

Micropolitical Challenges in the Face of the Sinister¹

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The colonial-racial-patriarchal-capitalist system, in its financialised and neoliberal strain, has colonized the whole planet. It now has the globalitarian² power to sweep away, with much more efficiency, everything that stands in the way of its free circulation. And a sinister scenario is being set up everywhere. We are witnessing the exponential escalation of extreme right-wing movements that deserve to be called fascist, keeping in mind the differences between these movements and the fascism of the inter-war period.

Faced with this scenario, we must make headways in our efforts to problematize fascist strategies deployed in the micropolitical sphere. What I have in mind here is the sphere of the regime of the unconscious, the factory of worlds responsible for the production and reproduction of a certain mode of subjectivation and for its formations in the social field.³ The mode of subjectivation proper to the colonial-racial-patriarchal-capitalist regime of the unconscious produced fascism as the most extreme manifestation of the violence against life that characterizes this regime (a violence directed against life in general, not just human life). This violence is intrinsic to the factory of worlds under the management of this regime. The goal of this regime is to pimp life and its potency to produce forms of existence, all for the purpose of accumulating capital.

¹ This essay resumes and develops a text originally published with this same title in the website CTXT Contexto y acción (number 292, Madrid: January 2023), published in a revised and expanded version in Portuguese in the blog Outras palavras, Jornalismo de profundidade e pós-capitalismo, on 20/01/2023 (accessible in <https://outraspalavras.net/descolonizacoes/suelyrolnik-para-o-brasil-esconjurando-o-fascismo>), as well as other blogs in Brazil, Argentina and Chile.

² The term "globalitarian" was proposed by the Brazilian geographer Milton Santos (1926-2001), author of more than forty books published in Brazil and abroad. "Globalitarianism", a fusion of globalization and totalitarianism, refers to a process of universal colonization operated by capitalism in its current form, which deepens the abyss between rich and poor, metropolises and colonies. In my use of this term, I add to the definition proposed by Santos the idea that this process of universal colonization involves modes of production of subjectivity, the micropolitical basis of the production and reproduction not only of the aforementioned deepening of the abyss in class and colonial relations, but also in the relations between supposed genders, races, ethnicities etc.

³ I describe the cogs of the world factory under the management of the colonial-racial-patriarchal-capitalist unconscious regime in my book *Spheres of Insurrection. Notes on decolonizing the unconscious* (with prologue by Stefano Harney and cover text by Verónica Gago), also published in Spanish and Portuguese. I unfold the description of this machinery in a more recent essay, "The spiders, the Guarani and the Guattari. Why is it important to activate the micropolitical force of working with the unconscious?". In: *Psychoanalysis and Schizoanalysis: difference and composition*. Anderson Santos (org.), n-1 editions, 2022. A revised and expanded version of this essay will be published in book form, with the title "The spiders, the Guarani and some Europeans. Outras notas para uma vida não cafetinada", by the same publisher in 2023 and, simultaneously, in Spanish by the Argentine publisher Tinta Limón.

In historical as well as in contemporary fascism, this modality of capitalist power emerges as a response to certain kinds of emancipatory movements, which have previously erupted in the decades prior to the emergence of these forms of fascism (the 1920s and 2000s, respectively). Alongside movements in the macropolitical sphere (typical of a leftist tradition), a new type of movement arose in those decades, one characterized by an offensive on the micro-political sphere. The difference is that the offensive that has emerged in the micropolitical sphere during the last two of decades has gained a degree of precision and propagation incomparable to the degree achieved by the historical version of this offensive dating back to the 1930s. The current mass production of fascist subjectivity has become infinitely more powerful than what it was in the interwar period. It is also more powerful than the fascist surge of the 1960s and 70s, when the production of this kind of subjectivity also took place, as a reaction to movements that were active in the macropolitical sphere.

It is hardly surprising that the production of a subjectivity with fascist traits coincides with the neoliberal fold of capitalism. We need only remember that the laboratory where this fold was first tested was Chile, through a military coup that led to the Pinochet dictatorship, whose economic project fell in the hands of the so-called "Chicago boys." The Chicago Boys, of course, were young scholars from the Chilean elites who studied at the University of Chicago, the cradle of neoliberal theories. The production of a subjectivity with fascist features as a strategy of power is therefore intrinsic to neoliberalism from its very foundation. It gets reactivated whenever necessary, deploying new strategies of mass manipulation.

This is what happened in the 1990s, as a response to the emancipatory movements that erupted after the fall of the dictatorships in the 1980s in Latin America and in the Soviet Union (a fall that took place over the course of a decade; the last dictatorship to fall in this period was the Chilean one, in 1990). The return of fascism under neoliberalism, in the early days of neoliberalism in the mid 1970s, has traits in common with the return of fascism of the 1990s. Among these common traits are an ultranationalist populism, the presence of charismatic leaders, a cult of masculinity, a sense of anti-intellectualism, etc. What sets these two returns of fascism apart is, among other things, their respective forms of governability. A new modality of power now takes shape in the macropolitical sphere⁴: the traditional military coups that establish authoritarian, one-party systems are replaced by "soft coups disguised by a veil of legality," which follow one another over time and involve a strong investment in the micropolitical sphere.⁵ Through this macropolitical

⁴ The new strategy of power is discussed in detail in "The new modality of the coup", chapter 3 of *Spheres of Insurrection* (see note 3).

