protect disenfranchised populations, like Indigenous persons and continental descendants from the enslaved and enslavers; and how self-interested theories produce disgraceful practices; it might then be useful to reread the narrative on one of the greatest atrocities suffered by Brazilians in the twentieth century. The event was the terror imposed by Brazil's federal government against the insurrection in the city of Rio de Janeiro triggered by the Compulsory Vaccination Law passed in November 1904, an insurrection otherwise known as the "Vaccine Revolt". Milked

down in the historical education received by Brazilian children and meant to spark allergic reactions against the danger of “ignorant mobs”, the Revolt is another instance of philosophical history extending class warfare. A critical rereading of this instance in state terror will then allow us to draft an appraisal of political philosophy according to its fundamental orientations.

1 Democratic dictatorship and the distorted destiny of the masses

Considering the events surrounding the Rio de Janeiro Vaccine Revolt from the perspective of its effects, the now official story tends to justify why dictatorial powers were taken by a president and a mayor merely a decade and half after Brazil had become a constitutional republic. Necessity pointed to accelerating much needed revitalization of the downtown core of the capital, we are told. Added to a form of governing by decree came the workings of a megalomaniacal physician required to push through the new vaccination technology on the general population. Also granted full dictatorial powers by the president, he went on to carry out his program of immunizing residents in the harbor areas of the city.³

With the actors now in place, the official version can now apply the great men historical narrative, albeit with a certain twist of irony. Through the conspicuous eyes of the natives of Rio de Janeiro (the “Cariocas”), the São Paulo (or “Paulistan”) elite’s hand on government could be derided for the disaster wrought by its bid to conduct the city’s urban renewal. In fact, the defeat of the Paulistan hegemony in this atrocity was urged on by its Carioca counterpart, even if the similarity of vision between the two oligarchies was never in fact denied. On the ground, the result had these two fronts joining forces in a massacre of the Afro-Brazilian, Northeastern and Pardo populations residing in the center of the old city. Not coincidentally, the center sat adjoining the slave-trading counters through which millions of kidnapped Africans were sold as property after sailing into the Guanabara Bay for over two centuries.

According to historians, Rio de Janeiro’s vulnerability to epidemics went unmatched in South America during the nineteenth century.⁴ On account of them,

³ We have drawn much of the data about this monumental event from Nicolau Sevcenko’s *A Revolta da Vacina*, the first edition of which was published in 1983. The third edition contains a afterword from 2010, Editora Cosac Naify, São Paulo.

⁴ Sevcenko transmits the report made by the Paulistan hegemony about the port of Rio de Janeiro: “it has an antiquated and restricted structure, absolutely incompatible with its condition as an energy pole

there was even good reason to lament the nation's slow development. It is hardly news how common persons are often depicted as an obstacle to progress, exactly as they are in the narrative about the yellow fever epidemic of 1850. Due to the high number of fatalities in this earlier epidemic, Brazil's then capital came to be known as the "deathbed of foreigners". Developmental reports point to the city's multi-epidemic vulnerability and how this exposure would have prevented the arrival of much needed manpower from Italy to substitute the enslaved. The struggle to eradicate disease sparked the needed turnabout of the country's economic model.

One would surely not be wrong to contest such a narrative, though. There was little if any opinion favorable to the abolition of slavery in Brazil in 1850, apart from the Britain's. By repeatedly threatening to block the country's ports, the Royal Navy pressured Emperor Peter II, barely twenty-five years old at mid-century, to make his supposedly pro-abolitionist word turn into deed. Historians do recognize that the epidemic contributed to positive legislation with the Eusebio de Queiros Bill banning Brazil from the international slave trade. This bill sought to better the country's image internationally as its colonial oligarchs kept stalling any real moves to abolish slavery.⁵

Once we manage to link the yellow fever epidemic with the multi-epidemiological situation of 1904 (yellow fever then being joined with bubonic plague and small pox), the official version of the Revolt starts to fall apart. Lauded for implementing a "sanitary dictatorship", the triple dictatorial framework began waging an unrelenting battle against the evils both natural and social that had ravaged Rio de Janeiro. The same narrative attempts to celebrate the recently achieved constitutional Republic as it decayed into social Darwinism, the most pernicious variation of social engineering. According to the still official tale, engineers would have saved a misinformed urban population enduring a form of lethal ignorance worse than the diseases themselves.

In the history lesson repeated to Brazilian high school students on the Republic's drive to modernity, such was the suspicion toward the government amongst the population at large it simply refused vaccination against small pox. The size of this demographic mass and the urgency for mass vaccination grew into an ideal justification for instituting dictatorial powers to the physician, mayor and president.

and catalyzer of the nation's entire economic activity. [...] The city streets are colonial, narrow, tortuous and dark alleyways, with steep slopes." Sevcenko, *op. cit.*, p. 35. (Henceforth, my translations.)

⁵ Pimenta, 2018, p. 196.

What the narrative does not contemplate is that, seen from the perspective of the AfroBrazilian population living in the city's port region, namely that of persons recently emancipated from slavery, the plan did not benefit them in any way. In fact, it was quite the opposite. Despite being prohibited by the pro-slavery constitution of 1831 from frequenting schools and learning to read and write, it was not ignorance that held the day amongst freed persons so much as the well justified fear of forced dislocation toward the hills, swamps or even more decrepit regions of the city.

