

GEORG WINK

DEUS  
PÁTRIA  
FAMÍLIA  
BOLSONARO NO PODER

# BRAZIL LAND OF THE PAST

The Ideological Roots of the New Right



“Wink’s work goes to the bottom of the intellectual and religious roots of Brazil’s main reactionary tropes and ideologies. His book sheds much needed light on the democratic crisis in contemporary Brazil.”

José Szwako, professor at the Institute of Social and Political Studies,  
State University of Rio de Janeiro (IESP-UERJ)

“This seminal book uncovers the ideological thread connecting past and present political reaction in Brazil. The quest for implementing a natural order emanated from God himself, in which rulers and ruled are separated by insurmountable inequalities, goes hand in hand with the coloniality of power.”

Ricardo Pagliuso Regatieri, professor of sociology at  
Federal University of Bahia (UFBA)

*Brazil, Land of the Past* scrutinizes the ideological roots of the so-called New Right in Brazil. The book traces the continuity and resilience of a system of thought based on the idea of a God-given hierarchical order to be defended against any social contract and modernizing relativization. It explains in detail how today a diverse movement — which includes actors ranging from the authoritarian Bolsonaro wing to economic liberals to the military to both Catholic and evangelical religious conservatives — assumes unanimously the ideas of this tradition as underlying premises of their political action. Though not always explicitly, this drives the self-declared “liberal-conservative” but rather anti-modernist reaction which claims to liberate an imaginary authentic “Brazil” from an aberrant “State” — and in so doing intends to preserve inherited privilege in an extremely unequal society.

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# Brazil, Land of the Past

## The Ideological Roots of the New Right

Georg Wink

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# Table of Contents

<b>Acronyms</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 Blurred Distinctions</b>	<b>21</b>
Conservatism at Large	22
Liberalism Revisited	29
Brazilian Liberal-Conservatism goes Authoritarian	32
Conservatism applied: From the Old Right to the New Right	38
<b>2 The Monarchic Legacy</b>	<b>45</b>
The promise of Brazil as the Fifth Empire	48
The Brazilian Inversion	51
The Restorative Independence	54
From the Fifth Empire to the “Country of the Future”	57
<b>3 Re-Christianizing Brazil</b>	<b>63</b>
The “Religious Question” in the Empire	64
The Catholic Restoration in the First Republic	67
The Center Dom Vital – Headquarter of the “Militia of Christ”	70
The Catholic Re-Encounter with the State	75
Integrism meets Integralism	78
The Conservative-Authoritarian (Con)fusion	85
<b>4 Balking Modernization</b>	<b>93</b>
The Conservative Induction of the Coup in 1964	98
TFP’s Campaigns to defend the Natural Order	108
Braking Progress	116

<b>5 God’s Invisible Hand</b>	<b>121</b>
The Liberal Founding Myth	130
Think Tanks on the Move	134
The Thomist Origins of Economic Liberalism	143
Metaphysical Economic Liberalism	151
Evangelicals as Liberal Political Actors	157
<b>6 The Guru’s Reaction</b>	<b>161</b>
From Intellectual Outsider to Anti–Academic	170
Serving Military Revisionism	174
The Media’s “Stab in the Back”	179
Unrecognized Saviors: Carvalho’s Spiritual Kinship with Plínio Salgado	183
<b>7 Bolsolavism</b>	<b>191</b>
The Philosophical “Cybersect”	193
Whoever Is Not With Me Is Against Me	201
The Midwife of the New Right	211
Not Breaking the Legs	216
<b>8 The New Right Today</b>	<b>221</b>
The Catholic Revival	221
Pentecostal Pawns	229
Integralism in Traditionalist Translation	234
Bolsolavism in Arms	241
The Parallel Monarchy	245
Love at Second Sight – Economic Liberalism and Monarchism	251
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>263</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>281</b>
<b>Index of Names and Institutions</b>	<b>317</b>

# Acronyms

- AD: *Assembleias de Deus* (Assemblies of God)
- AERP: *Assessoria Especial de Relações Públicas* (Special Public Relations Advisory Office)
- AIB: *Ação Integralista Brasileira* (Brazilian Integralist Action)
- AIR: *Ação Integralista Revolucionária* (Revolutionary Integralist Action)
- AP: *Ação Popular* (People's Action)
- ARENA: *Aliança Renovadora Nacional* (National Renewal Alliance)
- AUC: *Ação Universitária Católica* (Catholic University Action)
- BNDES: *Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social* (National Bank for Economic and Social Development)
- BP: *Brasil Paralelo* (Parallel Brazil)
- CAMDE: *Campanha da Mulher pela Democracia* (Women's Campaign for Democracy)
- CDB: *Centro Dom Bosco* (Center Dom Bosco)
- CDV: *Centro Dom Vital* (Center Dom Vital)
- CEDI: *Centro de Estudos e Debates Integralistas* (Center for Integralist Studies and Debates)
- CNBB: *Conferência Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil* (National Conference of Bishops of Brazil)
- COF: *Curso Online de Filosofia* (Online Course in Philosophy)
- CONIC: *Conselho Nacional de Igrejas Cristãs do Brasil* (National Council of Christian Churches of Brazil)
- CONPEFIL: *Conjunto de Pesquisa Filosófica* (Group of Philosophical Studies)
- CPAC: Conservative Political Action Conference
- CUT: *Central Única dos Trabalhadores* (Unified Workers' Central)
- DC: *Democracia Cristã* (Christian Democracy Party)
- DEM: *Democratas* (Democrats' Party)
- DOI-CODI: *Destacamento de Operações de Informação – Centro de Operações de Defesa Interna* (Department of Information Operations – Center for Internal Defense Operations)
- DOPS: *Departamento de Ordem Política e Social* (Department of Political and Social Order)
- ENCRISTUS: *Encontro de Cristãos na Busca de Santidade e Unidade* (Meeting of Christians in Search of Unity and Holiness)
- ESG: *Escola Superior de Guerra* (National War College)
- FIB: *Frente Integralista Brasileira* (Brazilian Integralist Front)

- FIESP: *Federação das Indústrias do Estado de São Paulo* (Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo)
- FPE: *Frente Parlamentar Evangélica* (Evangelical Parliamentary Group)
- FSSPX: *Fraternitas Sacerdotalis Sancti Pii x* (Fraternal Society of St. Pius x)
- IARC: *Igreja Apostólica Renascer em Cristo* (Reborn in Christ Church)
- IB200: *Instituto Brasil 200* (Institute Brazil 200)
- IBAD: *Instituto Brasileiro de Ação Democrática* (Brazilian Institute of Democratic Action)
- IBCON: *Instituto Brasileiro Conservador* (Brazilian Conservative Institute)
- IBF: *Instituto Brasileiro de Filosofia* (Brazilian Institute of Philosophy)
- ICL: *Instituto Conservador Liberal* (Conservative Liberal Institute)
- IEE: *Instituto de Estudos Empresariais* (Institute for Entrepreneurial Studies)
- IFL: *Instituto de Formação de Líderes* (Institute for the Formation of Leaders)
- IIGD: *Igreja Internacional da Graça de Deus* (International Grace of God Church)
- IL: *Instituto Liberal* (Liberal Institute)
- IMIL: *Instituto Millenium* (Millennium Institute)
- IMPD: *Igreja Mundial do Poder de Deus* (World Church of God's Power)
- IPCO: *Instituto Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira* (Institute Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira)
- IPES: *Instituto de Pesquisas e Estudos Sociais* (Institute of Research and Social Studies)
- IPF: International Policy Forum
- IURD: *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* (Universal Church of the Kingdom of God)
- LGBTQ: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning
- LIMDE: *Liga da Mulher pela Democracia* (Women's League for Democracy)
- MDB: *Movimento Democrático Brasileiro* (Brazilian Democratic Movement)
- MIL-B: *Movimento Integralista e Linearista Brasileiro* (Brazilian Integralist and Linearist Movement)
- MPS: Mont Pèlerin Society
- OAB: *Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil* (Brazilian Bar Association)
- PCB: *Partido Comunista Brasileiro* (Brazilian Communist Party)
- PCC: *Primeiro Comando da Capital* (First Capital Command)
- PCdoB: *Partido Comunista do Brasil* (Communist Party of Brazil)
- PDC: *Partido Democrata Cristão* (Christian Democratic Party)
- PDT: *Partido Democrático Trabalhista* (Democratic Labor Party)
- PHS: *Partido Humanista da Solidariedade* (Humanist Party of Solidarity)
- PL: *Partido Liberal* (Liberal Party)
- PMDB: *Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro* (Brazilian Democratic Movement Party)



- PP: *Progressistas* (Progressist Party)
- PRONA: *Partido de Reedificação da Ordem Nacional* (Party of the Reconstruction of the National Order)
- PRTB: *Partido Renovador Trabalhista Brasileiro* (Brazilian Labor Renewal Party)
- PSB: *Partido Socialista Brasileiro* (Brazilian Socialist Party)
- PSC: *Partido Social Cristão* (Social Christian Party)
- PSD: *Partido Social Democrático* (Social-Democratic Party)
- PSDB: *Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira* (Party of Brazilian Social Democracy)
- PTB: *Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro* (Brazilian Labor Party)
- PTC: *Partido Trabalhista Cristão* (Christian Labor Party)
- PV: *Partido Verde* (Green Party)
- RCC: *Renovação Carismática Católica* (Catholic Charismatic Renewal)
- SBPC: *Sociedade Brasileira para o Progresso da Ciência* (Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Science)
- SEP: *Sociedade de Estudos Políticos* (Society of Political Studies)
- TFP: *Sociedade Brasileira de Defesa da Tradição, Família e Propriedade* (Brazilian Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property)
- UCF: *União Cívica Feminina* (Women's Civic Union)
- UDN: *União Democrática Nacional* (National Democratic Union)
- UDR: *União Democrática Ruralista* (Democratic Union of Ruralists)
- UND: *União Nacionalista Democrática* (Nationalist Democratic Union)
- WACL: World Anti-Communist League

# Introduction

*Brazil Above Everything, God Above Everyone.*

*There's none of this secular state babble. It's a Christian state,  
and if a minority is against it, then move out. Minorities  
have to bow down to the majorities.*

Jair Bolsonaro<sup>1</sup>

When you enter the 19<sup>th</sup> century mansion, home of the Institute Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira (IPCO), you feel like having passed through a time machine. Situated in the noble quarter of Higienópolis in São Paulo, less than a mile away from the homeless people occupying the Republic Square with their tents, it bears the name of its patron, the Catholic intellectual and politician. Today Corrêa de Oliveira is mostly remembered as the deceased founder and leader of the former “Tradition, Family and Property” (TFP), a civil organization and supporter of the military coup in 1964, long back in the past. Frederico Viotti, the Institute’s courteous director of communications, guides me along the corridors, and comments in passing on precious objects of imperial and sacred art. Every little detail of the furnishings has been carefully arranged by Doctor Plínio, as he calls him, before he surrenders: “Well, it would take a few hours to explain just the conception of the décor.” I certainly believe him. On the second floor, several folios in leather binding are exposed on a pedestal, right in the middle of the corridor. “This is about how we stopped Mitterrand from turning France into a communist state,” Viotti informs unpretentiously before I could ask. Suddenly TFP moves closer, into my own life horizon and regional context. How come I never heard about this salvation? The folios reveal, in hundreds of newspaper articles from all over the world, how at the end of 1981 Corrêa de Oliveira campaigned against the newly elected French president and the country’s political course. His manifesto “Self-management socialism: in view of communism, barrier or bridgehead?” focuses on the introduction of employee participation

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1 Jair Bolsonaro, official campaign slogan 2018; electoral campaign appearance, Feb 19, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YmE4pxBulMw>.

and codetermination in the management of French companies, in his eyes the irreversible step toward communism. The inflammatory text was published in 178 editions in newspapers of 53 countries with an estimate of 35 million sold copies. Among them, the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Observer*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, *Hamburger Abendblatt*, *Die Welt*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Die Presse*, *Il Tempo*, *Diário de Notícias* and many others. A summary of the manifesto was published in the *Reader's Digest* and reached some more millions of readers.<sup>2</sup>

My immediate reaction is surprise. I remember Mitterrand's first government as a pompously announced rupture with Gaullism and then a cautiously executed reform in close collaboration with the establishment, by that time called "rosewater socialism". As I later checked, European newspapers mostly derided the modest outcome of Mitterrand's reforms – for example, the first introduction of a property tax, already common in neighboring countries, the only hesitant establishment of a public health system like the British National Health Service, or indeed the increased worker participation in company decisions, Doctor Plinio's main concern, which did not even get close to German laws on so-called operational codetermination. Was then Volkswagen a communist company? Apparently, the perception of reality can be quite varying, between Right and Left, flop and success, depending on the standpoint and the references of the observer. But the articles as such exist and attest at least the outreach of TFP's campaign, though other reasons might have slowed down France's leftist course too. Suddenly, the folios which I am still browsing remind me of a Lithuanian student in one of my courses at the University of Copenhagen, who once asked me about the Brazilian legacy of Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira and who did not feel very satisfied with my laconic answer on his historical role as former leader of TFP. Frederico Viotti seemingly appreciates my curiosity: "This was when we helped Lithuania to get rid of communist control." Finding out more, I learn that in 1990 TFP collected more than five million signatures under a petition for the independence of the country – it even yielded them a mentioning in the Guinness Book of Records – which a delegation delivered to president Gorbachev. Though this did not end the conflict and a month later the Soviet Union even used military means to reestablish control, it might have affected the whole process in some way, who knows.

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2 Corrêa de Oliveira 1981. Here and in the following, I refer his full surname to avoid any confusion with academic sources written by other Oliveiras. For statistical data on the campaign, see TFP's own estimates at [https://www.pliniocorreadeoliveira.info/Gesta\\_020212.htm](https://www.pliniocorreadeoliveira.info/Gesta_020212.htm).

My later conversation with IPCO's longstanding member, "His Royal Highness" Bertrand de Orléans e Bragança, fourth-generation descendant of the last Brazilian Emperor Pedro II, reveals more of the international influence of this Brazilian institution: The close collaboration of TFP, including *Dom* Bertrand, with archbishop Marcel Lefebvre's fierce opposition against the reformism of Roman Catholicism at the Second Vatican Council (1962–65).<sup>3</sup> Even more, a few years later TFP made an alarm-call to the Vatican against the "communist infiltration" among priests in Latin America, supported by two million signatures. This apparently triggered the Church's reaction against the theology of liberation, which then ended with the official condemnation by Pope John Paul II. Not to mention TFP's lobbying against "progressivism" at the Constituent Assembly during the Brazilian redemocratization and their participation in campaigns against a land reform and disarmament policies during the New Republic. Why was it so astonishing to listen to this great track record? Maybe because I would not have expected this country to interfere in international affairs, for being a voice from the notoriously disregarded peripheral South, and much less taking a reactionary stance. Indeed, TFP still exists, with branches in 25 countries. Only in Brazil the movement uses the provisional name IPCO, due to a legal dispute on the trademark right among Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira's institutional heirs.

A week later, in Rio de Janeiro, I visit the *Centro Dom Bosco* (CDB), the primordial cell of *Liga Cristo Rei*, the Catholic Ligue of Christ the King. After a traditional Latin Mass, whose abolition by the way TFP tried to stop at the Second Vatican Council, president Pedro Affonseca and vice president Álvaro Mendes obligingly display their showcase with CDB's publications, responsible for 80% of their budget, they say. One of the bestsellers is archbishop Geraldo de Proença Sigaud's 1962 *Anticommunist Catechism* in a 2019 re-edition. I recognize it from a photograph I saw earlier, of Brazil's president Jair Bolsonaro proudly posing with the book in his hands, the cover held in the colors of the Flamengo football club (at a first glance I thought this would be the volume's topic). On the first page of the catechism, I read:

Communism is an international sect, which follows Karl Marx's doctrine and works to destroy human society, which is based on the law of God and on the Gospel, and also to establish the kingdom of Satan in this world, implanting an impious revolutionary state, and organizing the life of the men of luck who forget God and eternity.<sup>4</sup>

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3 This collaboration, including the correspondence between Brazilian bishops and Lefebvre, has been documented by Caldeira 2009 and Cowan 2021.

4 Sigaud 2019 [1962]: 1.

Randomly opening another page, I find Sigaud warning about materialist practices: these do not only consist of earning money, enjoying life and neglecting worship, but also to dress “with sensuality, without modesty” and to engage in “modern dances”.<sup>5</sup> Do the people I was talking to, all visibly members of the Brazilian elite, bother about earning money? Who is longing for these messages about modern dance in 2019? I only dare to ask the second question. Young, educated people, disappointed with the degeneration of modernity and the lack of spirituality, just like they themselves are, Álvaro Mendes explains during the interview. Probably the same public who not only bought but also financed through crowdfunding – 444 sponsors, as I can see by the list printed in the book – the re-edition of *Objecções e Erros Protestantes. Com as respectivas respostas irrefutáveis* [Protestant Objections and Mistakes. With the Respective Irrefutable Answers], written by the French-Belgian priest Júlio Maria de Lombaerde, who came to Brazil in 1912. Do people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century really want to learn about Lutheran heresy and his “totally wrong” translation of the Bible? This question I do not ask either, as I spot in the introduction the reference to CDB’s campaign “Protestants, go back home!”. I learn that the campaign is flanked by a series of three books, the other two being Carlos de Laet’s 1907 *Heresia Protestante* [Protestant Heresy] and an essay collection on the Papal *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, a commented list of censored books originally published in 1564 after the Council of Trent. I am certainly underestimating CDB followers’ thirst for knowledge.

The further interview reveals that understanding CDB as a theological study center would be wrong. As Álvaro Mendes explains, the center’s three pillars are worship, study and defense of faith. Regarding the last, CDB has been in the front line too. In 2019, they sued – not for the first time – the famous satirical comedy group *Porta dos Fundos* [Back Door] on the grounds of blasphemy in their Christmas special *The First Temptation of Christ*, released by Netflix. After juridical order, the movie was temporarily withdrawn from the streaming platform, until Brazil’s Federal Supreme Court overruled the censorship. In parallel, a Neo-Integralist group (I will soon explain about Brazilian Integralism, a Catholic-authoritarian political movement during the 1930s, usually more associated with fascism) threw a Molotov cocktail against the front door of the production company. At that occasion, my gentle host Pedro Affonseca declared to a journalist that self-justice should be deemed unacceptable, though it would not be “irrational” to legally sentence

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5 Sigaud 2019 [1962]: 11.

somebody to death for blasphemy, those were his words.<sup>6</sup> If one accepts the premises that men's rationality is given by God and that – as stated by Saint Thomas Aquinas, my interlocutors' one-source-fits-all-problems reference – blasphemy is an unforgivable, eternal sin, graver than murder, he is certainly right.

Having done scholarly work on Brazil for around 25 years, I began to see some aspects of the country with different eyes after these visits. Back on the street and free of my Corona-mask (I never saw anybody else wearing one in these institutions), even the so familiar statue of Christ the Redeemer became strange, after I received as a present from Álvaro Mendes the re-edited book *Católicos, ao combate!* [Catholics, fight!]. It was written in 1916 by Cardinal Sebastião Leme, the man behind the architectural project of the sanctuary on the Corcovado hill, financed exclusively by private donations and concluded in 1931. The same statue which communists would have substituted by one of Fidel Castro, if the military had not saved democracy in 1964, as Olavo de Carvalho (\*1947), the most prominent online influencer of Brazil's New Right and so-called “guru” of president Bolsonaro, likes to say.<sup>7</sup> I started to realize that these visits were not an excursion into a parallel world but into a rather real Brazil, and that no time machine was needed. These thoughts and actions were there and switching on the TV at night they were echoed by politicians, popular men in the street and some raging journalists.

★★★

The research project which brought me to these temples of unfamiliar Catholicism in the pandemic times of late 2020 had started in the year 2016, when Brazil's president Dilma Rousseff was successfully impeached and thirteen years of government of the Workers' Party (PT) terminated abruptly. At that moment, it became clear to many observers that the Brazilian Sixth Republic was only an apparently consolidated democracy.<sup>8</sup> It seemed that it had overcome the authoritarian past of the military dictatorship, but it has come to an end too. What has visibly entered the stage instead is a new political actor with a new discourse, soon baptized as the New Right. Like many other scholars, I was impressed by this sudden rupture and started to study the phenomenon. Soon I realized that the rise of the Brazilian New Right was under thorough analysis and more and more substantial studies were published in the years I conducted

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6 Oliveira 2020b.

7 “Hangout” with Olavo de Carvalho, Jair Bolsonaro, Flávio Bolsonaro and Carlos Bolsonaro, Feb 14, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMpoOJ-NAzg&t=0s>.

8 For example, see the lucid assessment in Santos 2017.

my research. These studies clarified the coincidental conjunctural circumstances that can be summarized as the growing antipathy against the governing PT (the so-called “antipetismo”), politically motivated anti-corruption campaigns resembling lawfare, the increasing problems of economic downturn and public insecurity. In this context, as also has been well explained by those works, Jair Bolsonaro was staged as an anti-systemic candidate, supported by a variety of political and social actors with strong presence both in the streets and the online world. Special emphasis was given on the political alliance between culturally conservatives (the Bolsonaro supporters, evangelicals and parts of the repressive forces) on one side, and economically liberals on the other (represented by the designation of Bolsonaro’s Minister of Economy Paulo Guedes). This liberal-conservative fusion was not a new phenomenon, they all agreed, but already present in other contexts, such as in the United States, which Brazil seemed to echo. Regarding the political and social phenomenon of the New Right, these valuable works, many of them thoroughly done PhD theses, have created a robust socio-political analytical basis.<sup>9</sup>

However, I also realized that in comparison less attention, though still having produced a number of substantial studies, has been given to the New Right’s impact on Brazilian culture, the world of ideas, through the so-called expanded state and its private apparatuses of hegemony, as Gramsci’s famous theory goes.<sup>10</sup> This is curious because it has turned into a New Right’s obsession to complain about a supposed hegemony of “cultural Marxism” in Brazil, as if there were never any promotion of their own ideas. One could even speculate if Brazilian intellectuals over-generalize their own “progressist” stance for the world outside academia. Even more, the New Right logically presupposes an Old Right, which certainly was not just blown away by the winds of democratization, just as the New Right did not just plummet from the skies. Presumably, there must have been a continuity which in fact did catch the attention of several scholars.<sup>11</sup> This suspicion made me concentrate on systematically tracing the origins of the ideology which the New Right has so successfully adopted and their continuity from the remote past – much more remote

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9 Among the main references are Velasco e Cruz et al. 2015; Telles 2016; Alonso 2017; Proner et al. 2017; Almeida & Toniol 2018; Solano 2018a, 2018b, 2019a and 2019b; Saad-Filho & Morais 2018; Kalil 2018; Rocha 2018; Rocha et al. 2021; Valle 2018; Damgaard 2018; Santos Jr. 2019; Pinheiro-Machado 2019; Pinheiro-Machado & Freixo 2019; Anderson 2019; Santos et al. 2019; Lerner 2019; Galvão et al. 2019; Cesarino 2019 and 2020; Nobre 2020; and Avritzer 2020.

10 Among the main references are Ferreira & Botelho 2010; Chaloub & Perlatto 2016; Patschiki 2012; Patschiki et al. 2016; Casimiro 2016 and 2020; Pachá 2019; Puglia 2020; Lynch 2020; Leirner 2020; and Avritzer et al. 2021.

11 For example, Pierucci 1987 and Motta 2000.

than I thought the journey would take me at the beginning – to the present situation.

This book scrutinizes the underlying substrate of undisputed core ideas of the New Right and the political impact they trigger. These ideas provide the premises on which a doubtlessly diversified bunch of actors of different shades agrees, one could say, as their common denominator. I will show that this ideology (in the mere sense of a shared set of ideas, ideals and beliefs) has been existing as a powerful tradition in Brazil and that it was the driving force behind reactionary politics (in the sense of suppressing socio-political change) during most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. What turned this old Right into a “new” Right is mainly the public confession to openly defend their quite radical goals, firmly and steadily based on their ideological grounds and inspired by the remote past. This assumed legacy sheds a new light on its success and suggests possible explanations on some rather awkward phenomena of the New Right, which will be addressed in the following chapters: Why do some members of the government refer to “crusades” and “salvation of the Occident”? And others to an obscure political theorist called “Eric Voegelin”? Why are they all extremely concerned with “communism”, three decades after the end of the Cold War? Why is Jair Bolsonaro at the same time a Catholic and recently baptized evangelical? Why do most rightist Youtubers expose somewhere in the background an Imperial flag? What does the New Right mean by “less state, more Brazil”? And last, what is the role of philosopher Olavo de Carvalho, who constantly refers to Thomas Aquinas’ thought?

The main finding in this endeavor was that the apparently New Right’s ideology builds on a core of thought, created as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which has been conserved and transmitted through various generations of thinkers in a network of institutions. It has been the recurrent framework for reactions against any of the cyclical attempts to change the social order of Brazil, most recently against the rather modest reforms introduced by the PT governments. From this I learned that the ideas of the New Right are indeed quite old. Even more, I learned that the New Right is above all a Religious Right.<sup>12</sup> In my view, an early wake-up signal for this trend was when vice president and main impeachment conspirator Michel Temer – with no reputation as a religious hardliner – concluded in his inauguration speech: “What we want to do now, to Brazil, is a religious act, an act of reconnecting the whole of the Brazilian society with the

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12 The references closest to my approach – and to which I am very much obliged – are Power 2010; Cowan 2016 and 2021; Silveira 2019; Lacerda 2019; Rocha 2021; besides the specific scholarly work on Catholic fundamentalism by Gizele Zanotto and on monarchism by Teresa Malatian.



fundamental values of our country.”<sup>13</sup> However, differently from what I expected, this religious substrate turned out to be deeply influenced not only by evangelicals but also by Catholics with roots in the Integrism of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Integrism was an originally European reaction to a supposed *fin de siècle* decadence, determined to prove that only Catholicism can regenerate society by “living the integrity of faith in the totality of existence”, and quickly spread in Brazil in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup> In comparison, evangelicals, who today seem to be in the front line of the New Right, were noisy latecomers, though very effective as mass mobilizers in the 2000s.

This finding was intriguing because it suggested a different perspective on the Brazilian New Right. At least regarding the symptoms of its Bolsonaro wing, categories frequently refer to either “Neo-Fascism” or “Neo-Integralism”, the latter referring to the Brazilian Integralist Action (AIB), created in 1932 and led by its main ideologue Plínio Salgado.<sup>15</sup> While both perspectives point to valuable characteristics to sustain their argument, I came to the conclusion that the second one enables a more accurate perspective on Brazil’s fascist idiosyncrasies, given the notoriously difficult definition of fascism and its assimilation to different contexts.<sup>16</sup> As has been demonstrated at length through a specialized literature, Brazilian Integralism of the 1930s was a variant of fascism, but it was precisely a *Brazilian* variant, adapted to the country’s particular socioeconomic conditions, determined by colonization, miscegenation and a peripheral position in the world system, which differed clearly from the European contexts.<sup>17</sup> Still, one could object here that today it is not the Neo-Integralists – though they exist and eventually contributed to the rise of the New Right<sup>18</sup> – who stand out as protagonists, nor is Neo-Integralism promoted as its unifying ideology. This might be somehow misleading. If Integralism is not capitalized as an attractive political brand in the context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, for rightly assuming that public opinion would predominantly consider it a closed chapter of the past and maybe even a political taboo, this does not mean that Integralist ideas are not present in

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13 First speech of interim President Michel Temer on May 12, 2016, <http://www.biblioteca.presidencia.gov.br/presidencia/ex-presidentes/michel-temer/discursos-do-presidente-da-republica>. On the “impeachment”, see Freixo & Rodrigues 2016.

14 Antoine 1980 [1972]: 11–12.

15 See Lynch 2020 and Santos & Regatieri 2020.

16 See Payne 1995.

17 For example, the still seminal work Trindade 1974 as well as Chasin 1978; Cavalari 1999; Bertonha 2014; Doria 2020.

18 See Barbosa 2016 and Gonçalves & Caldeira Neto 2020.

the New Right's ideology just because their representatives do not wear green shirts.

Therefore, what I see as a problem in using the label “Neo-Integralism” is that the conventional connotations of Integralism might evoke supposed incongruencies with the New Right. These certainly are the case regarding political style and organization, but they do not hold in a closer ideological analysis of the New Right's ideas. The point is that the Integralist ideological framework was inspired, as I will show in detail in the following chapters, in the above-mentioned Integristism, which achieved, during the 1920s and 1930s, an almost hegemonic moral authority and a decisive political position to re-Christianize Brazil.<sup>19</sup> Integristism not only preceded but also incubated Integralism. Specialized scholarship has already pointed to the blurred distinction between the two “integrating” movements, due to their fluctuating personnel. One could even understand Integralism as a populist variant of Integristism which only occasionally diverged about the way to politicize and minor theological aspects.<sup>20</sup> It is certainly true that Integralists opted for a different strategy of mass mobilization, including fascist rhetoric and symbology. Still, their main paragon was not Italian fascism but the Catholic-monarchic reactionary movements in Spain and Portugal.<sup>21</sup> Hence, if Integralist political action was based on Integrist ideas and if these survived and even today are recognized in the analysis of the New Right as somehow “neo-Integralist”, Integristism still matters. Even more, it should be considered – and maybe even named as such – because of its potential contribution to the understanding of the deep and intrinsically Brazilian roots of the New Right thought.<sup>22</sup> This necessarily brings up Thomism, the main doctrinarian reference of Integristism and again in the interviews I conducted a hundred years later, as I mentioned above. Thomism refers to the 13<sup>th</sup> century writings of the Dominican friar Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) and the philosophical school based on his main oeuvre *Summa Theologiae*, which will play a central role throughout

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19 Mainwaring 1989 [1986]; Azzi 2003; Cowan 2016.

20 Todaro Williams 1971 and 1974; Deutsch 1999; Trindade 2016.

21 Vasconcelos 1979; Gonçalves 2018.

22 The concept of neo-Integristism is conspicuous by its absence from scholarship on the New Right. Only a few exploratory studies apply it to denominate conservative Catholic movements (especially the Opus Dei) that oppose “abortionism” and “gender ideology” in Spain, Central America and occasionally Brazil (Steinleen 2012; Sagot 2012; Camargo 2018; Paredes 2020; Ramirez 2020). Interestingly, they all conclude that these neo-Integrist movements have proven capable of integrating both economic liberalism and evangelical fundamentalism in the successful attempt to subvert the laic state and implement conservative Christian positions in public policies, which confirms the main finding of my research.

the following chapters.<sup>23</sup> So when Pedro Doria (2020) provoked that Integralism “is in our political DNA”, he is objectively right, except that most of these chromosomes are Integrist, not “fascist” as he assumes.<sup>24</sup> It was this insight, after having studied the New Right’s reference texts and current discourses for four years, that made me travel again to Brazil and personally interview the at-first-sight alien representatives of an apparently obscure neo-Integrism in their apparently eccentric institutions, which I recounted at the beginning of this introduction.

With this study I hope to contribute to a better understanding of the recent right-wing shift in Brazil by unveiling the continuous formation of rightist thought in Brazil and its integrating capacity. Revisiting the tradition, it will become clearer how, despite internal controversies and personal feuds, the Brazilian Right had the ability to include Integrist Catholics, monarchists, Integralists, nationalists, authoritarians and market liberals. As I will show in detail, these versatile actors joined the same institutions, published their texts in the same publications, referred to the same sources – and all this to defend the same core of ideas. Though by its very nature often a discreet political influence, this tradition produced some reactionary brokers with large public outreach. Each in a different historical period, they stimulated and guided the political implementation of ideas, and we can understand them as organic intellectuals of the dominant class, again in the sense of Gramsci. Among them are some of the above-mentioned personalities who will have many appearances in the next chapters: Plínio Salgado, Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira, as well as nowadays and with unrivaled success Olavo de Carvalho. Under their orientation, the Right, both old and new, acted in concert whenever the hierarchical status quo seemed to be endangered by periodical outbreaks of social revolt and intellectual “progressivism”: in the 1930s, the early 1960s, during the redemocratization in the 1980s and especially after the watershed in Brazilian politics in 2002, the election of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the Brazilian Mitterrand, so to speak. The last reaction provoked the “impeachment” of his successor Dilma Rousseff in 2016 – my original motivation – and culminated in the well-known rise of the Brazilian New Right and the election of Jair Bolsonaro.

It turns out that the striving toward comprehending the ideology of this continuous Right, whose starting point is to deny its ideological character, is a challenge *per se*. My effort was to study them by the very standards of their own representatives and to take them in principle

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23 For a competent summary of the main arguments of *Summa Theologiae*, see Hugon 1998 [1914].

24 Doria 2020: 237.

seriously. Notwithstanding, I have to admit that many times their assessment of the state of things and the fear of any change astonishingly resembles the irrational reaction which György Lukács once called “disparagement of understanding and reason, an uncritical glorification of intuition, an aristocratic epistemology, the rejection of socio-historical progress, the creating of myths”.<sup>25</sup> What seems most important to me was, as Fabio Gentile writes in his insightful article, to familiarize with a strange yet specific “collection of symbolic, mythological and liturgical identities, manifested in the form of conceptual networks and communicative codes”.<sup>26</sup> This approach avoids misunderstandings which are likely to obstruct crucial insights. For example, the question why the Brazilian New Right represents a threat to democracy needs to be answered under careful consideration of how this concept is defined by themselves: The well-known liberal Roque Spencer Maciel de Barros and the conservative Ricardo Vélez Rodríguez, Bolsonaro’s ex-Minister of Education, prefer the term “Democratism”. Ex-diplomat José Osvaldo de Meira Penna clearly distances himself from the model of the Swedish “totalitarian democracy”.<sup>27</sup> They all take as an implicit premise Plínio Salgado’s verdict that “democracy can only exist under the law of God, who created man free and responsible”.<sup>28</sup> Or, to give an example the other way around, one would miss the point when accusing the Brazilian New Right of medieval, antimodernist backwardness, if they believe in the superiority of traditional theocentrism over modern humanism. Bolsonaro’s former Minister of Foreign Affairs Ernesto Araújo said he did not understand if ex-Ambassador Celso Amorim calling his thought “a return to the Middle Ages” was meant as criticism or praise.<sup>29</sup> In fact, the only reason why the New Right’s ideologues would not happily take the label “medievalist” as a compliment is that for many of them – especially for Olavo de Carvalho – the crisis of modernity already started in the late Middle Ages, when the inseparable unity of Church and world in the 11<sup>th</sup> century was split into a competition of two realms, with the temporal power of the kings increasingly interfering in the spiritual power of the priests.<sup>30</sup> Nobody will explain this better than Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira:

Does TFP wish for new Middle Ages? For everything that has been said, the answer does not leave room for hesitation. Although it was not

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25 Lukács 1980 [1954]: 10.

26 Gentile 2018: 94.

27 Barros 1992: 86–87; Vélez Rodríguez 2020: 257; Penna 2019 [1987]: 113.

28 Salgado 1937: 179.

29 Ernesto Araújo, Tweet, Nov 18, 2018, <https://twitter.com/ernestofaraujo/status/106428306773590016>.

30 Cavalcanti 1994 [1985]: 115–116.

ideal, it was during the medieval period that the Church and Christian civilization reached the pinnacle of their beneficent influence. If by new Middle Ages one understands an era where that pinnacle again marks the lives of men and nations, does TFP desire it? Yes and no. *Yes*, because since the institute's doctrinaire inspiration is a Catholic one, it cannot but desire that men and nations should benefit in every way from the teachings of the Church. *No*, if one understands that, in that matter, the Middle Ages were a historically reached acme, but which was very far from being the highest reachable culmination. And it is in its love for the Church and Christian civilization that TFP makes that culmination the goal of all its aspirations and actions.<sup>31</sup>

I think it is a good tuning for reading this book to keep in mind that for an ambitious Integrist Catholic the Middle Ages are not the *ne plus ultra*. This might provoke the question if, after all, these protagonists are always talking seriously. As I will show, not only are they talking seriously, but they are forced by superior power to do so, based on the full conviction of knowing “the absolute truth” which, as Bolsonaro likes to say with John (8, 32), “sets free”. They are even talking seriously when bearing witness to their own traumas of dictatorships, such as the post-Second Vatican Council repression against the traditional Tridentine Mass, which forced traditional Catholics into the underground where they had to worship clandestinely.<sup>32</sup> The main broker of this “truth” is doubtlessly Olavo de Carvalho. His contribution to the Brazilian right-wing shift is consensual among scholars and among all Brazilian New Right protagonists I spoke to. Still, while most of the former tend to not take his ideas seriously and focus on his propaganda tools and reception, the latter not only take his ideas seriously but also know – though conveniently maintaining silence – that he is just offering old wine in new bottles. To understand his success, in my eyes, both perspectives are necessary.

With this focus, my approach to the history of the New Right's ideas necessarily includes a perspective of political theology which has been recycled in the 1930s by the German jurist Carl Schmitt (who was a Nazi sympathizer, which is not the issue here). He justified it by arguing convincingly that “all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts”. For example, in jurisprudence “the exceptional case has the analogue meaning of the miracle in theology”.<sup>33</sup> This reconnects fruitfully with a dimension which,

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31 Corrêa de Oliveira 1985: 235–236.

32 Fleichman 2018a: 23.

33 Schmitt 1934 [1922]: 49, my translation.

as an effect of rationality and illumination, was somehow relativized but never ceased to be at the core of Brazilian rightist thought: the certainty of the sovereignty of God and natural law. As others already observed too, this premise concerns any aspect of human existence, the reason why – whether one likes it or not – religion inevitably penetrates the temporal sphere and becomes public.<sup>34</sup> Political theology allows us to perceive this systematic resemblance between the domains of the theological and the political.<sup>35</sup> However, it is not an easy task because it means to study scientifically a domain of anti-science. In 1912, Adolf Menzel denounced in his *Naturrecht und Soziologie* [Natural Law and Sociology] social sciences as the usurper of natural law that intend to determine what is “right” in the immanent realm (Earth) without any transcendental consideration (God). As I seek to show in this book, it is through that approach, which does not dismiss transcendental ideas, that one can comprehend the functional orchestration of ideological control by the New Right, with the obvious Earthly effect of “discreetly braking the train of progress”, as TFP’s mastermind Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira liked to say.<sup>36</sup>

The central findings of my research deal with exactly this intersection between political immanence and religious transcendentality. First, that the New Right is much more integrated than the stances, discourses and performances of its different actors might suggest. The term “integrated” is used here in a conceptual sense: Catholic “Integralism” and the so-called fascist “Integralism” were created as all-encompassing – until reaching certain political limits – and they both put this uniting mission in their name. But also, the Right in Brazil has always had an impressive absorbing capacity to unite against “the enemy”, probably because due to the social asymmetries there is a lot at stake to lose and to win. This anticipated the liberal-conservative fusion, even though “liberal-conservatism”, like most representatives of the New Right prefer to characterize their movement, turned into a unifying label only recently.

Second, my analysis will point to Christianity as the fundament and in today’s Brazil again the strongest driving force of the New Right, as main guarantor of the hierarchical social order. Peter Berger was prophetic in 1999 when he presented his famous thesis on the desecularization of the world, by the way also with Brazilian evangelicals in mind. Notwithstanding, my results indicate a much stronger – though discreet – protagonism of the somehow neglected Catholicism within

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34 Burity 2018, under reference to Giumbelli 2013.

35 Løland 2020a. For further information on the revival of political theology, see Mouffe 1999; Eslin 1999; and Newman 2019.

36 Bertrand de Orléans e Bragança, interview with author, São Paulo, Nov 11, 2020.

the Brazilian Right, if compared to the role of the intensively studied evangelical movements. This bias might be a vestige of the theology of liberation's commitment to progressivism, strategically overhyped from both supporters and adversaries, and it provokes the underestimation of the weight of the long Integrist tradition and their growing political influence since the foundation of the Republic, with the explicit goal to establish a Christian social order.<sup>37</sup> To just give one example, while the liberation theologian Hélder Câmara is an icon (in spite of his Integralist past), the strongly influent bishop of Campos, Antônio de Castro Mayer, goes largely unremembered. However, it was his merit that one small village of indomitable Integrists held out against the Vatican Reformers, celebrating the Tridentine Mass, which made Campos in the eyes of international Catholic hardliners the “last Catholic diocese” in the world.<sup>38</sup>

Even if possibly a minority in numbers and not perceived as representative for Brazilian Catholicism as a whole, what made the difference was the Integrists' “operational capacity”, according to the scientific authority on Brazilian Integristism, Charles Antoine, who also prophesied in the 1970s their future importance.<sup>39</sup> Their revival during the last years shows again this operational ability, as Dom Bertrand gloated over with certain scorn when I interviewed him: while evangelical “charlatans” mobilize the gullible voters for the New Right (and they are of course welcome to do it), Catholics instruct the political elite.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, Integrist Catholicism has thereon created a fascinating common basis with liberalism – which I call the phenomenon of “God's Invisible Hand” – formerly a domain of evangelicals. To avoid any confusion with “progressive” Catholicism of whose existence I am quite aware, I use the expression “conservative Catholicism” even when in some contexts it seems redundant. Though “Integristism” or indeed “neo-Integristism” would be the most appropriate term, it has been abandoned by conservative Catholics since the 1940s, for the proximity to “Integralism”, and sunken into academic oblivion. For this reason, I reserve it for conservative Catholicism during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Third, my tracing of this tradition will make clear that these ideas were not just “imported”, as a delayed reflex of right-wing tendencies from the U.S. or elsewhere, nor were they “misplaced”.<sup>41</sup> If there was a stimulus from abroad, it was Integristism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century and mainly

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37 Antoine 1980 [1972]: 7.

38 Cowan 2021: 55, 58.

39 Antoine 1980 [1972]: 117.

40 Bertrand de Orléans e Bragança, interview with author, São Paulo, Nov 11, 2020.

41 For the perspective toward “imported ideas”, see for example Souza 2019. For the argument of “misplaced ideas”, see Schwarz 1992 [1977].

inspired in France, the first-born daughter of the Church and home of counter-revolution, as Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira liked to praise.<sup>42</sup> Maud Chirio has drawn the attention to a similar neglected French connection in a field I will only touch upon: the military corporative thinking which built its strategies of counter-revolutionary war on the French experience in Indochina and Algeria rather than looking at the U.S.<sup>43</sup> But what is most important is that these ideas were developed in Brazil with a high degree of autonomy and originality. Even more notably, Brazilian thinkers anticipated in many aspects rightist social diagnoses and response strategies. They coined elements of thought which only later became universally known as common places of the Right, for example, in the U.S. Among these is the “defense of the family” and “morality” by fighting “cultural Marxism” through an inverted “culture war”. The Brazilian culture war against modernization started in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and did not need any Italian recipe. The fact that the New Right now declares Gramsci to be the *spiritus rector* of their successful enemy does not detract from their own ability to use their own tradition of ideas as ammunition for persuasive politics in order to retain inherited power. All this was already designed in Integrist and Integralist counter-revolutionary theory in the 1930s, elaborated through Catholic anticommunist action. When culture war and cultural Marxism entered the debate in the North in the early 1990s, as *Ersatz*-communism after the Fall of the Berlin Wall, the respective canon in Brazil (which always depended on an *Ersatz*-communism) was already consolidated with its ideas perfectly in place.<sup>44</sup> The recent editorial boom of liberal-conservative books in Brazil has antecedents – most relevant ideas have been published in Brazil by native thinkers for almost a century. The “intransigent Right” is not only imported but also a national product and, as Benjamin Cowan has shown in his recent book, even qualified for exportation.<sup>45</sup>

Last, this book adds in a certain way the necessary second part to research I concluded a decade ago. In my monograph “The Idea of Brazil” (*Die Idee von Brasilien*, published in German) I explored the profound differences in the idealization of “Brazil” as imagined community and its implications on the country’s historical process in contrast to Hispano-America, ending my analysis in the early First Republic, which was expected to bring about the “modernization” and “Americanization” of the Empire. The deeper meaning of this history is indispensable to

42 Corrêa de Oliveira 2017 [1959]: 132.

43 Chirio 2018 [2009]: 25–29.

44 See, for example, the rather late-coming foundational book in the U.S. under the title *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (Hunter 1991).