⁵ I take up here a footnote from the book *Spheres of Insurrection* that brings relevant data on the orchestration of this new modality of power. Its roadmap was sketched out in a series of three meetings between right-wing and centre-right politicians from various countries in Latin America that took place soon after left-wing candidates began to be elected to the presidency in some of these countries. The first two meetings took place, respectively, in Asunción in 2010 and Brasilia in 2011. But the decisive meeting was held in November 2012, in the North American city of Atlanta. This meeting was attended by a dozen

strategy, extreme right-wing populism, characteristic of fascism, gains a much more effective form of power. Its ability to mobilize the masses radically vanquishes the possibility of any identification with leftist ideas, and beyond that, it demolishes the ideas of democracy itself. This is an objective pursued by fascism in its various versions.

One way to produce a fascist subjectivity is to bring about semantic confusion, through narratives that distort reality and that keep subjects alienated from reality and captured in paranoid narratives that border on delirium. In the new mode of power, the gears that produce this form of subjectivity keep turning violently to the point where they produce a real cognitive collapse in subjects.⁶ In this context, violence against life, intrinsic to capitalism, reaches levels that threaten life itself (not just human life) in its the insistence on persisting.

What speeds up the production of fascist subjectivity in the 1990s is, among other things, the advance of technologies of communication and artificial intelligence, which made the technological manipulation of subjectivity much more sophisticated and much more effective than in the 1930s and 1970s. Besides the changes in communication made possible by chatbots and technological innovations incorporated into social media, and aside from increasing the transmission of messages in real time, the algorithmic machine has infinitely increased the effectiveness of this manipulation, adapting messages to the specificities not only of each country under its domination, but also of the distinct groups that make up their respective societies. These technologies, in conjunction with other

former presidents of the Americas and also by leaders from various sectors of politics, the economy, major media corporations and the judiciary. At the end of the meeting, the meeting was referred to as the First Summit of the Latin American Presidential Mission (LPM) and the "Atlanta Declaration" was drafted ". Its objective is evident in the idea of a "Presidential Mission" and in two of the statements made at this meeting, which define its mission statement: "As we cannot win over these communists through elections, we will interrupt their mandates with a mask of legality". Such interruptions have been called "soft coups": the use of the plural and its qualification already indicate that this modality of coup consists of a sequence of operations that take place successively with a mask of legality, that is, without explicit violence. The supposed legality of such coups is based on misleading narratives that accumulate over time, aiming at the demonization of public figures of the left and their ideals. It is worth noting that, in the case of Brazil, one year after the return to democracy (which took place in 1985) and two decades before the three meetings mentioned above, generals of the armed forces evaluated that, after the defeat of the guerrillas, the strategy of the left to take power became focused on culture, with narratives about the Brazilian reality, as well as in the equipping of institutions. Faced with this, the military concluded that it was with this same weapon that the left should be combated. These generals then conceived a secret project in this direction (from 1985 to 1988), entitled Orvil (the word for "book" in Portuguese written backwards, a primitive form of cipher in cryptography). Parts of this project were divulged in internal reports of the Army Information Centre between 1989 and 1991. On this, see CASTRO ROCHA, João Cezar, *Guerra cultural e retórica do ódio: crônicas de um Brasil pós-político*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Caminhos, 2021. I'll add that it was on the basis of this strategy that, in 2014 (the year Dilma Rousseff was reelected), military generals suggested Bolsonaro as a candidate for the 2018 presidential campaign. This is the year When Bolsonaro began to be build up as a presidential figure..

⁶ Among the most fanatical, one arrives at the conviction that the Earth is flat, and that the fact of having us believe that it is round would be part of "the conspiracy", which they insist on calling communist, generic name they give to their others, upon whom they project the figure of the enemy as the supposed cause of their uneasiness.

factors, created the conditions that made possible capitalism's seizure of globalitarian power in the 1990s.

The power of seduction needed to facilitate identification with narratives that distort reality (as deployed in the historical form of fascism of the interwar period, when these narratives were enunciated by the head of state and broadcast by radio and later by television to the whole nation as a homogeneous mass) cannot be compared to the power of seduction the same type of narrative has when broadcast incessantly by social media and by a multiplicity of actors. These narratives now multiply incessantly, adapted to different contexts, and this has been happening since the 1990s. Their ability to swiftly produce a subjectivity with fascist features is light years ahead of its previous versions from the 1930s in Europe and the 1970s in Latin America.

If Chile was the laboratory in which the neoliberal turn was first tested in the 1970s, installed by means of a military coup, Brazil was the laboratory of the new mode of power (especially in Latin America) that led to the election of Jair Bolsonaro. It is not a coincidence that Paulo Guedes, Brazil's Minister of the Economy during the four years of Bolsonaro's government, was also a "Chicago boy"; he graduated from UChicago, the same university where his Chilean colleagues were educated. I will dwell here on the new modality of power in its Brazilian laboratory.