The "sanitizing" assessment of the insalubrity of the port region and of its vulnerability to epidemics is part of the political elite's official version of history. Its plans of urban revitalization did not include keeping residents in the area, let alone renovating the buildings in which they lived. The Compulsory Vaccination Bill was voted on October 31, 1904 and enacted as law on November 5 of the same year. According to the official version of the train of events, in reaction to the decree, city residents grouped together in Tirandentes Square in a bid to prevent federal agents from carrying out their campaign.⁶ To disperse the masses, government forces opened fire, thus triggering the "most unruly popular insurrection of which the Republican capital had been the stage".⁷ Spreading through all neighboring areas in the city, and at one time moving dangerously close to the Presidential Palace in the Catete district, the revolt tended to concentrate in the port areas of Gamboa and Saúde.⁸ These districts were to be bombed by battleships from Guanabara Bay and invaded by the army. Soldiers allegedly sought the leader of the revolt, one "Silver Negro", whose codename leaves little mystery either to his, or the community's, racial profile. Far from a battle between scientific reason and mass ignorance, the struggle has to be understood today as yet another transnational act in the nineteenth century of an impoverished community aiming to protect its residents from predatory bourgeois projects of modernization.⁹

⁶ According to Sevcenko, the powers granted to the physician Oswaldo Cruz were of a dictatorial nature, since they allowed him to "invade, assess, fine and demolish houses and constructions. In addition, [the law] established its own jurisdiction, provided with a judge specially appointed to settle questions and reinforce resistance. Appeals to common law were not permitted." *Ibid.*, p. 42-43.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁸ Sevcenko unequivocally registers the anonymous nature of the insurrection, which resisted leadership attempts made by both the League against the Compulsory Vaccination Law and federal and municipal governments. "For the mutineers, it was not a question of choosing leaders or platforms, but more crucially fighting for a minimum of respect for their condition as human beings." *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁹ Citing a description made by novelist and journalist Afonso Henriques de Lima Barreto, Sevcenko asserts that "the fact is that when the revolt irrupted, it had no party, no platform, or explicit objectives." *Ibid.*, p. 54.

The question of race seldom enters into the representation of the events, which is striking and worrisome given that Blacks in Brazil, unlike even southern states in the U.S. at the same time, made up the majority of the population. That it is often described as if it were comprised of foreigners leaves little doubt about intention. The terminology allowed Brazil's oligarchs to simply replace the freedwomen and men with "foreigners", now called to immigrate and take up the paid labor denied to the emancipated. The defeat of the Afro-carioca population in this conflict amounted to extending the remains of slavery to other forms. It marks the beginning of structural, institutional and genocidal racism in Brazil's period as a Republic, a process that has only become more rigid with time.¹⁰

More than just a prudent rereading of the events, it is a duty to be sceptical regarding the whitewashed versions of history. According to them, so-called poor communities, non-distinct regarding race, would have simply rejected, because of sheer ignorance, the health benefits of vaccination against small pox. By contrast, what can be assessed from the ground view is how the revolt was likely triggered by the additional strain of being forcefully dislocated from one's living space. Resistance to the vaccine was but a spark to this broader struggle to maintain hearth and heath. In exchange for defending themselves with stones, these residents were massacred by bullets, bayonets and bombs. Through the cruelty typical of the anti-political posturing of social engineering, a most decadent form of constitutional government, entire families were expelled from the center of the city. Victims of the "demolition fever" orchestrated by the modernist project of urban "revitalization", they represent the fallen to a genocidal form of gentrification.

Were we to extend our analysis by means of structural comparison, the Vaccine Revolt represents for Rio de Janeiro what the 1871 Commune does for Paris. It does so both in terms of the resistance mounted as well as in its aftermath.¹¹ Recall that the

¹⁰ The 2020 Atlas on Violence in Brazil, published by the federal government-linked IPEA think tank, shows an *increase* in violent deaths amongst persons of color of 11,5% over an eight-year period from 2012 to 2018, as opposed to an almost symmetrical *decrease* of violent deaths during the same period amongst whites by 8,5%. <DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.38116.riatlasdaviolencia2020>>

¹¹ By terming the Revolt the "last classical urban riot (*motim*) in Rio de Janeiro" (p. 87), Sevcenko gets close, but never gives himself over to establishing a structural and symbolic relation between the two revolts. When commenting on the interest had by then mayor, Engineer Pereira Passos, the historian lends his voice to the engineer's dream, even if only for rhetorical effect: "The narrow alleyways and cobblestone pavement constituted the inevitable scenario of the various riots (*motins*), revolts and Communes of Paris – the urban planners perceived it soon enough. Broad paved avenues made barricades practically unfeasible and gave total liberty of action to the police force." (p. 47) The fact is that the 1871 Commune did not fall due to the famous openings of the Haussmannian boulevards. It

1871 Commune was brutally suppressed by an army loyal to the French nobility holed up in Versailles following the Second Empire's defeat by Prussia in a short war between bourgeois empires. Victims of a terrifying state of siege imposed by the victors that had lasted for months, thousands of French workers, intellectuals and artists created a radically socialist autonomous government and declared political independence for Paris. The Council acted from March to May to organize and defend the population. Like their kin in Rio de Janeiro, the Parisian poor had also been subjected to forced dislocations and to the destruction, often for allegedly sanitary reasons, wrought upon entire districts by urbanization. Historians have suggested that roughly 10,000 persons were massacred in Paris by the French liberal-conservatives (though the numbers continue to be contested), with hundreds deported. In Rio de Janeiro, the real facts risk never to correct the official narrative about those days of fire. According to the webpage of the Brazilian Ministry of Health, "the revolt left a balance of 30 deaths, 110 wounded and 945 arrested, of which 461 were deported to the northern state of Acre".¹²

Even as they overlooked the modernization of nearby Buenos Aires, the barons and marquis whose names spread over the cartography of Rio de Janeiro could not keep themselves from dreaming about Napoleon III's Paris. They were convinced that the obscure underside of Baron de Haussmann's urbanization could be allied with the successful elimination of at least part of the residential poor. Beyond what the administrative records show, as a result of the Vaccine Revolt there were possibly thousands of Afrobrazilians rounded up and detained on Cobra Island, which served as a concentration camp. When the most recalcitrant of the rebels refused to collaborate, they were deported to the northernmost state of Acre, thrown again without a trial into slavery. Such was also the destiny for the *Communards* deported to New Caledonia.

As enlightening and well-researched Brazilian historian Nicolau Sevcenko's fundamental book is on the events and as critical as is the narrative he has spun, it is curious not to find in his report any suggestion that the people of the city center were

was the greatest and most successful popular revolt in France of the nineteenth century, notwithstanding its crushing end. By condemning with passion the authoritarianism and violent repression of the Cariocas by President Rodrigues Alves's government, Sevcenko does not seem to perceive the genocidal nature of the use of all sectors of the armed forces against the districts in the port region, nor specially the racial profile of its residents.