45 Cowan 2021: 8.



understand the fortitude of monarchic thought in Brazil until today. When Bernardo Ricupero raises in his otherwise brilliant article the question of how to be conservative in a country that emancipated from a colonial past and refers to Leopoldo Zea's *El pensamiento latino-americano* [Latin American Thought] from 1976, he misses the momentousness of Brazil's *Sonderweg*. Differently from the Hispano-American republics, no rupture with the European ancestors put in front of the founding fathers a *tabula rasa* urging them to reinvent the nation. Brazil has been for centuries the projection screen of a "Fifth Empire" to save the Occident and bring Christianity to its completion. The transfer of the Crown from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro in 1808 not only allowed for an independence as monarchic Empire. This also granted the country a legacy of organic ties with Europe which is exclusive in the New World, and which sometimes is missed even among conservatives in the U.S., as Ricupero precisely observes.<sup>46</sup> After all, real continuity of tradition requires the presence of the dead, as the conservative godfather Edmund Burke has prescribed. Even though the deceased Lusitanian ancestors are separated by an ocean, the Portuguese Kingdom's legacy – including two sepulchered Emperors – has grown deep roots in Brazil, and for some this makes an essential difference, as we can read in the first number of the journal *Convivium* from 1962: "Brazil is not a spontaneously arisen reality with no connection with a shaping past. [...] We do not belong to the West. We constitute it. [...] Brazil has a historical and cultural past and cannot disconnect from it nor cease to be what it is."<sup>47</sup> The New Right's quest to restore a threatened ideal of "Brazil" bears on the existence of a unique Christian-monarchic founding myth.



The title of this book evidently dialogues with a centuries-old tradition of affirming and questioning the cliché of "Brazil, country of the future".<sup>48</sup> My intention is not to negate any promising future for *Brazil*, whatever this might be, but to show that the New Right's vision for

46 Ricupero 2010: 76, 78 footnote 4. Nash (2006 [1976]: 302) explains how conservatives in the U.S. invested heavily in creating a transatlantic philosophy of an "American Europe".

47 Crippa 1962: 8–9.

48 I am thinking of two references: Primarily and obviously Stefan Zweig's famous book *Brazil: Land of the Future* from 1941, written in his Brazilian exile after his escape from war-ridden Europe and Nazi persecution, and reproducing somehow innocently the promising national narrative of the country (which I will discuss in chapter two). But also the volume edited half a century later by some of my teachers at the Institute for Latin American Studies at Freie University Berlin (Chiappini et al. 2000), who initiated me in my studies on Brazil. Now, doing a diagnosis of time twenty years later,

the country turns to an illusionary past and hereby obstructs deliberately any promising present for most of the *Brazilians*. The chapters to follow are mainly about the history of ideas and therefore less concerned with the chronicle of political struggles or the analysis of social processes, for which a range of brilliant analysis is available. However, these will always be in the background. Regarding the structure of the chapters, my original idea was to avoid a chronological order and to concentrate on each expression of the Right separately – conservatives, fundamental Catholics and evangelicals, liberals, monarchists, Integralists, as well as the military and other authoritarians. This plan turned out to be impossible, due to the close entwinement of these tendencies, both regarding ideas and action, at all moments, even with frequent multiple identities of their protagonists. Therefore, I will broadly follow a chronology and refer to a simplified standard periodization: Old Republic (1889–1930); New State and its foreplay (1930–1945); the Democratic Interim Period, often called the “Populist” Republic, until the civil–military coup in 1964; the military governments until 1985; redemocratization and New Republic, which for many scholars already ended with the “impeachment” of Dilma Rousseff in 2016. Still, the conjuncture of the Right does not always correspond to these periods which the chapter structure emphasizes.

The first chapter lays the indispensable grounds for the later analysis by introducing the central concepts of “conservatism”, “liberalism”, “authoritarianism”, “Right” and “New Right” and discussing their applicability and the limits of mutual distinction in the Brazilian contexts. The second gives a summarized and updated version of my book on the “Idea of Brazil”, the historical experience of nation–building through monarchism, which I consider fundamental for the understanding of the Brazilian Right. The third chapter explores the introduction of Integristism in Brazil and the re–Christianization campaign, which brought Integristists to indirect power in Getúlio Vargas’ New State government. It also discusses their competitive relation to Integralism, which I analyze less as a “fascist” movement than a populist variant of Integristism. In the fourth chapter, I trace the reaction to social reformism in the 1950s and the Right’s engagement in the civil–military dictatorship. The fifth chapter deals with the rise of liberalism and evangelicalism during the 1980s, standing in at a moment of large discreditation of the Old Right, and their political influence on redemocratization. Chapter six focuses on the central figure to promote the renaissance of rightist ideas in Brazil and later main ideologue of the Bolsonaro government, Olavo de

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the timid question mark in *Brasil, país do passado?* [Brazil, country of the past?] seems unsustainable.

Carvalho. Chapter seven explains how his influence was decisive for the reaction to incipient political and social change, with the elections in 2002 symbolizing a major threat to “the order” of Brazil. Chapter eight finally portrays how these dynamics took the form of a “New Right” and how “liberal-conservatism” is their integrating element, followed by a conclusion in which I will get back to my original questions and risk an outlook.

In my research, I concentrated on the pertinent primary sources, which I consumed – according to my wife – in hazardous quantities; an uncommon dedication possible thanks to a longer research leave granted by my department at the University of Copenhagen. I certainly only scratched the surface of these sources to understand them in their function for the formulation of the ideas the Brazilian Right draws upon. I do not intend to argue about their philosophical and theological content as I am interested to evaluate the applications and impacts of these ideas on social and political processes. To better understand the current interpretation and political applications of these ideas, in addition to building on the rich specialized secondary literature, I conducted interviews with some of the main representatives of these ideas at the *Instituto Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira*, *Instituto Imperial*, *Fundação Casa Imperial* and *Associação Pró-Monarquia* in São Paulo as well as at the *Centro Dom Bosco* and – more for historical reasons – the *Centro Dom Vital* in Rio de Janeiro. I am deeply grateful to the gentlemen Frederico Viotti, Bertrand de Orléans e Bragança, Jean Tamazato, Paulo Emanuel de Oliveira Freitas, José Carlos Sepúlveda da Fonseca, Pedro Affonseca, Álvaro Mendes as well as Carlos Frederico Gurgel Silveira and Jefferson Alves for having received me personally during pandemic times and for having opened my eyes and mind for the contemporaneity of their thought.

The book’s argument would not have taken its final form without the many critical comments I received from colleagues during the last years, especially though not exclusively from Jorge Chaloub, Leonardo Puglia, Esther Solano, Maud Chirio, Ben Cowan, Bruno Deusdará, Poliana Coeli, Marcelo Moraes Caetano, Rui Rothe-Neves, Ana Vera, Karl Erik Schøllhammer, Mark Sedgwick, Einar Braathen, Ole Jakob Løland, Andrés Rivarola Puntigliano, Juan Pro, Derek Pardue, Georg Fischer, Thaïs Machado Borges and Mônica Raisa Schpun. I also thank Marco Etmanski, José Szwako and Ricardo Pagliuso Regatieri for having accepted to act as manuscript critics and first readers, as well as Ludimila Hashimoto Barros for her thorough revision and the translation of the Portuguese quotes – naturally, I am responsible for any remaining errors. Finally, I am grateful to Olavo de Carvalho for having shared with me his opinions

on another of my publications (on his protagonism as key thinker of the radical Right<sup>1</sup>) from which this book also greatly benefitted. Above all, I thank my family for their tolerance and support during these years.

Copenhagen, Summer 2021

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1 Wink 2022.

# 1 Blurred Distinctions

*They have made freedom the stalking horse of inequality, and inequality the stalking horse of submission. Men are naturally unequal, they argue. Freedom requires that they be allowed to develop their unequal gifts. A free society must be an unequal society, composed of radically distinct, hierarchically arrayed, particulars.*

Corey Robin<sup>2</sup>

“Conservatism” and “liberalism” are commonly defined as the political ideologies and forces opposed to progressist and tendentially leftist projects of reforming society through government. Conservatism claims to preserve the inherited structures of society as a genuinely good organic mechanism, with emphasis on tradition, continuity and stability. Liberals state to be open for improvement of these structures through the liberation of individuals from coercion that potentially suppresses personal liberty. The famous liberal thinker Friedrich August Hayek promoted these stances in the form of a triangle of ideologies, with one angle reserved for each: conservatives, liberals and socialists.<sup>3</sup> This triangle certainly represents an ideal and perhaps even describes reasonably specific political settings such as in the U.S. When applying it to liberal and conservative movements in Brazil, the triangle does not correspond to real positions and actions. Not only that the ideas seem to circulate between these two tendencies, also their representatives did so and supported each other in political action. As will become clear in the following chapters, conservatism and liberalism are hardly distinguishable the way they position themselves to the Brazilian context of inherited colonial social structures. They both manifest themselves above all as reactionary attitudes in opposition to any change of the social order. Their common goal is to prevent and combat any “ideological attack of a social group, either foretelling a new era or representing the interests of ascending social groups”, as even Paulo Mercadante (1923–2013), perhaps the most important contemporary

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2 Robin 2011: 102.

3 Hayek 2011 [1960]: 398. The Republic of Austria enacted in 1919 by law the abolition of nobility, which determined the suppression of all titles of nobility for private and public use. I am obeying this law, though international common practice might be different.

conservative thinker in Brazil, frankly acknowledges.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, Brazilian conservatives and liberals are above all defined as the opposite of those who claim to promote change, commonly understood as the “Left”, which makes it somehow natural to understand them as part of the Right. This stretches Hayek’s Triangle into a bipolar shape. Still, the different traditions of thought constitute distinguishable references in the Brazilian ideological landscape, which makes it indispensable to scrutinize these concepts as the basis to examine their blurred relationship.

### **Conservatism at Large**

Most of the attempts to define conservatism have come from the ideology’s thinkers themselves. However, they do so hesitantly because in their own eyes there is hardly anything to clarify about what is just “normal”. Consequently, conservatives frame their own approach to reality as simple contemplation of inherited and naturally fixed “normality” that is embodied in historical wisdom, customary knowledge and political pragmatism. As Michael Oakeshott wrote in his famous essay under the pedagogical title “On Being Conservative” (1956), conservatism is a “disposition”, not a creed or doctrine. Others called it a “habit of mind”, a “mode of feeling”, or a “way of living”.<sup>5</sup> Conservatives derive from this “normality” a normative unchanging “truth”, which brings them into a natural opposition with all those who do not just accept this “truth” but relativize it by analyzing it as the justification of a *particular* status quo in historical process. Intellectuals were predestined as the main enemy, the one who not only perceives the constructedness of conservative “normality” but also because of that encourages the search for other normalities. William Buckley anticipated in 1951 conservative anti-intellectualism by contrasting an ideologically compromised and elitist “university crowd” with a grounded “non-university crowd”.<sup>6</sup>

One of the most intellectualized conservatives, Roger Scruton, diagnosed in 1980 this theoretical vagueness of conservative thought as a problem, rightly worried that it might cause the loss of its intellectual appeal. Somehow unwillingly, he then put his own effort into finally creating a conservative doctrine. He understood this endeavor as a detour: creating an additional description of a system of beliefs which usually expresses itself directly and unproblematically through political action. Still, the pressure on conservative politicians to explain the obvious made

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4 Mercadante 1980 [1965]: 227.

5 Oakeshott 1962: 168; White 1950.

6 Buckley 1951.

it necessary, he writes, to provide them with concepts to better define and defend their positions.<sup>7</sup> This is of course an exaggeration that does not hold in face of the long tradition of conservative writing to which Scruton has surprisingly little to add. But it is still a valid analysis of the conservatives' self-declared uneasiness or even reluctance in theorizing their perception of reality – what for, one could object, if anyway vested with “truth”. For the Brazilian side, Mercadante does not seem entirely happy about this epistemological stance either:

In general, the conservative mentality does not contain in itself a theorizing predisposition. [...] The conservative reactions to immanent factors and determinate situations consisted of habitual attitudes, and in such situation, thoughts tranquilly accept the existent, as if it were the exact order of things and the world.<sup>8</sup>

Who indeed systematized the conservatism as an ideology was Karl Mannheim in his *Konservatismus*<sup>9</sup>, in two versions, from 1925 and 1927, which in my eyes is still a valid analysis. He takes his starting point in the conservative emphasis on the practical-concrete, the immediate experience of the factual “real case”, and the chronical mistrustfulness against both invisible abstract “structures” and speculation about other “potential” realities. Mannheim calls this the primacy of the *Seinsprimat* (the primacy of being) over the *Denkprimat* (the primacy of thinking), which means that conservatism prefers to infer knowledge through individual experience (induction) of reality and not through reason (deduction from the principle of what is and could be reality). Under this primacy, the only legitimate conservative way to improve reality was by exchanging one concrete fact by another, like somebody who looks at a house from all angles and finds a detail to improve, instead of rethinking and redesigning the layout of the house, as Mannheim's analogy goes.<sup>10</sup>

Robert Nisbet once wrote that conservatives consider the present as the latest point reached by the past and therefore have no interest in hypothesizing about the future (they actually do, especially on dystopic

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7 Scruton 2001 [1980]: xii, 2, 9–10.

8 Mercadante 1980 [1965]: 227.

9 Mannheim 1984 [1925/1927] is the only complete edition, including both the manuscript of his habilitation treatise “Altkonservatismus: Ein Beitrag zur Soziologie des Wissens” (1925) and the later, reduced by half, publication “Das konservative Denken: soziologische Beiträge zum Werden des politisch-historischen Denkens in Deutschland” (1927) which was the basis for the translations. Mannheim's professional and personal circumstances at that time explain his – for an admirer of György Lukács – most cautious treatment given to obvious political implications of his analysis, which made his argument curiously also suitable for conservatives.

10 Mannheim 1984 [1925/1927]: 111, 119, 121.

futures, but this will be discussed later).<sup>11</sup> Only “ideologues” invented “abstract”, “rationalist” or even “utopian” thinking about other possible worlds, including house layouts which then forced conservatives to reflect and explain their own “normality”. In this sense, conservatism is correctly theorized as reactionary. Historically, its first treaty, Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), reacted to the certainly so far greatest threat to normality: the destruction of “all those connections, natural and civil, that regulate and hold together the community by a chain of subordination” combined with the revolutionary attempt to “raise soldiers against their officers; servants against their masters; tradesmen against their customers; artificers against their employers; tenants against their landlords; curates against their bishops; and children against their parents”.<sup>12</sup> What the Catholic Irishman Burke preferred to say between the lines,<sup>13</sup> was emphasized by the book that supplemented his reaction: the theocrat Louis de Bonald’s *Theory of political and religious power* from 1796. In three volumes, the author justifies “normality” as based on natural law in the sense of Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae*. Sovereignty only resided in God, who delegated power to Family, Church and State alone, and with clearly separated competences.<sup>14</sup>

If the first reaction of conservatism has been the defense of order, its legitimacy can only be justified by a sublime author of this order, be that the emanate of God’s mysterious reason or just its effect as tradition. This argument is the basis of conservative thought, though not always made as explicit in its theological dimension as Leo Strauss did again in the 1950s.<sup>15</sup> The point is that this necessary premise delegitimizes per se all other legitimations as claimed by revolutionary “natural rights” or “positivist law”. Many of the conservative thinkers mentioned in this chapter were Catholic, some of them even radically. A few of them did not just accept conveniently the absolute truth behind the natural law, but also that it is determined in sacred and hence infallible texts.<sup>16</sup> This fundamentalism remained unaffected by the relativizations of the Word of God with regard to its historicity and the different literary forms of the Bible, as suggested by the Roman Pontifical Biblical Commission under

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11 Nisbet 2008 [1986]: 40.

12 Burke 1792 [1790]: 12.

13 See on the Catholic dimension of Burke’s thinking Stanlis 2003 [1958].

14 Bonald 1843 [1796].

15 Gottfried 2011. See for example Strauss 1953: 183.

16 Fundamentalism as a concept was originally coined for orthodox protestants who broke down the Bible to *The Fundamentals, a Testimony to the Truth* (published 1910–1915). Still, it applies perfectly to the Catholic belief in Church doctrine (Sousa 2020: 80). On modern Brazilian fundamentalism, see Burity (2018: 43).



Paul VI in 1964.<sup>17</sup> Even diverging about theological arguments, there is consensus on this premise and the necessity to conciliate Christian dogmas with the state.<sup>18</sup> The reason is given quite frankly by Scruton:

Of course, political activity may be independent of the existence of God, and independent of the will of God; but it is not independent of the belief in God. It is the possession of that belief which enables people to direct their most powerful dissatisfactions away from the ruinous hope of changing things, to a more peaceable hope of being one day redeemed from the need to do so.<sup>19</sup>

An important implication of the religious legitimization of conservatism is that it conveniently helps to avoid the question of inequality, its Achilles' heel. If due to original sin man was evil and needed redemption, this allowed refuting the progressist idea that "man is by nature good, and hence capable of indefinite perfection [...] achieved through technology, science, politics, social reform, education".<sup>20</sup> The recognition of human imperfection bears the idea of human inequality – men born equal but different in their abilities and opportunities (in the sense of Aristotle) – which levers out any need for social justice. Given wealth then equaled to being born "better looking or more intelligent"<sup>21</sup> and any interference would be a violation of natural justice. Mannheim called this perspective "romantic-conservative": everybody had the freedom to develop unequal talents within unequal structures.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, conservative freedom is defined as a given privilege. No society can be created through a social contract which unauthorizedly "privileges the living and their immediate interest over past and future generations".<sup>23</sup> Nor can their members be granted the mentioned "abstract, universal, egalitarian" Human Rights, unless they are bound to concrete origin, allegiance and existing obligation. For example, under these premises welfare can only be granted as charity. In the same way, political power can only be granted as privilege, and only recognized in these terms confers authority, in the conservative worldview the substance of every form of relationship.<sup>24</sup> For conservatives, inequalities brought about an organically grown hierarchical society, analogous to a living organism whose specialized organs play specific parts, from the most

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17 Brown 1984: 311–326.

18 Nisbet 1970: 75–76.

19 Scruton 2001 [1980]: 158.

20 Chambers 1952: 506.

21 Scruton 2001 [1980]: 80.

22 Mannheim 1984 [1925/1927]: 114–115.

23 Scruton 2001 [1980]: 47.

24 Kirk 2008 [1953]: 52.

basic to the most noble.<sup>25</sup> The favorite metaphor for this organism was the fortress of the “natural” family, at the same time model for the symbolic and practical organization of society in corporations (as private associations), ruled by non-contractual, natural relations. This construction of an ideal society as extended family provided moral authority for the defense of tradition against any gnostic, nihilist or countercultural subversion.<sup>26</sup>

Until today, a large canon of conservative writing has tried to justify again and again the norm of privilege and inequality.<sup>27</sup> These authors added specifications to arguments (which Burke and Bonald at their time probably took for granted) and strived for reassurances of their continued validity in light of progressing modernization during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They preserve and build on what I call the conservative core that has survived as undisputed quintessence, also or even especially in Brazil.<sup>28</sup> The *Burke Instituto Conservador* deserves the merit to have tried to summarize this core in the brochure *O mínimo que você precisa saber sobre conservadorismo* [The minimum you need to know about conservatism] – the title in the style of Olavo de Carvalho’s bestseller.<sup>29</sup> The resistance against the destruction of inherited normality fights on many fronts, all of which corrode the status quo with fatal consequences.<sup>30</sup> The enemy might appear not only as communist, socialist or revolutionary but also

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25 Oakeshott 1962: 11.

26 Kristol 1995: 103, 438; Gottfried & Fleming 1988: x.

27 The conservative canon builds on a millenary tradition of philosophical thinking of which the most frequently cited masterminds are Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, John Locke, Mandeville, David Hume, Adam Smith and Alexis de Tocqueville, to mention just the most frequently cited. Among the most influential books are Friedrich Hayek’s *Road to Serfdom* (1944); Richard Weaver’s *Ideas have consequences* (1948); Whittaker Chamber’s *Witness* (1953); Leo Strauss’ *Natural Right and History* (1953), Russell Kirk’s *Conservative Mind: from Burke to Eliot* (1953); Robert Nisbet *The Quest for Community* (1953); Michael Oakeshott’s *Rationalism in Politics* (1962); Roger Scruton’s *The Meaning of Conservatism* (1980); Paul Gottfried & Thomas Fleming *The Conservative Movement* (1988); and Irving Kristol’s *Neoconservatism: The autobiography of an idea* (1995). Most of these authors are Anglo-Saxon, many with a German background, and belong to what is called the “American Old Right”, with repercussions among the so-called paleoconservatives. The neoconservative movement and the “New Right” which emerged during the 1970s, show different characteristics and diverge on details, especially regarding religiosity, the role of the state and pragmatic conciliation with modernity but still agree on the conservative main principles. For an overview, see Nash 2006 [1976]; Gottfried & Fleming 1988; and Frohnen et al. 2006. Certainly, there are more authors, also writing in other languages, who contributed to the molding of conservatism, but for brevity and the purpose of presenting the conservative core, I decided not to bring them in here and to refer to them whenever necessary in the course of my analysis.

28 Nisbet 2008 [1986].

29 Burke Instituto Conservador n.d.

30 Hayek 2010 [1944]; Weaver 1948.

as New Deal statist and Social Democrat. To Olavo de Carvalho, all these who are suspect of any threat against the existing order equal to communists, reason why it makes no difference that the only label he accepts is that of “anti-communist”. The assiduously defined conservative doctrinal vagueness allows one to create means of resistance in response to any threat today. Still, it targets especially at the perfectly adapted and even fitter post-Cold War heirs of communism, the advocates of “cultural Marxism”, “multiculturalism”, “feminism”, “gender ideology” and “political correctness”.<sup>31</sup>

This suggests once more that conservative thinking is shaped by what it is against. But is the whole ideology really only about “the desire to conserve”, as in Scruton’s limp definition?<sup>32</sup> Mannheim distinguishes “natural conservatism” (in the sense of traditionalism or normosis<sup>33</sup>) as a generic-sociological concept on one side, from conservatism as historical-sociological concept bound to modernity on the other. While the former is a common impulse of human psychology to preserve and to be suspicious of change, the latter points to action within the changing structural context of time and space. As such, conservatism is purposeful, political and modern. Mannheim adds one more interesting thought: The safe conservative haven accepts reality as per se irrational, with no general principle being valid for all individuals, nor applicable in all contexts, and the only possible way to facts is by induction. Obviously, this anti-systemic approach impedes the perception of the very counter-system of natural law which is never questioned as the only source of legitimacy. However, it still is a system, though familiarized and based on a formidable tradition.<sup>34</sup> The suspicion arises that what is really at stake is not being down-to-earth (conservatives) or alienated in abstractions (progressists), nor the change as such, but the risk of personal deprivation this change implies. If change promises an improvement for the privileged, there might be a good reason to surrender a “known good” for an “unknown better” and even a conservative might accommodate himself to change. Therefore, it is not tradition or natural law, it is the benefit of it that makes the difference. After all, the interest of somebody who has the “propensity to use and enjoy what is available” and “who is acutely aware of having something to lose which he has learned to care for”, is necessarily different from another one who is acutely aware of having nothing to lose and did not even have the chance to learn to take care for his inexistent fortune.<sup>35</sup>

31 Kristol 1995: 484.

32 Scruton 2001 [1980]: 10.

33 See Caetano 2020.

34 Mannheim 1984 [1925/1927]: 92–96, 119, 128, 132–134.

35 Oakeshott 1962: 170–172, 168–169.

Oakeshott's famous and quite romantic definition sounds persuasive only if we abstract from the essential social condition which allows one to be a conservative, from which the narration ingeniously disguises:

To be conservative, then, is to prefer the familiar to the unknown, to prefer the tried to the untried, fact to mystery, the actual to the possible, the limited to the unbounded, the near to the distant, the sufficient to the superabundant, the convenient to the perfect, present laughter to utopian bliss. Familiar relationships and loyalties will be preferred to the allure of more profitable attachments; to acquire and to enlarge will be less important than to keep, to cultivate and to enjoy; the grief of loss will be more acute than the excitement of novelty or promise. It is to be equal to one's own fortune, to live at the level of one's own means, to be content with the want of greater perfection which belongs alike to oneself and one's circumstances.<sup>36</sup>

Focusing on the real function of conservatism, Corey Robin redefined the ideology in very different terms from apolitical privateness and eventually mere reactionism as self-defense: as a theoretically based, proactive strategy of changing to stay the same, with the main impact of disguising the intentions by recalibrating ideas in democratic settings and even rhetorically adopting traces of what they in principle oppose. Equally, the stylized victimhood itself fulfills a veiling function to distract from the very power position. This becomes clear whenever conservatives, getting under pressure, had to ensure the support of the masses. As Robin observes and thoroughly details in his book, "reactionary populism runs like a red thread throughout conservative discourse from the very beginning". This upside-down populism, with the lowest seeing themselves projected in the highest, is the conservative's main precaution against "the agency of the subordinate classes".<sup>37</sup> Recently, the Indian-American right-wing political commentator Dinesh D'Souza alerted that if the existing society were inherently hostile to conservative beliefs, it would be "foolish for a conservative to attempt to conserve that culture. Rather, he must seek to undermine it, to thwart it, to destroy it at the root level. This means that the conservative must [...] be philosophically conservative but temperamentally radical".<sup>38</sup> Both the objections of Robin and D'Souza are of elevated relevance if we think about the role of conservatism in the Brazilian context, which is determined by a social structure created through colonization, based on a slave economy, with the necessity of

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36 Oakeshott 1962: 168–169.

37 Robin 2011: 7, 17–18, 50–52, 55, 98, 248.

38 Quoted in Robin 2011: 18.

authoritarian control, and until today with remarkable effects on power asymmetries and class, race and gender inequality.<sup>39</sup> Being conservative in Brazil means in the end, inevitably, preserving structures of coloniality.

### Liberalism Revisited

As we have seen, conservatism affirms to resist not only against all sorts of “communists” but against any change of the social order, including “liberalism”. If, as we also have seen, these changes are evaluated by conservatives depending on their outcome, this raises doubts about the validity of their distinction against liberalism as a whole. As Domenico Losurdo explored in his counter-history of liberalism, even in the homelands of liberalism there is a lack of coherence in the liberal self-image (and the conservative hetero-image projected on liberals) of defending any individuals against abuse of state power, if they historically advocated above all the liberty for those individuals who had to conserve something. Based on abundant historical sources, Losurdo revealed in his book the selectivity and the elitism of part of liberal thought, especially regarding the parallelism of establishing liberal political systems and retaining human rights for slaves. A case in point is Alexis de Tocqueville legendary *Democracy in America* from 1835 and 1840 (frequently cited among liberal-conservatives in Brazil) praising the U.S. as first liberal democracy and locus of liberty. Still, he does not even mention persistent slavery at a moment where it already had been abolished in neighboring Mexico – and then reintroduced by the U.S. in annexed Texas. This suggests the interesting question if liberals are indeed truly liberal, if they submit the absolute principle of the Rights of Men and human liberty conveniently to the criteria of class, race, gender and even property privileges. It does not seem a real commitment to principles if these are only activated strategically to avoid furnishing “grist for the communist propaganda mills”.<sup>40</sup>

The concerns conservatives have about liberals might be more due to prejudice – or motivated by competition – than to real differences in political action. This is what Scruton suggests when he jokes in his “Philosophical Appendix: Liberalism versus Conservatism”: “In the perfect liberal suburb, the gardens are of equal size, even though decked out with the greatest possible variety of plastic gnomes.”<sup>41</sup> He certainly knows that evidence (or conservative intuition) is hard to find to

39 All these effects were perfectly described already by Santos 1987 and addressed as urgent challenge at the moment of Brazil’s return to democracy.

40 Losurdo 2011 [2006]: 12, 27, 167–170, 327, 342, 469–472.

41 Scruton 2001 [1980]: 182.

sustain the hypothesis that liberalism conducts to egalitarian structures while preserving a culturally declined façade of diversity. Indeed, many attempts have been made to show that the theoretical similarities between conservatives and at least some liberals in fact outweigh the differences, the most complete example being George W. Careys edited volume *Freedom and Virtue* (1984). What indirectly confirms this “fusion of ideas” – which allows to operationalize the concept of “liberal-conservatism” in this book – is that even the affirmation of incompatibility between the ideas of the two tendencies, if read against the grain, sustain the fusion. Hayek’s famous essay “Why I am Not a Conservative”, one of the few liberal attempts to distinguish themselves from conservatives, was curiously received with sympathy by conservative icons like Weaver (2000 [1960]), Kirk (1993) and even Scruton (2006) as well as enthusiastically praised by the eminent Brazilian liberal-conservative and diplomat José Osvaldo de Meira Penna (1997).<sup>42</sup> They all perceived that Hayek’s alleged differences actually indicate points of convergence.

The first difference, the supposed conservative “fondness” of authority is grossly unfair, given Hayek’s own public fondness of authoritarian regimes from Salazar to Pinochet, which has been thoroughly documented.<sup>43</sup> To join forces with authoritarianism, when serving their interests, does not seem to be any particular feature of conservatives, especially not in Brazil, where liberals regularly collaborated to defeat any threat to the social hierarchy. But also with regard to Europe, this liberal pragmatism has been early appointed by Herbert Marcuse in his analysis of Ludwig Heinrich Mises’ seminal work *Liberalism* (1927).<sup>44</sup> In this regard, Weaver’s answer to Hayek’s essay, defending the imperative to protect the liberty of the individual without any use of violence as common ground for both tendencies, sounds cynical but still reveals a common imaginary.<sup>45</sup> Tellingly, Weaver justifies this supposed liberal-conservative pacifism again with the notorious spirit of reality that immunizes against the irrationality and the obsessive altruism that guides the “disordered personality” of progressists.

Hayek’s other concern about the conservative’s lack of ability to point out alternatives (which he thinks liberal) and not just to impede undesirable tendencies, responds to the conservative narrative but – as shown above – hardly to practice. Both create new worlds and promote them efficiently. In addition, the conservative weakness in theorizing, writes Hayek, forced them to borrow from liberal theory production.

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42 Hayek 2011 [1960]; Weaver 2000 [1960]; Kirk 1993; Scruton 2006; Penna 1997.

43 Robin 2012.

44 Marcuse 1965 [1934]: 23.

45 Weaver 2000 [1960].

However, again the flawed theoretical basis and the preference for simple applied recipes seem to be a common feature. This is at least what the declared liberal scholar David Walsh – akin to Scruton above – denounces as principal weakness when he laments “liberal coolness toward theory”, the reliance on intuitive sense and focus on finding a means of translating liberal convictions into actual political life. The main problem seems to be the same as for conservatives: “No one needed any elaborate defense because it never occurred to anyone to question the meaning of the truths, they [liberals] held to be ‘self-evident.’” Therefore, it would be better “not to engage in reflection that is bound to be less secure than tangible common sense of practice”. The solution lay in the reaffirmation of the premises because “the crisis is not so much a crisis of liberal politics as it is a crisis of the philosophical assumptions that had made its principles appear so self-evident”.<sup>46</sup> The liberal mastermind in Brazil, Roque Spencer Maciel de Barros, fully agrees with this assessment of liberalism, and another non-suspect outstanding liberal thinker, José Guilherme Merquior, stated once laconically that it would be “easier to describe liberalism than to define it”.<sup>47</sup>

The last of Hayek’s assumptions, the correctly observed “mystic” dimension of conservatism which he then contrasts with liberalism, touches on an intriguing hidden quality of a certain liberalism which called my attention before<sup>48</sup> and calls for a discussion, which will be given in chapter five. What I want to advance here is that the existing transcendental dimension of liberalism is a strongly neglected aspect and indispensable to understand its proximity to conservatism, as will be demonstrated through the analysis of Mises’ theory of human action and Hayek’s own mysticism. This corroborates Wendy Brown’s recent thesis of an expanded neoliberal morality which questions the common but probably wrong liberal-conservative dichotomy of “dysregulation and amorality” versus “regulation and morality”.<sup>49</sup> Liberalism does not only economize the public sphere but also “familialize” it by the expansion of private morality – Hayek’s “traditional moral values” of the “personal, protected sphere”<sup>50</sup> – competing with the secular pluralist core principles of modern democracy.<sup>51</sup>

Significantly, from a Brazilian liberal-conservative view, both pillars, the distance to theory and the openness to metaphysics, are fully embraced

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46 Walsh 1997: 79–81.

47 Merquior 1991: 15; Barros 1992: 119.

48 Wink 2020.

49 Brown 2019.

50 Hayek 1982: 67.

51 Brown 2019: 108.

and understood as potentiality. In the words of Gustavo Adolfo Santos, an outstanding liberal voice in today's Brazil, it is "every human being's experience of transcendent dignity, an existential depth that is impossible to be exhausted in history, let alone in theory manuals" to stimulate intellectual vitality and adaptation to changing historical contexts.<sup>52</sup>

### **Brazilian Liberal-Conservatism goes Authoritarian**

For my approach and the purpose of this book, which is to explore the core of ideas, as common denominator among the Brazilian New Right, it is of less importance to distinguish among its various tendencies.<sup>53</sup> These groups obviously show divergences about isolated ideological aspects, but these turned out peripheral to my analysis. Simplifying, I refer to a complex of "liberal-conservative" thought, because this is how these ideas are presented and this is the basis of joint political action.<sup>54</sup> The fusion gets even more plausible if we explore the nature of liberalism in Brazil. The above-mentioned liberal thinker Merquior remembers that the political agenda of liberalism in Brazil had little to do with liberal principles, as its main function was to "hinder democracy". Emblematic for this new liberal-conservatism was, still following Merquior, Hayek's oeuvre and its "harsh criticism of egalitarian dreams and its quixotic rejection of majoritarian democracy".<sup>55</sup> This is important because Brazilian liberalism is indeed strongly influenced by the legacy of the Austrian School of Economics, especially the texts of Mises and Hayek.<sup>56</sup> The fact that Bolsonaro's Minister of Economy was trained at the Chicago School of Economics does not contradict this predominance. As several Brazilian liberals have affirmed, his policies are in perfect harmony with the "Austrian" models.<sup>57</sup>

The Brazilian absence of truly liberal ideas has been explained predominantly as an effect of the historical circumstances, due to the above-mentioned formation of Brazil, which created structures with little room for liberal experiments that would not sooner or later run the risk of having to question the illiberal structures themselves. On the other hand, liberal macroeconomic policies have been firmly represented in Brazilian political institutions, despite the "statist" discourse, and

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52 Santos 2019 [1987]: 243–244.

53 These tendencies are well described in Cepêda 2018 and Santos & Regatieri 2020.

54 For example, in the reference works Leme 1986; Paim 1987, 1997, 1998, 2019a [1987]; Scantimburgo 1996; besides others which will be mentioned in the text.

55 Merquior 1991: 110, 149, 193.

56 Gros 2003; Alexandre 2017; Onofre 2018. This corresponds also to the self-definition by the liberal Paim 1997.

57 Iorio 2018; Constantino 2018.



liberals got along very well with this façade and even with authoritarian practices.<sup>58</sup> This particular formation is seen as the main reason for the perpetuated conservative–authoritarian bias of Brazilian liberalism which, differently from Europe or the U.S., hardly allowed for any sustainable experience of “social” or “progressive” liberalism.<sup>59</sup> Liberalism in Brazil has been illustrated with cultural topoi such as the famous “misplaced ideas”<sup>60</sup> or the “neo-Girondinism”<sup>61</sup>, the historical phenomenon that the mere suspicion of a possible loss of privileges induced self-declared and sometimes even revolutionary liberals, usually members of the elite, to re-align with authoritarianism. Having to choose at some point, they regularly opted for betraying their ideas and oppressing the rebellious or, in other words: they turned conservatives.<sup>62</sup>

Significantly, the periods of major liberal activity – as in the case of conservatives – were those with an impulse for social reform, such as during the João Goulart government, during redemocratization in the 1980s and again after 2002. A revealing episode about the nature of liberalism is that at the beginning of Brazil’s return to democracy both the liberal scholar Maciel de Barros and the liberal activist and sponsor Donald Stewart Jr., founder of the Liberal Institute (IL) in Rio de Janeiro, categorically proclaimed their preference for an authoritarian regime akin Pinochet’s Chile in comparison to a hypothetical government of Lula and his PT. Doing so, they even went beyond Scruton’s conservative defense of Pinochet who alleged that the general committed crimes only “in the cause of continuity”.<sup>63</sup>

The proximity of liberal-conservatism to authoritarianism in Brazil is an intriguing and well-known question. Already in the 1920s, another godfather of the New Right, the conservative Catholic Oliveira Vianna, was the first to point to the Brazilian paradox: the existence of liberalism in a deeply illiberal society and its effects on strengthening patrimonial control over the state. His *Populações Meridionais do Brasil* [Meridional Populations of Brazil] from 1920 proposed authoritarianism as a means of modernization through the demolition of the colonial conditions (mainly the local power of oligarchs and the lack of national economic integration) which impeded the transformation toward a liberal society. Having achieved this objective and emancipated the people as liberal

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58 Trindade 1985.

59 See for an overview Gentile 2018. For liberalism in the Brazilian Empire, see Lynch 2010 and Ferreira 1999; for “progressive” liberalism, see Fraser 2017.

60 Schwarz 1992 [1977].

61 Cândido 1964: 269.

62 Santos 1987, 1988 and 1998.

63 Barros 1992: 92, 103; Stewart 1988: 76; Scruton 2001 [1980]: 16.

citizens, he argued, state interference could be reduced again, a proposal which later was conceptualized as “instrumental authoritarianism”.<sup>64</sup> This concept explains well the liberal alignment with authoritarian ideas and policies and is extremely topical. It even allows liberals to join the current authoritarian Right and their plan to demolish – instrumentally or not – what they call the hegemony of cultural Marxism in society and their appropriation of the state since redemocratization, best defined by the New Rights’ mastermind Olavo de Carvalho:

After classical Marxism, soviet Marxism and revisionist Marxism [...], the fourth modality of Marxism: cultural Marxism. Since it did not speak of proletarian revolution nor openly preached any truculence, the new school was well accepted in the spheres in charge of defending western culture it professed to destroy. Expelled from Germany by the unfair competition of Nazism, the Frankfurtian found in the U.S. the ideal atmosphere of freedom for the destruction of the society that had welcomed them. They then endeavored to demonstrate that the democracy to which they had run to was exactly like the one that made them flee. They called their philosophy “critical theory” because it abstained from proposing any remedy for the evils of the world and only sought to destroy: to destroy the culture, destroy confidence among people and groups, destroy religious faith, destroy language, destroy logical capacity, to spread everywhere an atmosphere of suspicion, confusion and hate. Once that objective was achieved, they claimed that the suspicion, confusion and hate were proof of capitalism’s evil.<sup>65</sup>

“Cultural Marxism” as the main enemy is so important as common denominator of the New Right that it deserves some explanation. While Carvalho has discovered in Gramsci the great villain to infect Brazil’s intellectuals, the awareness of this kind of contamination has a longer history in Brazil’s Integrisim and Integralism, which will be explained in chapters three and four. In fact, Gramsci’s name was firstly dropped in Brazil only in 1950 and by coincidence through Otto-Maria Carpeaux, one of the few intellectuals Carvalho respects. Carpeaux mentioned Gramsci without any resentment in a newspaper article as a “second Machiavelli” and even a better one, who found the key to unite common people and intellectuals, just like in earlier times the Catholic Church did.<sup>66</sup> Still, the

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64 Santos 1978: 104–105; Brandão 2010: 120–121. On the discussion on the concept “instrumental authoritarianism”, see Silva 2008; Pinto 2018: 130; and Gentile 2019.

65 Carvalho 2002b. Here and in the following I cite journalistic texts, whenever possible, from Olavo de Carvalho’s online platforms because these are more accessible to the reader than the original print version or the reprint(s) in his book collections.

66 Carpeaux 1950: 3.

first translation of Gramsci dates from the late 1960s only and his ideas did not circulate before the 1970s. This means that only recently a well-known phenomenon has been ennobled with the authority of a foreign philosopher.<sup>67</sup> Carvalho's re-discovery might have been stimulated by the comparatively late debate in the U.S. which was triggered by Michael Minnicino's essay "New Dark Age: The Frankfurt School and 'Political Correctness'" (1992) and then popularized by the paleoconservative William S. Lind in his speech "The Origins of Political Correctness" (2000), both referring to conspiracy theories from the Schiller Institute. This institute was owned and led by Lyndon LaRouche, an anticommunist politician, notorious conspiracy theorist and convicted financial fraudster, who previously had affirmed that Henry Kissinger was a soviet agent and Queen Elizabeth II a narco-trafficker. The Schiller Institute and LaRouche will have several other appearances in this book, linked to similar analyses done by Olavo de Carvalho. What is most important is the – intentional or not – confusion between the attempts to subvert and relativize given structures of "cultural hegemony" (Gramsci's revolutionary recipe) and to dominate exactly these structures (the New Right in anti-Gramscian manner) which obviously works out favorably for the dominator and justifies the own reverse culture war.

The somehow sinister proximity between liberal-conservatism and authoritarianism also has conceptual reasons, as the latter is, again, not sharply distinguishable from the former. The most common definition, mainly based on Erich Fromm's empirical work on the authoritarian personality and popularized by Theodor Adorno, is admittedly only partly applicable to the Brazilian context.<sup>68</sup> This goes for the scales on ethnocentrism and antisemitism, as even in Integralism, so far the most explicitly authoritarian movement in Brazil, doctrinarian racism has been carefully omitted and antisemitism been marginalized to an extremist position. As can be expected, the scale to measure political and economic conservatism largely fits what has been already defined above. But surprisingly also most items of the most famous F-scale, which measures the susceptibility for fascist ideas, are covered by the conservative creed: the allegiance to conventional beliefs about right and wrong, including simple answers and polemics; respect for submission to acknowledged authority; the resistance to creative, dangerous ideas; the negative cynical view of people in general; the tendency to project one's own feelings of inadequacy, rage and fear onto a scapegoated group; and the preoccupation with violence and sex. What the F-scale actually adds in terms of useful

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67 See the discussion in Bianchi 2021.

68 Adorno et al. 1950.

criteria are the need for strong leadership and the aggression toward those who do not subscribe to conventional thinking. This is well represented in the performance of the strong leader – or “myth”, as his followers like to call him – Jair Bolsonaro, for example in his menace against those who are not willing to succumb, quoted in the motto at the beginning of this introduction, among many other clearly aggressive discourses against any opposition.

Authoritarianism enters through the back door, and it is difficult to get rid of this guest again, as Wanderley Guilherme dos Santos explained already in 1978 in an analysis which seems to be made for the current political situation under Bolsonaro.<sup>69</sup> Authoritarian politics do not depend on an authoritarian political system. Their principal objective is permanent control of power and the destruction of any opposition, which might sound as a dream to many political agents. It can, however, turn into a nightmare, as it breaks with the democratic principle that the opposition represents the “well-founded doubt about the correctness of the decisions of those in power” and without this critical feedback governments might fall about their own feet. However, this sparring becomes secondary when authoritarianism projects on the opposition their own strive for seizing power, not a democratic judgment of political means and ends. For Bolsonaro, the opposition is an enemy to be annihilated, as he made clear on several occasions, referring to the democratic opposition in utterances such as “they will either go out or go to jail. These red punks will be banished from our country. [...] It will be a cleaning like we never seen in the history of Brazil”.<sup>70</sup> As in a formal democracy one cannot that easily wipe away any opposition, authoritarian politics are necessarily expansive in a vicious circle: the more authoritarian, the greater the opposition, the greater the urgency to impede the opposition. This provokes the politization of all dimensions of social life in order to annihilate any critique, as it happened in Bolsonaro’s COVID-19 policy, which downplayed the sanitary dimension of the pandemic (easy to be controlled by medical prophylactic treatment, as the government promised) and instead hyped a supposed political function of the pandemic, backed up by conspiracy theories of cultural Marxism and globalism.