Brazil: laboratory of the new power strategy

In Brazil, the recent seizure of power by the forces of this new right goes beyond the impeachment of President Dilma Roussef in 2016, which can only be read as "the coup" if it is considered exclusively from a macropolitical perspective. The impeachment is only one of the aforementioned "soft coups masked under a veil of legality," which began much earlier, in 2004, with the so-called Mensalão,⁷ a scandal that was made to look as if it only

⁷ "Mensalão" was the name given to the payment of "monthly fees" to federal deputies in center and right-wing parties that supported the government of Luiz Inácio da Silva (Lula) in exchange for votes for the agenda of the executive branch, which otherwise ran the serious risk of being defeated in Congress, especially in the area of social policy. It should be said in passing that this relationship between the executive and legislative powers accompanies the entire history of the Republic in the country, the origin of which will be discussed later in this essay; a solution to this dynamic, which will depend on the winning of broad support from society, is not yet in sight. The scheme came to light in 2004, making the headlines in the print press and on television, giving a start to the micropolitical use of it in order to prepare a soft coup masquerading as legal. This use consists in the demonization of then-president Lula and of the Workers' Party (PT), aiming to break the identification with such figures and, consequently, with PT's government as a whole, which at that time had reached 80% approval ratings. The fact that this strategy was put into practice in 2004 demonstrates that the architecture of the new modality of coup was conceived soon after the election of leftists governments in South and Central America, and years before the consolidation of this architecture in the meetings that resulted in the first *Cúpula da Missão Presidencial Latino-americana*. Three years later, in 2007, the scheme was forwarded to the highest court in Brazil, thus beginning a judicial process that would ultimately result in Lula's

took place under the government of Luiz Inácio da Silva (Lula). These coups continued with the election of Jair Bolsonaro to the Presidency of the Republic, and they are far from over.⁸ Since this scenario began to establish itself, we've been trying to keep our balance while walking on a tightrope, running a constant risk of slipping and falling into the abyss.

First, we experienced terrible tension during the nine years since the Mensalão scandal, tension that worsened with Lula's imprisonment and with Jair Bolsonaro's election to the Presidency of the Republic in 2018. Then, relief came with Lula's latest electoral victory in 2022, a kind of collectively celebrated euphoria that remained in the air for a few days. But the joy was short-lived and was soon interrupted by the intensification of massive demonstrations by Bolsonaro supporters across the country, and by encampments in the vicinity of army barracks and other public institutions, encampments that had already plopped up during the election period. These demonstrations took on a more bellicose tone a month after the election, following the unsuccessful attempt to light a bomb outside the Brasilia airport.

Then came another moment of rejoicing, with the January 1, 2023 inauguration party to celebrate Lula and with the unusual passing of the presidential sash by representatives of social sectors that have always been excluded from the republican banquet. This was the response of the new government to Bolsonaro's silence following the election result, and his refusal to ceremonially pass the baton to the incoming president, cowardly fleeing to Florida (the favourite kitsch paradise of the nouveau rich in Latin America) two days before this republican ritual took place. The unusual scene at the inauguration ceremony powerfully illustrated the undeniable and much denied fact that, in the history of the Republic in Brazil, the president is elected to serve society, and this includes all segments of society. What we have here is a draft of an embryonic future, wherein the racial hierarchy and other hierarchies are dissolved, the hierarchies intrinsic to the imaginary that guides the production of worlds under the dominant regime of the unconscious (these are hierarchies that were especially naturalized in the ex-colonies). A week later, we witnessed a new interruption, with the bestial invasion of the Three Powers Plaza in Brasilia, headquarters of the Executive, Legislative and Judiciary powers of the Brazilian Republic. This invasion was followed by a quick reaction on the part of the government, which managed to disarm the insurgents swiftly and decisively. And things continue to develop along this tightrope, becoming more and more dangerous.

This situation involves more than a national scenario, since this scenario results from the aforementioned strategies of a new type, which are very well orchestrated, and which have considerable funding. These are the strategies introduced by the globalitarian power achieved by contemporary capitalism in its new fold. If the new mode of power is

imprisonment. The Mensalão constructed the veil of legality for the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff, one of the "soft coups" that took place in Brazil thanks to the new modality of taking over power.

⁸ The sequence of soft coups, in its Brazilian version, is amply described in "The new modality of coup", third chapter of *Spheres of Insurrection* (cf. note 3). Evidently, such coups have not stopped since 2018, the date of the book's publication, and continue to this day.

establishing itself everywhere, intensifying day by day, its laboratory in Brazil has been extended to other Latin American countries such as Chile, Argentina, and Paraguay, in a process facilitated by a particular characteristic of the continent's history. Brazil shares with other countries in the region the structural mark of the foundation of its existence as a nation originated by the colonial enterprise and by the violence intrinsic to it: the theft of land, the genocide of native peoples, the abduction of thousands of people from the African continent to be sold as slaves to the owners of usurped lands (Brazil, it bears repeating, was the country that received the largest contingent in the world of trafficked and enslaved Africans, 4.86 million people in total). However, the way in which this structural violence is actualized in each country of the continent throughout its history is unique.