¹² Ministério da Saúde, Centro cultural da saúde: "Revolta da vacina". <<http://www.ccms.saude.gov.br/revolta/revolta2.html>>. Consultado em 1 de junho de 2020.

largely freed persons of African descent. The closest an observation of his gets is when stating “how ironic such systematic exclusion and elimination of a number so large of persons is in an era when the government stepped up its efforts to attract foreign immigrants.”¹³ Who would these persons in fact be if not descendants of the enslaved and enslavers who sixteen years earlier, on May 13, were granted their freedom? In the end, Sevcenko delegates this confirmation to author Lima Barreto: “What the author suggests is how our Republic democratized the quarters in which the enslaved lived (the *senzala*): once the legal privilege of a private citizen flaunting his slaves was prohibited, the State moved to treating everyone according to practices warranted by the symbolic existence of the category of the *senzala*.”¹⁴ Even considering that Brazilians of African descent make up half the population, the question remains as to whether it was really “everyone”?

The official version of the Revolt tends to reduce the number of deaths, possibly by thousands, as it also tries to divert from the issue by shifting attention to the disorganized military coup attempt against President Rodrigues Alves prepared at the Praia Vermelha Naval Base. As writer Abdias de Nascimento has shown, inconsistencies regarding the numbers of registered Black Brazilians exist in census counts published during the first decades of the twentieth century. Moreover, there has been a longstanding controversy regarding the use of “*Negro*” (Black or Negro) as opposed to “*Mulato*” in the country. As a result, the Afro-Brazilian community went through much of the twentieth-century appearing as a minority in the country, an official trend most specifically witnessed in the city of Rio de Janeiro.¹⁵ But to consider the atrocity suffered by the black community in this revolt as only *relative* to the *version* of history that is told by the defeated would amount to a second conceptual covering over. It would amount to ignoring a crime against humanity that was plausibly the cornerstone to strengthening a national political philosophy constituted by institutionalized and structural racism.¹⁶

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹⁵ The city of Rio de Janeiro has been the capital of successive state formations: of the colony, from 1763 to the arrival of the Portuguese royal family in 1808, who shifted the Kingdom’s capital from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro. From 1815 to 1822, Rio de Janeiro was then capital of the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and the Algarve, then of the Kingdom of Brazil, the two Empires of Brazil and from 1889 to 1960, of the Republic. Thereafter until 1975, it was its own capital as it was the only city belonging to the previous federal district, called Guanabara State. Since 1975, it has remained the state capital of the larger state of Rio de Janeiro.

¹⁶ Almeida, 2019.

It is the task of political philosophy to prevent its field from succumbing to an ideology when serving to shape state structures. To prevent this from happening, political philosophy in Brazil (and beyond) has a duty to take positions as to the details of history and let itself be immersed by them. Its aim to achieve objective truth depends upon it. This is not as slight or calm a gesture as frequent calls to listening to the other might suggest. Although reviewing the principles of political philosophy might not immediately translate the victims' perspectives, which may have been silenced forever, it does aim to participate in the process of creating truth from a viewpoint that has no other version.

2 Political philosophy and its doubles

Critically telling either histories or stories involves reexamining the parameters that structure the way a theoretical discourse aspiring to scientific pretensions of verification and validation are set up. A critical political philosophy can thus be understood as a theory that presents the political in the shape of a space of speeches and acts in which truths are created. Clearly, it is not merely a field subservient to lies and vulnerable to the opportunism of those with a hunger for power. Upon identifying this space, it is possible to observe that there are only three possible directions to be taken. Three directions in which the two first are related, whilst the third is irreducible. Three directions, but with their doubles.

By naming these directions, our aim is to stress the elements of the discursive production behind political philosophy and its presuppositions. Our interest is not to review how Plato or Aristotle may have classified state forms. Nor it is to leave off from the assumptions about supposedly transhistorical invariables, such as human nature, race, natural hierarchies, struggle for power or the inevitability of economic inequality. We focus instead on the structures validated by political philosophy. By doing so, we also seek a topological ground in which the difference between a real direction in political theory is inscribed into the very fabric of an organizational, practical form, be it statecraft or government.

Regarding past attempts that have given this space some topological detail and conceptual density, we can laud French structuralism for its commitment to not giving up on how the political produces truths. Post-structuralist thinkers, from Michel

Foucault to Alain Badiou, Jacques Rancière and Chantal Mouffe, have produced important deconstructions regarding the key concept of sovereignty as the political prime mover. These approaches have taken a great deal from the perspective of the history of African, Amerindian and pre-Greek Indo-European history, languages and mythology. They have been enriched by case studies in the struggle for decolonization during the more recent modern period. Moreover, it is structural analysis that has shaped contemporary knowledge as to how the transformation of feudal domains into market societies transformed the formative locus of the State. In the past, two castes, the nobility and clergy, were bound by a legal compact that legitimized power by divine right, which also authorized the monopoly over land possessions. The modern order came to justify ownership of individualized private property, which included enslaved and indentured persons, by groups made up of a third component, that of small owners and the mass of labourers. Their existence in the feudal context was latent at best. Although Karl Marx and writers who have extended his historical analyses integrated the working class viewpoint into political theory, it was really only through the full-scale implications found in the concept of otherness or alterity, as it moved from Simone de Beauvoir to James Baldwin, that political philosophy managed to broaden its parameters.

Regarding the historical progression of this theoretical body, the secularization of the legal order came to reformulate the State based on the representational instantiations of the popular or general will. Yet, the theoretical bind that bolstered claims to extend the idea of popular will to the field of state formations still relied on holdovers from natural law and social contract theories, like the structuring capacity of the sovereign and sovereignty. By means of general will, a new political structure would turn obsolete the former process of legitimization of power, which had derived from divine right and moral law. This change would usher in the spirit of liberty that has since crossed civilizations and continents by repositioning the supreme power of State in the circulatory rhythm of the markets of domestic industry and international trade.