Authoritarians tend to interpret any well-founded doubt in relation to their adopted system of truth as oppositional infiltration to sabotage the government, which at the same time allows them to delegate the responsibility for government failure (in principle even without an existing

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69 Santos 1978: 129–131.

70 Jair Bolsonaro, public discourse via mobile phone, transmitted to supporter manifestation in São Paulo, Oct 22, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=at8qr1MeO6g>.

opposition) and provides the justification for enhanced control. What fuels these convenient interpretations of facts is frequently “conspiracy theory” and the mode which allows their promotion is “post-truth”. Both are intrinsically linked and have been conceptualized as mass cultural phenomena of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as circumstances in which the official version of facts is less influential in shaping public opinion than the unmasking alternative explanations that appeal to emotion and personal belief.<sup>71</sup> Surveys done during the manifestations claiming for Dilma Rousseff’s impeachment show that a majority of protesters believed that the PT intends to implement a communist regime in Brazil or that the narco-trafficking syndicate First Capital Command (PCC) was indeed the armed fraction of PT.<sup>72</sup> Conspiracy escalates the authoritarian “good” and “evil” scheme as the latter can be anywhere, inclusively masked as the former. The enemy PT “did not do evil, it is evil!” and might even appear disguised as a reputable army general.<sup>73</sup> Suggesting that nothing is as it appears but all on purpose and connected, opens a parallel world, more coherent than the real one, and certainly making more sense.<sup>74</sup> Hannah Arendt warned in 1964 that in politics it is an advantage to lie instead of saying the truth: While a professional politician, committed to the truth, has to carefully conciliate political interest and veracity, and even so will always be suspect of distorting facts due to his own interest, the outsider liar, with no apparent interest, commands not only all liberty of creativity, but his lie, by simply enunciating what is not and modifying what is, constitutes a political act. The more success he has, the more likely he is to believe in his own inventions, which gives him even more credibility.<sup>75</sup> In Brazil it is difficult to say who is more skilled in this, if the politician Bolsonaro or the ideologue Olavo de Carvalho, both mouthpieces of conspiracy theories on cultural Marxism and a “new global order”. The vagueness of conspiracy as an empty signifier allows for including all those who are considered political enemies with no need to specify.<sup>76</sup>

To boil it down polemically: In consideration of Brazil’s particular historical formation and the resulting social structures, conservatives can be understood as those who proactively conserve their privileged position. Authoritarians appear to be conservatives which openly assume the use of all means to conserve, while liberals seem to be conservatives which are in principle aware of unfair privilege and authoritarian means of

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71 Newton 2006.

72 Ortellano & Solano 2015.

73 Meinerz 2016: 152.

74 Barkun 2003; Taguieff 2006.

75 Arendt 1987 [1964]: 352–358. I owe this source to Meinerz 2016.

76 Solano 2019a.

conservation, but who opportunistically prefer to ignore this on behalf of their greater benefit. They all are necessarily positioned on the right, as they defend the conservation of privileges questioned by those who are, in reverse conclusion, defined as “communists”. In turn, any anti-communist attitude equals to a conservative one, which includes those who, at the bottom of social hierarchy, defend privileges of others at the top, in the name of a sublime order. For this reason, I will refer to the various branches of the Right with the encompassing term “conservatism” and only hyphenate when it is important to remember its specific liberal or authoritarian dimension.

### **Conservatism applied: From the Old Right to the New Right**

I have so far proposed that it is possible to understand Brazilian conservatism as an alliance between moral conservatism, economic liberalism and instrumental authoritarianism – which will be demonstrated in detail in the following chapters. But how does this relate to the rise of the New Right in Brazil? And if the alliance is historical, what is then “new” about this phenomenon? Obviously, the “Right” is a general term and describes an intrinsically pluralist phenomenon. Thus, it would be redundant to call them “Rights” in the plural, nor would the distinction into moderate, far, radical, or extreme forms like fascistoid or traditionalist, add substantially to the comprehension of their core ideology. All these tendencies matter and are relevant for the New Right, from Burke via Hayek to Olavo de Carvalho, as shows the *Guia Bibliográfico da nova direita* [Bibliographic Guide of the New Right], edited by Lucas Berlanza, by the way the director of the IL in Rio de Janeiro.<sup>77</sup>

One could further object if the use of the right-left spectrum still copes with the complexity of postmodern politics in a post-colonial setting. With this I am not referring to the strategic maneuver of the global Right to equate authoritarian or even totalitarian practices on both extremes, known as horseshoe theory. Norberto Bobbio has shown in his influential book that the distinction is indispensable, among other aspects to understand the opposing premises of the acceptance of social equality as guiding principle or its rejection as violation of the natural order, a fundamental question about which Left and Right could not disagree more.<sup>78</sup> He also suggests to understand them more as relative directions instead of fixed standpoints of a *côté droit* and *côté gauche*. I would

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<sup>77</sup> Berlanza 2017.

<sup>78</sup> Bobbio 1999 [1994]; Silva 1999: 8.

even argue that they are directions relative to very different points of departure, in the sense of a specific achieved status quo, regarding the implementation of the opposed values and objectives.

This is of utmost relevance for any meaningful application of the right-left terminology to the Brazilian context of veiled social apartheid. The reason is that I see margin for misunderstanding in the projection of a generic and uncritically used concept of “Left” on Brazilian realities, due to the long-range expansion of “communism” as defined by the Right. This brings about the fact that policies which within the achieved social status quo in Brazil could at best be understood as moderately reformist (for example, regarding social inequality) are labeled as “Left” (with positive connotation) or “communist” (with negative connotation). There is a difference between “leftist” claims for equal opportunities in Brazil and a typical first world country, exactly because the level of this equality reached in each of them is blatantly different – such as sky-high levels of income disparity and social immobility, the segregation between users of public and private infrastructure as well as perfidious mechanisms of exclusion from citizenship. To move in Brazil from Burke’s shadow a tiny little toward the enhancing of a “social contract” is in my eyes far from being a leftist position. Recently the famous Brazilian writer Luis Fernando Veríssimo formulated this caveat more poetically: “[In Brazil] to be left is not an option, it is a consequence.”<sup>79</sup> Yuval Levin’s distinction of Right and Left in *The Great Debate* (2014), as determined by either Burke’s or Thomas Paine’s principles, would be less distorting because it allows to position a political actor in a certain distance to both of the antagonistic poles of a “God given hierarchic society” and a “man-made social contract”. With this opposition even Plínio Salgado agreed, already in 1945, obviously defending the former.<sup>80</sup>

As shown above, it is dear to the conservatives’ heart to take their existence as natural and good, without any need to explain themselves. In his essay “What is right?”, Scruton does the same for the political branch of conservatism, defining the “Right” *ex negativo* as the normal against the evil “new” and “different”. Any association to Nazis, fascists and economic liberals, he writes, would be one more invention of the Left.<sup>81</sup> Also for the mentioned Brazilian liberal Barros, the leftist definition of the “Right” was just a trick of the “dezinformatiya” and their agents infiltrated at universities, Churches and in the media.<sup>82</sup> For a conservative

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79 Dias 2020.

80 Salgado 1979 [1945]: 47.

81 Scruton 2015: 273.

82 Barros 1992: 3.

Catholic, the distinction between what is “good” and “evil” is certainly less embarrassing. In a treaty specialized on the topic, we read that Right and Left are not partisan concepts, limited to the temporal world and therefore a matter of temporary dispute, but ideologies with metaphysical worldviews of which “the one on the right, well understood, is the one of the Church, and the one on the left, the Devil’s”. The definite proof is given by Mathews (25, 34 and 41):

Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world [...]”. Then he will say to those on his left, “Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels”.<sup>83</sup>

The Neo-Thomist authority, Friar Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, gives a more scientific explanation: “The real Right, which advocates the order founded on justice, seems to be a reflection of what the Scripture calls the right of God, when it says Jesus is sitting on his Father’s right and that the elect will be on the right of the Most High.”<sup>84</sup> Any other scholarly definition of the Right, as the following, which stands out in its preciseness, ends up as a paraphrase of conservatism that would also fit Scruton’s own comprehension:

The Right consolidates in reaction to the egalitarian and liberating political tendencies of the moment – whatever these may be – and other factors it believes are undermining the socioeconomic order. It fears that leveling impulses and universal revolutionary ideals will weaken respect for authority, private property, cherished traditions, and the particularities of family, locality and nation.<sup>85</sup>

The reluctance to assume a rightist identity in Brazil, against all evidence of acting as the Right, might indicate a strategic function. Timothy Power’s definition of the Brazilian Right from the end of the 1990s, based on large empirical work, describes with accuracy the conservative *modus operandi* as we know it today: exercising political power from an advantageous position which allows for establishing non-contractual relations of dominance (patrimonialism, clientelism, elitism), seeking to impede democratic participation in order to avoid social change and preservation of privilege, with an ambivalent attitude toward democracy and certain disregard for constitutional procedures, if necessary, deploying

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83 Taveiro 2018.

84 Garrigou-Lagrange 1938: 1, my translation.

85 Deutsch 1999: 3.



authoritarian means. As the main actors of the Right, Power defined elements of industrial bourgeoisie, oligarchic landowners, segments of Catholic hierarchy, the armed forces, as well as the middle classes and media representatives, which again describes quite adequately today's conservative alliance.<sup>86</sup> The only and crucial difference is the stance of their political representatives.

In the years of redemocratization, Brazilian politicians carefully avoided any association with the label “right”, connoted with the resigned military governments.<sup>87</sup> The absence of a self-proclaimed Right is still strongly perceptible in Power's survey from 2000 and even in the verification in 2009, when no congressmen identified with the radical Right and only 6% with the center-Right – while 37% localized themselves in the center, 52% in the center-Left and 5% on the radical Left. Notwithstanding, in both surveys the authors also perceived the discrepancy between strategic political stance and the real political convictions translated into legislative action in changing coalitions.<sup>88</sup> Brazilian scholars coined this phenomenon of masked rightist policies the *direita envergonhada* [abashed Right]. However, any abashment did not hinder the Right to undermine representative institutions and mechanisms which could have elevated the democratic quality (participation, contestation, accountability) and promote social change. Maybe a more adequate label would be “discreet conservatism”, as Power recognizes in his quite realistic tautology: “Brazil has long had a conservative political system, which permits the ongoing survival of the Right; and given the overwhelming presence of the Right, Brazilian politics is heavily conservative.”<sup>89</sup>

Interestingly and prophetically, already the study from 2000 mentions as one of the very few “unabashed” rightists Jair Bolsonaro. Less prophetically, the relevance of Enéias Carneiro, whose anti-systemic politics actually were a foretaste of Bolsonaro's (see chapter eight), is downplayed.<sup>90</sup> The revival of an explicit Right, called the “New Right”, as reaction to the government change in 2003, is basically due to a change in the political stance: the New Right defends the same positions less discreetly and even pioneers in new communication strategies such as cyber-campaigning – all this without any shame.<sup>91</sup> With this strategy, the New Right increased its political representation but above all consolidated an electoral basis that identified with openly conservative

86 Power 2000: 35.

87 Rodrigues 1987: 97. About the first democratic elections, see Singer 1999.

88 Power & Zucco 2009: 239; Figueiredo & Limongi 2001; Freitas 2016.

89 Power 2000: 190, 209.

90 Power 2000: 95, 95 footnote 6.

91 Cesarino 2020; Wink 2018a.

positions. Electoral surveys show in detail how since 2010 the New Right managed to attract not only significantly more votes and increased their representation in the Congress (in 2018 more conservative members of parliament were elected than in the first free legislative elections in 1982) but also – and this trend starting already in 2002 – to almost triple their share of votes among the better educated and wealthier elite.<sup>92</sup> Opinion polls show that the electorate responds positively to traditional conservative topics, now promoted aggressively, among them the main goals of conservatism (defense of the traditional family, Christian faith, economic freedom; combat against communism, public insecurity, state intervention, corruption) and associated them with the New Right.<sup>93</sup> Here the “new” becomes crucial.

The New Right is perceived as a new “antipolitical” actor, supposedly not yet coopted by the “rotten” political system and therefore “pure” enough to fight the “impure”.<sup>94</sup> This corresponds somehow to the little difference between the New Right and the Old Right in the U.S., which the paleoconservative Paul Edward Gottfried relativized as “purely chronological”, alleging that most New Right representatives had been active in conservative circles before. Both old and new fight “communism”, support free enterprise, and respect religion and traditional values. The only novel aspect was, according to this an unsuspecting source, that New Right’s rhetoric was more populist, attacking the establishment, especially moderate republicans.<sup>95</sup> In Brazil it seems that the “New Right” is a bit more than just the “Old Conservatism” with new technical means and PR-strategies. As will be shown in the following chapters, during most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Brazilian conservatism created ways of impeding democratization and social change by controlling the state. But the last chapters will show that again in government since 2019, the New Right goes beyond just “braking progress” and aims at destructing the state itself.<sup>96</sup> This state is identified above all with the legacy of the PT governments which – in spite of different political style and organization – de facto perpetuated liberal-conservative politics with some welfare programs – more Merkel than Marx – without tackling any of the structural reasons for inequality and even surrendering for this moderate project their social basis and ideological credibility.<sup>97</sup>

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92 Curi & Catelano 2020: 8–10; for more details, see Nicolau 2020.

93 Messenberg 2019: 36–37.

94 Avritzer 2020.

95 Gottfried & Fleming 1988: 77.

96 Nobre 2020.

97 Calil 2016: 10.

To make this destruction plausible as a defense against a “communist” threat, definitely requires some creative explanation which the New Right has been eager to provide. The one who buys this political fiction of the subverted system is a broad and diverse group, including those who created specific identities like *antipetistas* (who associate the rotten system with the PT and global communist networks); *lava-jatistas* (securitization and lawfare defenders, named after the famed police operation); and *olavistas* (fundamentalist-communophobic followers of de above mentioned Olavo de Carvalho). Yet, as the following chapters will show, the *premises* of what they claim – certainly in different and personalized ways – matches the larger liberal-conservative family assemblance, independent of their understanding themselves as moralist conservative, market liberal, Catholic or evangelical, monarchist or Neo-Integralists.<sup>98</sup> The New Right’s somehow frivolous designation as “Bolsolavism” is surprisingly accurate, as it brings together the thought and the deed and their mutual dependence: without Olavo de Carvalho, the Right would never have found such a fertile breeding ground, and without Bolsonaro it would not have come to fruition in politics.

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98 Kalil 2018. Ranquetat 2019, who explicitly commits to an internal conservative perspective, describes this family assemblance in similar terms.

## 2 The Monarchic Legacy

*The only question is whether Brazil, independent of Portugal, shall be a monarchy or a republic. [...] The conservation of monarchy in one part of America is an object of vital importance to the Old World.*

George Canning, British Foreign Secretary<sup>1</sup>

*The Empire was not anti-colonial nor was the Republic anti-imperial. On the contrary.*

Alceu Amoroso Lima<sup>2</sup>

*I assume this office, conscious that the world is divided into two antagonistic and conflicting ideological hemispheres – the communist and the democratic – and that the Brazilian people has already made its centuries-old choice in the very early stages of their nationality, emerged under the shade of the rugged cross raised in the virgin land in the bygone year of 1500.*

General Vicente de Paulo Dale Coutinho<sup>3</sup>

Brazil's historical formation was different from the rest of Latin America. The transfer of the Empire's center from the motherland to the colony in 1808, with the King himself crossing the Atlantic Ocean, and the independence as monarchic empire in 1822 makes Brazil doubtlessly unique in world history. Still, I think that the implications of this historical process are not yet fully comprehended – and that they offer a key for the understanding of conservatism in Brazil and some of the peculiarities of the New Right's discourse today. As announced, this chapter draws on

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1 George Canning to Henry Chamberlain (secret and confidential), London, Jan 9, 1824, quoted in Maxwell 2003: 154.

2 Lima 2014 [1939]: 134.

3 *Opinião*, Mar 3, 1974, p. 5. All historical journals referred to in this chapter and the following are available in the electronic newspaper archive of the National Library in Rio de Janeiro (<http://bndigital.bn.br/hemeroteca-digital>) and were not included in the bibliography.

my earlier book *The Idea of Brazil*<sup>4</sup> and intends to raise awareness of the long shadow of these historical events. In a summarized way, I will explain how some of the principal motives of the historical imagination of Brazil were created and hereby sensitize the reader to their sudden and frequent reappearance in the following chapters, as elements of the conservative tradition and, in the last chapters, of New Right discourses.

These imaginations are in fact older than the events of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; indeed, they even explain how these could happen. To show this, it is necessary to revisit the early colonization process of Brazil as the period in which these motifs were created as foundational myths. To start with, Brazil entered the European geographical imagination from the very first moment in 1500 as a really “new world”, an additional continent to the system of *triplex mundus* known since antiquity. This was due to the different geographical circumstances of the first voyages, which, in the case of the Spanish “discoveries”, suggested the exclusive proximity of these lands to the Asian continent, consequently named “West India”. On the other hand, the “New World” is a concept coined by Amerigo Vespucci and disseminated through his bestseller *Mundus Novus* (1503), after having sailed along most of the Brazilian coast. The consequence was a cartographic convention: during at least the first half of the 16th century, maps denominate the vast lands beyond the Southern Atlantic without distinction as “Brazil”, “New World” or – as homage to its “discoverer” – “America”. Many maps inform the three toponyms as synonyms.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the utopian connotations which were projected on this “New World”, most prominently by Thomas More (who bases his 1516 *Utopia* on the report of the Portuguese sailor Raphael Hythlodæus who says he participated in Vespucci’s expedition<sup>6</sup>), were fueled by chronicles and images from Brazil. These suggested an earthly paradise and, differently from the Spanish dominions, the wishful thinkers did not come across elements to rebut this projection, like the unmissable presence of “civilizations”, in the European understanding, incompatible with the edenic innocent state of the paradise’s inhabitants, nor did unparadisiac frozen mountains and dry deserts or burdensome mining activities relativized the “eternal Spring” of the lands and the peaceful and idle state of nature of its naked inhabitants described in the Bible. The Brazilian historian Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, who under this aspect compared a large corpus of Portuguese and Spanish colonial writing, concluded that until the 18<sup>th</sup> century a clear distinction must be

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4 Wink 2009.

5 Schwartz & Ehrenberg 1980.

6 More 1995 [1516]: 46.

made between the ideal projections of the two colonizing powers, the Spanish “El Dorado” and the Portuguese “Garden of Eden”.<sup>7</sup>

It all later diluted into a general image of a diffuse “America” and is largely forgotten. However, the determining role of Brazil is abundantly documented in a textual and pictographic canon of *brasiliانا*. As the Portuguese sources circulated almost unrestrictedly on the European editorial market,<sup>8</sup> the canon inspired the tradition of French social critique, from Michel de Montaigne to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who turned the – implicitly Brazilian – “noble savage” into a central motif of occidental culture. It spared Brazil from being included into the (by Spain) so-called “leyenda negra”, the anti-Spanish denouncement of genocide of the New World’s autochthonous inhabitants, and later from the “furore anti-americano”<sup>9</sup> promoted by many philosophers and naturalists of Enlightenment, such as Montesquieu, Comte de Buffon, Corneille de Pauw, Guilherme Thomas François Raynal, Johann Gottfried von Herder, among others. What is most, it provided the foundational myth of Brazil as state and nation, which guided the country on a different path during the 19th century: the transfer of the Crown in 1808; the elevation to the center of the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and Algarves in 1815; the Independence as Brazilian Empire in 1822, preserving the unity of the territory; and the late Proclamation of the Republic in 1889. This Brazilian *Sonderweg* has been cherished by conservatives and came back as a powerful retrotopia in the discourse of the Right.

In this chapter I am explaining the relevance of Brazil’s monarchic legacy for conservatism. I will focus on its eschatological *idée-force*: the mission to implement in Brazil by a *translatio imperii* the “Fifth Empire”. This is by definition the last one, whose realization would precede the end of times as in this understanding prophesied by Daniel and Isaiah and the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar.<sup>10</sup> Fundamental for the invention of Brazil and for its formation as a nation, the mission of the Fifth Empire lost relevance during the formation of the state in the second half of the 19th century and, especially, during the 20th century of historiographical and nationalist republicanization. In the following chapters, I will get back to this monarchic legacy and show that it is not just a curious anachronism but has been preserved in the substratum of national thought, for example, in the *topos* of “country of the future”, and got resurrected by the Brazilian New Right in its retrotopic construction of an authentic Brazil that, in

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7 Holanda 1994 [1959].

8 Obermeier 2000; Wolff 1992.

9 Gerbi 2000.

10 Pagden 1995: 42.

turn, would justify its project of demolition of “the system”, as in their slogan “liberating Brazil from the state”.

### **The promise of Brazil as the Fifth Empire**

The idea that the Brazilian colony would not be just an edenic place but also offer an option to carry out the political re-founding of the Portuguese Kingdom, is omnipresent in the first writings on Brazil. Jesuit letters from Manuel da Nóbrega (1549), Ruy Pereira (1560), in addition to the books *Do clima & terra do Brasil* [On the climate and land of Brazil] by the also Jesuit Fernão Cardim (around 1584), *Tratado Descritivo do Brasil* [Descriptive Treatise on Brazil] by the historian Gabriel Soares (1587) and the *Diálogos da Grandeza do Brasil* [Dialogues of the Great Things of Brazil] by the settler Ambrósio Fernandes Brandão (1618), emphatically agree that the new land would have the potential “to be the location of great reigns and empires”.<sup>11</sup> But it was up to the Franciscan Friar Vicente de Salvador, in his *História do Brasil* [History of Brazil] from 1630, to concretize this geopolitical advantage and transform it into the concrete proposal of transferring the Court to the center of the empire, to which Rocha Pita gave continuity in his *História da América Portuguesa* [History of Portuguese America] from 1730.<sup>12</sup> These voices were not limited to Brazilian nativist euphoria, obviously interested. In fact, the re-founding of the Portuguese Kingdom in Brazil arises regularly in every political crisis in the metropolis. At the Portuguese Court, the proposal for the *translatio imperii* was recorded for the first time in 1580 when, in the midst of a succession crisis, Antônio Prior do Crato, a nephew of King Manuel I, tried with the support of Catherine de’ Medici to re-found Portugal in Brazil.<sup>13</sup> In the same way, the relocation was planned again during the Restoration Wars (1640–1668), notably not as an interim solution or as a government in exile but as a permanent solution.<sup>14</sup> The project matured in 1738, as part of the Portuguese response to economic dependence on the United Kingdom, and in 1762, when in the face of the threat of a Spanish-French invasion the crown prepared a fleet to bring King José I to Brazil.<sup>15</sup> When in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Portugal was pressured to take a side within the newly begun war between the United Kingdom and France, a sustainable geopolitical solution became more urgent than ever. Its main advocate was the Overseas Council, which pressured the

11 Brandão [1618]: 22.

12 Vicente de Salvador 1630, Pita 1976 [1730].

13 Schwartz 2000: 108–110.

14 Mello 2000: 92–98, Schultz 2001: 16.

15 Hell 1986: 156; Moraes 1872: 12–21.

Council of State, alleging that Portugal was no longer “the best and the most essential part of the monarchy”.<sup>16</sup>

The reasons were not just political and economic. The *translatio imperii* built on a mythical power which originated from the period of the Iberian Union (1580–1649), a consequence of the military catastrophe of Alcácer Quibir (1578), where the young King Sebastião I and large parts of the Portuguese aristocracy were killed. From the trauma emerged a myth of irredeemability later called Sebastianism, the belief in the return of the king at the appropriate time. This expected resurrection, albeit in an ambivalent way, became a central argument in the writings of the Jesuit Antônio Vieira.<sup>17</sup> However, this resurrection was hardly intended to defend only the sovereignty of Portugal. Since the miracle of Ourique in 1139, the decisive battle against the Moors during the Reconquest, when as the saying goes Christ personally entrusted the to-be king of Portugal Afonso Henriques with the creation of a universal Christian empire, there has been a millennial Lusitanian tradition that linked the political empire to the coming Empire of Christ the King, that is, to apocalypse. The most concrete manifestations which projected this Empire on Brazil are found in Jesuit literature. In the context of the Restoration Wars, Antônio Vieira (1608–1697) provided the overwhelming “proofs”, mainly based on his exegesis of the writings of the prophets Daniel and Isaiah.<sup>18</sup> Vieira’s premise was that the purposes of providence were insinuated in these sacred texts and confirmed in God’s steering of the course of history. In his voluminous *História do Futuro ou Do Quinto Império do Mundo e as Esperanças de Portugal* [History of the Future or on the World’s Fifth Empire and the Prospects of Portugal], written between 1647 and 1664 and published posthumously in 1718, Vieira points out that the chosen people, mentioned in Isaiah (18, 1–2), which at the end of times would gather to welcome and serve Christ, are located in Brazil.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, a Portuguese-Brazilian Empire would have to be created to succeed the previous four empires of the Assyrians, Persians, Greek and Romans, which should be called “with the same reason and propriety”, the Fifth Empire of the World.<sup>20</sup>

There is a broad and long debate whether this Portuguese-Brazilian Fifth Empire was only thought of as a spiritual space (an eschatology)

16 Light 2008: 30–31. See also Lima 1908: 15, 45; Barman 1988: 9–12; Maxwell 2003: 137–138; Souza 1998: 45.

17 A deeper analysis of the diversity and the dynamics of the various “Sebastianisms” goes beyond the scope of my objective and can be found in Bethencourt 2015b.

18 Delgado 2003: 280.

19 Vieira 1718 i: 90.

20 Vieira 1718 II: 4.



or also as a new mundane-temporal order (in the sense of a utopia). It is certainly correct that Vieira did not primarily address the social order of his time.<sup>21</sup> What he intended was to return to a previous order and to reaffirm it by the providential establishment of a kingdom, based on the Tridentine proposals of Francisco Suárez which claim to conserve the mystical body of the Kingdom within social stratification of slaves, commons, as well as clergy and nobility.<sup>22</sup> For sure, he was no progressive, humanitarian or utopian thinker. The Fifth Empire was designed as an instrument to complete the divine project of turning the entire world into a flock with a single shepherd, a single head, spiritual and temporal.<sup>23</sup>

The dominant reception since the 1920s contributed to this interpretation by the influential critical work of the historian João Lúcio de Azevedo (and his commented editions of Vieira), who portrayed the Jesuit as a barely religious thinker and alienated from political issues.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, how does this explain the hostile reaction of the Church, which prosecuted Vieira for years?<sup>25</sup> It is quite telling that what he was accused of by Inquisition – and what got censured – was only his preaching of a Realm *before* the return of Christ the King and that Vieira was required to refer to the Fifth Empire only in metaphorical and not in literal terms, since the doctrine prescribes that this realm is not to be erected on this Earth.<sup>26</sup> (Curiously, this problem will reappear in the writing of Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira and he will save his soul by creating an interim realm on Earth, the Kingdom of Mary, Christ's mother.) Vieira was aware of his work's political dimension, since he mentioned that good Christian practice intervened in social forms in order to prepare men as co-authors of providence, a coincidence of spirituality and temporality later conceptualized as “theological-political utopia” or “providential pragmatism”.<sup>27</sup> Even more, Vieira was very active in advising the temporal power: he promoted at the Court not only the preservation of the Portuguese Kingdom in the New World but the creation of a single Portuguese World Empire, governed by an almighty alliance of a triumphant Universal Catholic Church and a Christian Emperor.<sup>28</sup> In

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21 Bethencourt 2015a: 19.

22 Albuquerque 2000: 295.

23 Lima 2005: 21.

24 Azevedo 1918–20.

25 Pécora 2000.

26 Real 2013.

27 Bireley 1990; Pécora 2002; Vieira 2015: 82–83.

28 Valdez 2012: 73; Bosi 2008. Especially in *Papel Forte* (1648), a kind of early policy paper in which he advises the Portuguese King on how to reconquer the Brazilian province of Pernambuco from the Dutch West Indian Company, Vieira showed his geopolitical awareness (Barbosa 2010: 90).

sum, the Fifth Empire in Vieira's seminal interpretation would be the last stage of perfection (superior to the fourth Roman Empire), preceding the apocalypse and final judgment. It would be an eschatological Kingdom (transcendent and future) brought to reality (immanent and present), logically governed by the supreme spiritual and temporal powers. The construction of this providential state required a special mission that only Portugal and no other country could carry out – and only in Brazil.<sup>29</sup> This should be kept in mind for the following argument.

### The Brazilian Inversion

The prediction of the Fifth Empire exerted enormous fascination on Portuguese thought.<sup>30</sup> Obviously, similar motives of *monarchia universalis* and westward movement also existed in Spain.<sup>31</sup> What distinguishes the case of Portugal is that this motif gained popularity with a certain historical delay and that the country, in spite of the peripheral and weak position in relation to equally ambitious European competitors, actually carried out the first concrete step toward the realization of this prediction.<sup>32</sup> It is of supreme importance to understanding the founding myth of Brazil that the Fifth Empire was not only routinely imagined in writings but was turned intentionally into a political reality. The opportune moment

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29 Vieira 2015: 97; Marques 2004: 10; Manduco 2005: 254.

30 Lyra 1994: 123.

31 Commonly the Fifth Empire was attributed in Spain to Felipe II, not a Roman Emperor anymore, while in that historical logic Carlos V, as Roman Emperor, only expanded the Fourth Empire (Delgado 2003: 257). Among the principal voices who promoted this was the Jesuit Juan de Maldonado (though critically toward any political instrumentalization); the Dominicans Tommaso de Campanella (in *De monarchia hispanica discursus* from 1601) and Juan de Salazar (*Política española*, from 1619); as well as Diego Saavedra Fajardo, who presided the Spanish delegation in the Peace Conference of Westphalia (1648).

32 The end of the Iberian Union (1640), the Treaty of the Pyrenees (1659) and finally the death of Carlos II (1700) brought about the end of Spanish hegemony in Europe. It is remarkable that exactly at this moment, the second half of the 17th century, the idea of the Fifth Empire arises in the Luso-Brazilian space. While other mainly non-Catholic European Powers opposed from the beginning the providentialist pretensions of Spain and counter-attacked by creating the powerful “leyenda negra” (Flor 2015: 18), it is important to notice that Portugal never provoked this kind of reaction. In the Spanish perception, the *translatio imperii* was concluded with the coronation of Carlos V. Therefore, the idea of moving the center of the Empire to the New World is almost absent in Spain but has been brought up in the Hispano-American colonies by creole thinkers as the Franciscan Gonzalo Tenorio (1602–c.1680) in Peru and the Jesuit Francisco de Florencia who died in 1695 in Mexico. An exception is the also Jesuit Manuel Lacunza y Díaz (1731–1801), inhabitant of the Papal States in Italy, whose *La venida del Mesías en gloria y majestad* received some attention in Latin America after the beginning of the political emancipation around 1812.

was the threat of an invasion of Portugal by Napoleonic troops, at least as a pretext, because it was not the only option: other discussed solutions were the marriage of Prince Pedro – later first Emperor of Brazil – with a niece of Napoleon or military resistance in alliance with the United Kingdom.<sup>33</sup> However, in both cases the Portuguese monarchy would have been exposed to what at that time was called the new philosophy introduced by the revolution.<sup>34</sup> It turned out that “the transplanted of the metropolis to the colony proved to be an efficient strategy to ensure the dominion of the richest part of the empire – Brazil – and, above all, to save the Kingdom and the Portuguese monarchy”.<sup>35</sup>

This was not planned as a temporary exile, as King João VI – already afloat – tried to make his subjects believe in his official message: “I have decided, to the benefit of the same Vassals of Mine, to move [...] with the whole royal family to the States of America [...] until the general Peace”.<sup>36</sup> After having set his foot on the New World, as the first European monarch ever, he did not show any will to return – not after the capitulation of Cintra (1808) and neither after the peace treaty (1814). He took with him, in 35 ships, 14,000 people, as well as the royal treasure and library.<sup>37</sup> Once he arrived, the King re-established all necessary institutions for a new government, turning Rio de Janeiro into a “tropical Versailles”<sup>38</sup>, and he recreated an aristocracy by distributing titles of nobility among Brazilian landowners.<sup>39</sup> Immediate measures included the suspension of the restriction on manufacturing and press, as well as the opening of ports for free trade, with privileged access for the British United Kingdom, which had assisted the Court’s transfer and should play a decisive military role on perpetuating the monarchic system in Brazil. By occasion of the Congress of Vienna, King João VI did not use the chance to restore the previous government status, much on the contrary he sealed the transfer by proclaiming in 1815 the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and Algarves with seat in Rio de Janeiro, marking the position of Brazil as *primus inter pares*. The Portuguese *translatio imperii*, after centuries of

33 Varnhagen 1981 iv [1856]: 33; Oman 2004 [1808–13]: 26.

34 Light 2008: 30.

35 Lyra 1994: 111.

36 Varnhagen 1981 iv [1856]: 58 footnote xv, my emphasis.

37 Light 2008: 106–107, Neves 1994: 179.

38 Schultz 2001: 102, 106; Malerba 2000: 29, 127. Among these re-foundations were the *Desembarço do Paço e Casa de Suplicação*; *Imprensa Régia*; *Biblioteca Real*; *Banco do Brasil*; *Real Academia dos Guardas-Marinhas*; *Escola Naval*; *Escola Politécnica* (all 1808); *Academia Real Militar* (1810); *Escola de Medicina* (1813); *Escola Real de Ciências, Artes e Ofícios*; *Escola Médico-Cirúrgica* (1815); and the *Museu Imperial* (1818). See Carvalho 1980: 60.

39 Jancsó & Pimenta 2000: 156 footnote 83; Schwarcz 1999: 174; Morais 2004 [1877]: 22 footnote 2.

debate, was an accomplished fact and, as I will explain shortly, happened to symbolize, more or less explicitly, the foundation of the Fifth Empire.<sup>40</sup>

The rebirth of Portugal in Brazilian lands happened at a convenient historical moment. For the advocates of the Fifth Empire, it was a happy coincidence that competing powers were either under alien occupation like “acephalous” Spain, with its King imprisoned by Napoleon, or even dissolved as the Holy Roman Empire in 1806. The fortunate situation of Brazil facilitated the somewhat forced contrast with the submergence in war of the “rest” of the world and the political instability caused by the independence movements in neighboring Hispano-America. The Court chaplain’s *Tè Deum*, a common religious service of thanks, after having crossed the ocean, evokes Brazil as the only hope for a world in chaos:

Happy America thou hast in thyne bosom  
Of the new Empire the solemn founder:  
It will be this Country of the Holy virtues,  
When the rest of the World is all crime.  
Of the great Affonso the august Descendent,  
to indoctrinate the Peoples of the ancient World:  
to embellish the Glory of the new World  
Sends the sixth João His friend.<sup>41</sup>

For the King’s influential conciliator, José da Silva Lisboa, Brazil would be the “Olympus” from where to “domesticate” the rebellious Spanish-American titans.<sup>42</sup> Again, the mythical argument is used for geopolitical considerations, which then culminated in justifying the global leadership of an emancipated Brazil, as in the speech of the patriarch of independence, José Bonifácio de Andrada:

And what a country, sirs, for a new civilization and a new ground for science. What a land for a great and vast empire! Its central position almost *in the middle of the globe*; opposite the door to Africa, which it should dominate, with Asia to its right and Europe to its left, which other nation can equal it? The richest one in the three kingdoms of nature, over time, no other country will be able to rival the new Lusitana.<sup>43</sup>

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40 Lyra 1994: 128, 160.

41 Quoted in Schultz 2001: 99 footnote 111.

42 Quoted in Schultz 2001: 197, from Lisboa’s *Memória dos Benefícios Políticos do Governo de El-Rey Nosso Senhor D. João VI* (1818). The same idea was taken up in the discourse of William Pitt: “the Emperor of America [prince D. João] should soon take control of all the Possessions of Spain” (Pitt 1808: 11).

43 Quoted in Lyra 1994: 143, my emphasis.

## The Restorative Independence

Just like the first colonial perceptions, the Independence process again differed substantially from the republican emancipations in Hispano-America. It was in fact the only legal independence, not created by revolutionary force new political systems against – by that time – the only existing monarchic legitimacy. The Brazilian independence was negotiated in a peace treaty that transferred part of the dynasty's sovereignty to a newly created kingdom, just as it had happened many times in European history whenever a monarchic possession was rearranged among family members. It became necessary as a response to the same separatist, constitutionalist and eventually republican pressure that had changed the political landscape in Hispano-America and were raising their voices both in Brazil and Portugal. Against the common perception of a typical colonial independence process, yet comprehensible as a consequence of the Brazilian inversion, the protests started in the former motherland, the abandoned part of the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and Algarves, which during the Napoleonic wars had practically turned into a British military protectorate.<sup>44</sup> The liberal Revolution of Porto in 1820 ended up summoning the Constituent Courts – a synedrion legally enshrined in Portuguese monarchic tradition, as a last measure against misgovernment – which adopted provisionally the Constitution of Cádiz in Spain, where the absence of the imprisoned King equally provoked a self-governing reaction by the aristocracy, following the tendency in Hispano-America.

In Portugal, however, these Courts could and indeed did allege the very same arguments against colonial subjection, which independentists in the New World rallied for. In the case of Brazil, “the real movement for the Independence of the colony took place in Europe”, as historian Maxwell summarizes the still awkward (for official historiography) episode.<sup>45</sup> But it rapidly spread in Brazil as well. Starting in the North, in February 1821 the protests reached the capital Rio de Janeiro, where the crowds cried out for “Constitution of Portugal or Death!”<sup>46</sup> The Constituent Courts in Portugal even dared to cite King João VI to submit himself to their demands.<sup>47</sup> No doubt, the monarchic system was in a dilemma, which an assessment of the royal minister Silvestre Pinheiro Ferreira, written shortly before the forced return of King João VI to Lisbon, wisely summarized:

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44 Bernecker & Pietschmann 2001: 78.

45 Maxwell 1986: 387.

46 Souza 1998: 80–94; Varnhagen 1981b [1917]: 36; Jancsó & Pimenta 2000: 161.

47 Varnhagen 1981 [1917]: 32; Lyra 1994: 134; Souza 1998: 93.

Therefore, it does not concern knowing in which of the vast dominions of the Royal Crown His Royal Highness condescends to establish his residence. It concerns nothing less than suspending and dissipating the torrent of evils with which the revolutionary vertigo of the century, along with neighboring peoples and the misunderstood politics that is devastating Europe, threaten of the next dissolution and of the total ruin of His Royal Highness' States, spread over the five parts of the world: be it for the emancipation of the colonies, in the case of YRHH returning to Europe: be it for the insurrection of the Kingdom of Portugal, if those peoples, losing the hope that still animates them of seeing their beloved Prince again, deem themselves to be reduced to the humiliating quality of colony.<sup>48</sup>

At that moment, the dynamics in Brazil indicated the simple repetition of the emancipation process in Hispano-America: the establishment of regional *Juntas* and the subsequent transformation of their power domains into independent states, governed by republican constitutions.<sup>49</sup> The differential factor was the existence of a political actor with military power to maintain the political unity under the monarchical status quo. In 1822, the royal family, father and son, agreed on a strategy, somewhat inspired by the neighbors: to take the lead of the movement and transform the real conflict of interests on both sides of the Atlantic – between monarchists on one side and constitutionalists, separatists and republicans on the other – into a conflict between “Portuguese” and “Brazilians”, national categories which at that time were still artificial in Brazil.<sup>50</sup> Following this script, on August 1, 1822, Prince Pedro declared the Portuguese to be enemies and cried out, in a Bolivarian gesture, “Union! From the Amazonas to the La Plata River no other echo shall resound but... independence!”<sup>51</sup> On September 7, the formal proclamation of independence was staged on the shores of the Ipiranga River and sealed and legalized, in agreement with his father João VI and according to *ius publicum*, by means of an act of transfer of sovereignty.<sup>52</sup>

In observation of these circumstances, there is no sense in understanding this as “independence” in the common meaning, whatever the minor details and rhetoric of the process, which I cannot deepen here. The point is that to transmit within a dynasty the inherited privilege of possession and government is the core principle of monarchic legitimacy. The division of

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48 Quoted in Souza 1998: 56.

49 Barman 1988: 75, 103.

50 Rowland 2003: 371–372; Holanda 1985 [1962]: 13.

51 *Manifesto aos Povos do Brasil*, quoted in Varnhagen 1981 [1917]: 128.

52 Kleinmann 1994: 126.

this privilege among family members or the fusion of privileges (in the case of marriage or conquest) is just a variation of this principle. Consequently, in the contemporary perspective of that time, the event was compared to the division of the Empire of Carlos v between his brother Ferdinand I and his son Felipe II, in the year 1556.<sup>53</sup> It was, however, more than that, as it restored the legitimacy by staging a “modern” Independence which is a source of misinterpretation until today.

We tend to assume that all these changes [through independency] are for the better. I mention this only to indicate how subjective our view of national independence and decolonization can be. Rarely, for example, do we see independence as a “bad thing”, as a regression, a triumph of “despotism” over “liberty”, of “slavery” over “freedom”, of an “imposed” regime over a “representative” one, of oligarchy over democracy, of reaction over liberalism. Yet the truth is, that in the case of Brazil’s independence, almost all these charges against the new empire can be made; and indeed they were made at the time.<sup>54</sup>

Restoration as monarchic independence seemed to succeed. Until the end of 1823, most opposing movements were beaten back with the help of the British navy, though entirely unofficially.<sup>55</sup> Shortly after the Ipiranga incident, something happened which goes beyond political tactics and reveals the reason of state that guided the historical process: The anointing of Pedro I, on October 12, as Emperor of Brazil, following the rite of the Roman emperors and hereby legitimating Him as dignified Emperor.<sup>56</sup>

In the Brazilian case, the crown reports directly to the idea of empire, adopting the tradition inaugurated by Charlemagne, on December 25, 800, as head of the Holy Empire. An almost mythical idea, with the imposition of a forced relationship between the vastness of the territory and the political and administrative theory [...] and a ceremony – according to the Roman pontiff – destined to the consecration of the emperors of that which will be designated the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>57</sup>

This dignification had actually begun earlier. On May 13, 1817, Prince Pedro was married to Princess Maria Leopoldina of Austria, daughter of the last Roman Emperor Francis I (forced by Napoleon to abdicate in 1806) and representative of the ultra-legitimate House of Habsburg. Hence, the resonance to these developments in Brazil was

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53 Schäffer 1824: 63.

54 Maxwell 2003: 147.

55 Barman 1988: 75.

56 Cantel 1960: 134.

57 Cardoso 2003: 570. About the crowning rite, see Souza 1998: 274.

overwhelmingly positive in restored Europe.<sup>58</sup> At the top of this chapter I quoted George Canning, former British Chancellor and Ambassador to Lisbon who declared that the conservation of a monarchy in the New World fulfilled the important function of demonstrating to the European skeptics the sublimity of inherited legitimacy, apparently with at least some success.<sup>59</sup> The famous German *Staats-Lexikon* recognized in 1859, without any concerns, the close ties between Brazil and Europe and the country's immunity against the notorious anarchic chaos in the Hispano-American republics.<sup>60</sup> Other German sources even appreciate the Brazilian ambitions to create the world's Fifth Empire, for example when the dictionary *Brockhaus Conversations-Lexikon* (1835) expresses its hope that the "newest Empire of Brazil" would be blessed to conduct to the "magnificence of Christianity".<sup>61</sup>

### **From the Fifth Empire to the "Country of the Future"**

The hope of creating the Fifth Empire of the world, main *idée-force* of the whole process of transferring the metropolis to the New World and the consolidation of Brazil as Empire, the events which "the Omnipotence had reserved for the Founding of the Fifth Empire",<sup>62</sup> almost logically turned into disillusionment. The real existing Empire had to face two decades of civil war with liberal and republican separatists, in addition to social revolutions in various regions. After the death of João VI, the Emperor Pedro I had to return to Portugal in 1831 to guarantee his succession against his brother Miguel and the strengthened constitutionalists, leaving the imperial crown for his son Pedro II (born in 1825).<sup>63</sup> After nine years of turbulent regency, the "agony of the Fifth Empire"<sup>64</sup>, a relative stabilization was achieved with the young Prince's coronation in 1841.<sup>65</sup> This coronation was strongly backed up with theological considerations, not least to strengthen the authority of the young heir of the Crown, a personality similar to the "awaited Messiah, who at the age of twelve ran from his parents and was found in the temple, teaching the doctors of the law the holy doctrines", and for sharing the same birth month with

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58 Morel 2005: 636; Achugar 1998: 68–69; Godechot 1972: 34–35.