Genealogy of structural violence in its Brazilian version

A summary of key moments in the actualization of this violence in our history could begin with the fact that we are the only country in the Americas in which independence was proclaimed by members of a European royal family. The Portuguese court had moved to Brazil fifteen years before the proclamation of independence, to safeguard itself from the invasion of Portugal by Napoleonic troops. During this period, to protect his reign, Dom João (who had become Prince Regent of Portugal and the Algarves when the queen, his mother, was declared mentally ill) changed the colony's legal status to United Kingdom with Portugal and the Algarves, which had been, until then, its sovereign metropole. In 1821, when Dom João (by then Dom João VI, King of Portugal) had to return to the metropole with the royal family, his son, Dom Pedro de Alcântara, became Prince Regent of the Kingdom of Brazil. Under his regency, between 1821 and 1822, the Council of Ministers was formed by large landowners and by the merchants responsible for the slave trade.

Although a strong independence movement had existed in Brazil, with different actors and moved by different ideas, the Declaration of Independence of 1822 took place following the initiative of the son of the King of Portugal himself, in response to threats to Brazil's political autonomy, which went against the interests of the "Brazilian" elite. The latter did not want to lose the autonomy they achieved with the arrival of the royal family. At the same time, they did not want to jeopardize the social order, based at the time on agricultural production made possible by slave labor. They also did not want to act against national unity. To this end, they deployed the figure of the Prince Regent – it embodied a sense of dynastic continuity - who was then proclaimed Pedro I, Emperor of Brazil. One important detail is that Brazil had to pay compensation to Portugal for its independence.⁹

⁹ Brazil was one of the rare colonies that had to pay compensation for its independence. The idea was suggested to Portugal by England as a way to settle the former's debt with the English for the military

In short, not only was national Independence achieved by the son of the King of Portugal himself; Brazil also had to pay “reparations” to the metropole. Added to this is the fact that only the interests of the local elites with whom the Prince Regent was allied were taken into account in the declaration of independence; other actors were completely ignored. In contrast, it is worth remembering that not only did the first Declaration of Independence in South and Central America and in the Caribbean take place eighteen years before Brazil’s, in 1804 in Haiti; it was also the result of an uprising of enslaved people against French colonial rule.

Brazil was the last country in the continent to abolish slavery, almost at the end of the 19th century, without any kind of support for the former slaves, who were thus abandoned to their own fate. In fact, in Brazil, the absolute precariousness of the conditions of existence of African descendants was never abolished, and remains in place to this day, generation after generation. The abolition of the Atlantic slave trade had been in place for seventy-three years, since 1815, since the Congress of Vienna (which took place after the end of the Napoleonic era) and before slavery was abolished in Brazil. After the Congress of Vienna, the first laws restricting the slave trade began to be enacted in different countries. This process, I should point out, came about thanks to pressure from the United Kingdom, whose interest was not even remotely in the abolition of slavery (the UK was after the South Atlantic trade route, controlled at the time by slave traders).

Portuguese and Brazilian merchants were the ones who held the greatest power in the slave trade, and this meant that the first law prohibiting slavery in Brazil was only promulgated in 1831. That did not prevent traffickers from continuing to practice their trade. It is estimated that 750,000 Africans were shipped to Brazil and sold there as slaves from 1831 to 1850, when the slave trade was definitively prohibited. Even after that, the trade continued illegally for another six years (I should mention that the payment Brazil made to Portugal as “reparation” for its independence was partially funded by the slave trade).¹⁰ Throughout that period, one of the most debated questions was how to financially compensate the slave owners who incurred economic losses with the abolition of the slave trade. This discussion continued for decades, and when abolition took place, it began to include a demand for compensation for the economic losses suffered by slaveowners after the emancipation of slaves. And while compensation for slaveowners

cost of expelling Napoleonic troops from its lands. To do this, Brazil had to take out a loan from English bankers, the Rothschilds. See interview with Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, “Brazil’s Observer in the South Atlantic. In: Pesquisa FAPESP, issue 188, October 2011. Online: <https://revistapesquisa.fapesp.br/luiz-felipe-de-alencastro-o-observador-do-brasil-no-atlantico-sul/>

¹⁰ It was, therefore, at the expense of enslaving 750,000 Africans (after the official prohibition of traffic) that Brazil paid off part of its debt to the Rothschilds, contracted to pay compensation for the independence. In short, the illegal traffic served to pay off English bankers and England which, paradoxically, had been the country responsible for the pact that prohibited slave traffic (see note 9).

was being debated, no one ever considered compensating the former slaves, the very rare exception being the few abolitionists who brought this issue up for debate.¹¹

In 1889, a year after the end of slavery was decreed, the Proclamation of the Republic of Brazil took place, the result of a military coup supported by the same agrarian elites affected by the end of the slave trade and the abolition of slavery. About five years of military governments later, the command passed into the hands of these large landowning families, mainly coffee growers from São Paulo. It is worth noting that while former slaves continued to be ignored, receiving no support from the government, this same government financed the immigration of five million Europeans, mainly Italians and Germans from rural areas impoverished by industrialization and by an economic crisis. They were offered land, equipment, seed, and other resources to facilitate their arrival and their economic development, as part of a project by the ruling elite to "whiten" Brazilian society.