The problem with this descriptive model of state functioning, which is based on secularization and the diminished role of clergy as a landowner, has always been the overdetermined legitimization of the concept of sovereign. The discursive structure of political secularism differs precisely from the trifunctional feudal model of State by the

way the codified legal archive, namely the formal constitution, stipulates the nature, character and limits of a political order, along with its moral and indeed commercial possibilities. While it is doubtless true that freedom was primarily an inalienable right espoused by social-contract and natural-law theorists, it was furthermore a practical concept required to broaden commercial autonomy according to the British and Dutch models. Submitted to an incorporated conception of the sovereign, feudal political philosophy had for a long time molded itself according to the sacralisation of the law. Whatever shifts or mutations would arise in the theoretical foundations of its applications were recast as effects of the social traditions and ideologies specific to the growth of the nation-state.

What the doctrine of reason of State continued to shield through the concept of sovereignty was a discursive, creative force limited by the social contract doctrine. This force sought to preserve a fundamental, if not always asserted right, according to which each citizen could “ensure the right to acquire a life”.¹⁷ On the ground, though, with slave-based economies heading the way, the right to acquire was less that of a life than of invasion, treachery, plunder and rape by those who had seized power to commit acts of primitive accumulation and appropriation by dispossession.

Nonetheless, other operators serving as conceptual focal points in political philosophy can easily be found. Their surface content may not allow much theoretical extrapolation upon first view. Take for example the conceptual operator of cleanliness. Standards of bodily cleanliness have increased with the development of technology, higher aesthetic standards accompanying wealth is a case in point. Consider, however, how some societies seem to believe they favor a greater degree of household cleanliness than others. Whether cleanliness can really be reduced to a national tradition is easily debatable. From the perspective of exchange relations, either you clean your own house or someone else does. In oligarchic societies, if you do not clean your own house, lazy sloppiness aside, it means you are able to pay someone else to clean yours. As such, cleanliness is clearly an offshoot of economic means. In a supposed cleanliness obsessed society, like Brazil for example, it is characteristic to hear upper middle class households pride themselves on how they tend to maintain higher standards of

¹⁷ This right is the fourth in thirteen “lines of action” proposed by economist, Ladislaw Dowbor in the annex of his book *The Era of Non-Productive Capitalism* (2017, p. 282.) These lines of action materialize his bid to restructure capitalism into a productive economy, as opposed to the non-productive hegemonic form currently stripping society from the results of its historic struggles while lining the pockets of central banks and billionaires.

cleanliness than most found in, say, Canada or France. Yet, when considered through forms of government, it is easy to see how social-democratic societies place as much importance on the cleanliness of its *public* spaces as its private abodes. By contrast, one can spot an oligarchic society by the cleanliness of its private spaces and the utter decay in which it seemingly condemns its public commons. Maintaining these standards requires having a reserve army of domestic workers to attend to the cleanliness of the private domain. Such a result might only be a factor of available time. Were the domestic sector of the population not overly busy cleaning the households of the rich, they would surely be attending as meticulously to their own.

To such topical scrutiny developed in the guise of geopolitical assessments, one can easily encounter other perennial questions such as those regarding whether some nations are less inclined or more resistant to democratic forms of government than others. The question is frequently asked of Arabic and Muslim nation-states, most often when disregarding Iran's democratic history. Similar speculations arouse in the 1970s about South America. Meanwhile, the "greatest democracy" of the world would assist military tyrants individually to topple democratically elected progressive governments in Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil, or even in otherwise longstanding democracies, like Chile. Meanwhile, through the Condor Plan it would organize the torture and extermination of social workers, intellectuals and social democrats. By contrast, one often finds less of the same type of inquiry regarding nations with short histories of democracy, such as Spain, Portugal or Italy. By the mere fact of being European and Catholic, these states would supposedly have had the essence of democracy carved into their souls.

In our bid to trace the three directions structuring political philosophy with their symmetric doubles, the distinguish factor will not be cleanliness nor an innate sensitivity to democratic forms of government. By maintaining that political philosophy is limited to three directions, the focus on the concept of the sovereign proves to fall short of the complexity expected of this field. However, the structuring force of a State in the midst of a public space in continuous movement, between expansion and retraction, is maintained by the partial transparency afforded by self-referential discourse, one that blends creativity and obedience. Sovereignty has nothing to tell us about diversity, racism and reparation for enslaving peoples, as a contemporary political philosophy must. As we seek to unfold what we see as the

typology of directions in political philosophy, it seems more cogent to *derive* the field from the concept of constitution, constitutionality and constitutionalism.

Social contract theories reinforce themselves by disconnecting natural right from what had reinforced the position of the sovereign in its ancient fusion into a unique figurehead of the nobility with the clergy. The new legal parameters of constitution came to gradually invest collective participation of the public in the construction and maintenance of the social and administrative State by means of a growing sensitivity to rights. Therefore, by *constitution*, let us understand the discursive entity that sets fundamental (or supreme) laws, rights and norms, the form of which oscillates according to the historic and religious characteristics of a class or specific political culture. Viewed abstractly from within the historical forms of political theory, constitutionalism aims above all to ensure the internal coherence of an organizational logic, either as an extension or substitution of the principles of domination through force. Constitutions organize political processes by setting the parameters that enable them to become concrete factors of integration. As it is carried out at the level of nation-states, constitutionalism establishes the translation between ideas and its inscription into a referential entity, namely a State's supreme law.

As seen from this angle, political philosophy works to refine its capabilities of analysis and interpretation of normativity and prescriptions always from the limits of discursivity. In other words, its theoretic center lends itself to better scrutiny when thought from its *parameters*. To resist such transparency, the center would seek to dissolve these limits in the name of fighting off excesses and insurrections. In its initial historical manifestations, this tendency would pressure political philosophy to surrender to the seductions of power, instead of struggle to reach the conditions of universal inclusion of citizens into visions of wealth redistribution – a perspective articulated solely from a model's discursive parameters and referential limits. The advantage in overseeing political science from the perspective of its parameters is to see it as a continually formative and thus dialogical process.