59 Kleinmann 1994: 125. Mattos 1994: 513.

60 Rotteck & Welcker 1859: 14, 24.

61 Hagedorn 1835: 8, s.v. Kaiser.

62 "Artigos Nam Officiaes: Rio de Janeiro", *Diário Fluminense*, Oct 13, 1828, p. 1.

63 Bernecker & Pietschmann 2001: 82–83.

64 "Bolinhos de Mãe Benta", *O sete d'abril*, March 11, 1837, p. 4.

65 Rodrigues 1965: 12–13.



Jesus Christ.<sup>66</sup> Still, references to the Fifth Empire were dwindling from political and economic discourses and only survived in poetry<sup>67</sup> as well as, curiously, in the newly fashionable “political algebra”, potential and cabalistic calculations, based on the Hebraic and Christian calendar and in the system of comet constellations, to justify “scientifically” what already seemed hardly believable – divine providence.<sup>68</sup> Another relativization suggests the rare, although existing, use of the Fifth Empire as a metaphor for good governance which would conduct Brazil to prosperity on the path of conciliation, legality and even industrialization.<sup>69</sup> Increasingly, it is the mere presence and the supposed superiority of the monarchical system as such that fulfills the function of distinguishing Brazil from its neighbors and branding the country, although the internal realities were far from corresponding to the image of “a country organized around European models”.<sup>70</sup>

In the 1870s, even this image began to fade, significantly even before the formation of a relevant republican movement. The discursive change got some inspiration from the discrediting of Vieira, the patron of the Fifth Empire, now accused of having promoted the “stupid senility of the Fifth Empire”, which only produced “melancholic prejudice and ill-fated superstitions”.<sup>71</sup> The Republic, proclaimed in a somewhat unexpected way in 1889 through a military coup and without popular support, naturally decried the monarchic system as anachronic and anatomic, and promoted the country’s new destiny through “modernization” and “Americanization”.<sup>72</sup> Apparently, no place was left for providence and its “monumental collection of ridiculous superstitions, insufferable puns and exotic nonsense”.<sup>73</sup> In this context, the Fifth Empire, which had already become a cliché, was trivialized, and stripped of its metaphysical dimension. Notwithstanding, numerous examples show the heavy criticism against the republican system, such as experienced after the military coup, and the plea for a rehabilitation of the constitutional monarchy and of Brazil’s particular

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66 “Ao grande dia 2 de dezembro. Natalicio de S. M. I. o Senhor D. Pedro II”, *Correo do Imperador ou o Direito de Propriedade*, Dec 2, 1836, p. 1.

67 Above all in the literary journal *Minerva Brasiliense* between 1843 and 1845.

68 For example, “Comunicado”, *Diario do Rio de Janeiro*, Dec 16, 1842, p. 2.

69 For example, “Colonisação Industrial”, *Jornal do Commercio*, Nov 3, 1841, p. 2.

70 Carvalho 1998: 237.

71 Camillo Castello Branco, “Portugal e Emilio Castelar”, *A Folha Nova* (Rio de Janeiro), Aug 17, 1884, p. 2. “Noticias Litterarias”, *A Gazeta de Noticias*, July 05, 1885, p. 1.

72 Janotti 1986: 15; Holanda 1985 [1962]: 360; Carvalho 2003 [1990]: 35–36; Lessa 1999: 40; Oliveira 1989: 175; Carone 1973: 18; Vianna 2004 [1925].

73 Lessa 1913.

historical path.<sup>74</sup> Popular support for the republic was still tenuous as the monarchy had its deep cultural roots among the population.<sup>75</sup> However, paradoxically, the idea of a Fifth Empire gained new strength through new political doctrines which grounded the Republic on a system of higher order and augured again a future of greatness as hegemon in South America: Positivism.

The reception of positivism in Brazil occurred quite late, after the death of its founder Auguste Comte (1798–1857) and even after the schism that divided positivism into a progressive and an orthodox branch, the latter guided by Pierre Lafitte and with emphasis on the apolitical and transcendental doctrine of the second phase of Comte.<sup>76</sup> The main Brazilian mediators, Miguel Lemos and Teixeira Mendes, went even beyond this interpretation and founded in 1881 a Church, the *Apostolado Positivista*, where they preached that “to regenerate the world it was necessary, first of all, saints and not only sages”.<sup>77</sup> The Apostolate prescribed that positivists were not allowed to occupy public positions, political mandates or exercise professions such as teacher or journalist, and they rejected any change of the traditional hierarchy as illegitimate rationalist interventionism.<sup>78</sup> Consequently, they did not raise their voice during the transition to the Republic, except in relation to the national symbols. According to Comte’s very concrete orders, these had to be maintained and brought to perfection by adding the positivist motto “Order and Progress”, just like it had been done with regard to the Brazilian flag: it conserved the Imperial design – avoiding any tricolor revolutionism – and the colors of the dynasties Bragança and Habsburg, redefined as symbols for the mineral and natural resources, and added the positivist creed, enshrined as banner on the night sky of the Proclamation of the Republic.<sup>79</sup>

74 Among these critiques stand out Eduardo Prado’s *Os fastos da Ditadura Militar no Brasil* [Annals of the Military Dictatorship in Brazil] from 1890 and Araripe Júnior’s *Função normal do terror nas sociedades cultas* [Normal Function of Terror in Cultured Societies] from 1891.

75 Carvalho 2003 [1990]: 24; Carvalho 1996: 348. The famous chronicles on Rio de Janeiro by João do Rio (written 1904–1907) mention the omnipresence of monarchic symbolism among the population. If lettered, they preferred the history of *Charlemagne and the Twelve Peers of France* to any modern text (Rio 1997 [1908]: 104, 107–108). During the First Republic, all of the many social movements, severely combatted by the republican government, had a monarchic–millenarist dimension, such as most prominently the movements of Canudos 1893–1897 and the Contestado 1912–1916 (Naro 2015).

76 For example, in *Appel aux conservateurs* (1855). About the history of positivism in Brazil, see Lins 1984.

77 Costa 1967: 211.

78 Holanda 1985 [1962]: 289–290, Carvalho 2003 [1990]: 134.

79 Carvalho 2003 [1990]: 113, 139; Costa 1967: 224; Holanda 1985 [1962]: 299; Leal 2006: 66, 69; Chauí 2000: 62.

On the other hand, the positivist ideology from Comte's first phase, somewhat simplified and adapted, served as inspiration for republican intellectuals, military and engineers in their quest for a pedagogical development state, the "government of the order".<sup>80</sup> As such, it contributed to substituting and secularizing the reminiscences of the Fifth Empire, in my understanding precisely because of their structural similarity: according to Comte's law of the three states, the transition set in motion by the great crisis of 1789 urged the creation of a new order beyond revolution and restoration, the conciliation of order and progress in the third and last state, the scientific or positive. Conveniently, this state was supposed to be achieved without altering the social hierarchy, just by mitigating the revolutionary demands through welfare policies and moral reeducation.<sup>81</sup> In other words, positivism replaced the traditional spiritual power with the social doctrine of a natural order, and the temporal power with an elite of expert administrators.

This civilizing mission of Brazil, as the only country worldwide that elevated positivist ideas to state doctrine, gained an imperialist dimension. As the opposite of order and progress, soon were spotted the "sick republics", their "disorder", "savagery" and "tragicomical continuity of dictatorships".<sup>82</sup> Therefore, it would be Brazil's duty to "share with the U.S. the 'hemispheric hegemony'" over the neighboring republics.<sup>83</sup> Though meanwhile itself a Republic, "neither physical Brazil, nor moral Brazil form a system with those nations".<sup>84</sup> The transformation of the Fifth Empire through the synthesis of the monarchist imaginary with the positivist promise of harmony and progress, finds its conclusion on the celebration of four hundred years of Brazil's European discovery in 1900. On this occasion, the monarchist Count Afonso Celso, lifetime president of the prestigious Brazilian Historical-Geographical Institute, published the little book *Por que me ufano do meu país* [Why I am Proud of My Country]. Targeted at schoolchildren, it lists eleven reasons of national pride and constitutes, until today, the main repository of nationalist discourse, called after the title of his book "ufanism", including all leitmotifs of natural and transcendental superiority above mentioned. Interestingly enough, the book does not mention a single time the Republic, and no historical process or human action seems to matter, as all superiority stems from

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80 Carvalho 2003 [1990]: 21–22.

81 Comte 1994 [1844]: 56, 70–71, 76, 101–102.

82 Prado 2003 [1893]: 13; Lima 1907: 33–34.

83 Lima 1907: 50. This alliance with the U.S. was translated into Brazil's Foreign Policy during most of the First Republic, regularly opposing the interests of the neighboring Latin American nations (see Bandeira 1978; Burns 1968: 61; and Capelato 2000: 291).

84 Prado 2003 [1893]: 12–13.

providence: “Granted by providence, Brazil received that which other countries, shedding rivers of blood, had immense difficulties to achieve.” Simplifying the interpretation that took Vieira a few hundred pages to explain, Celso’s evidence was natural superiority, just as God selected the donkey drover Saul to reign over the Israelite tribes because of his tall stature:

Let us trust. There is an immanent logic: out of so many premises of greatness, only one great conclusion will come. Let us trust ourselves, let us trust the future, let us trust, above all, God, who would not grant us such precious blessings for us to waste them barrenly. God will not forsake us. If God has doled out for Brazil in an especially magnanimous way, it’s because He reserves high destinies for it.<sup>85</sup>

Apparently, though under a republican regime, Brazil continued to legitimize itself as an Empire, as a historian specialized on this political transition affirms: “The idea of the Empire, as a positive exception in the concert of the nations of Latin America, remained unaltered as it went through the republican rupture.”<sup>86</sup> I would add to this that it was not just any Empire, a concept with inflationary use in the 20th century, but the Fifth Empire in the sense of future national greatness by divine providence which continued as a reference in the imagination of Brazil as a new tropical civilization, as promoted by the modernists of the 1920s and later the influent cultural philosophers Gilberto Freyre and Darcy Ribeiro. This perpetuated also, more or less explicitly, the monarchist legacy; at least symbolically, despite the parallel republicanization of national identity. Obviously, I am referring here to the official “ufanist” narration of the nation, pedagogical in the sense of Homi Bhabha, and I am abstracting from the subaltern intellectual tendency which historian Carlos Fico called “defeatist”.<sup>87</sup> Certainly, in the government discourses of the 20th century, the vision of a developmental state and future geopolitical power prevailed over the theological dimension. This vision found its most expressive metaphor in the motif of the “country of the future”, coined – though not invented – by the grateful asylum seeker Stefan Zweig in his book-homage “Brazil, a country of the future” (1941), promptly translated to Portuguese as “Brazil, *the* country of the future”.<sup>88</sup>

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85 Celso 1901: 10, 11, 235.

86 Janotti 1986: 213.

87 Bhabha 1990: 297, 299; Fico 1997.

88 The cliché, however, had already been introduced into the German imaginary by Hermann Ullmann’s *Land der Zukunft: Reise in Brasilien* (1937) and Heinrich Schüler’s *Brasilien: Ein Land der Zukunft* (1912), probably both inspired in the mentioned seminal book *Porque me ufano do meu país* (1901) by Afonso Celso which had been translated

The construction of Brasília as a city of the future gave concrete form to the motif as a national symbol. Moreover, official propaganda during the civil-military dictatorship drew heavily on world power fantasies.<sup>89</sup> Sometimes, the military government alluded directly to the mission of Brazil, for example, as general Vicente de Paulo Dale Coutinho in his speech I quoted as a motto of this chapter, when he took office as new commander-in-chief of the army in 1974.

This legacy was never translated from philosophical and social thinking to monarchic political action, after the last failed try of Afonso Celso to create a monarchist party. This was due to a fixed clause in all republican constitutions before the current one from 1988, which excluded from elections monarchist parties whose political program aimed at restoration.<sup>90</sup> Still, it continued vivid in conservative thought throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1950s, by the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the transfer of the Court, even Antônio Vieira underwent a curious second resignification, this time as rehabilitation.<sup>91</sup> As the following chapters will show, the Brazilian monarchic legacy will constitute a central reference for conservative Catholic thinking throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and even for the ideology of part of the New Right in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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immediately to German as “Warum bin ich stolz auf mein Vaterland?” and published in three editions before 1910. The intentionally ambiguous Portuguese title of Zweig’s book was corrected in later editions.

- 89 In 1968, the military government created its own PR-Agency “Special Public Relations Advisory Office” (AERP) which produced or adapted famous slogans such as “God is Brazilian”, “Nobody can stop this country”, “Brazil, count on me” and “Brazil, love it or leave it”.
- 90 See the Constitutions from 1934 (art. 178, § 5°), 1946 (art. 217, § 6°) and 1967 (art. 47, § 1°). See Santos 1988: 19.
- 91 See, for example, Lins 1956; Torres 2017 [1957]; or the article “O verdadeiro Quinto Império” in the newspaper *Correio Paulistano*, Sept 27, 1958, p. 6.

### 3 Re-Christianizing Brazil

*Indeed, of us Catholics, one can say the same as may be said of the national army: it is not necessary to constitute a party and really use the weapons entrusted to them for them to play an important role in the country's political life.<sup>1</sup>*

Jackson de Figueiredo

The historical event which created the conditions for the phenomenon of the re-Christianization of Brazil during roughly the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the proclamation of the Republic in 1889, and more precisely the consecutive separation of the Brazilian Catholic Church from the state in the first republican constitution from 1891. This was a surprise for the clergy and conservative Catholics themselves who naturally feared a loss of privilege and even an existential threat.<sup>2</sup> But paradoxically the creation of a laic state resulted in an enormous strengthening of the Church and its influence on politics, especially in Getúlio Vargas' New State during the 1930s, with its first Constitution (1934) carrying the Church's signature. The reason was that the Republic opened a free space for developing a proper ecclesiastical project, in a hitherto inexistent and soon very close collaboration with the Vatican. The project was developed and even succeeded against a notoriously hostile republican and tendentiously positivist political elite through institution building and ample proselytism through newly created Catholic media outlets.<sup>3</sup> Alceu Amoroso Lima (1893–1983), one of the key figures of the Catholic restoration, concluded in retrospective that only separate from the state and under political pressure could the Church evolve its full spiritual force, just like the effort to combat the hostility after the French Revolution had made it “infinitely richer in its authentic spiritual physiognomy”.<sup>4</sup> Apparently, the same happened in Brazil one hundred years later.

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1 Figueiredo 1922 [1921]: 46.

2 Casanova 1994: 114; Bruneau 1974.

3 Miceli 1988.

4 Lima 1999a [1963]: 221.

## The “Religious Question” in the Empire

The separation of state and Church made it possible for the latter to emancipate from a particular Brazilian situation of so-called Caesaropapism, the submission of spiritual power under the temporal power of the sovereign, with limiting rather than supporting effects. To start with quantitative data, at the end of the Empire and after four centuries of presence in Brazil, only 13 bishops and 700 priests tried to take care of more than 14 million Catholics.<sup>5</sup> This was the first thing to change during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, in the Empire the Church not only resembled practically an administrative government department but also became subject to an extraordinary fusion between clergy and freemasonry. Numerous priests and bishops were openly freemasons and even the highest ecclesiastical authority, Emperor Pedro I, was at the same time Grand Master of the Masonic Order Grand Orient, while his son Pedro II was at least a masonic sympathizer. This mixture subjected the Catholic doctrine to anticlerical liberalist and positivist ideologies.<sup>6</sup> In the 1870s the clergy had reacted for the first time to this submission. This prelude, the so-called “religious question”, served as a painful lesson for the Catholic restoration. In response to the dangerous fusion with freemasonry, the Brazilian clergy started to send seminarians to ultramontane schools in Rome and Paris, the centers of Integrisism. What they expected from this was to achieve theologically more orthodox and higher moral standards among the clergy.<sup>7</sup>

One of these seminarists was Father Vital Maria Gonçalves de Oliveira (1844–1878). After his return from France and nomination as Bishop of Olinda (as usual by the emperor), he set off a bomb: in his pastoral letter from 1875 *A maçonaria e os jesuítas: Instrução pastoral* [Freemasonry and Jesuits: Pastoral Instructions] he denounced freemasonry as a mighty conspiracy which waged war against the Church. He saw this war happening above all through a slandering campaign that, in his eyes, tried to attribute an extremist position to the Church, similar to the argument of the New Right today, which refutes categorically any attribution of extremism. If we further substituted “masonry” by “communism”, bishop Vital’s words could be written today by a conservative Catholic: “Under the hateful denominations of *fanaticism, ultramontanism, romanism, Jesuitism*, etc., masonry does not cease to rage a relentless war against Catholicism, fighting it no matter what, by all means, by all sides.” Familiar seems also his self-declared position as a lonely warner of a catastrophe nobody else

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5 Casanova 1994: 116.

6 For the fusion between Church and freemasonry, see Thornton 1984.

7 Feitoza 2019: 43.

perceives: “There it is, patent, quite patent, the double end to masonry: to strangle the last of the priests with the bowels of the last of the kings! All that is extremely significant. However, nobody understands it!” Vital gives some credit to those clerical and royal masons who were just used, unaware of being manipulated, just like the New Right today grants to some seduced intellectuals to be promoting cultural Marxism without knowing it.<sup>8</sup> Among these, there are however also the betrayers, the inner enemy. When Pope Pius IX commented in June 1871, more or less at the same time as Vital, on the Paris Commune, he was worried especially about those: “What scares me are not those wretched ones of the Commune, real demons from hell that stroll the Earth. No, it’s not that; what scares me is that disgraceful politics, that Catholic liberalism which is the real flagellum.”<sup>9</sup>

In his redundant and hyperbolic style, Vital resembles an Olavo de Carvalho *avant la lettre*. They even share the predilection to emphasize keywords with capital letters. Vital’s polemical style in his letter, more than his argument, might have been the reason for his imprisonment, in which the “religious question” culminated. The difference between them is only the name they call the enemy, but regarding the generalized menace against traditional society the terms “freemasonry” and “communism” are exchangeable. As I will show later, this is no coincidence, as both are seen as heirs and excrescences of medieval heretic Gnosticism. The error of freemasonry already comprises the error of communism, the latter just being one more step in the wrong direction. For some, this was still an issue a century later. Bishop Kloppenburg explained in 1984 that the fundamental error of freemasonry was the relativization of divine truth as unreachable, which induced to subjectivism and tolerance toward contradictory ideas, aiming at the ethic improvement of the individual, instead of obeying the dogma and awaiting to be improved by grace.<sup>10</sup>

Vital was only released from prison after Pius IX’s personal intervention. Different from the Brazilian bishop, Pius IX was quite aware of the “communist threat”, bigger than the masonic conspiracy. Already decades before, he had warned in his encyclical *Qui pluribus* (1846) against the “unspeakable doctrine of communism, as it is called, a doctrine most opposed to the very natural law. For if this doctrine were accepted, the radical subversion of everyone’s and even human society’s rights, objects and property would follow”.<sup>11</sup> Or, in other words, the scenario the New

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8 Vital 1875: 6–7, 35–37, original emphasis.

9 Quoted in Antoine 1980 [1972]: 12.

10 Kloppenburg 1984.

11 Pius IX 1846.



Right depicts of the contemporary Brazilian society. Both socialism and communism also figured among the 80 modern heresies from Pius IX's famous "Syllabus of Errors", an appendix to the encyclical *Quanta Cura* (1864). In this drastic reaction against revolutionary movements in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the Pope vindicated the absolute and infallible leadership of Rome in all religious and profane matters, the basis for the implementation of modern ultramontanist at the First Vatican Council (1869–1870), the birthplace of Integrism, which should dominate Catholic thought in Brazil until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup>

At a first glance, it is astonishing how in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Vatican anticipated most of the New Right's arguments. On second thought, if we understand the conservative Catholic roots of the New Right, it is just a logical sequence. The next Pope, Leo XIII, was even more explicit when in his *Quod Apostolici Muneris* (1878) he warned against the "sect of men who, under various and almost barbarous names, are called socialists, communists, or nihilists". This sect would be responsible for planning the "overthrow of all civil society" by defending "absolute equality of all men" and diminishing the "union of man and woman".<sup>13</sup> Or, in other words, levelling and what later should be known as "gender ideology".

The New Right's credo in a degenerated Occident just echoes the Vatican, which perceived in the rampant modernism of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the "synthesis of all heresies", the result of a process that had started well before.<sup>14</sup> In the encyclical *Diuturnum* (1881), Leo XIII traced for the first time the long history of communism back to Lutheran Reform. From this original sin stemmed "false philosophy – a new right as it is called, and a popular authority, together with an unbridled license which many regard as the only true liberty".<sup>15</sup> Against these wrong philosophies, he had taken, shortly before, a decision which would profoundly influence Integrism thinking in Brazil, with long-lasting effects on the conservative tradition until today. In his encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879), he made Thomism into the official theological and philosophical system of the Church. This system of knowledge was to be applied not only in the education of seminarians, but also of lay people, for example at Catholic universities.<sup>16</sup> The Brazilian pioneer who started to teach Neo-Thomism as "the unity of knowledge" was the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters São Bento in São Paulo, later incorporated into the Catholic University of São

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12 Pius IX 1864.

13 Leo XIII 1878.

14 Moura 1978: 28.

15 Leo XIII 1881.

16 Caldeira 2005.

Paulo, co-founded by Monsignor Charles Sentroul (one more Integrist missionary from Belgium, like the before-mentioned Lombaerde).<sup>17</sup>

However, as all this effort could not wipe out modernization and especially social claims, Leo XIII changed the tactic. In 1878, he had thought it to be enough to denounce subversion and to pay special attention to the “artisans and men who rent their work and who, tired of their condition as laborers, are very easily allured by the hope of riches and the promises of wealth”.<sup>18</sup> True words, no doubt, as this hardly works for a wealthy aristocrat who understandably might feel less tired and less in need to hope for a decent life. But in his later encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) he seemed to have understood that just denouncing and remembering the pleasures of afterlife might not convince a workman under conditions of Manchester Capitalism anymore. He also understood that communism was not just a destructive conspiracy of evil but actually grounded on rational principles of social organization. Therefore, the Church should quickly find “immediate, effective measures [...] to assist men of inferior classes, caring for those who are, for the most part, in a situation of misery and unjust wretchedness”.<sup>19</sup> This concession created the basis for the Catholic social doctrine which later was interpreted as the Christian principle of distributive justice – obviously by the betrayers because the Pope’s remedy was never meant to include any social transfers. Above all, *Rerum Novarum* was an attempt to conciliate, without changing, the old order and modern society.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Catholic Restoration in the First Republic**

Bishop Vital died in Paris before Brazil’s proclamation of the Republic. Therefore, he could not see that his concerns about the political elite were prophetic. The Republic brought to unshared power not only masons like Marshal Deodoro da Fonseca (the one who started the military action to trigger the whole process) and Rui Barbosa (the mentor of the republican constitution) but a whole new political class of lawyers, organized in the influential “bucha” of the Faculty of Law of São Paulo (inspired in German student fraternities called *Burschenschaften*), officers from military academies in Rio de Janeiro and “Order and Progress” oriented engineers. This generation, most of them born in the 1870s, was tendentially agnostic and even more anticlerical.<sup>21</sup> As most of them

17 Moura 1978: 65.

18 Leo XIII 1878.

19 Leo XIII 1891.

20 Lima 1964: 123–124, essay originally published in 1961.

21 Farias Brito 2006 [1912]: 92; Moura 1978: 53.

were sympathetic toward positivism, Catholics in Brazil interpreted – not without reason – their hostile attitude as an attempt to finally win the pendant “religious question”. They perceived the introduction of freedom of religion in the republican constitution as a hidden way to promote a positivist “Religion of Humanity” and to oust Catholicism as the “primordial element of a nation’s soul”.<sup>22</sup> In addition to its quality as competing “pseudo-religion”, positivism was seen as the most visible agent of modernization due to its scientificism. Historian João Camilo de Oliveira Torres (1915–1973), like Alceu Amoroso Lima an Integrist Catholic and a monarchist but still one of the more “scientific” sources on monarchism and Integristism, should later spot positivism’s original sin in Comte’s empiricism: “He did not understand that experience is given immediately to everyone and that philosophy presupposes interpretation, and faith revelation, neither being evident.” Lacking this understanding, Comte tended to explain humanity in his early sociology only “from outside”, through its social structures, which made the new science an illegitimate substitute of natural law.<sup>23</sup> His particular concern was that only natural law secures the monarchic system. This is a particular dimension that infuriated Brazilian Catholics against Leo XIII’s *carte blanche* to collaborate with republicans against the common enemy, communism, the famous *ralliement* in the encyclical *Inter Sollicitudines* (1892).<sup>24</sup> Natural law and monarchy were seen as intrinsically entwined.

What modern science missed, Catholics objected, was the theological perspective, and without theology, no science could ever reach reality and truth. The philosopher Raymundo Farias Brito (1862–1917), inspired by the French philosopher Henri Bergson, explained in *A base física do espírito* [The Physical Basis of the Spirit] from 1912 the function of theology as interpretation of the “conception of the world as the creation of an infinite being, as the act of an omnipotent God: a solution to the problem of the universe”. The interpretation of the world was “the science of the being as being, the search for the first causes and the first principles, in the terms of the Aristotelian philosophy”. If done the right way, this meant metaphysics, “the conception according to which the world should be interpreted as an external manifestation of the divine thinking”.<sup>25</sup> Science

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22 Moura 1978: 32.

23 Torres 1968: 159–160. Torres is author of an almost concluded series on the history of ideas in Brazil in 12 volumes, among them *A Democracia Coroada* [Crowned Democracy] from 1957 and *História das ideias religiosas no Brasil* [History of Religious Ideas in Brazil] from 1968.

24 Veiga 1895.

25 Farias Brito 2006 [1912]: 87–88. In his previous *A filosofia moderna* [Modern Philosophy] from 1899 he tried to refute all variants of materialism, such as scientific positivism,

and theology just looked at the same thing from two different perspectives which only together enable us to comprehend the totality of reality: “The material world is the external, objective face; the world of the spirits is the subjective, inner face, the one of divinity.”<sup>26</sup>

But also for other reasons critical voices publicly opposed the radical change through republicanization during the 1890s. Besides the mentioned father of “ufanism”, Afonso Celso, one of them was the Integrist and monarchist militant Carlos de Laet (1847–1927), author of trenchant conservative articles. Another one was Eduardo Prado (1816–1901), also monarchist and in his later years sympathetic to Integristism, author of the above-mentioned *Os fastos da ditadura militar no Brasil* and *A ilusão americana* [The American Illusion] from 1893, arguing against the Brazilian imitation of Hispano-American republicanism. A third and today the best remembered critical voice against the young Republic was Alberto Torres (1865–1917), a conservative but not a monarchist. He served as president of the State of Rio de Janeiro, congressman and judge of the Federal Supreme Court and inferred from this experience the incompatibility of constitutional and national realities. In *A organização nacional* [The National Organization] and *O problema nacional brasileiro* [The Brazilian National Problem], both from 1914, he explains this by the alienation of the progressive cosmopolitan elites and urges to ground politics again in the empirical reality of the country, based on tradition and an agrarian economy.<sup>27</sup>

Torres’ ideas only gained popularity among conservatives during the 1930s, well after his death. Among his admirers were the Integralist Plínio Salgado and the already mentioned Oliveira Vianna, founders of the Society of Friends of Alberto Torres<sup>28</sup>. Vianna proposed to modernize Brazil by reencountering its traditional roots and making the state again compatible with the country’s very nature. Strengthening the traditional elite, his famous “Men of one thousand” and especially the São Paulo’s nobility, the most entrepreneurial because the purest (with the highest rate of endogamy in the country, as he stressed), would give rise to the “true nation”.<sup>29</sup> Vianna’s convenient interpretation of Torres – Brazilian solutions for Brazilian problems – made retroactively the latter the godfather of Brazilian authoritarianism. Laet, Prado, Torres and Vianna and a banalized version of their ideas are constant “fit-all” references among the New Right today. They serve as guarantors to argue for the opposition of “the

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evolutionism and Marxism.

26 Farias Brito 2006 [1912]: 256.

27 Torres 1978 [1914]: 29.

28 Fernandes 2010: 95; Trindade 2015.

29 Vianna 1999 [1949]: 240–242, 373.

state” to an “authentic Brazil”, and sometimes even to refute international identity politics and to defend the interests of Agrobusiness (I will get back on this in chapter eight).<sup>30</sup>

Freemasonry, positivism and republicanism were perceived by Brazilian Integrist Catholics as symptoms of modernist relativism which sooner or later would lead to the “communism” the Popes had alerted about. I have quoted the encyclicals at large because these texts and their arguments are hardly familiar knowledge nowadays. However, they offer the central explanations about the crisis of modernity, which will be the fundament of 20<sup>th</sup> century conservative thought and, considering the premises and implied references, that of the New Right until today.

### **The Center Dom Vital – Headquarter of the “Militia of Christ”**

Militant Integristism, the unconditional adherence to Catholic traditional values as represented by the sacred and infallible authority of Vatican, was the recommended strategy to join forces and re-Christianize the decadent Brazilian society in a doctrinaire war of ideas. One of the disciples of the above-mentioned Farias Brito, Jackson de Figueiredo (1891–1928), was more a man of deed than of thought – a blessing for Integristism, which struggled to put into practice what Pope Pius x had ordered in his tough action plan *Pascendi* (1907): to resist “modernism” by expelling, censoring and supervising the enemy by Diocesan Watch Committees. In addition, to counter-attack by proselyting, using modern communication means, to reconquer society, especially its elites and hereby gain political influence on the state, all this with mandatory reporting back about the results.<sup>31</sup> Sebastião Leme (1882–1942), archbishop of Recife and Olinda and author of the mentioned *Católicos, ao combate!* from 1916 (which I gained as a present in its 2016 re-edition), had come to the capital Rio de Janeiro in 1921. He soon stimulated the creation of the *Centro Dom Vital* (CDV) in 1922, a civil association of lay people subordinated under the Church, named after this first Brazilian Integrist who today is in process of canonization as saint.<sup>32</sup> His book, as the title suggests, adds one more ingredient to Brazilian conservatism: Nationalism. Defending Roman Integristism meant to resist against cosmopolitan modernist habits from abroad like “Carnival” and “exotic dances” which to him seemed

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30 Fernandes 2010: 103, 116–117; Ferreira 2010: 67–68; Doria 2020: 78.

31 Pius x 1907. See also Zanotto 2009: 56; Pierucci 1992: 150; Caldeira 2004: 105; Pierucci 1999; Alves 1979; Casanova 1994: 117.

32 Azzi 2003: 12. See also Azzi 1994.

“unreasonable and even ridiculous”.<sup>33</sup> The message was clear: Those who did not actively fight these tendencies betrayed Jesus and betrayed the Fatherland. The CDV institutionalized, centralized and disseminated, like no other institution before, the rich, albeit still diffuse, Integrist Catholic thinking and action, conciliated it with nationalism and translated it into political lobbying.<sup>34</sup>

The center’s main activist, Jackson de Figueiredo, as many of his peers a recent convert to Catholicism, was certainly convinced of his endeavor, as he confessed two years before in a letter to an anonymous friend: “Today I only have one concern in life: to be an integral Catholic, to be a man of the Church, a sacristan able to take up arms for my faith and nothing else.”<sup>35</sup> The martial rhetoric is no coincidence. An order and authority fanatic, Jackson understood his mission to create the “Militia of Christ”, an interpretation of evangelism which became a pillar of Catholic conservative self-conception.<sup>36</sup> A century later, my interview partners at the IPCO and CDB also referred frequently to this military term. This conception significantly broadened the supporter basis of Catholic conservatism. Many of the center’s collaborators had a background in the – not necessarily Catholic – authoritarian-nationalist movements that spread in Brazil during the First World War. Among them were monarchists such as Olavo Bilac or even positivist military officers, organized in various National Defense Leagues. All of them were assiduous contributors to the same new journals such as *A Defesa Nacional*, *Gil Blas*, *Bazília* and *Revista do Brasil*, the last two co-founded by Jackson.<sup>37</sup> However, most of them then started to write above all for the journal *A Ordem*, directed also by Jackson and founded in 1921, shortly before CDV. Another novelty was the sympathy of the formerly adversarial Brazilian government, such as in the persons of the presidents Epitácio Pessoa (in office 1919–1922) and Artur Bernardes (1922–1926), the latter even nominating Jackson his head of censorship.<sup>38</sup> “For Brazility and For Catholicism”, the motto of *Gil Blas*, indicated a new at least strategical alliance at a moment of political turmoil. The year 1922 not only saw the foundation of the CDV but also of the Brazilian section of the Communist Party. Under these circumstances, authoritarian preservation of tradition and social order, even if not committed to Catholic conservatism, must have represented the minor evil – and here begins the approximation between originally

33 Leme 2019 [1916]: 55–57.

34 Rodrigues 1981: 6.

35 Quoted in Antoine 1980 [1972]: 12.

36 Torres 1968: 186–187.

37 Trindade 1974; Deutsch 1999: 109; Cowan 2016: 161.

38 Deutsch 1999: 118.

opposed movements which will reappear at any historical moment of social change, as I anticipated in the introduction.

The CDV had a paragon, like Integrism again imported and adapted from France: the *Action Française*, created in 1899 by journalist Charles Maurras (1868–1952). The similarities are intriguing: both started with presenting their ideas in a new erudite journal, both managed to synthesize most tendencies that were somehow disillusioned with the republican liberal democracy by promising the revival of an objective pure order, given and represented through tradition, Church and monarchy, applied through “political physics” and based on the “concrete description of facts”, far from any ideology. *Action Française* is considered the outstanding case of a school of political doctrine to unite all nationalists to resist “communism”, if not in an alliance at least under mutual respect. This can certainly be confirmed for the CDV during the 1920s too.<sup>39</sup> They both even achieved the approximation between Catholics and positivists – anticipated in Comte’s late idea to join forces with the Jesuits – by emphasizing their shared belief in the quintessence of a hierarchic order and their opposition against religious individualism, seen as the main pernicious effect of romanticism. As the specialist on this French Catholic-positivist fusion, Michael Sutton, joked: for a medieval conception of Catholicism, Comte was no more a risk.<sup>40</sup>

Jackson did not only manage to arrange this fusion but also to justify it ideologically, again inspired in Charles Maurras. Though probably an agnostic, for Maurras Catholicism mattered enormously as part of the national Tradition – just as monarchy – and therefore indispensable to represent order and unity.<sup>41</sup> Jackson, in a similar argument, identified nationalism as tradition, Brazilian tradition as Catholicism, and in conclusion nationalism as Catholicism. In addition, monarchism resurged as an ideal among the first generation who cherished a “deep felt nostalgia for a monarchy that they had never known”.<sup>42</sup> Closely related to the CDV emerged in 1928 Brazil’s first larger monarchist movement, the *Ação Imperial Patrianovista Brasileira*, short Patrianovism, led by the Afro-Brazilian activist Arlindo Veiga dos Santos, an admirer of Maurras.<sup>43</sup> Like their French model, they strived for the restoration of traditional monarchy (an ideal one, not the in-their-eyes liberalist Brazilian Empire under Pedro II), based on King, Church and corporations, the latter

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39 Gurian 1931: 2, 28, 36, 62, 98; Iglésias 1977 [1962]: 148; Todaro Williams 1971: 74.

40 Sutton 1982: 1, 20.

41 Gurian 1931: 38.

42 Todaro Williams 1971: 98, 106, based on interview with Hamilton Nogueira.

43 Malatian 1978: 65; Gonçalves 2012: 218.

anticipating their proximity to Integralism.<sup>44</sup> The organization presented itself as

radical and violent extreme Right, affirmers of God and His Church, affirmers of the Imperial, Catholic Nation, irreconcilable and intolerant enemies of bourgeoisism, plutocratism and materialist, atheist, mocking, exploitative, internationalist, Judaizer and freemason capitalism; enemies of the republic, of the parties, of parliamentarism, in short, of religious, political and economic liberalism; that is, also so much enemies of Bolshevik anarchy that with equally big mistakes intend, in vain, to “correct” the tyranny of liberal bourgeoisie, as enemies of the lying social order, installed virtually all over the world.<sup>45</sup>

Their program was a bit more sober, concentrating on the reestablishment of the privilege of Catholic religion and the reinstatement of the king as chief of state and the government, generously endorsed from French exile by “His Majesty” Dom Pedro Henrique, father of Bertrand.<sup>46</sup> Tellingly, the young Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira was also a member of Patrianovism, which shows once more how conservatives of all *couleur* commuted between these institutions.<sup>47</sup>

Though imitating the efficient organizational strategy of *Action Française* to build strategic alliances, Jackson did not fully identify with Maurras’ thinking.<sup>48</sup> As the latter declared the primacy of temporal over spiritual power, this would have reestablished the undesirable dependence of the Church on the Brazilian Empire. Neither did Jackson follow Maurras in his antisemitic explanations of a “Jewish Conspiracy”<sup>49</sup> and despite his martial rhetoric, he never reached the point to preach the legitimate defense of order by any means, including violence. Pope Pius XI’s condemnation of *Action Française* in 1926 and the censorship of its publications – though unclear if with a moderating or competitive intention – provoked even more reserves.<sup>50</sup> However, Maurrassism was much larger and diffuse than that. Its ideas penetrated various European movements such as Lusitanian Integralism, *Acción Española* and Italian fascism, all followed by Jackson with strong interest. This goes especially for the influence of his friend and “brother in spirit” Antônio Sardinha

44 Todaro Williams 1971: 107, based on interview with Arlindo Veiga dos Santos and the monarchist João de Scantimburgo.

45 Quoted in Domingues 2006: 523.

46 See the organization’s journal *Revista Pátria-Nova* from Sept 1929 and several letters quoted in Domingues 2006: 525.

47 Zanotto 2007: 37.

48 Mattei 1997 [1996]: 108.

49 Deutsch 1999: 130.

50 Gurian 1931: 46–47, 110–111; Mattei 1997 [1996]: 108.



with whom he shared imperial visions of a Lusitanian or even Hispanic World Power.<sup>51</sup> Sardinha's Lusitanian Integralism, despite being discreet about it for nationalistic reasons, was directly inspired by Maurras, the personal mentor of Alberto Monsaraz and Pequito Rebelo, both exiled in Paris from 1910 to 1914, who built the movement after their return to Portugal.<sup>52</sup> Besides that, through *Acción Española*, Brazilian conservatives rediscovered the thought of the counter-revolutionary Spanish political theorist Juan Donoso Cortés (1809–1853) and some even considered to follow the example of general Primo de Rivera, who seized power through a military coup and governed Spain from 1923 to 1930.<sup>53</sup> Equally, Mussolini's first party program and his strategy to combine nationalism, hierarchy and Church was an important stimulus for Brazilian conservative thinking.<sup>54</sup>

But more than anybody else, Jackson turned into a devote admirer of the earlier reactionary – and of course pivotal inspiration for Maurras – Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821).<sup>55</sup> He even planned to write a monograph on Maistre's thought but then only had time to conclude two chapters with the promising titles: “The Remote and Profound Origins of Revolutionary Satanism” and “The Splendor of Corruption”.<sup>56</sup> Maistre's 1797 seminal book *Considerations about France*, which includes reflections similar to his Irish counterpart Burke's, came in handy for Brazilian conservatives, regarding the imperative nature of inherited and incorporated tradition for any political organization of society:

But can you, insignificant man, light this sacred fire that inflames nations? Can you give a common soul to several million men? Unite them under your laws? Range them closely around a common center? Shape the mind of men yet unborn? Make future generations obey you and create those age-old customs, those conserving prejudices, which are the father of the laws and stronger than them? What nonsense!<sup>57</sup>

In light of the previous chapter, it is clear that the unimaginable that became normality in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the creation of nations by a social contract out of a tabula rasa, is what Brazil had carefully avoided, even though the Republic then accidentally happened. For this incident, Maistre

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51 Gonçalves 2012: 187, 219; Velloso 1978; Pinto 2018: 112.

52 Gonçalves 2012: 180–182; Malatian 2006: 85; Cazetta 2012.

53 Deutsch 1999: 128.

54 Todaro Williams 1971: 125.

55 Pinheiro Filho 2007: 38.

56 Figueiredo 1929. About his unfinished book, see Todaro Williams 1971: 87.

57 Maistre 2017 [1794]: 109. For Maistre's influence on the French Right, see McClelland 1970.

offered the antidote counter-revolution but not in the erroneous royalist sense of learning from the insurgents how to mobilize the masses for regaining political power and restore the old system. Counter-revolution, he argues, does not depend at all on popular deliberation because for this no consent of the French in their majority seduced by republicanism was needed. What he proposes is to practice the contrary of revolution: preach calmness instead of commotion, peace instead of violence, order instead of chaos. This is no paradox but results from the robust belief in providence as a “secret force” to restore core values as obedience and subordination, without any need for violence and punishment, safe for those measures the “true nation” approves, without getting into details about what this practically means.<sup>58</sup>

This strategy of a counter-revolution as the contrary of revolution, which Jackson later tried to summarize in his article “Joseph de Maistre e a Contra-Revolução” (1929), deeply influenced the Brazilian approach to re-Christianizing society by instructing the political elite and rebuilding a conservative intellectuality. To practice a wrong – which means populist – counter-revolution will be a frequent internal quarrel with those conservative Catholics who managed to create militant counter-revolutionary mass movements, such as later Plínio Salgado’s Integralism in the 1930s and Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira’s TFP in the 1960s. This reluctant elitism motivates a certain disdain for the popularity of conservative evangelicals, as expressed by Dom Bertrand in my interview with him. It also stands behind Olavo de Carvalho’s life project to endow Brazil with a new generation of authentic intellectuals, rigidly committed to his teachings. As such, the Catholic counter-revolution is conceived as an authentic proto-Gramscian war of position to gain cultural hegemony instead of trying to dominate the state apparatus, which will be discussed later. The CDV was the first successful attempt to put this elitist strategy into practice, especially through its journal *A Ordem*, but also exclusive discussion circles, conferences and a large Catholic library.

### **The Catholic Re-Encounter with the State**

Jackson’s early accidental death in 1929 changed the character of the CDV during the 1930s and its role in the twofold conservative counter-revolution. The Center itself moved to a more moderate position under the leadership of Alceu Amoroso Lima, consolidating as the intellectual center of Catholic life in Brazil and spurred by a *jeunesse dorée* of “well-born

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58 Maistre 1880 [1797]: 133–135, 138, 185–186.

intellectuals for whom strictly material difficulties do not exist”.<sup>59</sup> These gave not only a new visibility to conservative Catholic ideas but introduced them into the political mainstream, in close collaboration with the anti-liberal regime of Getúlio Vargas. On the other hand, the new Integralist movement of Plínio Salgado took over their radical claims for a complete renewal of society. Amoroso Lima defined himself in contradictory terms as “Catholic in religion, Thomist in philosophy, democrat in politics and modernist in art”.<sup>60</sup> He literally opened the doors of the Center for another prominent member of *Action Française*, Jacques Maritain (1882–1973), who after the Papal prohibition changed to less authoritarian ideas and started to promote an “integral humanism”, also title of his famous 1936 book. In recognition of the irreversibility of the modern world and the need to answer to this with a new Christianity between medieval orthodoxy and liberalism, attitude which for others made him the 20<sup>th</sup> century corruptor of Thomism, Maritain substituted the previous main references Maistre and Maurras at the Center.<sup>61</sup> This also reflected a new strategy in Rome. Pius XI’s encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) updated Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* by introducing a significant formal distinction between “moderate” socialism and “violent” communism, for ending up condemning both. But he also added as third and major evil misery, in his eyes the principal cause of the success of communism. Conservative welfare policies would therefore disable revolution, notwithstanding the absolute incompatibility of real Christianity and socialism.<sup>62</sup>

It is no exaggeration to say that the Brazilian New State (1930–1945) coincided with the heyday of neo-Christianity in Brazil.<sup>63</sup> The anti-liberal revolution of Getúlio Vargas in 1930 opened all doors for this new harmonic collaboration between state and Church, conveniently exchanging support for privileges. Archbishop of the capital Rio de Janeiro, Sebastião Leme, the spiritus rector of the CDV and major ecclesiastical authority in Brazil, saw no problem in this and extolled the new authoritarian regime as “consistent with the Church’s hierarchical vision of society”.<sup>64</sup> The most visible and even iconic symbol of this re-encounter is the statue of Christ, a project realized by Leme, together with the architect Heitor da Silva e Costa and Alceu Amoroso Lima. As such, for the first time in Brazil, the Church was recognized and integrated

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59 Todaro Williams 1971: 183. See also Ramos 1961: 153 and on the *jeunesse dorée* Schwartzman et al. 1984.