Later, in the 20th century, a series of dictatorships came into power. Every time one of these dictatorships came to an end, those responsible for the atrocities committed by these regimes were always given amnesty – a perverse pact disguised under the mask of cordiality that supposedly characterizes Brazilians (this is not what happened, for instance, in Argentina, where those responsible for the frighteningly perverse violence committed by the military dictatorship in that country during the same decades were tried and sentenced to prison¹²). Accountability for the atrocities committed during dictatorships in Brazil would have meant submitting the Armed Forces to civilian power, an unprecedented fact in the history of Brazil, one of the only countries in which the existence of this violence, repeated since the colonial foundation of so-called "America," has never been thoroughly acknowledged nor properly addressed.

The colonial-slavocrat trauma and its returns

Because this sequence of violence went unpunished, the traumas that it caused and continues to cause have never been collectively elaborated. The consequence of this is that these infinite wounds remain open, encapsulated in the memory of the body of Brazilians.

¹¹ If indemnity for Independence from the colonizing metropolis, as occurred in Brazil, was a rare case in the Americas, compensation claimed by landowners for the abolition of slavery was not exclusive to Brazil. In the former colonies of the Caribbean islands, for example, with the exception of Haiti, not only did the landowners succeed in this claim, but the rights to the cultivation of land by freed slaves were subject to serious limitations.

¹² In this regard, it is worth watching the film *Argentina 1985*, directed by Santiago Mitre, which shows how public prosecutors managed to judge and imprison those responsible for the atrocities committed by the military dictatorship in that country in the same period. We see in the film how this process was widely followed by society; however, by emphasizing the figure of the prosecutors (whom the film treats as heroes), we do not learn about the vigorous social movement that preceded the trial, without which the prosecutors probably would not have succeeded in convicting the military.

These wounds get reinfected during crisis situations, such as the one that has been happening in recent times, mobilizing the same reactive responses given to the founding trauma. These are responses built on inadequate ideas regarding the cause of violence, the result of projections made to make sense of this violence, the result of the impossibility of confronting this trauma, which remains suppressed. This trauma makes its return from time to time, triggering mass bursts of reactivity. For this reason, we are much more vulnerable to the new mode of power of the capitalist system, which has improved its machinery for the production of subjectivity. If we can call its extreme manifestation fascist, this is because of the type of gears that characterize it, even if its technologies are different now, as are the forms of governability that accompany this machinery in the macropolitical sphere, as I already pointed out.

With respect to this denial of violence, it is worth noting that, for the first time in history, there are signs that this is now being addressed. What I have in mind is the slogan "No amnesty," the rallying call of a mass campaign unleashed in social media immediately after Lula's inauguration, which grew in intensity after the criminal takeover of the headquarters of the three branches of government in Brasília. An outline seems to emerge at last, an outline for a response from society to the pact of impunity that runs through the country's history: the first step in the process of healing the open wounds that make us so vulnerable to violence. In line with this popular demand, the recently sworn-in government has taken several initiatives to investigate and arrest those responsible for the vandalism unleashed in the buildings that house the seats of Brazilian republican power.¹³

When this hostility emerged, we were already in a complex and highly tense situation and we knew that it would be very difficult for the Lula government to handle it. At the national level, he would have to circumvent the maneuvers of antagonistic political adversaries (in Congress, in the Armed Forces, in the Federal Police and the Judiciary, and elsewhere in the State), adversaries hostile to his projects. These adversaries are historical allies of a significant segment of the national business class, especially the agrobusiness owners who have been in power since the Proclamation of Independence. This is the reason why Lula had to establish a policy of broad alliances, which included historical adversaries. As was to be expected, these adversaries began to show their true colors from

¹³ In the Federal Police's crackdown on the acts of vandalism in Brasília, 2,090 extremists of the new ultra-right were arrested – of which 54 had run for office in the previous elections – and warrants of arrest are still being carried out at the time of writing. Soon after the acts were stopped, the governor of the Federal District was removed from office for 66 days, and his Public Safety Secretary had to return from Miami (to where he had gone to meet the former president two days before the invasion to answer to an enquiry, having remained three months in preventive detention, followed by house arrest, which continues to this day. The government then opened criminal investigations and issued warrants for the search, seizure and arrest of those suspected of responsibility for the acts, such as their financial backers, who had part of their assets blocked. The army commander was exonerated, as well as military personnel who worked in the coordination of the security of government buildings, and 38 military personnel who worked in the Institutional Security Cabinet of the Presidency were dismissed. On top of this, a series of reshuffles in the Federal Police and the Federal Highway Police took place in several states.

the beginning of his government, rolling up their sleeves and launching endless attacks through neoliberal mouthpieces who defended the financial markets. At the international level, even if Lula now counts with the support of governments not aligned with the neoliberal ultra-right, the internal forces working against him rely on the support of this same, reactionary part of the political spectrum. This a globally organized and increasingly powerful right wing that will certainly support building up a candidate for the next presidential elections in 2026, one with great chances of winning.

It was written in the stars of this dreary scenario that the support of such adversaries for Lula's candidacy for the 2022 elections was a purely strategic decision. The reason for this support is that, despite Bolsonaro having been chosen by these same forces in 2018 as the candidate to play the role of populist leader (an important element of the micropolitical strategies of the new modality of power), the rough and unpredictable character he showed during his mandate was not the right one for the role. It was therefore necessary to prevent him from being re-elected in 2022. In the face of this, these forces began to sharpen their narratives – in social media and newspapers and on TV screens – on the figure of Bolsonaro, aiming to destroy his legitimacy. Simultaneously, they insisted on building up another candidate capable of mobilizing the masses, one more suited to the neoliberal agenda, with the power to defeat Bolsonaro in the ballot box. This effort failed, and Lula thus became the only alternative available for the neoliberal ultra-right to succeed in their project to discard Bolsonaro. This is likely the main reason why Lula was released from prison.