The first direction of political philosophy, recognizable by the concrete projects of magna cartas, declarations of independence or the other varied promulgations of universal rights of man or woman into which it has materialized, may be named the constitutional direction *per se*. Had we to attribute a symbol to it, the *incandescent light bulb* would surely summarize the combined force of nature and culture involved

in the discovery of its technical model. Two centuries earlier, Thomas Hobbes had asserted nothing different regarding the technical prowess of his “new political science”. He would apply to it the most advanced scientific knowledge of his day with the aim of creating a State cadenced by the pitch of an “artificial animal”.¹⁸

In fact, Hobbes’ *Leviathan* already bares the complexity of conceptual creation when applied to concrete livelihoods. Based on the hypothetical premise of saving human animals from their own destruction, after they had been transformed into hordes of psychopathic assassins due to the scarcity of goods found in nature and a soul ill-executed by the creator, his oft-slandered political blueprint is a jewel of conceptual creation. First, Hobbes preserves in the judicial order of the State what Nature created most perfectly, that is, natural laws. Second, Hobbes subtly submits the concentration of powers in a sole figurehead, the sovereign itself, to a network of tensions, affects and interrelations amongst the “subjects”, without whom, truth be told, the State would not exist as a political body. As opposed to John Locke’s ideal, the subjects abdicate their “natural rights”, which are none other than the fundamental principles of their physical human nature. The latter being “natural”, they are as malformed as the soul itself, for only Nature’s *laws* are perfect. Consequently, a human animal only has to gain by allying itself with the material entity of the “Civil State”, that is, *Leviathan*’s “artificial animal”. And, finally, the extension of the sovereign power is limited morally by the civil law exactly insofar as it still concedes to the subject a fundamental right to resist: just in case, and on an individual basis, the State should put its life at risk.¹⁹ It ought to be clear that there is no authoritarian State anywhere that recognizes the legitimacy of this right universally and literally, let alone a dictator who would respect it. As such, one witnesses, if one chooses to, the reversal in Hobbes of the essential dynamic between sovereignty and constitutionality.

The color to represent this foundation direction in modern European political philosophy, the constitutional direction, is *white*. As such, it evokes the incandescent

¹⁸ “Nature (the art whereby God hath made and governs the world) is by the art of man, as in many other things, so in this also imitated, that it can make an artificial animal.” Further still, art imitates “that rational and most excellent work of Nature, man”. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Introduction.

¹⁹ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan or The Matter, Forme and Power of al Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civill*, Penguin Classics, New York, 2017, II.xxi, p. 134: “Of the Liberty of Subjects”: “No man is bound by the words themselves, either to kill himself or any other man; and consequently, that the obligation a man may sometimes have, upon the command of the sovereign, to execute any dangerous or dishonourable office, dependeth not on the words of our submission, but on the intention; which is to be understood by the end thereof. When therefore our refusal to obey frustrates the end for which the sovereignty was ordained, then there is no liberty to refuse; otherwise, there is.”

light bulb, with its glow, wealth and transparency. Human ingenuity makes the State into a structure the coherence of which is ensured by the corporal variations amongst its citizens instead of by divinity's monarchic avatar.

The symmetrical double of this direction cannot be considered in and of itself. In the three orientations, the deformations of the first reference are not sufficient to make them distinct. In the case of the destruction of the principles of a constitutional political philosophy, as in the case of the Vaccine Revolt, there is no model, but only a destructive mutation of the first. To consider this deviation, we point to the transformation of political philosophy into *social engineering* when it literally distorts and undermines all of the possible creations emanating from human communities through their arts and technologies. To raise the Vaccine Revolt to a status structurally similar to that of the Paris Commune is to draw attention to yet another revolt in the Americas spawned by the continental African-American community as it faced the life threatening prods of a predatory State that had unwillingly and cynically conceded its emancipation. The citizen virtue of rejecting laws of exception when they jeopardize the lives of the disenfranchised is the very basis of the constitutional direction – and its willed destruction is the result of treachery on behalf of the colonial elite through measures of social engineering, urbanism and architecture. Citizen virtue denotes ethical conduct linked to a principle of moral excellence, promoted by the integration of the collectivity in participatory works of knowledge and science. In light of what citizens can create, a State is a work of justice. However, it is so only insofar as it is increasingly fruit of collective creation in which freedom is shown to be a complex relational process instead of the dogma into which it has stagnated.

What limits political philosophy from securing itself as an extension of collective creativity? What can prevent its slide into engineering and disaster? One of the responses could be the nature itself of its discursive composition. Decades after mapping human nature and potential in the *Leviathan*, theories of the social contract split themselves increasingly from the analytical field of psychological inquiry into human nature, while keeping for its own domain the nature of the political and of law. In this movement of discursive filtering, having recourse to empirical analysis became increasingly necessary. The study of history in the nineteenth century, the time of its consecration as a science, came to compensate what the distancing from psychology left pending for political philosophy. The insertion of history into a now legalized form

of psychologism typical of the constitutional direction did not create a new science, though. In fact, history risked neutralizing the applicability of the prescriptions issued by the latter. Political philosophy reinforced the legal and administrative apparatus in which citizen virtue and ethics were recast, even allowing for a religious form of morality to dictate over the rights granted to citizens. Still, this direction in political philosophy did not eye with less suspicion the lessons history could bring to the theoretical realm.

Following up on this dispute with history, a second direction in political philosophy emerged in response to the need of recognizing demands to integrate broader sectors of the population into the public conceptual space. It would use the expedient of justice to determine the conditions of its inclusion. In this movement, it is less history per se that is coveted for an interdisciplinary partnership than economics, or rather political economy. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the example of creating an income tax in the United States of America represents a true leap for a community hoping to give itself the means to carry out its social objectives. Taxation was a revolutionary program. Depending on how it is crafted, it still is. Up until the first World War, revenue from income tax had financing wars as its main goal.²⁰ It might seem ironic that an overall progressive tax reform – that is, one not limited to income, but focused on inheritance, capital gains and dividends – encounters such dire opposition today precisely when society requires the State to increase its spending. But this opposition is simply proportional to the measure of wealth concentration that has occurred over the past three decades. Since then, plutocracy has clasped onto tax-exemption and new financial instruments to forge astronomical profits in what has become a non-productive capitalism. Tax havens, initially created by the City of London to perpetuate its global rule, ushered in a return to a mode of government by the rich merely for the rich.²¹

A progressive tax system is the main reform that has to be put on the agenda by political philosophy in Brazil, provided the funds collected be reinvested in society – and not in banks and financial institutions. Most liberal democracies would also do

²⁰ Cf. Thomas Piketty, *Capital et idéologie*. Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 2019 (2019); Emmanuel Saes and Gabriel Zucman, *The Triumph of Injustice. How the Rich Dodge Taxes and how to make them pay*. W.W. Norton, New York, 2019 and also Kevin Phillips, *Wealth and Democracy: A Political History of the American Rich*. Broadway Books, New York, 2003.