60 Quoted in Antoine 1980 [1972]: 17.

61 Mattei 1997 [1996]: 62.

62 Pius XI 1931.

63 Mainwaring 1989 [1986]: 43.

64 Quoted in Pinto 2018: 111; see also Hernández Sandoval 2016: 352.

as autonomous political actor. Their first conquest in 1931 was the permission by presidential decree to offer religious education in public schools, restoring the situation as it was before 1889. Shortly after, in 1932, the Church was invited by Vargas to design a political, economic and social program for the country. Numerous Catholic organizations followed in the wake, and the foundation of a Catholic party remained as the only taboo of political engagement. Instead, Leme invented a new format, only apparently “outside and above political parties”, which turned out very efficient: the Catholic certification of candidates, committed to the Church’s principles, through an extra-partisan Catholic Electoral League (*Liga Eleitoral Católica*). The tool was first tested with great success in the 1932 elections for a Constituent Assembly, set up by Vargas.<sup>65</sup> The final 1934 Constitution then boasted all ten Catholic core claims, as promoted during their campaign, from a preamble invoking God to the prohibition of divorce.<sup>66</sup> The success was so big that Amoroso Lima gave a warning to watch out for the reaction of the invidious.<sup>67</sup>

Along with influencing the election of political representatives, to reach out to “common people” was a second priority of Leme’s “Catholic Action” which he started officially in 1935. This included workers organizations like the *Confederação de Trabalhadores Católicos* in Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais, journals like *O Operário* (with the same title as the anarchist one, to confuse readers<sup>68</sup>) and media organizations like the Confederation of Catholic Press (1937) which represented a wide range of militant Catholic papers such as *Vôzes*, *O Mensageiro do Coração de Jesus*, *Ave Maria*, *Lar Católico*, *Mensageiro do Rosário*, *O Lutador*, *Almanaque de Nossa Senhora Aparecida*, *Leituras Católicas*, *O Horizonte*, *O Diário*, *O Legionário* – the last one will be important in the following chapter. Above all, Catholic Action was concerned with increasing control of education because to reach the future generations of common people was another priority. Several research institutes, professional associations and confederations as well as college and university associations, the first one Catholic University Action (AUC) founded in 1929 by Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira. Together they pursued a rollback of the modernization of education, idealized as laic and public by the modernist “escolanovistas” (new-schoolers), arguing that the state has no authority in matters of morality neither competence in matters of pedagogy.<sup>69</sup> Less successful, this

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65 Todaro Williams 1971: 113.

66 Moura 1978: 89; Todaro Williams 1971: 330–34.

67 Lima 1934b: 7; Todaro Williams 1971: 336.

68 Deutsch 1999: 134.

69 Cowan 2016: 44.

initiative managed at least to submit most of the private colleges to their doctrine.<sup>70</sup>

### **Integrism meets Integralism**

The AIB, created in 1932 and led by its main ideologue and lifetime president Plínio Salgado (1895–1975) is considered by many scholars as the major fascist movement outside of Europe.<sup>71</sup> Notwithstanding, AIB was restricted to a short period from 1932 until the extinction of all parties in Brazil in 1937 and the repression in response to their failed coup d'état in May 1938, the “Levante Integralista”. During this period, Integralists did not have the opportunity to participate in the government (the second, tacit phase of Integralism after 1945 and especially after 1964, when ex-Integralists occupied high government positions, will be discussed in the next chapter.) However, as Amoroso Lima evaluated retrospectively

within a population of forty million inhabitants – that was the case of Brazil at the time – almost all of them “Catholics”, as they used to say, one million green-shirts, sworn and militant, constituted an inestimable force of action, not only in terms of numbers but also quality, thanks to the strictness of discipline and the cohesion of the movement and the mystique that bordered fanaticism.<sup>72</sup>

The foundation of the party AIB opened indeed a new chapter, though it lasted very shortly. It was not only a new party but unique as a conservative Catholic party with a nationwide infrastructure, rivaled only by the communists. As can be expected from a president for life, Plínio Salgado held absolute power. The party members were recruited basically from the urban middle class (public functionaries, teachers, journalists) whose principal motivations to join the party (anticommunism, sympathy for European fascisms, nationalism, authoritarianism) tended indeed to be more secular than spiritual motivations, which shows that apparently there was a demand for a more applied Catholic conservatism.<sup>73</sup> Anticommunism was such a natural motivation because it was already well introduced in the popular imaginary, due to the early reception of the “communist”

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70 Barbosa 2015.

71 Deutsch 1999: 5. The statistical information presented by Chauí & Franco (1978: 102–103) is impressive: At their peak in 1936, the “green year” (referring to their green uniform), Integralists commanded around 500 city councilors; 24 mayors; 3,000 Centers for Cultural, Moral and Civic education; more than one million party members; 123 private seminaries; 1285 private elementary schools and medical clinics to attend 2,000 patients.

72 Lima 1964: 526.

73 Trindade 1974: 140, 172; Chauí & Franco 1978.

threat in the above mentioned Catholic texts with a first peak in the press coverage of the October Revolution. The 1920s were shaped by a rich domestic production of anti-Soviet books in Brazil, besides translations, with another peak in the mid-1930s, stimulated by the Spanish Civil War. Interestingly, this happened earlier than for example in the U.S., whose government even reacted with concerns to the Brazilian prohibition of the Communist Party in 1937.<sup>74</sup>

Two main collaborators had a decisive influence on the Integralist party, which – besides tactical rivalry and the reserves against their creation of a political party – made other conservatives disavow from the Integralists; the first one because of his antisemitism, the second because of his republicanism. Gustavo Barroso (1888–1959), director of the National Historical Museum and responsible for the Integralist militias, and lawyer Miguel Reale (1910–2006), responsible for the party’s National Department of Doctrine. In 1969, the latter was nominated rector of the prestigious University of São Paulo and his son, Miguel Reale Junior, became famous as one of the proponents of the successful impeachment claim against Dilma Rousseff. Both Miguel Reale and Gustavo Barroso were interested in the world of high finance. Reale’s book *O capitalismo internacional* [International Capitalism] from 1935 reads as an anticipated version of Olavo de Carvalho’s later theory of metacapitalist globalism. Barroso reintroduced into Brazilian conservative thinking the updated version of the century old cliché of Jewish financial conspiracy through his book *Brasil, Colônia de banqueiros* [Brazil, Colony of Bankers] from 1934. Probably a larger readership reached his prefaced translation of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, published in 1936, exactly after the Berne Trial that definitely certified the forgery (the last edition of this embarrassing book was then published in 1991, as part of Barroso’s Commemorative Collection). Barroso had a certain influence on gaining the support of the military who felt more attracted to AIB’s martial rites and symbolism, their military trainings in schools and their attempt to build a citizen army through Integralist militias, than by Catholic re-Christianization.<sup>75</sup> Several articles in the journal *Revista do Clube Militar* from the early 1930s, signed only with the abbreviation “M. C.”, are symptomatic for their appraisal of Integralism, as in this sample:

Fascism substitutes the communist hate for a friendly reconciliation. It substitutes the relentless fight between enemies, preached by communism, with a rigorous collaboration among allies. Morally, fascism

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74 Motta 2000: 17–18, 20, 27–31.

75 Deutsch 1999: 109.

tears away the hypocrite mask from Bolsheviks faces. It replaces the impetuous waterfall of Bolshevism with a more tranquil and regular water current. Fascism does not constitute a reaction. Just like Bolshevism, it is a revolution; but a civilizing, constructing one, not destructive or vandalistic like communism.<sup>76</sup>

On a sidenote, to Plínio Salgado this moral support was by far not enough. Just as Olavo de Carvalho did later, Salgado had insisted, in his 1930's texts, on accusing the army of not repressing the communists rigidly.<sup>77</sup> At the same time, he always insisted – again like Carvalho – that a reform of the state, without a previous “interior revolution” of the Christian human being, would not succeed.<sup>78</sup>

There is no doubt that several aspects suggest the labeling of Integralism as tropical “fascism”. However, if considered within the context of re-Christianization, the AIB might also be understood as a more practice-oriented and populist variant of Integrism. They shared the same roots, agreed on most ideas, and only diverged about their political strategy during the New State and about theological aspects with limited relevance for the movement's social impact. Still, it is undisputed that Integralism represented the major right-wing movement in Brazil until the rise of the New Right.<sup>79</sup> If we consider their large overlap with Integrism and other conservatives, this is even more valid. In my examination, I will only focus on the aspect of the convergence with conservative ideas which goes somehow neglected in the vast scholarly literature on Integralism, probably due to their rituals and symbols in affinity with European fascisms, which – I presume – might have biased the perception. This is even more important to understand that their political fiasco did not make Integralist ideas disappear at all. Along this and the next chapters, I will argue that the writings of Plínio Salgado, Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira and even Olavo de Carvalho, if seen under this aspect, have much more in common than in separate. Or to put it straight: there is no surprise in Olavo de Carvalho deeming Salgado's ideas as “morally unexceptionable” (I will get back on their many affinities in chapter six).<sup>80</sup>

The very denomination “Integralism” suggests a proximity to Catholic “Integrism”. In fact, both allude to “integration”, although with different scopes and therefore integrating different components. “Integralism”

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76 Quoted in Monteiro Jr. 2014: 54.

77 Quoted in Motta 2000: 332.

78 Roque 2003: 304.

79 Doria 2020: 11.

80 Carvalho 2000a.

derives from Salgado's theory of the stages of humanity: First, the polytheist humanity; second, the Roman Christian fusion; third, the enlightened-rationalist disintegration; and fourth – like always, last and best – the one heralded by themselves to integrate all the previous ones; hence the name and the symbol, the Greek uppercase sigma.<sup>81</sup> The Integralist doctrine is summarized in the movement's Manifesto from the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 1932 and elaborated in a multitude of texts. The quintessence is quite familiar for somebody who has read the encyclicals: the diagnosis of a modern suffering from alienation from religion. Integralism promises to reconduct to “eternal truth” and hereby create the basis for a new organic and harmonic society, guided by spiritual humanism.<sup>82</sup> But what sounds as one more Catholic variation of the nostalgia for pre-modern times goes indeed a bit beyond. Salgado deemed his project so powerful that it could “integrate” literally all antagonisms in a new harmonized Brazil:

We intend to realize the Integralist State, free of every and each principle of division: political parties; federal states fighting for hegemony; class struggle; local factions; *caudillisms*; disorganized economy; antagonisms of military and civilian; antagonisms of state militia and the army; of government and the people; of government and intellectuals; of the latter and the masses. [...] We intend to create, with all the racial elements, according to the mesological and economic imperatives, the Brazilian Nation, saving it from the mistakes of the capitalist civilization and the mistakes of the communist barbarianism.<sup>83</sup>

While this social vision was seen critically by Catholic conservatives because of the latent “liberal agnosticism” and “pantheism”, as well as later the Integralist's mystical “theosophic” rhetoric and the Christ-like veneration of their leader Salgado<sup>84</sup>, they could perfectly agree on how to start the whole process: a cultural counter-revolution to transform the spiritual “interior” of human beings.<sup>85</sup> It is important to notice that despite the political impact of Integralism, Salgado has always concentrated his writings on the spiritual counter-revolution – indeed a re-Christianization – and at the sight of the political debacle of AIB he retrenched even more to the exclusive defense of the true traditions of Brazilian Catholicism.<sup>86</sup>

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81 Trindade 1974: 211.

82 Todaro Williams 1971: 372.

83 Salgado 1932.

84 So Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira in several articles published in *O Legionário* between 1934 and 1936 (Deutsch 1999: 298; Todaro Williams 1971: 408).

85 Salgado quoted in Chasin 1978: 564–5; Cavalari 1999.

86 Lustosa 1976: 511.



Actually, most of his books can be classified as theologically inspired, in spite of the political presence of his movement.

The affinity between Integralism and Integrism is only coherent if we remember that Salgado's biography has been closely related to neo-Christianity. He too came from the National Defense League, wrote for *Revista do Brazil*, *Brazílea* and *Gil Blas*. In 1922 he preferred to join the more militant organization *Legião do Cruzeiro do Sul* in São Paulo, but he and his growing group of followers – most of them militant Catholics<sup>87</sup> – also joined several of the mentioned Catholic movements, such as the AUC.<sup>88</sup> In sum, until the founding of the AIB as a political party, hardly any divergences can be spotted and the mere distinction between “Integralists” and “Integrists” appears arbitrary. They perfectly agreed about the piety, morality, family and authority to be realized in an ordered Christian civilization. They also agreed that for this the evil of liberalism, communism and freemasonry had to be annihilated.<sup>89</sup> If Integralists were more radical in their “battle for Christ”<sup>90</sup>, this fell on fertile Catholic ground, as Amoroso Lima, who in the 1950s renegaded from Integrism and started to sympathize with Catholic reformism, remembered in retrospective: “Catholic conservatism, nourished by a not always well-grounded anti-liberalism, would naturally tend toward an organization where the primacy of authority was blindly cultivated, and discipline and order deified even at the expense of freedom.”<sup>91</sup>

Salgado's thought dialogues almost exclusively with the opulent tradition of Brazilian Integrism, above all with the above-mentioned mentor Farias Brito and his disciple Jackson de Figueiredo.<sup>92</sup> He leaned even less on European influences than for example Jackson, and always insisted on having learned about Lusitanian Integralism only after he founded AIB.<sup>93</sup> The same way, he remained skeptical about *Action Française*, which he understood as too restorative instead of visionary, and there are only few implicit references to Maurras in Salgado's work.<sup>94</sup> Even if we should not forget that for a declared nativistic ideology, the mimesis of external ideas is never a motive for pride, there is no sound reason to assume why Integralism should have been closer to European fascisms

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87 Todaro Williams 1971: 347.

88 Azzi 2003: 14.

89 Moura 1978: 98.

90 Todaro Williams 1971: 373.

91 Lima 1964: 530.

92 See, for example, Salgado's text *Despertemos a nação!* (Salgado 1935: 17–18) which testifies the reception of Farias Brito's legacy from *O mundo interior* (2006 [1914]). The information is confirmed by Trindade (1974: 38) and Cavalari (1999: 158–159).

93 Trindade 2016: 181, based on his interview with Salgado in 1974.

94 Bertonha 2018: 17–18; Salgado 1979 [1945]: 16.

than Integrism.<sup>95</sup> It is certainly true that Salgado carefully observed Italian fascism and even met Mussolini briefly in 1930, which gave some room for speculations.<sup>96</sup> But Italian fascism mattered to him more as anticommunist emergency break than as program: “[Fascism] was the salvation of Italy. It was almost in the hands of communists. They had already seized the factories, had seized everything, so that it was the salvation there. Then, turned into state, the mistakes start to come.”<sup>97</sup>

Still in 1932, Salgado founded and presided in São Paulo an institution, the Society of Political Studies (SEP), which was in every sense similar to the CDV in Rio de Janeiro: an inclusive conservative Think Tank, frequented by Catholics – among them Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira – and monarchists.<sup>98</sup> Integralists only became ideologically distinguishable and successively isolated within conservatives as a result of their decision to definitely turn into a predominantly political movement and to create their own party, something Archbishop Leme had always vetoed his followers to do.<sup>99</sup> As Sobral Pinto summarized, politics were in principle of no interest for the Church, unless they interfered in the “order of ideas” and other principles above politics. In that case, political interference was required to make sure that, as Pope Leo XIII commanded, the philosophy of the Gospel governed the states; through teaching, legislation and social practice, which could all be expressed through the verb “penetrate”.<sup>100</sup> In this almost unlimited understanding of politics, Integrists worked tacitly to change society from within the structures of *Estado Novo*, while Integralists, after having supported equally Vargas’ seizure of power in 1930, attempted to change these structures from outside, culminating in their coup d’état in May 1938 – and failed. Forebodingly, Integrists felt more attracted by the stability of a Catholic-friendly *Estado Novo* than by an Integralist counter-revolution with uncertain consequences. Still, the Catholic authorities of the 1930s, Archbishop Leme and Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira, unanimously appreciated Integralism as the best prepared organization to defend “God, the Nation and Family” (the Integralist battle cry) against atheistic communists, especially for being able to operate in fields which could not be officially supported by the Church.<sup>101</sup>

The critiques uttered at that time by Catholic conservatives like Amoroso Lima – setting aside theological matters, which equally raised

95 Vasconcelos 1979: 17, 51.

96 Gonçalves 2012: 221.

97 Trindade 2016: 186.

98 Todaro Williams 1971: 349; Trindade 1974: 127; Malatian 1978: 37.

99 Zanotto 2010: 290–292; Pereira 2010: 295–296.

100 Sobral Pinto 2014 [1931]: 188–193.

101 Pinto 2018: 131; Todaro Williams 1976: 452; Zanotto 2010: 290–292.

internal quarrels with monarchists and even among Integralists themselves – pointed to the fact that Integralists had appropriated the CDV’s ideas, popularized them to the masses and undertaken the plan to become the official party of the Catholic Church in Brazil.<sup>102</sup> This sounds more like reproving unfair competition to their own Catholic Action and indeed my interviewees at the IPCO were concordant to see the historical rise of Integralism as useful for their anti-communist cause but in the end as too independent and too successful. What they feared was, in their own words, a “cannibalization” of the movement. Once the communists were defeated after their failed insurrection in November 1935 (the foundational myth of the Brazilian military’s red scare), Integralists seemed to lose relevance.<sup>103</sup> Not even their unconditional and theatrically staged support of Vargas’ self-putsch in 1937, justified as a reaction toward a forged plan of a Jewish-communist invasion, the “Cohen Plan” (which Salgado had the honor to revise before it leaked), saved them from being prohibited like all other parties a month later.<sup>104</sup> When their last desperate act failed, the vengeful coup d’état in May 1938, which Archbishop Leme still appreciated as willed by Providence,<sup>105</sup> Integralists seemed to have accomplished their duty and could even have been officially condemned like *Action Française*. This was actually induced in 1938 and when Eugenio Pacelli, the State Secretary of the Vatican and future Pope Pius XII, asked through the Brazilian Nuncio for an assessment, it turned out finding fault in Salgado’s attempt to pull the Church to partisan politics. Nevertheless, the Holy See, under the impression of the Spanish Civil War, saw no necessity of condemning them, confident that their good seeds would grow vigorously and reconsolidate Brazilian moral on religious sentiments.<sup>106</sup>

However, Plínio Salgado abandoned his seeds at this very moment in 1938. After having followed the *Levante Integralista* strategically at a distance and without later assuming any responsibility as the movement’s spiritual leader of this merely political act, he was kept in provisional

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102 Lima 1934a: 405; confirmed by Torres (1968: 195) and Todaro Williams (1971: 376).

103 Moura 1978: 100.

104 The Cohen Plan was the fictive scenario of a Soviet invasion, authored by the military Olympio Mourão Filho and revised by Plínio Salgado, who planned to disseminate the story among entrepreneurs to boost their money collection. The plan got out of control when Mourão lend the document to his neighbor general Mariante, who forwarded to general Góes Monteiro, who then suggested to Vargas to use it as pretext for the declaration of the state of exception (Trindade 2016: 161). Mourão Filho was later in charge of the Operation Popeye, which triggered the military coup in 1964. He has no family relation with Hamilton Mourão, Bolsonaro’s vice president.

105 Todaro Williams 1976: 452.

106 Gonçalves 2012: 266–267, 271–272.

detention for three weeks. Differently from around 1,500 of his militants, no accusation against him followed and he departed – in fact as a tourist – into his Portuguese “exile”. There, he became known as the “fifth evangelist”, so the poem *Vox Dei* composed by the militant monarchist Count of Monsaraz:<sup>107</sup>

How it is, my Lord, two thousand years later,  
 That one thus raises, in a hellish century,  
 Preaching Love and Good for hating the Evil,  
 New gospel in new meridians?  
 A man, Plínio, name of Romans,  
 With roots in the equatorial jungle,  
 Brought it now, in peaceful sign,  
 For the men of this inhumane times.  
 Jesus called him, as with John and Peter,  
 And told him: Where in spirit I do not prosper,  
 Go, sow the magnificent seed...  
 Thou art my disciple today, at this time  
 When only the one who does not love me does not cry  
 “Make all the people cry and love!”

Integralism back in Brazil, once prohibited from political engagement, reconciled with Integristism and continued vivid in conservative intellectual debates – for example in the highly regarded journal *Cadernos da Hora Presente* (São Paulo, 1939–1940) to which most of the previously mentioned intellectual heavyweights contributed, especially Amoroso Lima, Miguel Reale, Camilo de Oliveira Torres – and of course Plínio Salgado.

### **The Conservative–Authoritarian (Con)fusion**

In the 1930s, “fascist” Integralists and devout Catholics were closely entangled. This has been later no matter of concealing but in general was proudly assumed as a glorious past, as Margaret Todaro William’s interviews with many of the key actors show. These interviewees depict Integralism as the natural ally of Catholicism against communism, to defend the superiority of the spiritual over the temporal realm, in a permanent struggle between Good and Evil.<sup>108</sup> This even included monarchists and the first early representations of Afro–Brazilian interests. The above-mentioned monarchist movement Patrianovism was practically

107 Gonçalves & Caldeira Neto 2020: 61–63, 70, 75.

108 Trindade 1974: 211.

undistinguishable from the CDV, where all members participated – and by the way, Patrianovist leader Arlindo Veiga dos Santos was the treasurer. The other way around, CDV's leader Amoroso Lima was one of the most assiduous contributors of the monarchist journal *Patria-Nova*. Monarchists had no concerns either to mingle with Integralists, who they praised in this journal as a complementary proposal to neo-monarchism.<sup>109</sup> Salgado, with monarchic inclinations, though considering the form less important than the essence, even tried to formalize the unwritten alliance with Patrianovists, and proposed to create a joint party, which for unknown reasons did not work out.<sup>110</sup> Instead, most monarchists joined his above-mentioned SEP and many others, among them important *patrianovistas* like the folklorist Luís da Câmara Cascudo and Father Hélder Câmara (the later liberation theologian). The latter was in addition CDV's chaplain and migrated to the AIB as soon as the party was founded.<sup>111</sup> Arlindo Veiga dos Santos then created a militant sister organization to AIB, the *Frente Negra Brasileira* (1931), Brazil's first political organization to defend Afro-Brazilian interests, under the Integralists' slightly modified motto "God, Race, Nation and Family". In 1932, he went one step further and created the *Guarda Imperial Patrianovista*, a paramilitary group to defend monarchic Christian Brazil against "communist" attacks who cultivated the ritual greeting "Glória!", extending the right arm.<sup>112</sup> For the Integralist hardliner Barroso, things were quite clear: "Patrianovism is monarchist because it is Integralist."<sup>113</sup> The only disturbing element in the relationship was Reale's increasing republicanism, but at that moment the movement was already close to its prohibition by Vargas in 1937.

Besides the organizational proximity, one of the most paradigmatic examples for the common basis of thought for conservative thinking during the 1930s, independent if Catholic, monarchic, national or Integralist, is their convergence on creating a corporatist society. Corporatism is, very briefly, the theory to ground political representation on bodies in which members of different professions elect deputies to a national corporatist chamber as part of the Legislative, usually complemented by a Senate which is composed by non-economic social and cultural representatives. Commonly, corporatism is closely associated with European fascisms.<sup>114</sup> Indeed, the Brazilian reception of this model draw somehow on the

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109 Todaro Williams 1971: 217–218, based on interview with Scantimburgo; Malatian 2001: 68.

110 Trindade 2016: 159.

111 Domingues 2006; Deutsch 1999: 250, 290.

112 Malatian 1978: 127.

113 Barroso 1936: 43.

114 Pinto 2018: 111, 129.

Romanian pro-fascist economist Mihail Manoilescu (1891–1950). His books on what he called pure corporatism – especially *O século do corporativismo* [The Century of Corporatism] from 1938 – were translated by the Integralist Antônio José de Azevedo Amaral (1881–1942), an important publicist associated with Vargas’ propaganda apparatus and advocate of an authoritarian collective solution for what he understood as the individualist liberal crisis of disorder in Brazil.<sup>115</sup> However, before that, corporatism became a determining reference for Vargas and his New State policies, which are considered the most advanced case of the implementation of corporatism in Latin America.<sup>116</sup> Integralist thinkers such as Miguel Reale contributed to making the adoption of corporatism in Brazil plausible for conservatives by situating the model in a tradition of medieval corporations, which had been destroyed by modernism.<sup>117</sup> This idea of reinvigorating medieval social structures was also exalted by the monarchists. Patrianovist Paim Vieira argued for the indispensability of religion for corporatism: “Corporate organization in itself does not realize the harmony of classes. It is simply the instrument whose energy is the Christian spirit. There is no such thing as a ley corporatism. Unionism without God is absurd.”<sup>118</sup>

The above-mentioned Pedro Henrique de Orléans e Bragança, Crown pretender in French exile, directed in 1936 one of his few manifestos to his Brazilian subjects, making no secret of his sympathy for the Vargas regime, especially because of the implementation of corporatism as a remedy against excesses of state and liberalism:

Today, however, Brazil again relies on children who, seeing the danger that threatens us, decided to fight for the ideal of the united Brazil, without damaging the autonomy and the administrative differentiations of each region. They will be heard and followed because their cause is good and just; sophisms will not prevail against them. [...] But that does not mean that, for us to reach our aligned goal, we have to subject to the state’s functional hypertrophy, for that is the utmost cause of the present deep depression in all spheres of activity, both social and political, economic and financial. On the other hand, economic liberalism without brakes enslaves the world to the high international and anonymous finance, also being one of the most deplorable causes of social discontent.

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115 Amaral 1934. About the impact of Manoilescu’s theory on Vargas, see Pinto 2018: 124–125.

116 Fausto 2001: 57; Pinto 2018: 127.

117 In the books *A posição do integralismo* [The Position of Integralism] and *O Estado Moderno* [The Modern State], both from 1933. Trindade 1974: 235; Fausto 2001: 10; Roque 2000.

118 Quoted in Trindade 2015: 112.

Thus, the constantly propagated freedom of work is nothing but utopia, which ends up subjecting itself in the submission of the weak to the strong. Efficient remedy lies in the reestablishment of corporations by gathering employers, employees and workers of crafts and other occupations or professions, belonging to the same industry. By doing so, we move away from class struggle, which is sterile and harmful for all the stakeholders, and comes from workers' or employers' unionism. The corporative system eliminates these elements of unrest and carries out, in the economy, rational organization of production.<sup>119</sup>

The ones who actually introduced corporativism into the government as early as 1931 and designed the corporatist labor legislation were conservative Catholics experts.<sup>120</sup> This is confirmed by the conservative historian Oliveira Torres, unsuspected of slander. He came to the conclusion that the Brazilian Labor Legislation – the one the Brazilian New Right today likes to blame as based on Mussolini's fascist *Carta del Lavoro* [Labor Charter] which to them means leftist – was predominantly a Catholic product. It was written in collaboration between capital and labor under surveillance of the state and following the Catholic core principles.<sup>121</sup> One of these experts was the above-mentioned Oliveira Vianna (1883–1951), senior advisor to Vargas' Ministry of Labor since 1932, who in 1938 published on this topic *Problemas de direito corporativo* [Corporate Law Problems].<sup>122</sup> Another was Francisco Campos (1891–1968), Vargas' main ideologue and Minister for Education – the one who re-introduced religion in public schools. Later Minister for Justice, he was responsible for the elaboration of Vargas' corporatist 1937 Putsch-Constitution about which Campos commented: "Corporatism kills communism, just as capitalism generates communism."<sup>123</sup>

While corporativism is a goal which has almost completely disappeared from the New Right's agenda today, except for serving as example to adulate the imagination of a harmonic society in the Middle Ages,<sup>124</sup> another common creed has been carefully preserved until today and even gained new importance: sexual moralism. To portray communism as an erotic and diabolic enterprise has been a common argument since Jackson de Figueiredo (and in a certain way, referring to proto-communist freemasonry, since Bishop Vital). In Plínio Salgado, it gained a new pathos:

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119 Bragança 1936.

120 Gentile 2010.

121 Torres 1968: 198–199, 210–211.

122 Gentile 2010: 155.

123 Pinto 2018: 128.

124 Lindenberg 2017: 105.

Bolshevism is the most evident, the most eloquent and palpable of proofs that Satan exists and torments men. So, Satan is the horrible archangel of lies, deceit, perfidy, felony, hypocrisy, ambush, snare, surprises, pilfering, tortuosity, misleading, confusions, perjury, denial and doom.[...] Bolshevism deceives workers, taking them to slavery, oppression, to the whip, without the need to handcuff them physically, but handcuffing their soul, where it turns off the only light, the light of spiritualism, which ensures, sustains and protects man's freedom. Bolshevism deceives weak, demoralized governments by pretending to be its own enemy, acting like the advocate of democratic liberties, the supporter of the institutions. [...] Bolshevism deceives the bourgeoisie. It deploys numerous followers, who are well-dressed, frequent fancy places, hold key positions in society; they even pose as enemies of the Soviet. Its task is to demoralize the family, to praise pagan life.<sup>125</sup>

Benjamin Cowan has thoroughly worked out the idea that the communist Satan was feared most in his disguise as sexual seducer. Based on his findings, it looks like the fear of lax sexual morals has been the main motivation for anti-communist attitudes. For Everardo Backheuser, Catholic combatant at the CDV, communism acted from “Luther to Kremlin” to destroy purposefully the “moral perfection of Middle Ages” by gnawing “the noble roots of the Society that was built by the Catholic Church” – these roots understood as codes of moral, sexual and gender behavior.<sup>126</sup> Barroso made it his habit to mingle sexual and political liberties, as in “democratic orgies and communist bacchanals”.<sup>127</sup> Octávio de Faria, Amoroso Lima's brother-in-law, presented a whole treatise on the idea of moral subversion. Alfredo Buzaid, one of several ex-Integralists who came to power after 1945 (in his case, nominated vice rector of the University of São Paulo in 1969, Minister of Justice under president general Médici and later Member of the Federal Supreme Court) inferred from the changes in sexual morality “a plan of revolutionary action that corresponds to the proposals of Marxist-Leninist agitation”.<sup>128</sup> The conspiracy argument gave new brisance to the phenomenon which had been broadly bemoaned previously but usually with a bit of self-criticism and traced back to intrinsic causes. In *Primeiro, Cristo!* [First, Christ!] from 1945, Plínio Salgado appeals to male, occidental conscience: “What name does a civilization deserve when it has casinos, nightclubs, discos, scandalous promiscuities, nakedness on the beach and beauty contests

125 Salgado 1937: 159–60.

126 Cowan 2016: 26, referring to Backheuser 1933.

127 Barroso 1935: 15.

128 Cowan 2016: 30 (referring to Faria 1931), 134.



with a zoo-technical style, all of them degrading to women's majesty and dignity?"<sup>129</sup>

Cowan finds the earliest cases of this equation of sexual and political seduction and communism already in the National Defense Leagues, with growing popularity during the 1930s and 1950s, until it provoked "full-blown panic" in 1960s and 1970s. He reads it as a reaction to "sybaritic" counter-culture, with horny male communists beguiling innocent bourgeois daughters or even sons (or in the variant of pederast liberation theologians, any minors of age), often connecting moral with administrative corruption.<sup>130</sup> Apparently, under McCarthyism homosexuals were declared a bigger risk to be eliminated than communists themselves, as they were perceived as susceptible to blackmailing and potential betrayers.<sup>131</sup> Moral degeneration was analyzed as safe indicator of communist subversion:

Anticommunists, from power brokers to police, came to envision a grand conspiracy emerging in sexual, moral and cultural change. They interpreted these changes as evidence of a plot against the nation and against the West – a plot that implicated miniskirts alongside machine guns, gay rights alongside guerrillas, and pornography alongside propaganda.<sup>132</sup>

This notwithstanding the largely documented communist prudery, homophobia and misogyny – at other convenient occasions reason for conservative pique – also valid for Brazilian "leftist" political movements where "drugs, sex, gender-bending, and even feminism remained frivolous diversion".<sup>133</sup> The association of sexual morals and political subversion is a golden thread which apparently never breaks off. Cowan quotes one of the last masterpieces of intelligence in a Federal Police report from 1980 warning that "clandestine communist organizations have been forming their base cells in the homosexual milieus and among prostitutes, orienting homosexuals and sex workers to organize themselves in associations designed as tools of pressure and propaganda".<sup>134</sup> The report also fulminates against the "scenes of libertinism" during Carnival, already a thorn in Archbishop Leme's flesh in 1916, which reminds current attacks by the Bolsonaro government which insisted in generalizing the rather special sexual practice of "golden shower" as typical carnivalesque

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129 Salgado 1979 [1945]: 12.

130 Cowan 2016: 94–96, 101–103, 159. On the association of moral and administrative corruption, see Antoine 1980 [1972]: 74.

131 Robin 2011: 201–203.

132 Cowan 2016: 14.

133 Cowan 2016: 64; Ventura 1988: 34. See also Langland 2004: 54–55. and Green 2012.

134 Quoted in Cowan 2016: 239.

tradition. Regarding conservative sexual obsessions, apparently nothing has changed for a full century.

## 4 Balking Modernization

*“Revolution” – We give that word the meaning of a movement that aims to destroy a power or a legitimate order and put in its place a state of things (we deliberately do not want to say order of things) or an illegitimate power. [...] If Revolution is the opposite of the Church, it’s impossible to hate Revolution (considered globally, not in some isolated aspect) and fight it, without ipso facto having as an ideal the exaltation of the Church.*

Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira<sup>1</sup>

*Wars and revolutions cause excitement, as is natural, of the childish euphoria of the winners and the radical desperation of the losers. This is what we are seeing at the moment, thanks to the atmosphere of extremist radicalism, so anti-Brazilian for that matter, in which we have been living for a long time. Terrorism is also anti-Brazilian and for that very reason, at least so far, the form, that has been developing among us, still only takes on the aspects that are softer and indirect, as is for example cultural terrorism, the war on ideas.*

Alceu Amoroso Lima  
(in May 1964 on the coup d’état)<sup>2</sup>

In the late 1930s, after the authoritarian turn of Vargas’ New State, which checkmated both Integralist and communist attempts to power, the CDV and the Integrists grouped around it had almost achieved a hegemonic position. However, in absence of both competitor and enemy, the center became subject to internal fights. Its moderating tendency toward Maritainism during the 1930s, led by Amoroso Lima, to conciliate with political pluralism, had already dissipated the more radical members.<sup>3</sup> These so-called Anti-Maritainists ended up gathering around *O Legionário*. Previously an insignificant journal of the Sodality

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1 Corrêa de Oliveira 2017 [1959]: 3, 111.

2 Lima 1964: 319.

3 Villaça 1975: 14; Velloso 1978: 155.

of Our Lady at the Parish Santa Cecília,<sup>4</sup> it was upgraded in 1933 as the influential house organ of the Archdiocese of São Paulo with national distribution. This was done under the new direction of Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira. Unconditionally Maurrassian and supporting the *Action Française* still in 1937, *O Legionário* fought rigorously all moderating and reformist tendencies in the CDV, including Catholic Action when it appeared to grow too “progressive”.<sup>5</sup> Corrêa de Oliveira’s book *Em Defesa da Ação Católica* [In Defense of Catholic Action] from 1943 served as an “alarm call against the germs of laicism, liberalism and egalitarianism that started to invade Catholic Action”.<sup>6</sup> The sower of these germs was of course CDV’s president himself, Amoroso Lima, with whom Corrêa de Oliveira cultivated a feud.

Under these circumstances, the CDV gradually lost its central position among conservatives. Meanwhile Leonel Franca (1893–1948), the center’s first ecclesiastic assistant, founded the Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro in 1940.<sup>78</sup> Franca had distinguished himself with his monograph *A crise do mundo moderno* [The Crisis of Modern World] from 1941. This title should not be confused – despite certain similarities – with René Guénon’s 1927 identically titled book, in which he traced the negative force of philosophy through the already familiar three revolutionary acts: from Luther (relativizing Christian order as barely ornamental), via Descartes (affirming that the idea of God does not prove His existence) to Kant, Nietzsche and Hegel (who induced the “divinization” of man) which then prepared the grounds for communism.<sup>9</sup> Yet Sebastião Leme’s and Franca’s deaths, in 1942 and 1948, created a vacuum of leadership on the die-hard conservative wing of Catholicism which Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira occupied with enormous success. He should form a new triumvirate, together with his loyal fellow combatants Antônio de Castro Mayer (bishop of Campos) and the already quoted Geraldo de Proença Sigaud (bishop of Jacarezinho and later archbishop of Diamantina). Until his death in 1995, Corrêa de Oliveira acted as the main strategist to defend the recently conquered power position of the Catholic religion which allowed them to pressure the state’s conservative agenda.

Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira’s rise matched well the beginning of the Cold War, which also had an impact on the Vatican. Symbolically, Pius

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4 Mattei 1997: 74.

5 Altoé 2006: 43. About Maurrassianism in *O Legionário*, see for example Corrêa de Oliveira 1937.

6 Corrêa de Oliveira 1996: 15.

7 Todaro Williams 1971: 71.

8 Cowan 2016: 109.

9 Franca 1951 [1941]: 53–77.

xii's anticommunist decree from 1949 represented this new attitude. With a scratch of his Papal pen, literally all communists and sympathizers were excluded from receiving the sacraments – equal to excommunication. The only error to commit was to support communist politics, for example through vote, or communist ideas through writing, dissemination or reading of books, journals and leaflets.<sup>10</sup> The decree was confirmed by John xxiii in 1959 and in principle is still valid. Olavo de Carvalho has pointed repeatedly to the fact that this decree – given the encompassing definition of “communism” among Brazilian conservative Catholics – excommunicated almost every Brazilian intellectual and for sure a vast majority of the Brazilian population, even without knowing it.<sup>11</sup> This would concern, based on his understanding, all those who at some point gave their vote for a candidate of the Workers' Party (PT) or the Party of Brazilian Social Democracy (PSDB), browsed one of the notoriously “communist” Brazilian media outlets or switched through a “communist” TV channel, though Pius xii could not know yet about the misdeeds of *TV Globo*.

Brazil's new conservative icon Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira was born in São Paulo in 1908 in an aristocratic – some say masonic<sup>12</sup> – family. His great-uncle was João Alfredo Corrêa de Oliveira, senator, president of the province of São Paulo and one of Emperor Pedro ii's last prime ministers. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira studied in a Jesuit College but only converted to Catholicism when he turned twenty.<sup>13</sup> He earned a degree at the Faculty of Law of São Paulo (as a novelty in the Faculty, Leonel Franca worshipped at his graduation ceremony) where he created his inner circle of followers, the “Group Joseph de Maistre”, at that early moment probably with a certain gnostic tendency and a bias toward an initiatic society, as the contacts to mystic and esoteric movements suggest.<sup>14</sup> If this information is correct, it would allow for an interesting comparison with Olavo de Carvalho's mystic background which will be discussed at length in chapter six. However, a certain inclination toward spiritualist movements was a common feature among Catholics during the 1920s and does not allow for precipitated conclusions.<sup>15</sup> As a friend of the royal family, Corrêa de Oliveira had already been in contact with

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10 CDF 1949: 334.

11 “Hangout” with Olavo de Carvalho and Jair Bolsonaro, April 28, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cm8svK2jKCA>.

12 Valadares 2007: 250.

13 The biographical information is mainly based on TFP 1989, Zanotto 2009 and Mattei 1997.

14 Valadares 2007: 251.

15 A first attempt to grasp this dimension has been done by Oliveira 2015.

*Patrianovistas* and in 1931 he joined the São Paulo branch of the CDV and founded there the already mentioned AUC. Different from most other conservatives, Corrêa de Oliveira ran for political office. In 1933 and only 24 years old (by that time the legal minimum age for deputies) he was elected – through the Catholic Electoral League – to the Constituent Assembly, as most voted candidate in Brazil. This enormous success turned him immediately into a renowned person, which also opened the doors to academia: in 1937 he was appointed Chair of History of Civilization at his alma mater, the Faculty of Law, now belonging to the University of São Paulo, besides appointments at the Faculties *Sedes Sapientiae* and São Bento.

Brazil's return to a democratic system in 1945 and the readmission of parties provoked a certain confusion and dispersion of conservatives, though most ended up supporting to some degree the National Democratic Union (UDN) or the Christian-Democratic Party (PDC). Democratization developed many-sided dynamics, which gave reason to concerns among conservatives. Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira reacted by popularizing conservatism, enhancing the outreach, and modernizing the proselyting techniques. In 1951, a watershed was the new monthly journal *Catholicism* – founded by Castro Mayer in substitution of the traditional *O Legionário*, which had fallen to “progressists”. *Catholicism* revealed well the new lobbying strategy: targeting a broader upper middle-class readership, with catchy articles to draw the reader's attention and then to persuade him with a personal tone, convincing “cases in point” to sympathize and blunt statements. In Corrêa de Oliveira's own words, this might hurt but cures, just like “a disinfectant penetrates the core of the wound of the one who has an infection”.<sup>16</sup>

As the democratizing tendencies continued, Corrêa de Oliveira pulled his imaginary emergency break by launching in 1959 his most important book *Revolução e Contra-Revolução*.<sup>17</sup> Both his diagnosis of modernist “revolution” as his concept of “counter-revolution” revolutionized conservative Catholic thinking in Brazil. The “revolution” was encompassingly defined as a movement to destroy the legitimate order and power, to replace it with any other state of things (as in his eyes no other order was even imaginable) and illegitimate power. Historically, this revolution occurred as one single event, proceeding through three stages, which have been defined in similar terms by other conservative

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16 Corrêa de Oliveira 2003 [n. d.]: 27.

17 *Revolução e Contra-Revolução* has been published in 15 languages and distributed in 22 countries, with a total of 167,000 copies (Corrêa de Oliveira 2017 [1959]: 117 footnote 67).

thinkers before him, for example Leonel Franca: The Lutheran Pseudo-Reform to sow the doubt, the French Revolution to exclude the Church from the state and establish the false maxims of equality and liberty, and communism to apply all this in the economic and social fields. In his diagnosis, this revolution provoked one single, universal and total crisis, though with major impact on the Christian Occident. Its multiple aspects – cultural, social, economic, ethnic and geographical – were necessarily dependent variables of the single revolutionary process.<sup>18</sup> This process was manifest on three levels: as disordered tendencies at the level of mentalities; as new ideas and doctrines at the level of ideologies; and as created facts by transformed institutions, laws and customs, both in the spiritual and temporal sphere.