That said, it is not surprising that these forces withdrew their support for Lula the day after his inauguration, unleashing instead a micropolitical strategy to destroy his image and undermine every leftist idea. This kind of destruction is proper to the new modality of power. Insistent attacks against Lula's character and against leftist ideas once again circulated on social media, reappearing in the daily headlines of the print and television news outlets of large media corporations. All the while, attacks against Bolsonaro continued to circulate. In this aftermath, Lula and his government were no longer accused of corruption; rather, they were faulted for grave mistakes in their approach to government, especially as it relates to social and economic policy. We can already see that the attack on Lula and on the left will become more and more ferocious, vicious enough to sweep him and the left away from the political scene once and for all, to clear the ground for the victory of a new right-wing populist candidate yet to be anointed.¹⁴

Considering this, it seems evident that the challenge this government faces is not just to confront these antagonistic forces in the macropolitical sphere. Its challenge involves more than dealing with their soft coups: it includes confronting the strategies that sustain these coups in the micropolitical sphere. In this sphere, this government will also have to

¹⁴ Clearing of the ground for the next presidential elections includes the legal proceedings against Bolsonaro, now making their way through the highest court in Brazil. These proceedings will likely make him ineligible for public office for a period of eight years.

deal with the rise of fascism in Brazilian society, the result of the new strategy of power in this sphere, which reached uncontrollable levels during the government of Bolsonaro. Getting rid of fascist subjectivity, which already affects almost half of Brazilian society, is not something that must obviously get done. So much is clear in the results that emerged from the ballot box after the last elections: only a small margin of difference separated voters who favored Lula from those who favored Bolsonaro, and the segment of society affected by fascist subjectivity still managed to elect a majority of governors, senators and deputies.

It is true that not all those who voted for Bolsonaro in 2022 identify with the repeated terrorist acts that have taken place recently and that culminated in the invasion of Brasilia on January 08, 2023. It is also true that not all of them have been overwhelmed by cognitive collapse. That said, whether or not they identify with this extremism, their subjectivity remains gripped by narratives that distort reality, typical of the colonial-racial-patriarchal-capitalist regime of the unconscious, and they will certainly continue to demonize the left and support governments marked by right-wing populism, proper to neoliberalism.

How to confront, micropolitically, this sinister scenario?

An offensive strategy in this sphere consists in occupying the factory of worlds, taking over its management from the hands of the dominant regime of the unconscious. To accomplish this task is not in the least obvious, for it requires complex and subtle work that involves, first and foremost, freeing our own subjectivity from the power of the regime that produces it. One of the characteristic traits of the subject produced by this regime of the unconscious is a narcissistic shielding against the other: we convert the other into a projection screen for our representations. This shield is produced by one of the main components in the machinery of this regime.

The representations we project on the other are what guide our actions, instead of being guided by the effects on our bodies of the forces that – in various and varying relations – make up the environmental, social, and mental ecosystem of which we are a part; that is, the effects of the living presence of the (not only human) other on our body. This presence introduces a difference in our vital state: a seed of becoming. When taken into consideration, this future in gestation mobilizes a process of creation that can bring this future into existence, which transfigures subjectivity and its relations field, a transfiguration that impacts the forms of the subject and the current forms of society. This is the ethical destiny of the vital movement which needs new forms of existence to be created in order to persist, every time something else is coming, destabilizing the forms of the present where life can no longer be embodied. To act in this direction is our ethical responsibility: a responsibility towards that which life demands from us.

In order to meet this demand, in order to rise to this challenge, we must connect with this embryonic future, and we must listen to what it says to us. This requires desire to embark on the process of creation needed to give this embryonic future a body to incarnate in the present. Desire must be guided in this enterprise by whatever the embryonic future communicates to us. But these actions are blocked by the machinery cited above, by the machinery of the colonial-racial-patriarchal-capitalist regime of the unconscious, which takes away from us our access to these embryonic futures and to the effects of the living presence of the other on our bodies. Burdened with this blockage, the presence of the other instead destabilizes us, and this leads us to project on it the representations of our imaginary, in hopes of producing a meaning that can soothe us. What results from these actions, which are guided by our representations, is the reproduction of the status quo. The gestation of latent futures is thus interrupted.

The imaginary in question here is supposedly composed of universal representations grounded on the perverse idea that the human species follows a single, universal evolutionary line (hence the notion of progress that is proudly displayed on the Brazilian flag). This inadequate idea was established at the end of the 15th century, together with the application of the notion of race to the human species, a notion that is based on markers not only of skin colour, ethnic origin and economic condition, but also of so-called “gender” (another toxic notion invented in this same period). To this, class markers were added in the 19th century, markers conceived on the basis of the experience of the industrial revolution that began a century prior to that. At the top of this supposed hierarchy is the mode of existence of the white European male of the metropolitan elites (the elites now formed by the financial markets), whose world, not by chance, we call the “developed world”. The degree of proximity to this model is the yardstick used to measure the value of different human groups and of their modes of existence.