²¹ Cf. Ladislau Dowbor, *A Era do Capitalismo Improdutivo*. Outras Palavras & Autonomia Literária, São Paulo, 2017.

well to ditch the neoliberal stripping of public patrimony and criminalize tax havens. The gains from which wage earners would indirectly benefit from such progressive tax legislation could even eliminate the need for a universal basic income. Moreover, determining the right amount of such a basic income depends on rates of inflation, levels of goods and services tax as well as general cost of living. If a society still desires to give itself the wherewithal to survive and political philosophy the means to demonstrate how its concrete inscription does not imply the exclusion of prescriptions that aim for universal assent, then there is little other option than to flatten the curve of wealth concentration, the true economic curse of our times.

Integrating discursive fields is not without its own problems, even in as transdisciplinary a field as political philosophy. While constitutions already play a part of the revolutionary spirit of natural right and the social contract, it has always been manifest how imperfect they actually are. On the margins of this artful practice, to which philosophy has been such a major contributor, reparatory maneuvers emit a constant buzz. From the margins of constitutionality, an extra-legal resource is carved out, one specifically aimed at the ethical space triggered by the demand for rights. Modern constitutions tend to follow this path, recognizing and activating this resource. That this amounts to a revolution in thought, of a revolution that surpasses the spirit of secularism by integrating it as an instrument by which to recognize injustice within the constitutional order itself, is what can be properly observed in the second direction of political philosophy, the amendment-based or *extra-constitutional* direction.

The spirit of constitutional amendments deals with correction, as recognized by State and society alike. Ever since the Haitian Revolution of the Enslaved, historically excluded populations in the Americas have urged for their own rights to also be written. From the First Amendment to the Constitution of the USA, until the glorious but tragically flawed Thirteenth²², the margin created by constitutional amendments makes up the membrane by which the flux of real life permeates into the supreme law

²² Written in two sections, the Thirteenth Amendment or Emancipation Proclamation states: "Section 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, *except as a punishment for crime whereof* the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction. Section 2. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation." "13th Amendment". Legal Information Institute. Cornell University Law School. Retrieved August 7, 2020. (My emphasis). Through this loophole, the amendment quite literally legalizes slave labor for "convicted" citizens. According to Angela Davis, this is the major legal stimulus for the prison industrial complex. (2003). See also, Duvernay (2016).

and the theories by which they are upheld. When voted in legislative assemblies, political philosophy's structural form proves that it does not fail to integrate social struggle into its own field. The juridical truth consecrated by such modifications always has legislative potential on its side, provided this truth be recognized for the right reasons. Inasmuch as it does, its symbolic object builds upon inclusive policies as that which bolster accountability instead of a misleading universalism or a camouflaged bit of private interest. The symbolic object of the second direction in political philosophy meets the *long flow of rivers*, ancient and dusky, as deep as the soul, as Langston Hughes once sang. The color shining forth from them is *deep blue*.

Yet the amendatory discursive structure of the second direction in political philosophy does not altogether escape from destabilization. It risks crashing against a reef once interlocutions are allowed with the reductive versions of the economic sciences. With economic theories recognizing the supreme value of labor as a drive to create wealth, the extra-constitutional direction compensates its conceptual lacuna with concrete objectivities, such as wealth redistribution and labor law. The constitutional and extra-constitutional directions of political philosophy assert the possibility of transcending racial, gender and economic disparities in the name of higher moral principles. Yet they all too often surrender to the misunderstood obstacles of middle-term projects, especially those reiterating how economic equality would transform individuals into clones of one another.

Within the discursive structure of constitutional political philosophy, attempts at including economics have often worsened its internal coherence. When surrounded by a historical economic sequence, in which the system produces not only inequality, but misery and psychosomatic suffering, political philosophy can end up normalizing, even naturalizing, constraints determined by its own parameters. By legitimizing rational arguments on natural hierarchies and wealth disparity, it can frequently lead oppressed subjects to obsequiousness, submitting them to the humiliation of impoverishment and servitude.

Nevertheless, in the case of the second political direction, limits to including economic discourse into its camp is not so much impossible as it is undesirable. The logic of constitutional amendments in a good number of functional democracies produces not only concrete, but ethical results, the most spectacular of which was no doubt the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, by which freed African-

American persons were granted the right to citizenship and to vote. The fact that thousands of persons head to the streets to protest against racism and political violence is without a doubt a contingency, even when it happens during a pandemic. Yet their goal – our goal – is one and the same: it takes aim at those in charge of the absurd management of this pandemic in both the U.S. and Brazil.

The roots of political violence committed in different, but equally abusive, degrees in Brazil and the USA exposes the *double* of this second direction. The political carries out, over and above the collective fear experienced daily in Brazilian favela communities and disenfranchised American neighborhoods, the erasure of the means of survival of African-descendants in both countries. As previously in the Vaccine Revolt, militarized police forces, vetted on sturdy budgets, extend the legacy of institutionalized slavery by marking persons according to the color of their skin. Policing has come to reinforce the system of social exclusion now reproduced by structural racism. The prison complex has reverted, in the U.S. at least, what the aforementioned amendments no longer allowed. Perhaps no event better marks the limitations and helplessness revealed by extra-constitutional political philosophy than precisely the partiality with which terror was wrought by the federal State during the Vaccine Revolt in Rio de Janeiro – and by the all-white racist police forces operating in inner cities in the U.S.