Insightfully, Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira saw the first level as the most efficient and dangerous because what drove the revolution was the emergence of new “ways of being”, new expressions of arts, changing customs and traditions – all certainly also a reflex of new ideas but above all triggering them. What Corrêa de Oliveira described here as “revolution in the tendencies” – and in the 1976 second edition called, like Salgado, “psychological war” – is very close to the idea of cultural Marxism, the undercover subversion of liberal democracies through the manipulation of the psyche and “all fibers of mentality”. He was deeply concerned that fellow conservatives did not realize yet that the revolution did not threaten with weapons anymore but “smiling” and seducing with the extended hand, deluding and dividing, like Satan, and has long ago settled in the democratic West. With the enemy within, no geopolitical defense made sense because “even if a cataclysm swallowed Russia and China, the Occident, in fifty or a hundred years, would be communist”.<sup>19</sup> To Corrêa de Oliveira, already in 1959, the pacific and even antimilitarist character of revolution was clear, and consequently he rejected any form of dialogue, pacification, or disarmament. The substitution of military power for a “technical paradise” of scientific conflict avoidance, so he argues, would abolish at the same time the main symbol of values (to die for something) and morals (to fight for something), enshrined in the soldier’s mentality.<sup>20</sup> Quite tellingly, in his comments to the 1992 edition, Corrêa de Oliveira was alarmed, not relieved, by the breakdown of communism and the ending of the cold war. He immediately understood the new

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18 Corrêa de Oliveira 2017 [1959]: 13, 21–28.

19 Corrêa de Oliveira 2017 [1956]: 33–35, 107, 128–129. The question is not that he still could be right about the implementation of a formally communist global political system in 2059, but that today he would consider – like Olavo de Carvalho does – the West already a communist cultural dictatorship behind a capitalist façade.

20 Corrêa de Oliveira 2017 [1959]: 69.

epoch as a metamorphosis of communism and the fulfilment of his worst prophecy, the kickoff of the invasion of Europe by “barbarian or semi-barbarian hordes coming from the East and Mohammedan hordes from the regions to the south”, completing the defeat of a faith- and leaderless West, without any new Charlemagne who in the Middle Ages still had the preparedness to resist against.<sup>21</sup>

While Corrêa de Oliveira’s 1959 diagnosis was largely approved by conservatives, the designed counter-revolution was met with some reserve. The tactics he recommended in his book consisted of collective agitation, aiming at those who did not actively commit to the counter-revolution and therefore indirectly supported the evil forces, the so-called “semi-counter-revolutionaries”. The counter-revolution should not seek to conquer the masses, as these were naturally incapable of making a revolution on their own, but target at their potential leaders, the elites. Therefore, mass media were less efficient means than the agitation of “not-infected” individuals, that is, ideologically still receptive peers in elitist circles, winning their support both through spiritual apostleship and mundane political or economic collaboration. Last, the most precious and underestimated capital of counter-revolution, the grace of God, should stress the invincibility of counter-revolution. Again, the unsuspecting Oliveira Torres severely criticized this proposal of “counter-revolution” which in his eyes broke with the earlier concept of the “opposite” of a revolution, based on Maistre and followed earlier by the CDV. A counter-revolution only defined by its objective of restoring a previous order – “the peace of Christ in the kingdom of Christ, [...] Christian civilization, austere and hierarchic, fundamentally sacral, anti-egalitarian and anti-liberal”, as Corrêa de Oliveira promised<sup>22</sup> – would end up reacting with similar means and therefore adopt the same Marxist logic as revolution itself.<sup>23</sup> These were wise words, thinking about the military coup d’état which would happen in Brazil a few years later.

### **The Conservative Induction of the Coup in 1964**

Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira’s wake-up call in 1959 was not an isolated voice. Conservative forces strengthened during the years leading up to the civil-military coup d’état in 1964, in an anticipated reaction against a communist takeover. Certainly, these years were also marked by rising social movements, progressive politics and a good portion of wishful

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21 Corrêa de Oliveira 2017 [1959]: 124–126.

22 Corrêa de Oliveira 2017 [1959]: 75, 83–87, 100, 112–113.

23 Torres 1968: 221–222.



thinking, especially under the government João Goulart (1961–1964). But at the same time the liberal-conservative sectors of society reorganized themselves efficiently.<sup>24</sup> This conservative groundwork explains at least to some degree why immediately after the coup the editorial of the newspaper *O Globo*, symptomatically under the title “Democracy arises again”, could naturally draw on the repertoire of conservative ideas, from divine providence over fantasies of national greatness to law-and-order rhetoric:

The Nation lives glorious days. Because all patriots could unite, independently of political bonding, sympathies or opinions about isolated problems, to save what is essential: democracy, law and order. Thanks to the decision and heroism of the Armed Forces, which, obedient to their chiefs, demonstrated the lack of vision of those who were trying to destroy hierarchy and discipline, Brazil got rid of the irresponsible Government, which insisted on dragging it to directions contrary to its vocation and traditions [...]. Once again, the Brazilian people was assisted by Divine Providence, which allowed it to overcome the serious crisis, without greater suffering and grieving. Let us be worthy of such great favor.<sup>25</sup>

During these years, even the “Fifth Empire” thinking was curiously rehabilitated. Around the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the transfer of the Court, celebrated in 1958, its *spiritus rector* Antônio Vieira passed through a rehabilitation in historiographical monographs and newspaper articles.<sup>26</sup> Several new books questioned, against the academic mainstream, the legitimacy of the republic and invested in the rehabilitation of the monarchy.<sup>27</sup> Monarchists in São Paulo, under the mentoring of the anti-positivist professor of law and ex-Integralist José Pedro Galvão de Sousa (1912–1992) rediscovered the linkage between Catholicism and monarchism, according to his books *Conceito e Natureza da Sociedade Política* [Concept and Nature of Political Society] from 1949 and *Política e Teoria do Estado* [Politics and Theory of the State] from 1957. In addition, he recycled Brazil’s Christian-Imperial vocation as heir of Hispanism in *O Brasil no mundo hispânico* [Brazil within the Hispanic World] from 1962, defending the continuity at least in “style, ethos, spirit” of antimodernist transnational Iberic Culture, inspired in Donoso Cortés. This culture was

24 Codato & Oliveira 2004: 272.

25 Quoted in Codato & Oliveira 2004: 274.

26 For example, Lins 1956; Torres (2017 [1957]) and 1958 as well as the article “O verdadeiro Quinto Império” in the *Correio Paulistano*, Sept 27, 1958.

27 Such as Tito Lívio Ferreira’s *O Brasil não foi colônia* [Brazil was no Colony] and João Camilo de Oliveira Torres’ mentioned *A Democracia Coroada* (both from 1957).

based on Catholic faith, traditional monarchy, roman latinity, historical municipalism, opposition to enlightenment and peninsular Hispanic brotherhood.<sup>28</sup> In this remarkable book, published at the hottest moment of the Cold War, Galvão de Sousa also cites probably for the first time in Brazil the conservative political philosopher Eric Voegelin (1901–1985), a German emigrant who got to fame in right-wing circles in the U.S., later a central source for Olavo de Carvalho and one of the few scientific references Jair Bolsonaro ever mentions (I will get back to Voegelin in chapter six). From Voegelin, Galvão de Sousa understood that the decisive battle of humanity was not fought between democrats on one side and authoritarians on the other (read communists, fascists and Nazis). Rather, the main trench was between religious or philosophical transcendentalists (those who accept God’s perfect creation) and liberal or totalitarian immanentists (those who promise an Earthly paradise).<sup>29</sup>

In Galvão de Sousa’s monarchic circle participated Oliveira Torres, our old acquaintance Arlindo Veiga dos Santos and the Spanish philosopher and specialist on Thomist natural law, Francisco Elias de Tejada from the University of Salamanca. Also Plínio Salgado, recently returned from Portugal and preparing his new career as a politician, understood that the way to go was back to the Middle Ages; an insight he owed to the same colleague Tejada,<sup>30</sup> which he explained in his latest book *O Ritmo da História* (1951) as following:

We came from Portugal. Our history starts with the foundation of the Lusitanian Monarchy by D. Afonso Henriques. We are proud of that origin. We descend from a great people. [...] A people that appeared in Contemporary History, reaching high the cross of Christ. A people that became illustrious in the Moroccan wars, stopping with its swords the Muslim wave that threatened Europe. A people that plunged into the Ocean, solved the mysteries of Africa, revealed the Atlantic islands, reached the Indians Sea, arrived at the Pacific, billowed sails in the Five Oceans, revealing the World to Europe and revealing the Gospel do the World.<sup>31</sup>

This desire for “naturalizing” the political system of Brazil, in face of president Kubitschek’s rampant economic development of “50 years in

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28 Macedo 1979: 231–233; Forment 2008: 28–33; Gonçalves 2011: 114. Galvão de Sousa founded in 1950 the bilingual cultural journal with the telling title *Reconquista*, distributed in Brazil, Spain and Portugal but also Argentina, Chile and Peru (Gonçalves 2011: 118).

29 Sousa 1962: 65.

30 Salgado 1951: 324.

31 Salgado 1951: 249–250.

five” (his presidency was from 1956–1961), explicitly preserved the main thesis of Galvão de Sousa’s mentor Oliveira Vianna, who had just died in 1951. In *Raízes Históricas da crise política brasileira* [Historical Roots of the Brazilian Political Crisis] from 1965, the disciple Galvão reiterated that good governance should never build on “a-prioristic reasoning”, somehow alienated progressive juridical abstractions (such as the republican or the federalist system), but conditioned to the nature of the people, historically realized as ethnic and cultural community.<sup>32</sup> Here are the roots of the New Rights’ longing for an authentic “deep Brazil”, home of the common people, the “simple, poor, honest folks” who were keeping alive the “spiritualist substrate” which had faded among the cosmopolitan elites of the urban centers.<sup>33</sup> Omnipresent again in the Bolsonaro’s government today, this is not just a nostalgic escapism from a globalized world and its social engineering but builds on a long tradition in Brazil with a revival in the 1950s. The anti-political and anti-elitist stance, which the career politician Jair Bolsonaro used so well to get elected, draws heavily on this imagined deep Brazil of the people, long from alienated-elitist universities, editorial offices and parliaments. Bolsonaro’s main capital is what Salgado called the “mutual incomprehension” between the *demos* and its representatives:

Probing Brazilian social psychology, confronting it with the spectacle of the parties and the drama of the legislative elaboration, and the not less dramatic effort to interpret and enforce applicable laws, makes us more and more able to distinguish the causes of our public figures’ helplessness during our most acute opinion crises. [...] We still watch Brazil at the mutual incomprehension of what we have settled to call “our learned classes” and the populations of the extremely vast territory, whose temperament, aspirations and psychology are never taken into consideration when one intends to draft the political formula of the institutional and legal solutions.<sup>34</sup>

Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira had his own version of this long tradition and particularly the “Fifth Empire”, less dependent on the Hispanic legacy. In his concluding speech at the IV National Eucharistic Congress in 1942, he presented his vision of Brazil receiving from decadent France the scepter of spiritual civilization:

There was a time when the History of the world could be titled *Gesta Dei per Francos*. The day will come when they will write *Gesta Dei per*

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32 Sousa 1965: 13–15.

33 Araújo 1988: 50.

34 Salgado 1951: 268–269.

*Brasilienses*. Brazil's providential mission consists of growing within its own borders, developing here the splendors of a genuinely Catholic, apostolic and Roman civilization, and of lovingly illuminating the whole world with the torch of that great light, which will truly be the *Lumen Christi* that the Church emanates.<sup>35</sup>

The Catholic conservative disenchantment with France, latent since the original sin of 1789 but comforted by the country's powerful counter-revolutionary thought in Maistre and Maurras, is quite visible here and later should be deepened through the convulsions of 1968 and Mitterrand's reforms perceived as "radical" in 1981. I would not be surprised to find in these discourse changes at least some reason for the reorientation of Brazilian conservatives from France to the U.S., formerly seen by them as a materialistic and heretic scarecrow but today the undisputed idol of the Brazilian New Right. These new encounters between Brazil and the U.S. are thoroughly analyzed in Cowan's recent book *Moral Majorities Across the Americas*.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, in the 1970s and 1980s, Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira would receive support and even visits from leading representatives of the American Right. These included Fred Schlafly, president of the World Anti-Communist League (WACL), Paul Weyrich, founder of the International Policy Forum (IPF) and the Heritage Foundation, both linked to the Christian Right in the U.S. and especially the organization "Moral Majority". Another visitor was Morton Blackwell, IPF's first president and later special assistant to president Reagan, who commented that "for the first time, we encountered a foreign group solidly committed to our core values but which had developed impressive skills in organization and communication".<sup>37</sup>

Through the example of Corrêa de Oliveira, it is also possible to better understand the latent monarchism of conservative Catholics, until today. Member of Patrianovism in his youth, he later preferred to unfold a neutral position, referring to the authority of Pope Leo XIII, who had deemed in his – for many scandalous – 1892 encyclical both the republic and the monarchy as good. Corrêa de Oliveira adds: "As long as it can walk straight toward its goal, that is, the common good, to which social authority is constituted."<sup>38</sup> But both being good did not mean that one was not better. In his very last book, the magnificent volume *Nobrezas e elites tradicionais análogas* [Nobility and Analogous Traditional Elites], published with a foreword of Blackwell and not coincidentally at the very

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35 Corrêa de Oliveira 2007 [1942]: 21.

36 Cowan 2021: 144–157.

37 Power 2010: 97–98.

38 Corrêa de Oliveira 2017 [1959]: 27.

moment of the Brazilian referendum in 1993, about the maintenance of a presidential republican system or the return to a parliamentary monarchy (the former option won), Corrêa de Oliveira explains why a Catholic should, whenever possible, give preference to a monarchic system:

According to the straight order of preferences, the Catholic who is committed to being eminent in his fidelity to the doctrine of the Church should admire and desire more that which is excellent than what is simply good. And ipso facto should feel especially grateful to Providence when the concrete conditions of his Country bear or even beg for the establishment of the best form of government, which is, according to St. Thomas, monarchy.<sup>39</sup>

Monarchism enters the Catholic conservative thinking compulsory through Thomism and natural law. However, it is not a publicly promoted objective as such. As Dom Bertrand told me in the interview with him, the movement aims at much more, the preservation of Occidental Christian Civilization through the defense of their pillars “Tradition, Family and Property”, which in 1960 gave name to their organization. The repeatedly stated neutrality about the referendum in 1994<sup>40</sup> loses a bit of credibility considering the heavy luxury volume on nobilities – one out of two TFP ever produced in this quality, the other one had been an homage for Corrêa de Oliveira published in 1989 – which glorifies on 328 pages nothing else than the monarchy system and, as I was told, was distributed in large number to prominent opinion-makers.<sup>41</sup>

Besides monarchism, Integralism – as I earlier promised to explain – had a diffuse comeback during the 1950s and 1960s. Plínio Salgado invested heavily in spiritual and anticommunist indoctrination through the cultural centers of the “white eagles”, book series like the *Livraria Clássica Brasileira* and radio diffusion through some of the main broadcasting stations like *Tupi*, *Tamoio*, *Globo* and *Rádio Difusora Chateaubriand*. All activities received generous financial support, especially from the *Banco Mercantil* in São Paulo.<sup>42</sup> In 1955 Salgado himself tried to get elected for president with the jingle “For Brazil to straighten out” (the expression was later covered by Bolsonaro’s Minister of Environment, Ricardo Salles, in his “Endireita Brasil”-movement of the early 2000s), which did not

39 Corrêa de Oliveira 1993: 223.

40 Zanotto 2007: 114.

41 Other remarkable titles published before the referendum include Armando Alexandre dos Santos’ *A legitimidade Monárquica no Brasil* (1988), *Ser ou não ser um monarquista eis a questão!* (1990), *Parlamentarismo, sim! Mas à brasileira: com Monarca e Poder Moderador eficaz e paternal* (1992) and *O Brasil Império nas páginas de um velho almanaque alemão* (1992).

42 Gonçalves & Caldeira Neto 2020: 78–88.

work out, despite Arlindo Veiga dos Santos' and his monarchists' support.<sup>43</sup> But he still got elected as federal deputy in 1959 and thanks to his support of the coup – he held innumerable flaming speeches against Goulart – he could later join the military government's commissions for Education and Culture and on Moral and Civics at the Ministry of Education, together with the Catholic general Moacir Araújo Lopes.<sup>44</sup> There his major contribution was the notorious “moral and civic education” to which schoolchildren were submitted from 1969 onwards, based on his 1965 book *Compêndio de instrução moral e cívica* [Compendium of Moral and Civic Education]. This means de facto that during the 1970s and early 1980s whole generations were taught in Integralist thought (which is based on Integrism). Prominent examples of the many Integralists who celebrated their comeback during the military dictatorship were Raimundo Padilha as the first military government's spokesperson in the Parliament – a function which Salgado himself assumed too – and admiral Rademaker, member of the Supreme Command of Revolution to execute the putsch, president of the military junta in 1969 and later Médici's vice president. In Médici's government also participated Alfredo Buzaid (Minister of Justice) and João Paulo dos Reis Velloso (Minister of Planning) and later, under military president João Figueiredo, Ibrahim Abi Ackel as Minister of Justice.<sup>45</sup>

As these Integralists only acted dispersedly on the basis of shared ideological premises, without even gathering in a single party, the earlier competition with Integrists during the 1930s did not resurge. Conservative Catholics, under Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira's influence, followed the opposite strategy. They refrained from running for any political offices but created in parallel a centralized structure as political lobby group, the TFP, founded in July 1960 during the turmoil of the elections who would bring to vice presidency João Goulart. TFP was based on Corrêa de Oliveira's concept of the three forms of the Church: the triumphant Church (souls in Heaven), the suffering Church (souls in the purgatory) and the militant Church (souls on Earth). For Dom Bertrand, Corrêa de Oliveira's main contribution to Catholicism was precisely to have restored through his elite troop the idea that a Catholic had to be necessarily a militant.<sup>46</sup> The civil association with no formal bond to Catholic hierarchy turned into the main platform of counter-revolutionary mass mobilization during the

43 Gonçalves 2012: 89, 221.

44 Gonçalves & Caldeira Neto 2020: 103–107; Chirio 2018 [2009]: 124–125.

45 For more details, see Calil 2001 and 2005.

46 Zanutto 2007: 83, based on interview with Dom Bertrand on Sept 24, 2005. In my own interview with him, he reiterated this statement (Bertrand de Orléans e Bragança, interview with author, São Paulo, Nov 11, 2020).

1960s and the operational power of TFP went even beyond the earlier CDV. Different from most other institutions which I examined so far in this book, TFP and their decisive function for the coup d'état is academic and even popular common sense. Gizele Zanotto, who has dedicated large scholarly work to this institution, defines TFP as a Catholic movement of lay people; elitist because defending social hierarchy; integral and totalizing because relying exclusively on Neo-Thomist Church doctrine as the only truth; restorative because idealizing a re-Christianized society in medieval terms; antimodern because inferring all crises of society from modernization; and finally, combative because promoting to fight the revolution.

The last point is of highest importance because besides Integralism, this was the first time a Catholic conservative movement aimed at mass mobilization, going beyond what Jackson de Figueiredo had defined as counter-revolution. The strategies they applied did not stop at the instruction of politicians and the recruitment of intellectuals to raise awareness among the Brazilian elites but included political campaigning and protest actions in the public space. It was, in the true sense of the word, a crusade, for which TFP discovered ingeniously the unsuspected power of reputable middle-class women. These were the main actors of the famous “Marches of the Family with God for Freedom”, organized in Brazil’s main urban centers by women’s organizations such as Women’s Civic Union (UCF) in São Paulo, Women’s Campaign for Democracy (CAMDE) in Rio de Janeiro and Women’s League for Democracy (LIMDE) in Belo Horizonte.<sup>47</sup> Miguel Reale, who commemorated the “restoration of democracy” in the monograph *Os Imperativos da Revolução de Março* [The Imperatives of the March Revolution] from 1965, whitewashed the “deeply democratic” army who just responded to the “Brazilian woman’s appeal”.<sup>48</sup> Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira was received by general Castelo Branco and convinced him of the necessity of not only a military but a moral counter-revolution against harmful ideologies, such as to block the introduction of legal divorce, which TFP supported by collecting more than a million signatures.<sup>49</sup>

This political activism was possible due to TFP’s autonomous civil status in relation to the Church. But it was welcomed by the Catholic hierarchy, who after the coup d'état expelled a small group of progressives from the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB, created

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47 See the seminal study Simões 1985.

48 Reale 1965: 128.

49 Cowan 2016: 99–100.

in 1952) and approved the military intervention in their first official statement:

As we give thanks to God, who answered the prayers of millions of Brazilians and rid us of the communist danger, we thank the Military, who, at great risk of their lives, rose on behalf of our Nation's supreme interests [...]. We acknowledge and feel sorry that, even among movements of Catholic orientation, there have been occasion and abuse on the part of a few elements that escaped our surveillance.<sup>50</sup>

Even more explicit was the editorial of the *Verbum*, the prestigious journal of the Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, in which the managing editor Francisco Leme Lopes referred, under the title "Brazil chose Freedom", to the 1964 putsch as "April Miracle":

Brazil marched with God for Freedom. Christ said one day, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8, 32). The people of the greatest Catholic nation in the world knows the truth of the Divine Revelation: in the fidelity to its historical vocation, it met the safeguard of its independence. [...] The impartial observer cannot fail to recognize a particular action of Providence in the "April miracle". The first time in the whole world that communism is defeated so fast without firing a shot, without sacrificing a single life. A lesson that is an encouragement for the peoples that find themselves dominated by the most degrading of tyrannies. [...] The quickness of the action, the bravery of the armed forces, the clairvoyance of the governors, all that ensured the splendid victory. It was clear that the communists were nothing but an extremely bold and active minority. As if by magic, as if it were a house of cards, the scheming devised by them collapsed.<sup>51</sup>

The armed forces themselves, only a bit more soberly, understood their victory only as a first battle won. Without much delay, they started to work on safeguarding the defeat of "communism" in a National Security Doctrine, based on previous work realized in the *Escola Superior de Guerra* (ESG), Brazil's National War College, founded in 1949, and inspired by Alberto Torres and Oliveira Vianna.<sup>52</sup> This doctrine, in the words of its main author, general Golbery do Couto e Silva, should provide means to resist against

the modern war [...], total war that involves everyone and oppresses everyone, political war, economic war, psycho-social war and not only

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50 Quoted in Castro 1984: 88–89.

51 Lopes 1964: 3–4.

52 Macedo 1988.



military [...]. That is the war – total and permanent, global, apocalyptic –, which is formed, at this point, on the gloomy horizon of our troubled era [...] And all that is left for us to do, nations of any quadrant of the world, to prepare ourselves for it.<sup>53</sup>

Just like Corrêa de Oliveira, Leonel Franca and Plínio Salgado, on which they drew, the military had reformulated their definition of the “communist” threat as a revolutionary psychological war, not a military war, with the objective to subvert society morally. ESG systematized and categorized these notions of moral crisis in the problematic of the youth, the disaggregation of family, the means of communication and the liberation of the woman.<sup>54</sup> In an ESG paper it reads: “Communism assaults the Christian family because it is such an enormous source of resistance against materialism and [...] atheism. Communism does everything it can to destroy the family.”<sup>55</sup> Worse, the “communist” did this as a mimetic internal enemy, disguised as priest or professor.<sup>56</sup> The National Security Doctrine as official defense strategy became law by the famous decree “AI-5” in September 1969. Besides conventional repression, it included psychological means to react adequately to “communist” subversion, above all the notorious “psycho-social operations” and their “semantic bombs”.<sup>57</sup> Consequently, not just crimes of violent subversion of the political system were prohibited, but the law also established prison sentences for crimes of propaganda, usually augmented in 50% if committed through media, such as “redistribute material or funds for propaganda of foreign provision, under any form or with any function, for the infiltration of doctrines or ideas incompatible with the Constitution” (Art. 22); “Morally offend those who exert authority, for reasons of political-social factionalism or nonconformity” (Art. 34); and “Offend the honor or the dignity of the president or vice president of the Republic, of the presidents of the Federal Senate, the Chamber of Deputies, the Supreme Federal Court, the Ministers of State, the Governors of State or Territories and the mayor of the Federal District” (Art. 36. ). The all-encompassing Article 39 then defined that to incite “to war or subversion of the political-social order; to collective disobedience to the laws; to animosity among the Armed Forces or between them and social classes or civil institutions; to the fight for violence among social classes; paralysis of public services or essential

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53 Silva 1967: 12–13.

54 Cowan 2016: 117, 138.

55 Quoted in Cowan 2016: 128.

56 Coimbra 2000: 10.

57 Decreto-Lei nº 898, de 29 de Setembro de 1969: Capítulo i Da Aplicação da Lei de Segurança Nacional, § 2º.

activities; to hate or racial discrimination” was to be punished with a prison sentence of 10 to 20 years (15 to 30 years, if committed through media) and – if resulting in death – capital punishment.

Curiously, despite Bolsonaro government’s frequently stated desire to relaunch a similar law, many of these articles would probably restrict the New Right’s own government action. I am thinking about the impressive record of moral offense against public bodies, including the Legislative, the Judiciary (especially the Federal Supreme Court) the environmental enforcement agency IBAMA and others. Furthermore, Art. 45 criminalizes the engagement in subversive propaganda through media (today we would emphasize “social media”) with the objectives of “luring people into wrongdoing at their place of work or study”, “verbally abusing, slandering or libeling when the offended is an organ or entity that exerts public authority or an employee, on account of their attributions” or “manifesting sympathy for any of the acts previously mentioned”.<sup>58</sup> Article 42, “Constituting, enrolling in or maintaining military-like organizations, of any form or nature, either armed or not, wearing uniform or not, with combative purpose” would raise the question of the Bolsonaro clan’s involvement with paramilitary militias. This is of course not to advocate the need for a new security law but to point to the fact that most of the action projected on the “communist enemy” are habitually practices by the New Right themselves, justified by their war against the inimical “infiltrated” state – a phenomenon which I will discuss in chapter seven.

### **TFP’s Campaigns to defend the Natural Order**

TFP’s campaign introduced a new strategic topic and made itself its main advocate which soon rendered them the support of the rural elites, traditionally a group to support conservatives, but not necessarily Catholics: the looming land reform. This reform, a progressist claim since Independence, had been put on the political agenda in the post-war and received some support from the clergy. For example, Bishop Inocêncio Engelke understood it as a means to prevent communism, so that the “man of the countryside can defend himself against the dangerous seductions of those who see in him fecund breeding ground for the bacillus of riots and violent revolutions”.<sup>59</sup> Though TFP admitted that their function was not to interfere in mere economic and social issues, they declared themselves competent as defenders of the Eighth Commandment, which

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58 Decreto-Lei nº 898, de 29 de Setembro de 1969: Capítulo ii Dos Crimes e das Penas Art. 13.

59 Quoted in Mainwaring 1989 [1986]: 77.

says “Thou shalt not steal”. Only in this respect, they assure, it would be their sacred duty to declare themselves against the agrarian reform.<sup>60</sup> TFP’s subsequent campaign rigorously confronted any reformism by appealing to the “natural and immutable” right to property and “divinely-ordained” social inequality.<sup>61</sup> The book to sustain this Thomist truth, *Reforma agraria, questão de consciência* [Agrarian Reform, a Matter of Conscience], published in 1960 and jointly written by Corrêa de Oliveira, the bishops Sigaud and Castro Mayer and the economist Luiz Mendonça de Freitas, sold 30,000 copies in only seven months – the most successful title of the year.<sup>62</sup> In 1964, the authors presented a short and even more disseminated version, titled “Declaração do Morro Alto” [Declaration of Morro Alto, name of a TFP anticommunist training center in the countryside].<sup>63</sup> Significantly, the property right is at no point related to the country’s colonial history or slave economy. Therefore, a reform would not just steal these lands, “acquired through hard, honored work or through a legitimate hereditary succession” but deprive those who do not own any land from being employed there. And not only that, also cared for by the proprietary who granted them “food, housing, clothes and means of saving”, motivated by “a noble desire for increasing well-being and cultural ascension”.

After pages of romanticization of harmonic farm life which resemble Astrid Lindgren’s books, even the authors appear to have perceived their exaggeration when they admit that “in certain regions, the protection of rural workers against alcoholism, gambling, prostitution and the practice of illegitimate unions was insufficient or non-existent, and thus their moral fiber, family life, capacity for work and spirit of thrift were damaged”. While this still sounds as the peasants’ own fault and mainly a problem because of lower profits for the employer, the next sentence admits that these workers might have been given “higher salaries, more comfortable and salubrious homes, adequate training and more convenient life conditions”.<sup>64</sup>

This argument obviously points to an underlying, specific concept of equality which is also clarified in the book and will be of utmost relevance for what follows in this and the next chapters. To start with, the authors argue that God does not want this world to be a paradise. To doubt this would already induce the first error – and this premise, if one believes in Catholic eschatology, indeed does not allow for any contradiction. Still, the authors do accept a discussion on how much

60 Sigaud et al. 1960: 94.

61 Zanutto 2003: 111; Foresti 2013: 23.

62 TFP 1988: 67.

63 Corrêa de Oliveira 1964.

64 Sigaud et al. 1960: 7, 11.

of inequality should reign in this world. Following Catholic doctrine, they reason that natural hierarchy, intrinsic to creation, implied different social classes with different functions, which are equally dignified but not equal in dignity. For example, the intellectual has been created naturally superior to the manual worker, just as the spiritual was superior to the material. Harmonic inequality, as they call it, would allow for nobody falling in misery, while the “more capable and industrious” could achieve better conditions. In this ideal society, the salary of the (male) head of the household should be enough to give minimum life conditions to the whole family. But if this is not the case (it actually has never been the case for Brazilian minimum salaries), no solution is acceptable, as they all would imply “stealing” from those in better financial conditions. The authors see no contradiction to Mathew (22, 37–39), “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself”, as the closest human beings were family members, they say, reason for which “each one should benefit himself and their close ones, in a much wider measure, with the product of his work”.<sup>65</sup>

This quite selective reading of the Holy Scripture provides the TFP campaign not only with – in their eyes – cogent additional reasons to refute the legitimacy of redistributing land (even with financial compensation, as planned by Goulart’s basic reforms) but also to refute any attempt to indirectly redistribute wealth through taxation. Though they concede the state the right to tax, this measure should never target the transfer of wealth to mitigate inequality – or “plunder the richer”, as they prefer to write. This is especially valid for taxing inheritance because family members had to have – as the closest beloved neighbors – the right to inherit without any cost. Even if the unequal distribution of wealth reached extreme levels and results from colonial conquest and slave economy, as in the case of Brazil, this primary inequality was fair because God, the “supreme Lord of all assets, gives each one what he wants”. In addition, any inheritance taxation would eliminate the motivation to accumulate wealth, without the guarantee to pass it on to the next generation, provoking economic decadence.<sup>66</sup> This is considered a secondary argument and I am still mentioning it because it shows that in this conservative Catholic thinking there is no room for gradations. The question if 1% or 99% of the land should be redistributed is as irrelevant as the real level of the tax rate. It is about the sublime prohibition principle as such at stake. To doubt these principles, implied “white heresy”<sup>67</sup>, the term TFP coined for those who

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65 Sigaud et al. 1960: 17, 33, 37, 42, 56, referring to Pius XII’s encyclical *Casti Connubii*, from Dec 31, 1930.

66 Sigaud et al. 1960: 61, 76.

67 Corrêa de Oliveira 1983 [1943]: 230.

sentimentally tend to a relativist position of charity which then induces to error and – as we already know – communism. The way TFP combined a social problem with Catholic doctrine in the campaign against the agrarian reform shows that the organization was not just an anachronism but capable to use their doctrinarian legacy as pragmatic means to defend convenient and very topical political interests in the name of medieval tradition.<sup>68</sup>

Obviously, many and even theological objections can be made to this synthesis, and indeed they were made at the time. The Anglican bishop Cavalcanti, for example, remembered the Biblical institution of the Jubilee, the release from slavery and debt as well as the redistribution of capital every 50 years, as a means to subject inequality to a periodical levelling circle.<sup>69</sup> Amoroso Lima refers to an almost Marxist conception of appropriation through the effort to explore common goods, like the fisherman who becomes owner of his haul – unless somebody had the property rights.<sup>70</sup> Besides that, he criticized the distortion and politicization of theology to defend social privileges:

But when the bourgeoisie shuts itself in its castle of privileges and, instead of voting for funds to better distribute property, votes to defend the most conservative proprietism, or when instead of promoting more equitable distribution of rural property, considers latifundiumism the only “Christian and democratic” regime, we then have the right to judge that the fate of bourgeoisie is not in good hands.<sup>71</sup>

This destiny was and is in the hands of conservatism and my point is that the TFP campaigns might be somehow co-responsible for the fact that an inheritance tax (with a maximum rate of 8%) was not introduced in Brazil before 1988, and that land concentration has not diminished since the early 1960s. The land issue remained a priority until the death of Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira. The TFP started similar campaigns in 1981, with the publication *Sou Católico: Posso ser contra a Reforma Agrária?* [I’m a Catholic: Can I be against agrarian reform?]. The rhetorical question is answered in two parts, from a doctrinarian and an economic perspective, both affirming emphatically, not just as a possibility but as an obligation to be against. In the middle, a list denounces 106 bishops who at some moment had made positive comments about an agrarian reform, with the sources meticulously documented. The book sold over 20,000 copies

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68 Zanutto 2007: 158; Foresti 2013: 226–227.

69 Cavalcanti 1994 [1985]: 28; Cox 2016: 71–88.

70 Lima 1964: 18–19.

71 Lima 1964: 176, originally published in 1963.

in a few months.<sup>72</sup> In 1995, TFP launched the campaign *SOS Farmers* to defend them from what they called the “favelization of the countryside”, not so much because of the beginning of prudent settlement policies of the government, but because of the invasions of unproductive land by the growing movement of landless workers, MST.<sup>73</sup> Unthinkable a more blatant defense of privileges, in dimensions Amoroso Lima (who died in 1983) could only surmise.

During the 1960s, TFP redefined their enemy scheme, in accordance with what Corrêa de Oliveira had theorized as “smiling” revolution with an extended hand. Bishop Sigaud warned in his *Anticommunist Catechism* – the one Jair Bolsonaro proudly flaunted – that Catholic believers would prefer death to communist doctrine, reason why communism disguised as Catholicism.<sup>74</sup> This seemed to be confirmed by the increasing progressive tendency of the Brazilian clergy. CNBB had done a certain effort to collaborate with the developmental state, mostly to target regional disparity through government programs, focusing on the poorer Northeast and enhancing basic education. Father Odilão Moura, for sure not a progressist, justified this wisely with the necessity to concentrate more on the concrete and less on abstract considerations when progress itself was the “empire of elusiveness”.<sup>75</sup> However, CNBB for sure did not become “communist”. Still in 1962, the bishops listed in their emergency plan “secularization” and “Marxism” as the main threats for the Church in Brazil (together with protestantism and spiritism).<sup>76</sup>

Certainly more worrying for Sigaud must have been the sinister *aggiornamento* in the Vatican. Pope John xxiii, despite having confirmed the infamous excommunication decree for “communist”, tried to keep up with the times. In his encyclicals *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and *Pacem in Terris* (1963), he invited dialogue with the modern world, distinguishing error from errant and ideology from practice in order not to identify “false philosophical ideas about nature, origin and end of the universe and men with historical moves with economic, social, cultural and political purpose, even though such moves draw their origin and inspiration from those philosophical ideas”.<sup>77</sup> Paul vi went one step further in his address “To the Workers” in 1965, recommending comprehension for the workers’ suffering and their longing for a better world.<sup>78</sup> This was only a somehow

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72 Corrêa de Oliveira & Campo 1981.

73 See <http://www.sos-fazendeiro.org.br/manif.html>.

74 Sigaud 2019 [1962]: 6.

75 Moura 1978: 208.

76 Casanova 1994: 120.

77 John xxiii 1963.

78 Paul vi 1965.

populist side effect of a profound transformation of the Church by the occasion of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), which decided to implement two of the most controversial points: the liturgy in common languages and the ecumenical dialogue with other religions.

French bishop Marcel Lefebvre became famous as the leader of the resistance at the Council. Less famous are his Brazilian comrades, the leader group of TFP composed by Corrêa de Oliveira, Sigaud, Castro Mayer and the new royal TFP members Bertrand and Luís de Orléans e Bragança.<sup>79</sup> Only recent archive work in Sigaud's literary remains has brought to light the intensity of this collaboration in Rome, making the Brazilian bishops Lefebvre's closest allies.<sup>80</sup> Castro Mayer even followed Lefebvre in his later foundation of the schismatic Fraternal Society of St. Pius x (FSSPX) and was on his side to consecrate the Society's own bishops, which triggered their excommunication. But the whole TFP delegation lobbied heavily before and during the Council, pressuring with petitions against the proposed reforms and for the Church's condemnation of Marxism, communism and socialism. This experience was disseminated in Brazil again in form of special issues in *Catolicismo* and book bestsellers. One was the preparatory study *A liberdade da Igreja no Estado comunista* [The Liberty of the Church in the Communist State] from 1963, later translated into eight languages and published in 33 editions, with 160,000 copies sold.<sup>81</sup> The other, a denouncement of the Church's "modernist" dialogue, inviting for communist subversion, in *Baldeação ideológica inadvertida e Diálogo* [Inadvertent Ideological Sluicing and Dialogue] from 1965.<sup>82</sup>

Lefebvre did not win, but conservative Catholics at least registered some success in Rome, though only nationally relevant: the CNBB, which had been favorable toward Goulart's policies, elected a conservative general secretary, defeating Hélder Câmara (the ex-Integralist who had turned into a progressist) and aligned the directory, reason for the above quoted benevolent statement on the putsch.<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless, all TFP's mass campaigning could not prevent the common people of the "deep Brazil" from getting more and more under the influence of a progressive clergy, inspired in liberation theology. Formalized at the Latin American Bishop Conference in Medellin in 1968, the movement denounced the

79 The mission is described in detail by Cowan (2021: 16–34). Possibly the trip to Rome did not only receive moral support from the Brazilian government but also funding (Cowan 2021: 44).

80 Caldeira 2009: 118–166, also referring to information in Baraúna 1993. In addition, Sigaud's correspondence revealed a certain inclination toward antisemitism.

81 Caldeira 2009: 187–210, 239.

82 Corrêa de Oliveira 1974 [1965].

83 Casanova 1994: 121; Bruneau 1974: 126–131.

capitalist and colonial structures of dominance which perpetuated the exploitation of the developing world and the working classes, calling for resistance. This discourse worried diplomat Meira Penna, a central figure among Brazilian liberals as we should remember, because it was more “anthropocentric than theological, and even ideological”. Even more, the liberation theologians’ mentor, the Peruvian priest Gustavo Gutiérrez, went to the extreme to affirm that “the ‘Kingdom’ is realized here on Earth, in a ‘just’ society”.<sup>84</sup> What deeply shocked the diplomat might have sounded as a sensible idea to a person living in misery – God knows why. Still, he was right about liberation theology’s character as a social movement – with a minor group ending up joining the armed resistance of the Popular Action (AP) – in combination with a “people’s Church”, both in opposition to the military governments.<sup>85</sup> Interestingly, foreign priests made up to 40% of the movement and about half of the Brazilian priests had studied abroad, which could explain why they got to evaluate so differently from TFP the nature of “harmonic order” and “communist subversion” in the Brazilian setting.<sup>86</sup> Again Amoroso Lima, in 1951 ousted as leader of the CDV by the Neo-Thomist Gustavo Corção (we will get back to him soon), realized what the main problem was:

The Church was an institution of the past, preserving the absolutist spirit immutable, shut to every renovation, incompatible with Science, Progress, Freedom, Democracy, only speaking to condemn, in the form of monologues and unquestionable, imperative determinations. The ghosts of the Inquisition and the Holy Office interposed themselves between the ecclesiastic feudal castle, anachronistic reminiscence of Middle Ages in the 20<sup>th</sup> century [...]. The apostasy was, so to speak, inevitable.<sup>87</sup>

At the same time, TFP declared war on liberation theologians, using all its operational potential. The same year, they collected in only two months 1.6 million signatures for a petition, sent to Paul VI and urged for measures against the “infiltration of communists” in the clergy.<sup>88</sup> TFP was in full expansion after the coup, commanding around 1,500 militants who started caravans to reach the most remote places of the country, curiously inspired by Mao’s Long March. In 1970 the organization moved into the palace I visited in 2020 (lent free of charge by the real estate firm Barros Silveira S.A., established by friends of TFP) and international

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84 Penna 1982: 37, 51.

85 Moreira 2019: 98–99.

86 Casanova 1994: 125–130.

87 Lima 1999b [1963]: 243.

88 Campos Filho 1980: 180–181.



branches spread over 25 countries.<sup>89</sup> At this moment of triumph our old acquaintance Sigaud felt secure to even implore the military government to finally imprison the “red bishop” Hélder Câmara but without success, probably due to his enormous international popularity. Instead, he made it a habit to bless the arms of the repressive forces, with the following justification:

When we bless the swords, we do not bless only them but also the machine guns, the rifles, the cannons, we bless the fighter planes, the grenades, the bayonets [...]. Due to consciousness, the Church blesses the swords under one condition: that those swords serve the Law, be them the swords of Justice, the swords of Freedom, the swords of Honor [...] We trust you, we trust that you will defend our traditions. You, the military, who transform Cavalry more and more into a religious order, whose members spent the night keeping watch over the arms, now please watch over, always watch over freedom.<sup>90</sup>

TFP itself had – as the Integralists did before – a fondness for militarism: the militants frequently wore soldier berets and the headquarters was guarded with probably blessed machine guns.<sup>91</sup>

The overhyping of the liberation theologians’ impact should not belie that these were actually “fitful exertions of small bands of revolutionaries who are increasingly driven to work outside of Church structures”, as in the words of Margaret Todaro Williams, who conducted her large empirical research during this epoch. From her fieldwork she concluded that the “survival, maturation and perpetuation of an elitist, ultramontanist, intolerant and conservative Church appears much more significant”.<sup>92</sup> The higher ecclesiastic hierarchy, though more in private than public mode, collaborated intensely with the military government, most prominently in the Bipartite Commission (1970–74), composed of bishops and military officers.<sup>93</sup> Even the Vatican reacted but only under John Paul II and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, pressuring the influential liberation theologian Leonardo Boff until he quit his priesthood. Liberation theology was successfully pushed back by Catholic neoconservatism in Rome during the 1980s and Pope John Paul II’s “new behavior that simultaneously welcomed and/or rejected the elements of the post-modern world, according to their effectiveness in expanding faith and the consolidation of the Church in

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89 TFP 1989: 112, 199; Cowan 2021: 151–159.

90 Antoine 1980 [1972]: 34–35.

91 Antoine 1980 [1972]: 38.

92 Todaro Williams 1971: v.

93 Serbin 2000.

society”.<sup>94</sup> This tendency can also be stated for the Catholic hierarchy in Brazil.<sup>95</sup>

### **Braking Progress**

“Braking the train of progress” was Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira’s favorite metaphor about TFP’s historical function. When general Geisel (president from 1974–1979 and already suspicious as Lutheran) made a clear move to really start the political opening which his predecessor in office general Médici had only promised – the reason why Geisel is condemned as “communist” by the Brazilian Right today – conservatives of all *couleur* reacted. At stake were not so much practical political issues but the surrender of morality, symbolized in Geisel’s support to legalizing divorce, which finally became a law in 1977. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, who already had anticipated the concept of culture war, again preempted Olavo de Carvalho in his prominent re-interpretation of the military dictatorship as responsible for creating a communist cultural hegemony in Brazil. In 1981, Corrêa de Oliveira concludes exactly about this:

The Armed Forces have actively repressed all the attempts to restructure the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) and the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB), as well as other tiny extreme-left entities (Trotskyists, Maoists etc.). As has been said, they also prevented, or disarticulated, all the terrorist conspiracies. Nevertheless, non-violent communists enjoyed a good degree of freedom. They had the right to keep bookstores literally full of communist books at disconcertingly low prices. Many communists infiltrated as professors or students in universities and secondary schools, both public and private (including Catholic ones). In the social outlets (TV, radio and press), as well as in artistic circles (theater, cinema, etc.), they also had impressive penetration. Combined with that tactic success of specifically communist character, a considerable advance of socialist intellectual currents emerged in the country.<sup>96</sup>

Though this assessment might be accurate, conservatism still developed manifold initiatives and the reason that these are not part of the common vision on redemocratization can be an involuntary reflex of this general judgment of a leftist hegemony – or due to conservatives’ elitism and the discreet non-mobilizing character of their doctrines, as liberal Ubiratan Borges de Macedo respectfully recognizes.<sup>97</sup> In any case, there was a

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94 Zanotto 2007: 65

95 Mainwaring 1989: 270.

96 Corrêa de Oliveira & Campo 1981: 14.

97 Macedo 1995: 240.

curious continuity of conservative thought in Brazil since the military dictatorship which will be the issue of the next chapter.