This racial hierarchy used fake news to naturalize and (micropolitically) justify the enslavement of Africans and the genocide of indigenous peoples. It also guided the tracing of the social cartography of the world established with colonization of the macropolitical sphere, a cartography that, in different guises, is still in force today. This cartography is organised according to inequality in the distribution of the right to access material and non-material goods, an inequality that pushes the very limits of the right to exist. This, in turn, implies the exploitation of all those placed in the lower echelons of the supposed hierarchy. This hierarchy also provides the micropolitical grounds for the figure of the enemy outlined above, which is projected on the other in the fascist version of this regime.

It is fundamental to fight this hierarchy in the macropolitical sphere, a fight carried on by the left. It is equally fundamental to include a micropolitical dimension in this fight, without which everything returns to the same place, in other guises. In this sphere, it does not matter whether such supposedly universal representations are either right-wing or left-wing. Both emanate from the projection of representations proper to the ideology that guides the management of the dominant regime of the unconscious. The difference

between these two types of representation of the other is limited to a mere inversion of signs in this supposed hierarchy – an inversion that only reproduces it.

There is a wealth of offensive experience in the macropolitical sphere. Micropolitical activism, on the other hand, is relatively recent in the history of the modern West, which makes the task of taking the offensive in this sphere even more challenging. The good news is that, today, certain social movements, especially in Latin America, are increasingly acting in this sphere, in addition to raising their voices in the public sphere around the indispensable struggle against the unequal distribution of rights (this is the macropolitical militancy of social movements). What I have in mind here are one of the vectors in the debates within Black, indigenous, environmentalist and feminist movements, as well as within movements pushed forward by gender dissidents and by those who dissent from heterocisnormative practices (these movements have, in recent decades, grown exponentially across the continent). In Brazil, this trend is equally present in the Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST) and the Homeless Workers' Movement (MTST).

The micropolitical offensive of Black and indigenous movements has relied on an update to the politics governing the mode of production of worlds common to their distinctive ancestries, a politics which is exercised singularly in each of these cultures. These worlds move according to what life demands to be created, to materialize the effect of the living presence of the (not only human) other in our body (access to this presence is much less obstructed in these movements). It is in this sense that their diverse modes of being share a similar ontological politics. It has nothing to do with identitarian essentialism (a cultural form that is supposed to characterize each people according to its supposed essence), and it has even less to do with multiculturalism (the aggregation of the alleged, essentialized, cultural identities of different peoples). Such essentialism reproduces the racial hierarchy wherein each person has a marked place in which they recognize themselves and where each is recognized by the other, leading them to act reactively based on inadequate ideas, thus reproducing the prevailing form of existence. In the unconscious regime proper to this ancestral ontological politics, on the other hand, it is from the encounter with the other that forms of existence arise, in a continuous process of creation that is guided by an active micropolitics. The movements in question seek to exercise this micropolitics in their lives, which includes their mode of presence in the public arena. This tends to dismiss the authority of the modern Western ontological politics that commands the management of the production of worlds under the regime of the unconscious that corresponds to it, and this, in turn, reduces its power over subjects. This tendency is strengthened in the micropolitical activism of the other social movements mentioned above, which in turn intensifies its power of contagion in the social body.

What is at stake here is a clinical-political treatment of the dominant mode of subjectivation. What's at stake, then, is confronting what takes away our access to the sensations of the effects of the forces that make up the environmental, social and mental

ecosystem with which we interact.¹⁵ The possibility of a collective construction of worlds adequate to the demands of life – our ethical responsibility – depends on reconquering this access, a condition we must meet before we can evaluate the aforementioned effects from the point of view of what life demands from us to keep the rhythm in its flux.¹⁶ It also depends on our commitment to bring into existence what this demand indicates to us, without which the process is not complete; this necessarily takes place in a relational field. Shielding ourselves from the other makes us deaf to such demands, which creates conditions for life to be derailed from its ethical destiny to be pimped out for the purpose of accumulating capital: not just economic and political capital, but also and inextricably social and narcissistic capital. Accumulating this latter form of capital is the goal imposed by the toxic invention of a racial hierarchy. This clinical-political treatment of the dominant mode of subjectivity opens the possibility for an effective change, one that will take decades, maybe centuries, because curing it is nothing less than healing the trauma of colonial violence that constitutes us, which, in turn, is a process needed before we can come up with adequate responses geared towards an effective transfiguration of our socio-cultural and political reality.

Back to the Brazilian case of the "soft coups veiled with a mask of legality"

On January 11, 2023, there was a new moment of joy in the tightrope we've been walking. Two new ministries were inaugurated in the Lula government, which represent a very important milestone in our history: the Ministry of Racial Equality and the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples. Both are led by women, by respected thinkers and activists: Anielle Franco (a Black woman, the sister of activist and Rio de Janeiro city councilor Marielle Franco, murdered in 2018); and Sônia Bone de Sousa Silva Santos (known as Sônia Guajajara, after the Indigenous people to which she belongs). Not coincidentally, the vandalism that took place in January occurred on the eve of the ceremony planned for the inauguration of the two new ministers in the Planalto Palace, which meant that it had to be postponed for two days while the spaces in the building were recomposed (this was done in record time). This made the ceremony even more exciting.