Giving oneself the wherewithal and sensitivity to fully understand the implications of such terror still requires the critical openness reserved for a third direction in political philosophy. Meanwhile, the double of the second direction is without a doubt a repressive police state having no accountability with justice, furthermore a state legitimized by a cast of intellectuals, attorneys and judges. Joining them are the modern day technocrats, experts in computer mining, and professionals of the State. In its unfolding, this double of extra-constitutional political philosophy tends to present arguments favoring inequality between classes, genders and ethnic groups as a mere extension of hierarchies allegedly found in nature. Justifying the existence of inequality shows why there is no way to go further with institutional constitutionality.

The judicialization of political philosophy typically veils subliminal levels of class and racial bias. In the end, it amounts to justifying the cruelty suffered by poor sectors of the population – and by the *poorest* even more –, persons doomed to misery,

stripped even of minimal access to socialization, much less to a social safety net. Historically, theoretical racism would be transformed into white supremacist hatred. Its acting out went by lynchings, destruction of neighborhoods and intimidating voter restrictions, in virtue of clauses that would exclude those who could not read from the political process when thugs did not keep them away from polling booths. This was but a second form of exclusion after the enslaved had been constitutional forbidden in Brazil or prevented by law in the U.S., from benefiting of an education. Barred from reading and writing skills, the central slave-trading powers aimed at keeping the poor from the political process. When they got closer to the latter, white supremacy would turn, as it did in Memphis and Louisiana in 1866 and Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1921, to massacre. In Brazil, the yearly massacre by law enforcement of male Afrobrazilians under the age of twenty-five has already reached genocidal proportions.

In cases where the conflict of discourses mutates the unitary space of political philosophy and spills over into the social places of constructive political practices, a third direction, the *infraconstitutional*, may be cited. Its color, like its glow, is *red*. The technical complexity of its symbolic object is clearly more advanced as is its own organizational structure. Its application aims to split lost time by *spectroscopy* in order to weld it to a new reality. The *infrared beam* can also detect the unmistakable heat triggered by the fever symptomatic of Covid-19.

Like infrared light, the *infraconstitutional* orientation does not lend itself to being perceived in its totality. Analogous to it, the *infraconstitutional* direction carries within itself important information as to its formal organization. Spectroscopic movements break down the information against the threat of reduction or deletion. This information cannot be derived from visibility, at least not externally. Viewed from within, it might very well be unrecognizable, were political philosophy not intent on integrating scientific standards for increased stability of its own translations of discursive practices. As such, political philosophy may emerge as a fundamental science in which demonstrations draw thought closer to the real by showing how truths are created from within the latter. These truths prove to emerge in and through shifting the lateral forms of practical organization, in relation to which leaders become an impediment.

Deviations from *infraconstitutional* thought appear when the latter allows itself to be fooled by the idea that the creation of common political space may only occur in

the future, in the “can-being” of the “à venir”, as it were. Political philosophers of the likes of Angela Davis and James Baldwin have shown that, without integrating a critical, antiracist history of continental slavery, the future is literally unable to arrive. Infrared philosophy already has a future to fix, indeed, a racist future to rid.

Without embracing antiracism, not even post-conventional moral arguments can prevent shackles from binding its aspirations for inclusion. In the second direction, the sophisticated versatility of Realpolitik adorns the theoretical apparatus with a conviction that the rationality underlying the integration of amendments to a constitution is upheld by the spirit of conciliation that mends divergent discourses. Not infrequently, amendments are shipwrecked as a result of the inertia of their own scientific rationality. After all, the amendatory orientation functions insofar as discourses adjacent to political philosophy repair instances of exclusion and violent oppression suffered by the disenfranchised.

The third orientation really emerges discontinuously in another phenomenal realm, one that is no less structuring for political philosophy. It completes the impeded intersectionality of a discourse previously excluded from science and doomed to irrational destruction. When the infrared thermometer identifies the fever underlying a dramatically unjust society due to wealth disparity, it is rare for it not to accuse the sanctity of private property. The sacralisation of private property could be carried out only with the appropriation of Indigenous persons or those brought from the African continent, doomed to be sold, violated, raped and reduced as commodities in the slave-trading motor of Atlantic capitalism. Critical history bears out the story according to which capitalism grew thanks to machines, fruit of the-all mighty Industrial Revolution. Prior to that, capitalism had already operated beyond even its own internal commercial contradictions at the level of indentured and slave-based labour. From them, natural resources were extracted externally *and internally*, the very force of which the glorious industry of advanced countries was so in need. As such, a sentence comes to assert the infrared orientation in terms of the Covid-19 Pandemic: “At this time in which one discusses how persons can think a new democratic structure for society, there cannot exist democracy without the struggle against racism.”²³

²³ Eugênio Lima, founder of “Legítima Defesa e Frente 3 de Fevereiro”, in *El País Brasil*, June 14, 2020. < <https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2020-06-14/nao-se-pode-pensar-a-democracia-real-no-brasil-se-o-racismo-nao-for-um-ponto-central.html%E2%80%99CN%C3%A3o?fbclid=IwARox6wUsDNWtM-ZSLLqiJmflsJNWP88LwVWfY8RPzus46Qx5TI59LVaHSlo>>.

These days, the struggle against the privatization of the commons also takes place in the struggle against violence against women, and particularly against women of color. It is the struggle to discover who killed Marielle Franco. Sadly “*Amefricans*”, to cite Brazilian philosopher Lelia Gonzalez, still remain the most vulnerable to suffer different forms of sexual violence. Their living spectres are projected onto the complicity of the misleading rational perfectibility of a constitutional political philosophy. As Angela Davis has written when reflecting upon the conditions and experiences of enslaved women in the USA: “ Rape, in fact, was an uncamouflaged expression of the slaveholder’s economic mastery and the overseer’s control over Black women as workers.”²⁴ By integrating rape and slavery through spectroscopy steeped in the black and brown in order to make the red beam flash, voices are heard that can no longer silence the urgency of statements like “Black Lives Matter” and the Brazilian Favela movement’s “*Parem de nos matar*” (“Stop killing us”).