Before that, besides TFP three other conservative institutions deserve short attention. First, *Permanência*, in Rio de Janeiro, in a certain way a dissident group from the “too progressive” CDV, and competing with TFP for the title of the most conservative Catholicism, which triggered one more feud with Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira, who never tolerated any rival in his métier.<sup>98</sup> After Gustavo Corção (1896–1978) had replaced Amoroso Lima in the direction of the Center, he could not paralyze the ongoing immanentist tendencies and later stepped down himself in 1963.<sup>99</sup> Although this almost caused the agony of CDV and their traditional journal *A Ordem*, both the center and the journal still exist today, with vital academic activities but hardly any commitment to its first Integrist phase – and therefore viewed with suspicion by the New Right as potentially “progressist”.<sup>100</sup> Corção became the outstanding religious voice in journalism, reaching far beyond Catholic circles. Although Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira also had broad repercussion in the media, as the newspaper *Folha de S.Paulo*’s house columnist from 1968 to 1990, it was Corção who had an ability to republish his articles in so many newspapers that he could count on a readership of at least two million, at a time where, for example, the venerable daily *Estado de S.Paulo* only had a circulation of 200,000.<sup>101</sup> *Permanência* was Corção’s attempt to recreate, under the fortunate circumstances of 1968, a new conservative group and journal, besides a publishing house, the *Editora Presença*. The programmatic name was inspired once more in French conservatism: *Permanences*, a review published since 1963 by Jean Ousset, Maurras’ ex-secretary and close friend of Lefebvre (who even visited the group in Brazil in 1979). Most topics of Corção’s journal were directly imported from the French pattern – such as the harmful effects of the Second Vatican Council and Paul VI’s encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, about the cooperation with the developing countries – perpetuating Maurrassianism once more among Brazilian Catholics.<sup>102</sup> In addition, Corção had a good standing with the military governments, especially with the ESG, for whom he contributed with studies to help to implement moralizing measures against “cultural terrorism” as well as “sybaritism and socialism”.<sup>103</sup> He died in 1979 and

98 See TFP’s syllabus of Corção’s theological errors on <http://www.oprincipedoscruzados.com.br/2014/12/gustavo-corcao-apoiou-seita-maurrasiana.html>.

99 Rodrigues 2006.

100 Frederico Viotti, interview with author, São Paulo, Nov 11, 2020.

101 Antoine 1980 [1972]: 45.

102 Paul VI 1967. See also Paula 2012: 184 and Antoine 1980 [1972]: 46.

103 Cowan 2016: 84–97; Paula 2012: 172.

*Permanência*, now directed by Júlio Fleichman, was almost buried in oblivion, though the group still exists today at least virtually and with a rich online archive of Corção's and other collaborators' articles.<sup>104</sup> Recently his son, the priest Lourenço Fleichman, has had some appearances, on which I will come back in the eighth chapter.

The second is the cultural society *Convívio*, founded in 1961 in São Paulo by the priest Adolpho Crippa (1929–2000), ordained in Rome the same year. This Society reanimated the older Brazilian Institute of Philosophy (IBF), founded in São Paulo in 1949 by ex-Integralist Miguel Reale, and its journal *Revista Brasileira de Filosofia*. Together they formed one more apparatus of hegemony with efficient division of tasks. While IBF was responsible for disseminating Aristotelian-Thomist philosophy among an intellectualized Catholic readership, *Convívio* was responsible for political agitation in their journal *Convívium*. They united the who is who of Brazilian conservatism, besides Miguel Reale, also the mentioned Mercadante and Vicente Ferreira da Silva (1916–1963). Our already known conservative with Hispanic vision, Galvão de Sousa, brought in monarchism, in his serial on “Brazilian problems” in 1963.<sup>105</sup>

The third institution, less dependent on a main protagonist, was the group and journal *Hora Presente* (1968–1978) in São Paulo. Their formation followed the same patterns as the former, created by dissidents from the previous *Convívio*. Presiding the group was Adib Casseb, law professor at the Catholic University of São Paulo, an ex-Integralist close to Minister Buzaid and Miguel Reale. Directing the journal was again Galvão de Sousa, who received the collaboration from ex-patrianovistas like João de Scantimburgo and Oliveira Torres. While also somehow inspired by French Maurrassian publishing, their paragon was the Spanish *Verbo*, journal of civic education and cultural action in defense of natural law.<sup>106</sup> This was also *Hora Presente*'s matter of the heart and common denominator of its members. In 1977, the year general Geisel dared to put divorce on the agenda, Galvão de Sousa organized the legendary congress *Jornadas Brasileiras de Direito Natural*, which united all those who wanted to reassure themselves of the normativity of natural law, fixed in divinity, and the necessity to combat any distortion by positivists, rationalists and individualists.<sup>107</sup> *Hora Presente* also had its “Corção”, a journalist with mass impact, though less known today: Lenildo Tabosa Pessoa, as a side job professor of ethics at the Catholic University of São Paulo, and assiduous writer for the newspapers

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104 See <https://permanencia.org.br>.

105 Gonçalves 2009: 79, 83, 101.

106 Antoine 1980 [1972]: 64.

107 Sousa 1977: 13, 55.

*O Estado de S. Paulo* and *Jornal da Tarde*. Described as “a caustic character, of a cynical irony and a certain intellectual vivacity”, his apodictic and persistent articles intriguingly resemble Olavo de Carvalho’s. This goes for their favorite topics, their mission against “intellectual analphabetism” and even more for the hyperbolic style and the inebriation by their own opinion: on the eve of the free elections for the Constituent Assembly, Pessoa tries to persuade the reader that “there is absolutely no difference” between this process and the previous selection of a president by the highest military, as in both cases candidates were somehow selected by representative bodies (in the former case obviously by democratic parties and only pre-selected as candidates).<sup>108</sup> Certainly, an interesting thought on the system of the representative democracy, but sounding dishonest from the mouth of a defender of dictatorship – with which Pessoa had such an intimate relationship that he benefitted from privileged access to information as probably no other journalist.<sup>109</sup>

*Permanência*, *Hora Presente* and *Convívio* were safe havens for all those who shied away from TFP’s religious sectarianism. The academic biography of one of *Hora Presente*’s members, Alexandre Correia (1890–1984), illustrates well a typical conservative career and how conservative ideas adapt to political dynamics, always having the key of wisdom ready: he studied at the Catholic University of Leuven, in close contact with exiled Portuguese monarchists and followers of Maurras, presented as scientific debut a thesis on the “Política de Joseph de Maistre” (1914); during the 1920s he participated in the CDV and wrote for *A Ordem*; since 1934 a law professor, he habilitated with a monograph on natural law; then after decades of work he presented the first Portuguese translation of Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae*. He commented the 1964 coup d’état with the essay “Saint Thomas and the right of revolution”, joined *Hora Presente* and held his last public speech in 1976 was titled “Thomism is Incompatible with Marxism”.

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108 See, for example, Pessoa 1986a and 1986b.

109 Antoine 1980 [1972]: 67, 87.

## 5 God's Invisible Hand

*Neither the joys which money may give nor the sorrows of poverty have any particular relationship to our destiny [...] there is nothing more certain than that inequality is a work of God, and of all inequalities, it is inequality of material resources which shocks me the least.*

Jackson de Figueiredo<sup>1</sup>

*“The occasions of sin are to be avoided,” says Aquinas, “but poverty is an occasion of evil because theft, perjury, and flattery are frequently brought about by it. Therefore, poverty should not be voluntarily undertaken but rather avoided”.*

George O'Brien, Irish politician<sup>2</sup>

*We state that inequality is beneficial to those who find themselves at the bottom of the social pyramid. Indeed, the ones who occupy the highest positions serve as an inspiration and example to people who occupy an inferior place in the social ladder.*

Adolpho Lindenberg, president of the IPCO<sup>3</sup>

When Brazil took the return path to democracy in the mid-1980s, TFP made a last effort to exercise control over this process. Like the CDV in 1934, the organization aimed at the new Constituent Assembly, which started its work in 1987, to veto what in their eyes meant the betrayal of the country's conservative Catholic traditions. Corrêa de Oliveira's book *Projeto de Constituição angustia o país* [Draft Constitution Distresses the Country], published in early 1987, bears witness to this effort. It included symbolic politics, such as demanding to specify the wording of the evocation “under God's protection” in the Constitution's preamble which

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1 Todaro Williams 1971: 110, translation of unedited letter from Jackson de Figueiredo to Amoroso Lima on Jan 11, 1928.

2 O'Brien 1920: 78.

3 Lindenberg 2017: 83.

was interpreted as insufficient, as for the Catholic doctrine all power emanated from God anyway and, consequently, any such relativizing justification would be null and void.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, TFP insisted on the mitigation of several public policies (such as free public education and health, agrarian reform and tax reform) as well as labor rights (40-hour week, unemployment protection). But above all, the corrective proposal rejected vehemently the bare discussion of civil rights such as equaling marriage to cohabitation, gender equality, abortion, discrimination of homosexuality and indigenous minority rights.

It is important to remember that the Constituent Assembly, despite all democratic commitment, was far from being dominated by progressive forces. As journalist Hugo Studart calculated in *O Estado de S. Paulo*, quoted in Corrêa de Oliveira's book, the deputies of all progressive parties (PT, PCB, PCdoB, PSB and parts of PMDB and PDT) together amounted to no more than 50, around 10% of the Assembly. TFP's strategy was, therefore, to portray these civil rights questions as radical claims from a minority. Still, the lobbying for these progressive claims was broader than the Assembly. They were also supported by the CNBB and by the "popular emendations" from civil society, so that TFP saw their main function in counterbalancing not only the radical elements in the Assembly but also the popular demands brought into it.<sup>5</sup>

Even ending with a relative success, this was the last relevant campaign of the famous TFP. At this moment, the organization has become just a shadow for its former self, discredited in public opinion because of the noisy and intransigent support of the most radical wing of the military governments and in addition the involvement in scandals related to the sectarian veneration of Corrêa de Oliveira. During the last years of existence, TFP was fully occupied in denying these accusations. Most of them came from previous sympathizers or even allies and were directed at TFP as the major and only remaining representative of Integrism, though indirectly aiming at the excrescences of Catholic conservatism as a whole. From an academic point of view, Oliveira Torres, who a few years before still had been a member in *Hora Presente*, criticized that the main error of Integrists had been not understanding that there was no frozen moment in the past to serve as a unique and eternal reference. All history consisted of change and therefore even "revolutions" like the Second Vatican Council were not monolithic, he wrote. Categorical opposition to any change implied intentional blindness to the complexity of the historical process and its contradictions, for example ignoring

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4 Corrêa de Oliveira 1987: 84.

5 Corrêa de Oliveira 1987: 94.

the deplorable progressivism of the historical Brazilian monarchy itself (he alleges to freemasonry), against better available knowledge.<sup>6</sup> Other conservative Catholics, somehow resentful of TFP's almost hegemonic position during the military governments, pointed at its unclear double function as civil political lobbyist and self-declared ecclesiastic authority. As an otherwise quite conservative Catholic critic wrote: while on one side TFP had received "rich, extremely rich financial resources provided by the upper bourgeoisie, so as to survive in wealth" and without a qualm had engaged in "intense propaganda according to the modern suggestive technique [...] ineffective for an honest presentation of Christianity and for the apostolate", on the other, they had performed as "the judge of a religious supreme court, above the Council and the Pope".<sup>7</sup>

The harshest critique though came from dissidents of the organization. The first one, Orlando Fedeli, had been an important member for 30 years and even considered a possible successor of Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira. He left the TFP as early as 1983 and created the *Associação Cultural Montfort*, named after the French priest and saint. Since his exit, Fedeli has made it his chief activity to deconstruct in every detail the organization's theological basis (later he tried the same with his competitor Olavo de Carvalho, see chapter seven). His main accusation, almost obsessively documented in detail, was that within the TFP existed a secret society called "Sempreviva", to worship Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira and his diseased mother Lucília, adapting even the liturgy to the two. To Fedeli, it justified the gravest accusation of heresy that Corrêa de Oliveira had proclaimed himself inerrant spiritual leader and promised to initiate his followers in a sublime truth. Therefore, TFP had to be classified as a mystic sect or even an organization analogous to a masonic lodge, also because of similar rites.<sup>8</sup> There is not much reason to doubt Fedeli's testimony, as several other witnesses – Luís Filipe de Freitas Ablas, Giulio Folena and even Corrêa de Oliveira's loyal ex-comrade, bishop Castro Mayer<sup>9</sup> – confirmed Fedeli's accusations. Even for outsiders, the luxury biography of Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira, published in 2016 by his de facto successor Monsignor João Scognamiglio Clá Dias (founder of the Heralds of the Gospel, the *Arautos do Evangelho*, to whom I will get back soon), is blatantly a fascinating case of hagiography. There is also no doubt that within the TFP a secret society existed. Also named "sacred slavery", this inner circle consisted of 12 "slaves" or "apostles", among them our royal acquaintances Bertrand

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6 Torres 1968: 223–225.

7 Moura 1978: 214–215.

8 Valadares 2007: 252–253.

9 Santos Jr. 2008: 76–79; 81–86.



(alias “slave Plínio Miguel”), Luís (alias “slave Plínio da Cruz”) and the prosperous building contractor Adolpho Lindenberg, the leader’s cousin, possibly the main sponsor of TFP, and today president of the IPCO.<sup>10</sup>

Two testimonies, published by common members of the TFP, shocked the Brazilian public opinion with an insight into the organization’s cult-like practices. Some of these insights such as the records of military discipline, the disdain for the Church as “infiltrated structure” and anticommunist indoctrination, including the memorization by heart of the book *Revolução e Contra-Revolução*, were to be expected. Still, José Antônio Pedriali’s accounts on the veneration of the leader’s used handkerchiefs, the presence of antisemitic conspiracy theories, the pressure to break off the members’ family relations and the indirect death threats for renegades (naturally only as God’s punishment), added new details to an already dubious picture of TFP.<sup>11</sup> But Pedriali also defended Corrêa de Oliveira, alleging that he never had declared himself a prophet in the sense of the Old Testament but “only” a preacher similar to Moses. Giulio Folena confirmed all this and completed with descriptions of racism – including concerns against the “problematic” Jewish and Slavic “races” – in the proselyting practices of a de facto almost exclusively Caucasian community.<sup>12</sup> A third tell-it-all book, published by two dissidents in Italy in the mid-1990s, accused TFP of maintaining bonds with international freemasonry. Curiously, when one looks at the photographs to give evidence to this “grave error”, the terrifying masons turn out to be the mentioned representatives from the American Right, Weyrich and Blackwell, as the photographs show, which does not make the connection less problematic.<sup>13</sup>

These accounts certainly were interesting, but they are consistent with each other and surely did not just make up a story. What is also for sure is that Corrêa de Oliveira’s mission included an eschatological dimension which goes beyond the mere duty of leading the resistance against modernism in all its facets. This distinguishes him from other outstanding Catholic conservative leaders like Jackson de Figueiredo or even the – in this sense somehow overhyped – “Fifth Evangelist” Plínio Salgado, who ended as a career politician. Corrêa de Oliveira started as a politician and ended as a venerated prophet. It was basically this self-declared superiority which weakened the collaboration with other conservative Catholics, such as the ones from group *Permanência*, who continued to praise TFP but understandably found fault with Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira

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10 Altoé 2006: 54.

11 Pedriali 1985: 62–63, 87, 94, 146–148, 167, 183–184, 201. See also Zanotto 2010.

12 Folena 1987: 123–124.

13 Agnoli & Taufer s.d.

being “considered a prophet and venerated like a saint”.<sup>14</sup> The messianic message of TFP is important to understand the organization’s militancy. After all, the degeneration of humanity during modernity could just be a sign of the coming apocalypse and the desired second coming of Christ. In this longing for the end of times, why should it motivate such a fierce counter-revolutionary combat against the forces of evil? Taking TFP’s perspective, if these revolutionaries were to be defeated anyway by Christ, who then would inaugurate eternal salvation for some (the counter-revolutionaries) and condemnation for most others, what is the worth of the Earthly effort to resist?

This is where Corrêa de Oliveira’s Marianism comes in, probably influenced by Pius XII, who had introduced Marianist elements in the liturgy in 1954, besides favored by the death of his mother Lucília in 1968. Marianism belongs in the theological typology to apocalyptic dualism,<sup>15</sup> which means the creation of a hiatus of imminent wealth before Christ’s second coming and the last judgment. Corrêa de Oliveira preached in his prophecies, reserved for the elected at TFP and never published in his own publications, that the apocalypse would be preceded by the mentioned “Kingdom of Mary”, just as the birth of God’s son was preceded by Mary’s gestation: “It was through the Blessed Virgin Mary that Jesus Christ came to world, and it is also through Her that He must reign in the world”.<sup>16</sup> He based this interpretation on the writings of the above-mentioned Saint Montfort and the revelations mankind received through the miracle of Fátima in 1917. Fátima was a penetrant reference in Corrêa de Oliveira’s discourses and appears again in Olavo de Carvalho’s political analysis. By that occasion, the mother of God announced three punishments in the form of World Wars, if Catholics did not pray, do penance, and reintegrate Russia in Christianity. But at the end, as she is quoted, “my immaculate heart will triumph”. In Corrêa de Oliveira’s reading, modernity would end up in a final crisis, called by the French word *bagarre*, which had to be overcome by a militant triumphant Church to allow for the implementation of the Kingdom of Mary which then provided the conditions for Christ’s second coming and his final judgment. The unmistakable signs of *bagarre* were punitive and expiatory sufferings, a thermonuclear hecatomb, natural cataclysms, international and internal wars, diabolic infestation and angelic apparitions. To Corrêa de Oliveira, all these signs were manifest and “proven” in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with its “disordered passions”, the “communist anti-Christ conjuration”

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14 Fleichman 2018a: 38.

15 Løland 2020b: 68.

16 Corrêa de Oliveira 1972.

and its “brainwash by cultural Marxism”, and not least the “weakness of the non-communists in the spiritual and temporal spheres”, which means the reform of the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council.<sup>17</sup>

Catholic militancy (the third Church, as we remember) with the duty to overcome the challenges of the 20<sup>th</sup> century would therefore be imminently rewarded. This promise had the crucial function of not just accepting “world communism” and wait for the end of times but to fight communism (the *bagarre* as little apocalypse) and gain the right to enjoy the Kingdom of Mary’s Earthly paradise before – possibly even before death. This victorious stage would be characterized by the plenitude of the Catholic Church, embracing all but the conspirators, and the plenitude of the influence of the spiritual on the temporal world, especially the organization of the state. This millenarist idea has been marginalized in the official Catholic doctrine at least since the Council of Ephesus in the year 431 and criticized broadly, with the final refutation given by nobody else than Thomas Aquinas. Nevertheless, it persisted as a long popular tradition in Brazil and an inspiration for conservative Catholic strategists. Plínio Salgado also insisted that “Blessed Mary is the great savior of nations. Her cult is the starting point of the resurrection of the peoples”.<sup>18</sup> What Corrêa de Oliveira achieved by his Marianism was the strategic perfection of this tradition in his exquisite circle, with the climax of the veneration of himself as Dominus Plinius and his mother Blessed Lucília.<sup>19</sup>

Against all the above-mentioned objections, TFP defended itself immediately and vehemently with the pseudo-argument which is also Olavo de Carvalho’s favorite: that Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira was the author of an oeuvre of 2,300 published titles whose reading was the minimum requirement for uttering any comment on his ideas.<sup>20</sup> If one had read this, one could easily understand for example that all criticized points were perfectly in accordance with traditional Catholic doctrine. The defense bill stresses that Dominus Plinius’ prophecies, though not to be “absolutely believed”, were relevant because even though the last of the twelve apostles had died, “God still grants some the gift of prophecy”. According to TFP, if

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17 Zanotto 2007: 215–233. Zanotto 2017 summarizes all written and oral testimonies on Corrêa de Oliveira’s prophecies. They are also included in his biographies (Mattei 1997: 322–345; Clá Dias 2016) and in the online publications *O Príncipe do Cruzado*, published under a pseudonym by followers of Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira (Taveiro 2015, chapter 2 and 5).

18 Gonçalves 2012: 266.

19 Zanotto 2007: 501–502.

20 Corrêa de Oliveira 1985: 13. See also <http://www.oprincipedoscruzados.com.br/p/defesa-da-tfp-e-da-santa-tradicao.html#resist>.

followers happened to understand this role in analogy to the reincarnation of the Prophet Elias at the end times, the organization would not be “dictatorial” to prohibit such hypotheses. Furthermore, TFP assumed to be “extremist” in its political positions, as far as this meant the human capacity to “distinguish with total confidence and objectivity between truth and error, good and evil”. This position had to be defended, even under the risk that the “relativists” had already prepared for them “the yellow star, of compulsory use”.<sup>21</sup> As we have seen, the defense of their own doctrine as simple truth has been the spearhead of conservative thinking during the whole 20<sup>th</sup> century. But the pathetic self-comparison with the victims of Holocaust also shows that TFP felt increasingly cornered.

When on the 3rd of October 1995 the immortal Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira unexpectedly passed away, TFP entered a dirty inheritance dispute. At stake was the control over an organization with around 1.5 million followers, 200,000 militants, 700 internals living in 70 real estates and dedicating their lives to the organization, besides the ownership of the still widespread journal *Catolicismo*.<sup>22</sup> One group, the “founders”, ensured the continuity of TFP as IPCO, staying in the headquarters I visited, and following up on their campaigns – the caravans but also increasingly on social media – as well as editing *Catolicismo*. The other turned into the mentioned Heralds of the Gospel, led by Corrêa de Oliveira’s personal secretary João Scognamiglio Clá Dias, who changed the character of the organization from civil to ecclesiastical and himself became a priest.<sup>23</sup> The Heralds’ successful approximation to the Vatican (at the cost of a reluctant acceptance of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council) made it possible that in 2001 Paul II turned them into an International Association of Pontifical Right, which meant that they could train and ordinate their own priests.<sup>24</sup> In addition, several educational institutes like the *Instituto Filosófico Aristotélico Tomista*, the *Instituto Teológico São Tomás de Aquino* as well as the *Instituto Filosófico-Teológico Santa Escolástica* for female students and several colleges made the Heralds a growing education network. They also built a considerable media empire during the 2000s, including the monthly magazine *Arautos do Evangelho* (with one million copies and editions in Portuguese, Italian, Spanish and English), the trimestral academic journal *Lumen Veritatis*, the News Agency *Gaudium Press*, as well as the audiovisual channel *TV Arautos*, besides of course creating Youtube channels. Furthermore, the Heralds collaborate with

21 Corrêa de Oliveira 1985: 244–245, 259–260.

22 Altoé 2006: 36, 56.

23 Clá Dias 2011: 19.

24 See: [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/laity/documents/rc\\_pc\\_laity\\_doc\\_20051114\\_associazioni\\_en.html#HERALDS%20OF%20THE%20GOSPEL](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/laity/documents/rc_pc_laity_doc_20051114_associazioni_en.html#HERALDS%20OF%20THE%20GOSPEL).

Brazil's most important Catholic TV channel, *Rede Vida de Televisão*.<sup>25</sup> As they offer free education and therefore represent an interesting option for lower middle-class families, the Heralds' target group, earnings must stem from a sophisticated system of fundraising in which the *Cavalarias de Maria* have a central role. To give an idea, one cavalry visits an average of 30,000 households and 3000 public establishments a year, administers 17,000 sacraments and sells 5,300 subscriptions of their journal, besides collecting donations.<sup>26</sup> The only downside was that in 2017 Clá Dias had to step down as Superior General of the Heralds, due to several accusations of sectarianism and exorcism, recorded in a leaked video, in 2021 still under investigation by a Vatican commission.<sup>27</sup> The two heirs of TFP, IPCO and the Heralds, chose different strategies with different emphases, between sectarian Catholic education far from politics and Catholic-monarchist elite lobbying and cyberactivism. While the first apparently produced more wealth, as attested by their impressive kitsch castles in neo-neogothic style on a mountain range north of São Paulo but is much less present in the political arena, it is hard to evaluate which one achieved in the end more social impact.

A third group, not yet mentioned and not related to the other two, started in the 2000s to promote conservative Catholic ideas among opinion-makers: Opus Dei, founded in 1928 by Josemaría Escrivá (canonized by John Paul II) and institutionally part of the Church. It established the first Brazilian branch as early as 1957. In principle, Opus Dei aims at helping lay people to realize a fully Catholic life even while practicing profane professions but also lobbies for conservative Catholic positions. What distinguishes their strategy from the Heralds' and IPCO's is the focus on high-rank media representatives. In collaboration with the Business School of Opus Dei's own University of Navarra, executives are offered customized courses in media and journalism, directed by Opus Dei members Carlos Alberto Di Franco and Ives Gandra da Silva Martins, a legal scholar who will have other appearances later. Who got instructed by Opus Dei are managing editors and pundits from Brazil's main media groups, such as *Grupo Estado*, *RBS*, *Editora Abril* and *Rede Paranaense de Comunicação*. The last one is owned and directed by the Opus Dei member Guilherme Döring Cunha Pereira, also publisher of the *Gazeta do Povo*, which has turned into one of the most influential conservative newspapers in Brazil. Besides journalists, Opus Dei also instructs politicians (among them São Paulo's ex-governor Geraldo Alckmin from PSDB), lawyers and

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25 Zanutto 2011: 283; Pinheiro & Agapé 2019.

26 Clá Dias 2011: 53–54.

27 Lopes 2017; Tornielli 2017.

entrepreneurs, in close collaboration with the Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo (FIESP).<sup>28</sup>

These organizations can be understood as preserving and perpetuating the Integrist tradition during redemocratization, with a discreet influence on the political elite that should not be underestimated, though their public impact is by far not the same as in the period between the 1920s and 1970s. Jorge Boaventura, leader of the Brazilian branch of WACL and probably the last authentic Neo-Thomist representative of the original Brazilian conservatism, as described in chapter three, somehow anticipated this outcome in his *Ocidente Traído – A Sociedade em crise* [Betrayed Occident – Society in Crisis] from 1980. The book is dedicated to all those who “thinking and feeling as we do, find that their worries have no repercussions”. It reads as a resignation, as for him most of these preoccupations have come true – omnipresent materialism, indulgence in “syncopated music”, almost complete Marxist domination of press, churches and education.<sup>29</sup> The book was published by the Library of the Army, in recognition of Boaventura’s four decades in the political division of the ESG. In the 1980s, most Brazilians outside the military and conservative Catholic circles were probably not even aware of the existence of this Integrist tradition which had started in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. But Boaventura’s book also shows that the military never forfeited this knowledge, a phenomenon I will get back to soon. Boaventura died in 2005, shortly before he could witness the revival of what he stood for.

However, it is important to note that this downturn during the 1980s did not mean at all that the ideas as such lost power. They were taken up and brought back, in new clothes, by two new actors, neoliberalism and Pentecostalism, which entered the stage at this same historical moment and compensated the dwindling of the long history of conservative Catholicism. These new actors to influence right-wing thinking are usually not associated to the so far covered Catholic, monarchist and Integralist movements, and they were even treated at least rhetorically as their opponents, though – as I will show – they were intrinsically committed to the very same core ideas of conservative thinking. Through liberalism and Pentecostalism, almost as Trojan horses, conservatism amplified influence on the democratization process from a quite unexpected side.<sup>30</sup>

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28 Ferreira et al. 2005; Brum & Mendonça 2006. For Opus Dei’s courses, see.

29 Boaventura 1980: 7, 40–44, 212.

30 Antonopoulos et al. 2020: 246; Mariano 2012 [1999]: 184; Cowan 2021.

## The Liberal Founding Myth

To understand the emergence of liberal thinking in Brazil in the 1980s, we must briefly go back as far as to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when Brazil started its emancipation as a monarchic Empire. The first record of the reception of liberal ideas in Brazil coincides with the moment of the colony's emancipation: the transfer of the Royal Court of Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro, the re-foundation of the Portuguese monarchy as the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and Algarves and the subsequent independence of Brazil as the Empire. Shortly before, in 1804, José da Silva Lisboa (1756–1835), Viscount of Cairu, judge and later senator of the Empire, published the probably first manual of economic theory in Portuguese, *Principles of Political Economy*.<sup>31</sup> In this influential book, he presented to his readers the political economy of Adam Smith, as elaborated in the seminal *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). Lisboa's son would then follow in his father's footsteps and translate Smith's entire book into Portuguese in 1811.<sup>32</sup> Invited by Prince Regent João VI, Lisboa taught classes in the new capital Rio de Janeiro in which he opposed the mercantilist mainstream from this period. In parallel, he published through the royal press his *Observations on free trade in Brazil* (1808–1809), one of the first books printed and published in Brazil.<sup>33</sup> In these texts, he defines the role of the state as limited to national defense, public and legal security, in addition to the creation of a public infrastructure. In this endeavor he was supported by Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho, the Count of Linhares, influential minister of the Portuguese Overseas Council and as such the *spiritus rector* and manager of the transfer of the Court. Both Lisboa and Coutinho are considered the main agents of a political decision with great impact, the opening of Brazilian ports to foreign trade, without goods having to pass through Portugal.

Behind this liberal founding myth, it is questionable whether Lisboa was really a liberal. What marks his work and his public speeches is above all a conservative, anti-revolutionary attitude, right in the style of Edmund Burke, whose work he translated and commented in *Extracts from Edmund Burke's Political and Economic Works* (1812). Lisboa was a Christian jurist, with an Aristotelian–Thomist background, and only adopted Smithian ideas instrumentally – and, as has been objected, even distorting them.<sup>34</sup> Taking the historical opportunity, in his eyes provided by Providence,

31 Lisboa 1956 [1804]. See also Spaizmann & Sanson 2006: 260. Belchior (1977: 22–23) discovered that the member of the *Inconfidência* Rebellion in Minas Gerais (1789), Cláudio Manoel da Costa, had already referred to Adam Smith's theory in his manuscripts but without relevant repercussion.

32 Belchior 1977: 28.

33 Spaizmann & Sanson 2006: 261.

34 Caldeira 1999.

his main objective was to strengthen the independent Brazilian State in its moral order and, above all, to preserve the country's social hierarchy against the separatist, constitutional, republican, social and abolitionist claims which I addressed in chapter two.<sup>35</sup> Even though Brazilian monarchic politics certainly incorporated some liberal ideas selectively, such as the freedom of trade and broader political participation for the ruling class, this did not go beyond a moderate, pragmatic and functional liberalism, unable to postulate real social and political freedom, because of the objective context of a colonial slave economy.<sup>36</sup> What made Lisboa the godfather of liberalism in Brazil was the reception of his ideas in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, affirming his outstanding role as a liberal groundbreaker. This happened independently if his contribution was seen as a positive effect (according to liberal philosopher Antonio Paim) or a negative effect (according to developmentalist economist Celso Furtado).<sup>37</sup> Since then, his thought was marked by the not very representative *laissez-faire* tenet "let do, let pass, let sell!"<sup>38</sup> In this sense, Lisboa, the legendary Viscount of Cairu, is celebrated by the Brazilian New Right in manifold publications of several so-called Liberal Institutes.<sup>39</sup>

Another godfather of liberalism which the New Right likes to promote is Irineu Evangelista de Sousa (1813–1889), the Viscount of Mauá, remembered as the pioneer of industrialization in Brazil. As personification of a rare entrepreneurial spirit to fight against the economic tutelage of the monarchic state, dominated by anti-liberal slave owners, about a dozen biographies turned him later into a myth, which was convenient for illustrating liberal and individualist claims.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, historians have stressed that Irineu de Sousa rather made his fortune through slave trade and should be seen more as a pioneer of patrimonialism, the infiltration of private interest in politics to obtain advantages in business with the state, and that he went bankrupt when this scheme collapsed.<sup>41</sup> Maybe it was no coincidence that a feature film "Mauá: O Imperador e Rei" (directed by Sérgio Rezende) chose to pay tribute to him exactly in 1999, the moment when the neoliberal project for Brazil entered its biggest crisis. Neither can we say it is a coincidence that his heroification is performed in the movies produced by *Brasil Paralelo* (BP), a production company closely related to the New Right, to which I will return in chapter eight.

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35 Rocha 2001: 35.

36 Bosi 1988.

37 See respectively Paim 1968 and Furtado 1959.

38 Spaizmann & Sanson 2006.

39 Silveira & Carvalho 2013; Almeida 2018; Kistenmacher 2015.

40 Gambi & Cosentino 2020.

41 Guimarães 1997; Souza & Fossatti 2013; Guimarães 2005; Caldeira 1995.



As discussed in chapter one, it is significant that in the case of Brazil, rhetorical liberalism and practical conservatism were born together, in the sense of “liberal-conservatism”, not as an “idea out of place”<sup>42</sup>, but adapted to Brazilian realities and expressing the ambiguity of the yearning for modernity and attachment to tradition. Large scholarly work has been dedicated to this conundrum and as early as 1978 Wanderley Guilherme dos Santos put his finger right on the problem when he asked what could have been a convincing liberal political agenda in the Empire if both republicanism and abolition were considered taboos. When finally liberals made abolition an issue in the 1870s, they had to suppress republicanism because they needed the monarchy as an ally against the rural elite; the other way around, the Republican Party did not even mention abolition.<sup>43</sup> Interpreting these historical circumstances more skeptically, one could understand them not as a dilemma but as convenience: at this time, there was already a merge, which the title of this chapter refers to, of the “invisible hand” of the market with the monarchic “sovereign” and the divine “moral order”, the temporal and spiritual authorities. For conservatism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this foundational myth had the important function to root its liberal side – and in the first chapter I explained why it is only a facet, not a competing ideology – deep in the foundation of the Brazilian state and to make liberalism, together with order and national greatness, an element of national collective identity construction.<sup>44</sup>

In the period of re-Christianization which I covered in the third chapter, Brazilian liberals were perceived vaguely as part of the hegemonic political power in the Old Republic, despite the “fragility of the liberal experience in Brazil” which had “more than anything else an authoritarian character”. Therefore, liberalism only gained a concrete profile as the imaginary enemy of Integralist conservative Catholic thinking in the 1920s and Integralist doctrine in the 1930s.<sup>45</sup> The reason is that in this period the international tendency was predominantly anti-liberal and these discourses were projected on Brazilian liberals, which – although not corresponding to any concrete political position, except for being associated with the “Old Republic” – alienated them discursively from conservatism. That this was a somehow artificial effect was clear for contemporary observers. With rare objectivity, Francisco Martins de Almeida pointed in 1932 to “the real intimate situation of the liberal and the reactionary contenders, separated only by an accidental divergence,

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42 Vasconcelos 1979: 183; Schwarz 1992.

43 Santos 1978: 82–91.

44 Santos 1998; Prado Jr. & Guimarães 2001; Santos 1988; Chaloub 2013.

45 Vasconcelos 1979: 34, 189.

without any deep, organic contradiction”.<sup>46</sup> Even Plínio Salgado, who at the beginning gave more emphasis to his “lethal war against liberal-democracy” in curious contrast to his mild “warning against socialism”<sup>47</sup>, recognized later that the only problem he had with liberals was their “utilitarian conception of life, without any regard for the transcendental aims of man”.<sup>48</sup> Again, Olavo de Carvalho could not agree more in his essay with the pretentious title “Why I am not a liberal”.<sup>49</sup> One who always kept skeptical about liberals was Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira. To him, liberalism was “fruit of the same tree as egalitarianism” because he had the impression that when the liberation of unequal people from the natural order showed effects of persisting inequality, the tendency was to sacrifice liberty in the name of equality. Or, in other words, what started with liberalism had to end with communism: “The collisions between certain naive or retarded liberals and the socialists are, therefore, mere superficial episodes in the revolutionary process, innocuous confusion that do not disturb the deep logic of the Revolution nor its inexorable march toward something that, looking closely, is at once socialist and liberal.”<sup>50</sup> As early as 1959, Corrêa de Oliveira concluded that the only legitimate function of liberalism was to liberate society from state intervention in economic affairs but keeping out of moral affairs:

Official interferences in matters of exchange, exportation and importation increase too much the dependence of all the industrial, commercial and bank interests on the state. The state intervenes in wages, rents, prices, in everything. It has industries, banks, universities, newspapers, radio outlets, TV channels, etc. And at the same rate as the egalitarian dirigisme thus transforms the economy, immorality and liberalism dissolve the family and prepare the so-called free love.<sup>51</sup>

He could have known better, as after 1945 liberals revealed themselves as fierce supporters of the UDN, Corrêa de Oliveira’s own political ally, and in face of growing social claims discovered again Oliveira Vianna’s convenient concept of instrumental authoritarianism.<sup>52</sup> After this short historical detour, I will now return to the point we have reached in the chronology and show, in the following section, how liberals again significantly reinforced conservatism during redemocratization in the 1980s and thus helped

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46 Almeida 1932: 115.

47 Salgado 1933: 20, 53.

48 Salgado 1947: 41.

49 Carvalho 2007c.

50 Corrêa de Oliveira 2017 [1959]: 55–56.

51 Corrêa de Oliveira 2017 [1959]: 106–107.

52 Santos 1978: 93–99.

to compensate for the loss caused by the social impact of conservative Catholics.

### Think Tanks on the Move

Redemocratization in the 1980s and especially the Constituent Assembly were observed with lukewarm enthusiasm by liberals. In 1989, shortly before the first free elections for presidency, the already mentioned liberal Maciel de Barros spoiled the enthusiasm and warned in clear words against the “democratic superstition” – in his eyes, democracy was simply a process of distributing power in society, certainly not incompatible with liberalism, but neither was it tied to it with any essential bond. Yet incompatibility existed with “*petismo*”, the political position of the PT and its candidate Lula, with which “the liberal stance collides head-on”. Liberalism, he continued, cannot “coexist with its opposite – mainly when, somewhat surreptitiously, it aims to spread the idea that the ‘real’ liberalism is not liberalism but social-democracy or even an unclear ‘democratic socialism’”.<sup>53</sup> Democracies were not fit to resist communism, admonished in 1987 another already introduced liberal figurehead, the diplomat Meira Penna, pointing to the advanced subversion through the typical elements of cultural Marxism: “They do not have the means to face the permanent psychological war conducted by their enemies. Most of their press publicizes KGB’s *dezinformatsiya* campaign. Their churches and universities are a breeding ground for Marxism, subversion, defeatism, suicidal pacifism and diplomatic masochism.”<sup>54</sup>

Under the specific conditions of redemocratization, with the previous authoritarianism being *démodé*, liberalism declared itself the lonely heir of the former conservatives, only without “populism” or the “smell of sacristy”.<sup>55</sup> The liberal comeback in the 1980s was indeed prepared and escorted by a rather new phenomenon in Brazil: the exclusive and fragrant action of liberal “Think Tanks”.<sup>56</sup> These can be defined as civil, educational or charitable entities, funded by big corporations and usually related to “liberal” parties. They have the objective of communicating certain economic and political proposals to decision makers, as an alternative to – or competing with – universities and other public institutions of research, under an impression of scientific neutrality.<sup>57</sup> That is, liberal Think Tanks promote indoctrination, with marketing expertise, from a

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53 Barros 1992: xi, 92; essay originally published in 1989.

54 Penna 2019 [1987]: 112.

55 Barros 1992: 22.

56 Gros 1989 and 1993.

57 Cockett 1995: 131.

single economic theory, already customized for the political application, in abstention from scientific research.

The concept of “Think Tank” itself and the idea of creating a world network of it have a very identifiable origin in the beginning of the Cold War: libertarian Mont Pèlerin Society (MPS),<sup>58</sup> founded in 1947 on Hayek’s initiative, at the time aiming to fight the ascension of the state and its Keynesian or even Marxist planning. MPS had among its members renowned liberal economists and philosophers such as Milton Friedmann, Walter Lippmann, Ludwig Mises and Karl Popper, besides several Brazilians who have already appeared in this book: Donald Stewart, Meira Penna, Borges de Macedo and a new protagonist, Og Leme, son of Paulo Leme, Goldman Sachs Brazil’s president. SMP soon understood that a discreet lobbying, disguised as “a bridge between knowledge and politics”, could contribute substantially to winning the “war of ideas”. Hayek himself defined it in accordance with the previously mentioned “war of tendencies” or the “culture war”, investing in lasting psychological process, only effective over several generations.<sup>59</sup> It is known that MPS was inspired by the famous Walter Lippmann Colloquium, organized in 1938 in Paris, to retrieve the liberalism that was discredited with the crisis of capitalism and the threat of fascism and socialism – a second birth commonly called “neoliberalism”.<sup>60</sup> But it is worth remembering that Lippmann was one of the earliest theorists of propaganda, specialized in manipulation and “manufacture of consent” in a world designed as binary, as he explains in his seminal work *Public Opinion* (1922).

Hayek’s strategy to establish a network of liberal Think Tanks was soon implemented. The first was British businessman Antony Fisher, also a member of the MPS, who founded in 1955 the Institute of Economic Affairs in London. When the MPS at its annual meeting in 1959 concluded that the pro-market liberal ideas had not gained enough acceptance,<sup>61</sup> other projects proceeded, such as the Liberty Fund (1960) and the Institute for Humane Studies (1961). Later, Fisher created the Heritage Foundation in Washington DC (1973), funding over 300 organizations today, including the Fraser Institute (1975), the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research (1977), the Pacific Institute for Foreign Policy (1979), the Center for Independent Studies in Australia (1979) and, above all, the Atlas Economic Research Foundation (1981), which turned out to be the “mother” of over 450 other Think Tanks. Other important

58 About the MPS, see <http://thinktank-watch.blogspot.com/2007/12/mont-pelerin-society.html>.

59 Hayek 1967 [1957]: 224.

60 Barros 1992: 41–42 footnote 1.

61 Quoted in Cockett 1995: 140.

Think Tanks were the Freedom School (1956) – from which the Cato Institute came in 1977, funded by billionaire brothers David and Charles G. Koch – the Centre for Policy Studies (1974) and the Adam Smith Institute (1977), this one sponsored by the English Conservative Party. In a period of about 30 years, liberals created a worldwide network of probably almost one thousand Think Tanks to disseminate their economic message. It is no miracle that the influence of these liberal Think Tanks was critical for Ronald Reagan’s campaign in 1980, just as for Margaret Thatcher’s. According to Thatcher herself, she owed her government to the ideological indoctrination of the Institute of Economic Affairs, whose president, Ralph Harris, was the MPS’s president from 1983 to 1984.<sup>62</sup>

All these Think Tanks followed the guidelines laid down by the MPS in the following items:

1. The philosophy of the Market economy must be widely accepted; this requires a large programme of education and much thought about how to finance it; 2. The transformation from a controlled economy must be eased by compensating those interests whose expectations will be disturbed; 3. Policies must be designed to make otiose all pleas for protection from the consequences of change that the democratic politicians would have difficulty in resisting. [...] Education at varying levels must be directed first at the influencers of opinion: i.e., at intellectuals, politicians, businessmen, and all (not least journalists who help to form public opinion).<sup>63</sup>

The instructions were not limited to those general recommendations. For example, the same guidelines also suggested an editorial strategy called by themselves “infiltration in reverse”, which consisted of specific publications of antagonistic authors to pretend neutrality and orient the readers to other titles – these being liberals ones – released by the same publishing house.<sup>64</sup>

Think tanks in mass were introduced in Brazil only at the end of this process and in close collaboration with headquarters in the U.S., especially with the Atlas Network. Directed by Argentinean-American Alejandro Chafuen (who will be important in this chapter) since 1991, it provides support to 30 Think Tanks and other organizations in Brazil, through scholarships, courses in political management and public relations, events sponsoring and, in the last years, training cyberactivists.<sup>65</sup> The

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62 Cockett 1995: 173.