Nonetheless, as predicted, soft coups have not stopped happening since then. Two of the most serious, which occurred in the fourth month of Lula's term in office, were a bill to restructure the ministries and the so-called "Temporal Framework", both approved by Congress. Some of the main changes involved the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, which lost control over the National Policy on Water Resources and the

¹⁵ In the essay "The spiders, the Guarani and the Guattari. Why does it matter to activate the micropolitical force of working with the unconscious?" I designate such sensations by "affection", invoking Spinoza.

¹⁶ In the essay cited in the preceding footnote, I use the term "affect" to designate this evaluation, invoking Spinoza again. In my own words, affect is the active exercise of the spirit, our potency of thinking.

management of the Rural Environmental Registry (CAR). Preventing the destruction of the ecosystem and addressing climate change was a priority for this ministry, led by Marina Silva, who was appointed by Lula to that ministerial post.¹⁷ But the bill to restructure the ministries gave power back to agrobusiness, back to those long sanctioned to freely pimp the ecosystem, destroying it in the process. The Temporal Framework, in turn, determined that Indigenous peoples will only have the right to occupy the lands that they occupied or were already disputing in 1988, the year when the new Constitution was approved. The restructuring bill also took away from the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples the power to fulfill one of its main mandates: the demarcation of all lands originally belonging to Indigenous people, one of Lula's election campaign promises.

This shows that advances in the fight against racism in the macropolitical sphere, such as the creation of the two ministries mentioned above, can be quickly undone if they are not accompanied by advances in the micropolitical sphere. As Sandra Benites (activist and curator of Guarani origin) says, "there are two walls that have to be torn down".¹⁸ The macropolitical wall has been slowly demolished. Proof of this is the creation of those ministries, the result of actions taken by the Indigenous and Black movements, especially the women involved in these movements (who add a feminist perspective to their activism in this field). Despite these setbacks, the fight against racism will not stop, and it will only keep expanding. The demolition of the micropolitical wall, on the other hand, is just starting. Potentializing this work depends on a wider pollination of Brazilian society by the ontological politics that governs these movements.

There is something irreversible in the air

There are many of us in Central and South America that are now focused on this task. Though we come from different social positions, what unites us is this micropolitical offensive. We go on this offensive with different experiences and different languages (not without friction and thanks to the confrontation friction brings with it). This has been generating transmutations in our respective existences, above all in our ways of relating to the other or, more precisely, to the forces that compose the life of the ecosystem and its variations. This is what has allowed many of us not to succumb to the disaster we are living through, staying active.

¹⁷ Marina Silva is a Brazilian historian, teacher, psychopedagogue, environmentalist and politician. Black and born in a rubber plantation in Acre, she is currently affiliated to the Rede Sustentabilidade (Sustainability Network) party. Between 2003 and 2008, Silva served as Minister of the Environment in Lula's government. She was a senator for Acre between 1995 and 2011 and a defeated candidate for the Presidency of the Republic in the 2010 and 2014 elections (in which Dilma Rouseff of the Workers' Party was victorious) and again defeated in 2018 (when Bolsonaro won).

¹⁸ Idea shared by Sandra Benites in an informal conversation we had at the time when the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples was being conceived.

My intuition is that this micropolitical turn that is in process will provide the basis – in the long term, or rather, in the very long term – for a new politics of unconscious formations in the subjective and social fields. In other words, it will lead to a regime of the unconscious managed by a new ontological politics. This ultimately entails the creation of new forms of governability, grounded in a continuous process of collective creation, in place of the so-called "social pact" that originated our social structures. This is a pact that, as we know, rests on the consensus of the elites, which not only disregard the interests of other social segments in the macropolitical sphere, but also block the processes of creation in the micropolitical sphere, suffocating everything that escapes it.

In other words, my intuition is that, parallel to the macabre landscape we are living through, the reforestation of the subjective and social fields is in progress. In this operation, little by little, the monoculture that has imposed itself on these fields since the colonial foundation of Brazil, subjugating life in order to place it at the service of capital, is being replaced. If it is true that this task has faced many barriers – and no doubt will continue to do so for a long time, with different degrees of violence up to extermination – , what has allowed us to stand on the tightrope and keep our spirits lifted is the fact that everything indicates that there seems to be something irreversible in the air.

P.S: The reader will certainly be wondering what all this has to do with a celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *Anti-Oedipus*, given that the work in question is not even cited in this essay. My answer is that the value of a work that deserves to be celebrated is not measured by the mere reproduction of the concepts it offers us, but by its potency, which is evident in the distinct updates it can undergo over time, according to the problems that present themselves to our thought in every context. In other words, their value lies in their ethical-political potency. Among the vast array of concepts by Guattari and Deleuze that carry this power (concepts discussed in their first collaboration and in other joint works), this essay privileges the concept of micropolitics, which has germinated in different ways around the world over the half century that separates us from its conception. Such a concept emerges as a powerful instrument to face the impasses into which life is thrown now. It is this instrument that this essay wishes to honour, bringing it up to date to confront the deadly landscape in which we are immersed today all throughout the planet, and which the authors of *The Anti-Oedipus* had the merit of glimpsing when it was just beginning to take shape.