The infraconstitutional orientation opened by the critical dimension of theory amounts to signing onto the surging forth of newly situated and embodied subjectivities. Their emergence occurs in confrontation with the rule of law, the norm from which they had previously been excluded. But if the amendatory blue-orientation ends up punctually integrating previously excluded perspectives, only the force of the infrared orientation can overthrow the scientificity of liberal political discourse. When managing to present it as a concrete option, hegemonic institutions may attempt to discredit its aesthetic and fictional aspects. They distort its truth through an ideal of validation that only works well when coexisting with obscure ideologies.

3 Epilogue

Considered according to the two first directions in political philosophy, the current pandemic unquestionably caught the humanities unprepared. The rupture observed between a philosophical education and history is so deep one cannot merely lament it was created by an all-out attack against scientific research, travestied as a national policy of higher education. Suddenly the pandemic surged to face nature and its inhabitants off regarding a constitutional order and the discourses reproducing it. If science promotes measures by which to control the pandemic, it also keeps itself far

²⁴ Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class*. Random House, New York, 1981, p. 10.

too submissive to the interests of plutocrats for there really to be a public calamity produced by the disease.

By the end of the 1990s, Susan George, the political scientist and founding member of the ATTAC research group, used the recourses of fiction to integrate what constitutional political philosophy demeans as conspiracy theories. In her *Lugano Report*, she details the plans of a fictional “work group”, made up of business and political members of the global elite. Its proposals were aimed at passively shrinking down the size of the human population so as to attend to the needs and ends of a capitalist world system. In the hands of the elite, pandemics represent the perfect storm. Where George may have been inaccurate was only in the conviction, expressed by her characters, that a soon-to-come pandemic would be unleashed by supergerms, generated by the reckless planetary use of antibiotics.²⁵

Fictional supplementation becomes a formal tool in the infraconstitutional direction. The risk of seeking this kind of interface with political philosophy is to open the political space too far. Messianism and other forms of obscurantist delusions are a symptom of such opening. In cynical hands, they aim at creating false hopes, emotional confusion and predictable retaliatory hate crimes when the degree of their foolery is exposed.

But opening is what is nonetheless at stake, as the task is to situate the political from within a process lying outside of the current State, as if in “excess”. The parameter and limit prove to be porous. Analysis of non-recognized forms of political subjectivity becomes the new challenge. They have to be sought without the guarantees of instantiation. Anchoring proposals in deductive arguments is not only wished for, but possible. Michael Neocosmos, for example, stresses how his research into the emergence of new political subjectivities on the African continent aims at “opening up and discussing this excessive subjectivity – this thought in the strict sense, for expressive subjectivity is not thought, but mere expression of interest – justifying its existence, outlining some of the categories necessary for it to begin to be apprehended in thought, and identifying the way it is still marked by and linked to expression and representation.”²⁶

²⁵ Susan George, *The Lugano Report: on Preserving Capitalism in the Twenty-first Century*, Pluto Press, London, 1999.

²⁶ Michael Neocosmos, *Thinking Freedom in Africa: Toward a Theory of Emancipatory Politics*. Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 2016, p. 28. As Neocosmos argues, “it is indeed possible to be faithful to the idea that ‘The people shall govern’, i.e. to a vision of representation in which what people say when

At the time when Susan George's fictitious report was written, there was next to no possibility for social margins to be filled by widespread infrared concrete political action. Pressures and restrictions aided and abetted by transnational corporate media suffocated most proposals that could favor another economic system the basis of which would be to engaging with the communist hypothesis. Symptomatic of it all was how the key sentence in the penultimate paragraph of the *Communist Manifesto* had always been occluded –as much in positive references to the book as in those deriding it. In that paragraph, Marx and Engels assert their “disdain to conceal their views and aims [...]” as they vow to work “everywhere for the union and agreement of the *democratic parties* of all countries.”²⁷ It has taken half a century since *The Lugano Report* for a communist economic and political system to acquire a level of technical and organizational sophistication able again to show the lie of the primacy of the scarcity of goods. By pulling millions from poverty, China has gone from a limitless repository of cheap labor, ready to accommodate the relocations of globalization, to carry out the most sophisticated social-democratic economic organization of the 21st century, a “market socialism”.

The proof lies in the way it managed to contain the spread of Sars-CoV-2 and treat cases of Covid-19. After the 2008 collapse and the following recession, China had already saved the economies and financial markets of the West through its monumental public infrastructure works.²⁸ In the promissory figure in which a billion persons have been drawn from poverty in the world, seventy percent of them are Chinese.²⁹ Through the existence of China, in light of the pandemic and the antiracist struggle triggered in liberal democracies weighed down by unprecedented degrees of concentration of wealth, political philosophy confronts the need for a structural revision that is at the very least comparable to the achievements of this millenary flux of State and economic form.

To complete the symmetry, the third direction of political philosophy also confronts its degenerate double. We have seen how crushing normalization delimits the first *constitutional* direction of political philosophy and how terrorizing repression pulverizes the second, the *extra-constitutional*. The third direction, for being

they think at a distance from the state is taken seriously. The political problem consists in how to sustain this vision and the practices that flow from it.” (p. 538)

²⁷ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, Vintage Press, London, 2018, p. 52.

²⁸ Jabbour, Dantas E Espíndola, 2020.

²⁹ Dowbor, 2017, p. 150, citing various sources.

infraconstitutional, contains a totalizing, purportedly totalitarian opposite, but in appearance. Less discursive than the doubles of the first two directions, its opposite is opaque and brutal. Neither constitutional nor extra-constitutional political philosophy aim to inscribe in their models the hundreds of thousands of deaths by Covid-19 in Brazil and the United States. Only the third orientation manages to associate – perhaps to better vindicate – these deaths with racism and the most vulgar class discrimination.

The double of the third direction is thus death. Its realization is given through the brutality of assassination, of extrajudicial execution and genocide. A genocide provoked by passive inactivity and negationism by governments built upon economic, military and religious powers. The future of political philosophy struggles with complete symmetry. But through its most hopeful incentives, this art of thought, reason and art stands in front of the racist gun of pandemics, as does the future of us all – though no future more so than that of our fellow continental African-Americans.

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