63 Quoted in Cockett 1995: 140.

64 Cockett 1995: 143.

65 Aharonian & Rangel 2018.

complex chronology and the structure of sowing Brazilian Think Tanks have been well investigated<sup>66</sup> and here I will focus only on approaching their cooperation with conservative sectors, for the first time and in an improvised way before the 1964 civil-military coup, and massively during the 1980s redemocratization and the consolidation of the New Republic.

Among Brazilian precursors, before the implementation of the blueprint, is *Fundação Getúlio Vargas* (1944), which, although not classifiable as a Think Tank of pro-market advocacy, came to have relationships with the network of liberal Think Tanks. An institution that has already been mentioned, comparable to a Think Tank in the sense of the MPS, was *Convívio* (founded in 1961), where not only, as described in the previous chapter, monarchists and ex-Integralists were active but also two top Brazilian liberals, Borges de Macedo and Paim, the latter one of the most assiduous collaborators of the journal *Convívium*.<sup>67</sup> *Convívio* invested strongly in liberal-conservative philosophical and political education. Between the early 1960s and the late 1970s the society offered courses for 68,000 students, based on textbooks edited by *Convívio*'s founder Adolpho Crippa and later published by its lively publishing house *Editora Convívio*.<sup>68</sup> The courses boasted the illustrious participation of Maciel de Barros who contributed in 1971 with his *Introdução à filosofia liberal* [Introduction to Liberal Philosophy] and conservative Mercadante in 1965 with the volume *A consciência conservadora no Brasil* [Conservative Conscience in Brazil] in which he argues very frankly for the conciliation of the elite interests to avoid any radicalizations and ruptures, not least through a liberal rhetoric.<sup>69</sup>

As a curious detail, *Convívio* was the alma mater of the Catholic conservative Ricardo Vélez Rodríguez, Jair Bolsonaro's first Minister of Education. Assistant of Adolpho Crippa, Antonio Paim invited him in 1979 to earn his PhD in "Luso-Brazilian Thought" at the private University Gama Filho – even paying his tuition fees – which he concluded with a thesis about Oliveira Vianna. His postdoc studies from 1994 to 1996 at the *Centre de recherches politiques Raymond Aron* at the *École des hautes études en sciences sociales* in Paris were arranged by Ambassador Meira Penna. I am mentioning these details to illustrate the impressive networking between conservatives and liberals. This also includes the military, of which Vélez Rodríguez is again a typical example: Between 1983 and 2003

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66 Gros 2003; Silveira 2013; Casimiro 2016; Alexandre 2017; Carlotto 2018; Onofre 2018; Rocha 2018.

67 Gonçalves 2009: 88.

68 For example, the several volumes of *As ideias filosóficas no Brasil* [Philosophical Ideas in Brazil] from 1978 and *As ideias políticas no Brasil* [Political Ideas in Brazil] from 1979.

69 Gonçalves 2009: 101; Mercadante 1980 [1965]: 235.

he was responsible for the curricula at the army's *Centro de Estudos de Pessoal* where officials were trained in humanities, among other courses. In 2003 he started to teach Brazilian social thought at the Army Command and General Staff School (*Escola de Comando e Estado Maior do Exército*), besides having taught occasionally at the ESG too. After his dismissal from the Ministry of Education in 2019, he became a lecturer at the Brazilian University of the Air Force.<sup>70</sup>

The higher education of the military had been in the safe hands of liberal-conservatives for the last decades and still is today. The textbooks used in the basic courses “Fundamental Elements” at the ESG build on a bibliography which represents almost exclusively the canon of this tradition, most of them so far mentioned in this book, in a sharp contrast to any Brazilian university program in the humanities and social sciences. The references include texts by Leo XIII, Maritain, Hayek, Nisbet, besides the French liberal-conservative Raymond Aron, the neoconservative Michael Novak, the icon of the *nouvelle droite* Julien Freund, Daniel Bell who was Kristol's partner in *The Public Interest*, as well as the Brazilian thinkers Oliveira Vianna, Reale, Oliveira Torres, Paim, Ubiratan Macedo and Boaventura. Especially surprising, despite the bibliography's wrong spelling of both his name and the title of his book, is the inclusion of Louis Lavelle's *Traité des valeurs* (1955), a metaphysic philosopher which only recently Olavo de Carvalho claims to have redeemed from oblivion.<sup>71</sup>

*Convivium* had a leading role in the preparation for the putsch in 1964 through the “formation of a new mentality”, as an editorial in 1962 announced, and remained active until 1993. In these activities they were financed by the most important international companies in Brazil, among them Volkswagen and General Motors.<sup>72</sup> This is also characteristic of two other Think Tanks that emerged at the eve of the civil-military coup and which more than any other fulfilled the mission given by the MPS: the Brazilian Institute for Democratic Action (IBAD), created in 1959 by ex-Integralist Ivan Hasslocher, and the Institute of Research and Social Studies (IPES), created in 1961 by industrialist and MPS member Paulo Ayres Filho. Ayres later bragged about having personally persuaded the military to stage the coup, during meetings held in his private house.<sup>73</sup> Both were promoted as liberal institutes and represented the interests of the business community in their collaboration with the military. Many of the IPES members had studied at the ESG, and general Golbery do

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70 Vélez Rodríguez 2020: 237–238, 309.

71 ESG 2014.

72 Gonçalves 2009: 20, 74, 83. See also the self-promotion in Poletti 2012.

73 Payne 1994: 264.

Couto e Silva, the father of the National Security Doctrine, was one of IPES' associates.<sup>74</sup> Their common goal was to fight the reforms of João Goulart's administration. Curiously, one can notice a strong presence of ex-Integralists such as Hasslocher, Márcio de Freitas Rolim, Antonio Galotti, Adib Casseb, besides Miguel Reale and Adolpho Crippa from *Convívio*.<sup>75</sup> Maybe that is not without reason, since it could be expected of them to be prepared for the anti-communist campaign with any means they saw necessary.

The complex IPES-IBAD followed a two-fold strategy. It was responsible for both the creation of the *Movimento Anticomunista* and the *Grupo de Ação Patriótica*, militant groups that did not hesitate when it came to employing violent means, and the launching of a propaganda campaign never seen in Brazil before. They employed famous actors, writers, journalists and public relations companies; they sponsored speeches, symposia, conferences, public debates, films, theater performances and interviews; they published and distributed books, pamphlets, magazine and newspaper articles; they broadcasted television and radio programs; they organized letter-writing, telegrams and phone campaigns. CDV's Gustavo Corção took part in IBAD-newsletter's "Ação Democrática" assiduously to inform the population about the risks of legal divorce and the communist practice of kidnapping and confining children. Gumercindo Rocha Dorea, who was Plínio Salgado's confidant, became via his publishing house G.R.D. a great propagator of anticommunist books, some of them intended to be freely distributed. International anticommunist bestsellers such as Fred Schwarz's *You can trust the Communists (...to do exactly as they say)* and Susanne Labin's *Il est moins cinq* on the technique of Soviet propaganda, both from 1960, were translated and released in Brazil in 1963 in generous runs and pocket editions, the latter by the hands of Carlos Lacerda under the title *Em cima da hora* [At the Last Minute]. IPES also produced a series of anticommunist films which were seen by 100,000 viewers.<sup>76</sup> IBAD covered the public space with anticommunist posters and established a sophisticated capillary system of disseminating propaganda through shopkeepers, taxi drivers, elevator operators, shoeshine boys and barbers. They even seduced union leaders – around 2,000, until 1964 – to participate in reading groups of liberal Austrian Economics texts and

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74 Payne 2014: 268. Leigh A. Payne conducted in 1987 large research on the relationship between IPES-IBAD and businesses, including interviews with the institutes' leaders and CEOs, which showed their intimate liaison and even collusion. In 1963, 500 enterprises were affiliated to IPES-IBAD, among them key businesses. In addition, 27 out of 36 directors of IPES-IBAD were also members of the FIESP (Payne 1994: 18).

75 Carlotto 2018; Dreifuss 1987b.

76 Cowan 2016: 77–80, 108–109.



in training camps on how to subvert union assemblies, the technic of “dominion by minority”.<sup>77</sup>

This indicates that the induction of the coup as a conservative Catholic undertaking not only had an integralist dimension but also a liberal participation, with the substantial support of the business community, without causing any conflict with any supposed democratic spirit of liberalism. Repeatedly, I have pointed to the liberal praise for an authoritarianism, if not as a goal itself, at least as a pragmatic means. The liberal Manuel Lubambo (1904–1943), Secretary of Finance of Pernambuco, had no doubt about the importance of instrumental authoritarianism and no qualms to refer – as a self-declared liberal! – even to Maurras: “It’s useless to defend the culture, or the economy, or the finances of a nation in the absence of a strong power, capable of establishing order and inspiring trust: where there is no order in the street [...] difficult will be the productive effort, almost impossible, the capitalization.”<sup>78</sup> Once liberal-conservatives achieved their major goal, the stalling of reforms and the implementation of an authoritarian regime (of which liberals then only occasionally participated, through Roberto Campos, president Castelo Branco’s first Minister of Planning), their agitation naturally decreased, save for the resilient *Convívio*.

The second and more enduring stage of the liberal engagement in politics only started during redemocratization in the 1980s, with the foundation of the Liberal Institute (IL) in 1983 by the already mentioned Donald Stewart. He was encouraged by Hayek’s Brazilian translator, José Stelle, and received the support of the instigator of the coup, Paulo Ayres, along with Chicago boy Og Leme and Henry Maksoud, the latter again a member of MPS.<sup>79</sup> Maksoud, who also was a host to Hayek in his three visits to Brazil (between 1977 and 1981),<sup>80</sup> had already developed a liberal indoctrination that equaled to that of an institute: in 1974 he bought the important magazine *Visão* [“Vision”], with an average run of 150,000 copies, to give it a clearly liberal stance. In 1988 he started the talk show “Henry Maksoud and you” (in 170 editions) on *Bandeirantes* TV network to “discuss” liberal topics such as advocating privatization. Together with another liberal enthusiast, Winston Ling, Chicago boy, soybean producer and founder of the Institute for Entrepreneurial Studies (IEE) in 1984, he practiced the famous “close quarter” approach, the didactic monitoring of

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77 Payne 1994: 16–20, 265–269. See also Dreifuss 1987a.

78 Lubambo 1940: 20.

79 Casimiro 2016: 241.

80 Gros 2003: 75. See also Onofre 2014.

liberal training of decision makers, even giving reading instructions and following up on their CEO-students' learning progress.<sup>81</sup>

The IL founded branches in various states and became the most important liberal Think Tank in Brazil. Besides organizing a series of conferences from 1983 to 1993 (for example, with Paulo Guedes, now minister of economy in Bolsonaro's administration), the greatest indoctrination impact, always in the line of the Austrian School, was on "strategic audiences", through publications and other propaganda material: 3,000 opinion leaders, selected by the criterion of "possibility of conversion to liberalism", among them politicians (especially from the social-democratic PSDB), businessmen, lawyers from the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB) as well as university professors. Special emphasis was given on the formation of faculty at ESG, where Stewart, Meira Penna and Ubiratan Macedo had earned their superior degrees – and to which the latter returned as professor.<sup>82</sup> Not only them but about five thousand politicians and administrators received the monthly comments on bills of law (*Notas – Avaliação de Projetos de Lei*). These suggested "liberal solutions" for "social problems", concerning legislative work and, especially, the writing of the Constitution. Their main banners were obviously the privatization of the pension system, health and education.<sup>83</sup> In that context, the Liberal Institutes contributed discreetly to give new meaning to the concept of citizenship in the sense of individual consumer's rights, in comic book primers, commissioned to famous cartoonists Maurício de Souza (who created a special "Turma da Mônica" notebook) and Ziraldo, both explaining that all the problems in the country are due to the inefficiency of the state. The print run, in several editions, surpassed half a million copies, and the primers were distributed freely in schools. The Liberal Institutes, in this ambitious endeavor, received the support of 225 Brazilian and international institutions and corporations.<sup>84</sup> Schools and universities were strategic targets to train teachers in free workshops, establishing staffs that are qualified to "dis-ideologize" the teaching of economy. At the MPS conference in Rio de Janeiro, the attendance fee of

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81 Rocha 2017: 107.

82 Rocha 2017: 109–110; Gros 2003: 130–140.

83 The mentioned entrepreneur Henry Maksoud (1988) presented his own proposal for a constitution, which Roberto Campos praised as "the bible of neoliberalism" (quoted in Gros 2003: 208–210).

84 Among the financers, sponsors and collaborators of the IL are the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) and the corporations Shell, Xerox, Hoechst, Dow Química, Gessy Lever, Nestlé, Carrefour, Mesbla, Grupo Fenícia, Indústrias Villares, Bradesco, Banco de Crédito Nacional, Banco Noroeste, Citibank, Banco de Boston, among others (Gros 2004: 156; Casimiro 2016: 247–250; Onofre 2018: 302).

university professors was defrayed by anonymous sponsors from the IL.<sup>85</sup> However, the targeted creation of a liberal “epistemic community”, which Hayek called “second-hand dealers of ideas”, found more receptivity only at private universities, such as Gama Filho, Santa Úrsula, Cândido Mendes, Estácio and Instituto Brasileiro de Mercado de Capitais (Ibmecc), besides PUC-Rio and *Fundação Getúlio Vargas*, but not at the flagships of the public universities.<sup>86</sup>

A comparable impact on the promotion of liberal ideas and interests was achieved by the *Instituto Atlântico*, founded in 1993 by Paulo Rabello de Castro, one more trained Chicago Boy, many years later nominated by Michel Temer president of the National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES) and in 2018 candidate for vice president of Álvaro Dias from the party *Podemos*. Besides advocating the pension reform insistently, with the help of *Globo* columnist Merval Pereira (who continues active on behalf of the New Right), they deserve the special merit of having reached out strategically to the workers unions: the foundation of the *Força Sindical* [Union Force] broke the monopoly of the Unified Workers’ Central (CUT), committed to the social movements.

The effect of so many coordinated initiatives during a decade was indeed noteworthy. In 1993, when the MPS celebrated its first annual meeting in Rio de Janeiro, the new democratic governments had adhered, more or less openly, to the liberal agenda, and started to transform recommendations in reforms. It is important to notice that, in the Brazilian case in particular, what has already been verified worldwide remains valid: the success resulted, mainly, from the force of the liberal doctrine as an idea, and not from the economic results, which, during all those times, were modest when compared to the expectations.<sup>87</sup> Significantly, the activities of these Think Tanks diminished during the 1990s, partly because of a sense of accomplished mission. In the words of Bernardo Santoro, president of the IL in Rio de Janeiro, “if even a leftist president [Fernando Henrique Cardoso, PSDB] is practicing liberalism, we have won the political debate”. Partly it was also due to the death of crucial actors in the network, among them Donald Stewart, in 1998.<sup>88</sup> Still a greater achievement was the ILs’ launching of the magazine *Think Tank*, with print runs of 3,000 copies, containing insertions that disseminate the

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85 Onofre 2018: 329.

86 Carlotto 2018: 81. Internationally, Austrian Economic theory is strongly present at the universities George Mason (Washington DC), Francisco Marroquín (Guatemala City) and the Catholic University of Chile (Santiago).

87 Blyth 2017 [2013].

88 Rocha 2018: 97–98.

liberals' proposals of public policies and also present summarized versions of classical texts, by Adam Smith, Hayek, Karl Popper, among others.<sup>89</sup>

In view of what was mentioned above, it would not be exaggerated to characterize the structure of these Think Tanks and their associated social movements as at least equivalent to any activity of the *Komintern*, as the specialized researcher Richard Cockett provokes, only with another political orientation.<sup>90</sup> This means that the premise of the New Right that there was a "leftist" hegemony in Brazil since the military governments does not seem very convincing in the light of the efficient marketing strategies of liberal-conservative ideas being applied for decades. The fact that it contradicts common sense, might be indeed the intended outcome and precisely corroborates the success of that indoctrination which operates from a position of "victim" of a supposed cultural Marxism hegemony.

### **The Thomist Origins of Economic Liberalism**

As we have seen so far, conservatives and liberals in Brazil have a long-shared history of pragmatic collaboration that, in principle, has been sufficient for concerted political action. Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a new dimension allowed for elevating this partnership to a more ideological level of not only shared action but shared thought: the promotion of the discovery that economic liberalism in fact had very old Catholic roots or, more blatantly, that Catholicism actually invented economic liberalism. This might sound strange at a first glance, as in principle Christianity and economic liberalism are believed to have a conflicting relationship. This goes for the Catholic Church, especially after the reform of social doctrine at the Second Vatican Council but also for Christianity in general, including multiple protestant strands.<sup>91</sup> An exception is the Pentecostal branch guided by theology of prosperity, which presents an evident susceptibility to the liberal agenda. The reception of this theology, originally from the U.S., in Brazil during the 1970s where it was adopted by a multiplicity of churches, is well studied.<sup>92</sup> The massive adherence of precisely this liberal strand of protestantism to the Brazilian New Right, supporting them in their economic policies and above all fostering their conservative values, has been thoroughly analyzed too, which makes any

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89 Other publications of the Liberal Institutes included *Ideia Liberal*, *Informe Liberal*, the newsletter *Ideias Liberais* (since 1993, with around 3,000 subscribers) and the series *Políticas Alternativas e Conferências do Instituto Liberal* (Gros 2003: 130–140).

90 Cockett 1993: 308.

91 Alves 2001: 76–85, 113–120. See also Stackhouse 2005.

92 Sousa 2015: 17–19; Chesnut 1997; Mariano 2012 [1999]; Xavier 2009; Martins 2015.

attempt to tell the same story again superfluous.<sup>93</sup> I will limit myself to a few synthesizing observations and then pass on to the much more interesting – and less studied – question of the appropriation of liberal ideas by a certain branch of conservative Catholicism since the 1980s, which created a new and updated intersection between conservatism and liberalism in the strategic field of economics.

The principal characteristic of prosperity theology is that it breaks with the Christian idea of frugality and charity. Material poverty, which has never been considered a problem of faith, as it had to be compensated in the other world or was not bound to religious zeal, becomes a symptom of the lack of faith, just as faith becomes a guarantee of material wealth, which makes the central institution of charity dispensable.<sup>94</sup> The possibility to achieve wealth in this world through faith changes the whole Christian eschatology, of suffering here and compensation there, the reason why prosperity theology breaks with the millenarist tradition of Pentecostalism. Faith turns into a “magic” instrument to conquer this world, instead of rejecting it in expectation of a better eternity, and hereby loses its transcendental dimension. Obviously, this has an appeal for materially deprived believers who otherwise would have to abdicate from their faith to change their position by overthrowing the God-given natural hierarchy.<sup>95</sup> Not by coincidence, prosperity theology originates from the U.S. of the late 1920s, where during the Great Depression the health-and-wealth gospel emerged, slowly prospered and finally consolidated in the 1970s in a diversified landscape of radio and TV preachers. This includes many of these new pastors associated with the Christian Right and supporters of Ronald Reagan, especially the organization “Moral Majority”, Jimmy Swaggart being one of the most famous of them.<sup>96</sup> Their teachings promised that God’s blessing empowers believers to achieve improvements in all areas of life, including finances, health and relationships, thus, suffering did not come from God but from Satan. One of the most successful leaders was Kenneth E. Hagin, a former Baptist and pastor of an Assembly of God, founder of the Rhema Bible Church in 1974. He invented the ingenious doctrine that the Holy Spirit is essentially a gift, which means that a believer cannot do anything to receive it, much less to suffer for it (which is always an influence from the devil). The only possible way is positive confession, to believe in achieving grace by enacting oneself God’s sacral language in the liturgy. The doubt

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93 See Burity 2018 and Dip 2018.

94 Cox 2016: 69.

95 Mariano 2003: 22, 185–186.

96 Gottfried & Fleming 1988: 78; Bowler 2013.

(negative confession) destroys the impact, which means that one must act as if one already had received the grace, even contrarily to evidence. This worshiping and the expected merit imply monetary flows of individual responsibility: “It is no more your business what a preacher does with his money than it is his business what you do with yours. The important thing is to be sure you honor God with tithes and offerings.”<sup>97</sup>

Swaggart was broadcasted on the Brazilian TV network *Bandeirantes*, as part of Reagan’s offensive in Latin America. Together with Hagin, they inspired R.R. Soares, the Brazilian founder of the International Grace of God Church (IIGD), who incorporated prosperity theology in his business model. In *As bênçãos que enriquecem* [Enriching Blessings] he explains that economic success is the result of becoming a business partner of God (“sócio do Senhor”), which means to “invest” the tithe in the Church, but also to act economically “intelligent, astute, and make the most of good opportunities”.<sup>98</sup> Soon the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (IURD), owned by R.R. Soares’ brother-in-law Edir Macedo, followed and developed an even bigger business structure around the marketing of “prosperity”. Macedo is now one of the richest persons in Brazil, with an estimate fortune of 950 million US\$.<sup>99</sup> Other churches like Silas Malafaia’s Assembly of God “Victory in Christ” and Valdemiro Santiago’s World Church of God’s Power (IMPD) followed.<sup>100</sup>

What is most relevant for my purpose is that prosperity theology spiritualizes economic relations at the same time as it accommodates religious practices to consumption. That phenomenon has led to hitherto unimaginable forms of not only the marketing of religion but also religion as marketing of consumer goods, similar to a “Jesus brand”. Among Pentecostal leaders, a professional background in marketing is not anymore an isolated phenomenon. This goes for the founders of the Reborn in Christ Church (1986) and reached a new quality in the Bola de Neve Church (1999, literally “Snowball Church”), founded by Rinaldo Luis de Seixas Pereira, the “surf & skate” apostle Rina. His product targets wealthy, young and somehow informal believers and sells worship as a way to follow Jesus (and receive His grace) without dogmas and perfectly integrated in the community’s lifestyle. Pentecostal marketing strategies, especially as practiced by the above-mentioned Churches IIGD, IURD and IMPD, are designed as counter-revolutionary strategies that would have made Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira green with envy: some of them are

97 Hagin 1991: 1–2, 12; see also Hagin 1979 and 1982. Xavier 2009: 125.

98 Soares 2005 [1985]: 128–129, 144; Sousa 2015: 33, 72–80; Mariano 2012 [1999]: 152.

99 Macedo 1990: 25, 85–86; Antonopoulos et al. 2020: 254.

100 Sousa 2015: 138–139, 192, 208–238; Cunha 2014, 2017b and 2019a.

the “holy war” marketing (the spectacularizing of liturgy, both real and virtual), the “flanking” (exploring in detail taboo areas like sexuality, to argue against it), and the “holy guerilla marketing” (actively recruiting representatives of the enemy scheme, such as LGBTQ, to stage their reorientation). In addition, they established a Pentecostal event culture, such as Beach Festivals for university greenhorns and training camps to live out military fantasies and to prepare the defense against an imaginary enemy.<sup>101</sup>

While this reflects a micro-economic approach to success in business, conservative Catholics concentrated more on the macro-economics of a Christian free market. For this, the rediscovery of a not only proto-capitalist but also market-friendly and state-skeptical wisdom deep in the past was fundamental: the teachings of the Late Scholastics, roughly from the XIII to the XVI century, mostly based at the Schools of Salamanca and Alcalá. To cite just the most important representatives, this tradition of thought included luminaries such as Thomas Aquinas, Francisco de Vitoria, Juan de Medina, Martín de Azpilcueta Navarro, San Bernardino de Siena, Francisco de Soto, Tomás de Mercado, Francisco Suárez, Juan de Lugo, Luis de Molina and Juan de Mariana.<sup>102</sup> Very briefly, their theological economic theory, sometimes just subsumed under Thomism, took as premise a supreme divine reason whose principles were transposed, by natural law, into social institutions. This scholastic thought was the unknown basis of Anglo-Saxon classical liberalism, such as developed by Francis Hutcheson, Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson. Through an extraordinary case of traveling ideas, the Late Scholastics’ theories from Spain circulated in Europe during the 17th century before reaching Britain, through Flemish theologian Leonardus Lessius, Dutch diplomat Hugo Grotius and finally German jurist Samuel von Pufendorf, the last one responsible for omitting the references to the Spanish pioneers. In the following, I will not interpret these scholastic texts, which are ambiguous and provided ample evidence and counterevidence for centuries of debate,<sup>103</sup> but explore the reception of the ideas inferred from their writings.

These Catholic economic theories, which certainly remained well known in clergy circles, were rediscovered by economists in the 1920s via Irish politician George A. O’Brien’s “Essay on medieval economic teaching”, yet not with large repercussion. Later it was taken up again by Jesuit economist Bernard Dempsey in his historical comparative study on interest and usury (1943) and analyzed in depth by the specialized

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101 Maranhão 2013: 31–44, 52–59, 74, 100–115.

102 Light & Block 2017: 35; Catharino 2019b: 149.

103 Cox 2016: 74.

economic historians of medieval Europe Marjorie Grice-Hutchinson (a student of Hayek) and Raymond de Roover in the 1950s. However, who made these re-findings popular was the famous Joseph Schumpeter in his 1954 book *History of Economic Analysis*. Who then promoted the Spanish Late Scholastics as “hidden prehistory” of the Austrian School and economic liberalism among the Right was no other than the main libertarian reference in the U.S., Murray N. Rothbard (1976). Based on his article, several authors have discovered the convenient legacy of Catholic economic thought to strengthen the liberal-conservative fusion, and the MPS honored Grice-Hutchinson on two occasions for her discovery.<sup>104</sup>

Surprisingly, these ideas were already disseminated in Brazilian economic and political circles as early as 1940 through the above-mentioned Manuel Lubambo, a reader of O'Brien's book. As conservative Catholic, he belonged to the group and journal *Fronteiras* [Frontiers], a Northeastern Catholic and anti-Maritainist group and journal in the late 1930s and early 1940s, similar to *O Legionário*. In his most important book, *Capitais e Grandeza Nacional* [Capital and National Greatness] from 1940, he infers from the Scholastics that any discussion of “social justice” would be obsolete as there was no wealth to distribute in Brazil. On the contrary, society should concentrate forces on the “creation and defense of capitals”, which then would allow for voluntary individual charity.<sup>105</sup> Even more, in Lubambo's own cake theory, no collectively agreed distribution at all is desirable:

Why did St. Thomas found the concept of private property on that interest, on that individual super-excitement, on that fertile spirit, as it were, of greed, which animates man when he possesses something as his own? Simply because of this: the Christian or Thomist economic doctrine is a doctrine of life, a doctrine whose laws were established at the moment of “be fruitful and multiply” – laws of growth, expansion, creation, of “mass production”, so to speak, in a humanization of the term; and a concept of wealth that started by stealing the property of its individualist stimulus and turning the workshop into a beneficent institution [...] is a doctrine of death.<sup>106</sup>

Inspired by an article in the French Maurrassian (and since 1936 openly Nazi-friendly) journal *Je suis partout*, Lubambo then becomes politically more concrete and warns against the decapitalizing effects the “Marxist war on profit” would have on a “sub-capitalist” country like Brazil. With

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104 D'Emic 2014.

105 Lubambo 1940: 3, 13.

106 Lubambo 1940: 9–10 footnote 7.



the word “war” he refers to the reforms of French Prime-Minister Léon Blum, which established minimum standards in labor rights like the forty-hour work week. Furthermore, he was one of the first Catholic thinkers to break with corporativism – now an almost forgotten concept among the Brazilian Right – and substituted it by the idea of individualism as represented by “new *bandeirantes*”. The colonial rhetoric is no coincidence. What in his eyes dignifies Brazil for laissez-faire economics is its perpetuated and idealized colonial condition: “Emerging societies [...] can’t avoid suffering from that evil – their law is that of freedom; its wealth principle are free initiative, ambition, the taste for adventure, the courage of risking.”<sup>107</sup> Not surprisingly, Lubambo’s book soon became a reference for TFP.<sup>108</sup> Much later, that reception was reinforced by a second reading of the theories of the Late Scholastics, this time not by conservative Catholics themselves but by the liberal-conservative strand and with the participation of the Think Tanks. The president of liberal Atlas Network from 1991 to 2018, Alejandro Chafuen (MPS member), who had established himself as the main mediator between the organizations in U.S. and Brazil,<sup>109</sup> summarized in his 1986 work *Christians for Freedom: Late Scholastic Economics* (with a revised and extended version in 2003, titled *Faith and Liberty: The Economic Thought of the Late Scholastics*) the previous discussion to conclude that liberalism would be nothing but a late and even moderate echo of the Scholastics. Reading his book, it seems like the Scholastics had signed under the Washington Consensus.

These old Christian sages would have already confirmed, for example, that the seventh commandment (“Thou shall not steal!”), which the TFP has deployed against the agrarian reform, would imply the absolute right to private property, without the obligation of charity. That right would only be temporarily alienable in case of extreme necessity or, in the words of Francisco de Vitoria, “life threat”; even so, with the obligation of restitution of property. As Chafuen explains, in the 13<sup>th</sup> century wealth stopped connoting greed, and the accumulation of private property was recognized as the best therapy against human weakness. In order to protect it, the natural law would guarantee the right to self-defense, while any interference by the state, for example price fixing, would lead to the excommunication of the governors.<sup>110</sup> Taxation was seen as the involuntary payment to a coercive authority, that is, a form of confiscation, legitimate only as “neutral tax” when every person is

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107 Lubambo 1940: 79–80, 99, 167. *Bandeirantes*, literally “flag-carriers”, were slavers, explorers, adventurers and fortune hunters in early Colonial Brazil.

108 Corrêa de Oliveira 1944; Campos Filho 1980: 382; Macedo 1979.

109 Carlotto 2018.

110 Chafuen 2003: 19–22, 43.

restored the equivalent value in services or public goods (an interesting idea one could apply to favela inhabitants, calculating their paid exorbitant consumption taxes and received public services, which obviously did not occur to Chafuen). Otherwise, according to Siena, it would be morally justifiable to evade taxes (a balm for any occasionally bad conscience of Brazilian entrepreneurs who every year produce a tax gap of around 500 billion BR\$). But again, all depends on the point of view, as the president of IPCO explained recently without even perceiving the gravity of his words: “According to Ives Gandra da Silva Martins [the Opus Dei legal scholar], one of the greatest Brazilian tax experts, if there were no tax evasion, the taxes would absorb more than half of the gross domestic product.”<sup>111</sup> Consequently, for the Scholastics, taxation could never be a mechanism of wealth distribution (at least not from the rich to the poor, one might add in consideration of the regressive effect of the Brazilian tax system<sup>112</sup>). Furthermore, the reader learns that already in the 16<sup>th</sup> century the formal prohibition of charging interests was eluded by ingeniously converting the currency of financial transactions and profiting from the exchange rate instead – again balm for any Catholic rentier. Regarding entrepreneurs, according to Luis de Molina, any employer should have the obligation to pay only the counter value of the work provided, independently if sufficient to maintain the worker’s existence, with the low margin of that value being defined by the balance between demand and supply; Francisco de Soto generously recommends emigration for those who will not accept the low value offered by the market. Finally, Chafuen finds in Lessius the legal guarantee to demand the implementation of free trade, otherwise the state would have to compensate for the lost profit.<sup>113</sup>

The late scholastic thought in the reading of Chafuen was propagated, during the first great liberal-conservative mobilization, by *Mises Brasil* magazine in 2013 and 2014, which also published Rothbard’s article. The scholastic economic theories served perfectly to strengthen again, in the Brazilian context, the conservative Catholic thought itself, which – as I showed in previous chapters – had never abandoned its Thomist roots. When the known Catholic liberal Thomas E. Woods concludes that “a profound philosophical commonality exists between Catholicism and the brilliant edifice of truth to be found within the Austrian school of economics”, he confirms something that, in Brazil, has been present for half a century and only reinvigorated itself in the periods of intensified

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111 Lindenberg 2017: 94.

112 Lins 2021.

113 Chafuen 2003: 13, 19–22, 69, 76, 106–107.

liberal indoctrination by the Think Tanks in the 1980s.<sup>114</sup> A couple of liberal studies engaged in further “nationalizing” Scholastic economics, pointing to the relationship between the Salmanticenses and the Luso-Brazilian academic tradition, originated in the University of Coimbra.<sup>115</sup>

As such, these ideas served conveniently to continue to stifle social issues, omnipresent in the inequality champion country and more and more often raised since redemocratization. To ex-TFP member Orlando Fedeli, the predominant problem of the world was precisely equality, between sexes, nations, in culture (for example music, fashion, architecture), in social relations (between generations, classes and professional hierarchies). He remembers that God himself created the rich and the poor (Proverbs 22, 2) and that the poor should always exist (John 12, 8), exactly because inequality was a “good in itself”, just like the whole universe was created as a hierarchy of inequalities, between the extreme poles “mineral” and “angel”. Therefore, “hating inequality is hating order, is hating the image of God’s wisdom. Hating inequality is hating God.”<sup>116</sup> Adolpho Lindenberg incorporated those theories into *Os católicos e a economia de mercado* [Catholics and Market Economy] from 1999, released again in 2018 more ecumenically as *Uma visão cristã da economia de mercado* [A Christian Vision of Market Economy]. To him it is clear that claims for social equality are the work of Satan:

Lucifer’s sin was his indignation against God’s superiority. For that reason, each situation of discord, grudge, hostility before natural hierarchies, structures desired and instituted by the Creator, shares somehow the sin committed by the first angel. The hierarchical orders among human beings express the various forms and aspects of divine perfection.<sup>117</sup>

Any objection to this, for example Matthew’s (19, 24) metaphor of the camel not going through the eye of a needle and other basic biblical principles with a “bias for the poor”, are rejected as arbitrary interpretations.<sup>118</sup> Furthermore, this naturally existing divine poverty was intrinsically motivated by “the population’s moral vices – indolence, laziness, neglect, lack of providence in expenses, drugs” and potentialized by “nationalizing, populist, Bolivarian economic politics”. The only way to reduce poverty was to recreate “a healthy economy, based on natural laws, that is, on private property and a market economy” and adequate religious assistance by employers to their employees. Any excess on the

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114 Woods 2005: 216.

115 Huerta de Soto 2000; Alves & Moreira 2009 and 2018.

116 Fedeli 2003.

117 Lindenberg 2017: 82.

118 Cox 2016: 71; Lindenberg 2017: 212.

side of entrepreneurs – still possible, Lindenberg admits, due to the original sin – had to be treated by stakeholders, the proprietary's family and peers in the business community (like FIESP, I assume), but never ever by state legislation. Charity and philanthropy were good things, Lindenberg admits, especially for those who practice them, because through this symbolic gesture they participated in a sense in the “divine life”.<sup>119</sup> In extreme and merely hypothetical cases, even limited and proportional solidarity was legitimate:

Let us consider the case of a relatively rich country where, for various reasons, part of the population ended up, through no fault of its own and without the means to remedy it, relegated to inhuman conditions. In that distressing situation, it has the right, in the name of the solidarity the whole must have with its parts, to demand the authorities, as representatives of society, to take measures for its improvement so that it can have a dignified standard of living.<sup>120</sup>

Applying Lindenberg's argument to his immediate social context, this apparently does not concern Brazil, where – as we have to understand – poverty is self-inflicted and easy to remedy by the poor themselves.

### **Metaphysical Economic Liberalism**

As we have seen, liberal thought not only cultivates hostility against scientific standards in general and against social sciences in particular but also evidently abstains from considerations of transcendental order. Among outstanding liberal thinkers, any metaphysical question is carefully avoided. However, there are indications that it does not exclude the possibility of addressing an underbelly in the liberal economic theories or something suppressed as a result of tabooization. Liberals themselves recurrently state that in principle liberalism is not interested in the whys behind the issues as they are considered unrelated to rationalism. Or, according to eminent liberal Maciel de Barros, these questions would be reserved to providence, which in his eyes is the reason why great Catholic liberals have appeared, for example, among conservatives, like devout Lord Acton.<sup>121</sup> The combination of distancing from the scientific method and avoiding questions of theological order demands an explanation. The two key thinkers, Mises and Hayek, representatives of what Weaver called the “quintessentially conservative approach to economics”, offered clues that

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119 Lindenberg 2017: 10–11, 38–39, 50, 121, 129, 153.

120 Lindenberg 2017: 141.

121 Barros 1992: 91.

I will explore next.<sup>122</sup> To Mises, the only economic method that could provide “the truth” would derive from *praxeology*, presented in his 1949 magnum opus *Human Action* (originally released in German in 1940). Concisely put, this theory proposes as the basis of its investigative method an “action axiom”, whereby economy is understood solely through the human action of individual and intentional choice, through which the individual tries to achieve certain overriding objectives to improve, from a strictly subjective perspective, his or her condition.<sup>123</sup> That which seems trivial from the perspective of social sciences, which developed much deepened methods such as ethnography, reintegrated the human factor – in all its irrationality, and not only as *homo oeconomicus* – into an area of economics until then inspired by the methods of the exact or natural sciences, for example refining calculus of balance price and marginal utility. Regarding mainstream economics, I can certainly share Scruton’s gratitude to the Austrians for having finally proven that “rationalism in economics is irrational”.<sup>124</sup>

What matters here is not so much the macro-economic applicability of this thought but its function of abstracting the social *structures* in which the above-said individual human action develops, excluded because they constitute, according to Mises, mere invention of imaginary theories.<sup>125</sup> Only the “experience” of these acts could be generalized. Thus, praxeology creates a territory that is inapproachable, fascinating and convenient to this day, “established on the basis of logical deduction from an irrefutable axiom” and, therefore, “apodictically true” and “not falsifiable by experience”, as Woods celebrates. Mises’ proposal is a sophisticated way to withdraw to the pseudo-epistemological position of “accepting reality as it is” – without problematizing the perception of that reality and the description of that perception. However, what matters most is that it delegates all the part that goes beyond the observation of “facts”, through the analysis of the achievements of individualized human actions, beyond science. Then, moral law would be applied to discuss the particular ends of those achievements. Mises did not name that extra-scientific realm, but his present followers did not hesitate to state, “what those ends should be is a matter for theology and moral philosophy to decide”.<sup>126</sup> That is the main reason why conservatism and its religious dimension is not only compatible with liberalism but necessary for the realization of the

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122 Weaver 2000 [1960]: 480.

123 Mises 1998 [1949]: 23, 97.

124 Scruton 2001 [1980]: 32. For an excellent critical review of mainstream economics, see Häring & Douglas 2012.

125 Mises 1998 [1949]: 32.

126 Woods 2005: 18, 31.

liberal proposal. Or, polemically, one could ask if that form of analysis of economic means would not be the best guarantee of never achieving the moral ends, a question I will address below.

In Hayek's writings, there are more explicit clues in several reflections that point to a transcendental core in liberal thought.<sup>127</sup> Familiar to the Aristotelian and Thomist traditions, he stressed in his Nobel Price acceptance speech that the Scholastics (in fact, Juan de Lugo) knew the "chief point" of economic studies, the impossibility to calculate the price-setting mechanism, which would be God's exclusive knowledge.<sup>128</sup> What may seem to be just another metaphor reveals that the liberal theory not only outlines an area where hypotheses become out of scientific reach but searches the premise of its own theory there – which could explain the election of epistemology as his favorite enemy. According to Hayek, the "market", although always singularized and personified as an agent, is "the most complex structure in the universe". It is ruled by a "spontaneous order", absorbing knowledge, information and subjective expectation flows, and, through its mechanism, coordinates and expresses itself with some delay in prices. As such, the market would always be the economic system of the future, never fully experimented, neither known nor comprehensible, and much less directed by the human being. Moreover, it could only develop its potential when its mechanism was not restricted because only at that moment, by a miracle, it would find its equilibrium. That is, since the political and socio-economic structures themselves would inhibit the fully functioning of the mechanism, their eradication would be the necessary condition to experiment it, as the system is binary (market versus non-market or state, without the possibility of hybrid forms). Once realized, it would release, as a consequence of free prices, human beings as economic subjects. The market itself turns into freedom, without a right that does not derive from it in the form of reciprocity, and freedom is only limited by laws conflicting with the market.<sup>129</sup>

Hence, the market is defined as a perfect, omniscient being, of infinite wisdom, not subjected to criticism as it transcends human cognition. It is scatological because its knowledge is a promise, maybe eternal, which first demands the human being's faith and abnegation. The market manifests

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127 In the 1920s and still in Vienna, Hayek participated in an intellectual circle called the "Geistkreis". Among the members was also the already mentioned political scientist Eric Voegelin who later advocated a social order based on a primordial Christianity. Both Hayek and Voegelin also attended Mises' *Privatseminar*. The circle dissolved with the emigration of virtually all its members to several places in the U.S., due to the ascension of National Socialism during the 1930s (Dekker 2014).

128 Hayek 1974.

129 Hayek 1996 [1970]: 16, 87, 103–104, 136, 172.

through miracles and has a transubstantiation quality because it makes subjects free individuals. It is all-mighty because it commands the action of the economic subjects through prices, and omnipotent because this way it gives them life. Omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent – evidently, the same attributes would be applicable to God. In the case of liberal thinking, this comes as a surprise. The explanans is common in conservative thinking, such as for Scruton, to whom social knowledge arises “by an invisible hand” from the open-ended business of society.<sup>130</sup> But it does not match the common sense about liberal thinking, since liberals habitually condemn the progressive idolatry of any Gods like “state”, “government” or “majority vote”. Maybe it is just a question of Manichaeism, as suggested by liberal José Huerta de Soto in the statement that “the state” would be the main instrument of the Devil to destroy de spontaneous Hayekian order of the universe.<sup>131</sup>

Generally, people who are critical toward neoliberalism foresee the dimension of this proposal when they feel disturbed by the idolatry of “the marked as God” and the primacy of economy as “religion”, phenomena that have also been approached scientifically. So far, the most substantial contribution, by Harvey Cox, convincingly explains the deification of the market through the economic discourse. He shows the striking resemblance of economic language to the Bible, from “Genesis” to the “Epistle to the Romans”, analyzing their myths of origin, legends of the fall, and doctrines of sin and redemption, as “chronicles about the creation of wealth, the seductive temptations of over-regulation, captivity to faceless business cycles, and, ultimately, salvation through the advent of free markets, with a small dose of ascetic belt-tightening along the way for those economies that fall into the sin of arrears”.<sup>132</sup> However, Cox does not consider the metaphysical presence of the theory of the Austrian School of Economics itself, nor does he mention the Late Scholastics’ legacy, which may indicate the prevailing reception of that narrative in the Iberian-Latin American context.

To liberals this appears to be less a heresy or *Ersatz*-religion than a convenient theological explication to fill in a scientific gap. As Woods wrote, nothing could be “more congenial to the Catholic mind” than “economic principles on the basis of absolute truth, apprehensible by means of reflection on the nature of reality”.<sup>133</sup> Therefore, in a way it was coherent that the first grand sower of liberal Think Tanks, Antony

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130 Scruton 2001 [1980]: 31.

131 Huerta de Soto 2017.

132 Cox 2016: 5.

133 Woods 2005: 216.

Fisher, proudly exhibited his proselytism when he remembered that “the IEA [Institute of Economic Affairs] knew ‘the truth’, their task was to evangelize”.<sup>134</sup> The metaphysical dimension allows understanding why in the Brazilian context the liberal-conservative option for the Austrian School was so convenient and continues to produce fruits such as in the case of the new liberal icon Rodrigo Constantino.<sup>135</sup>

The metaphysical dimension of the Austrian School of Economics’ thought may have contributed significantly to the convergence between conservatives and liberals, especially by their common reference to Hayek. What may have strengthened their political alliance, in the Brazilian context, is the usefulness of that liberal metaphysics for the central function of the liberal-conservatism to defend the social status quo against social claims. Since these claims feed on social utopia – envisaging a better world in order to fight for its realization – the above-mentioned emphasis on the delegitimization of any utopic aspiration, by treating it as Gnosticism or heretic statism, becomes obvious. As we have seen above, if God is omniscient, just like the market, trying to regulate the market through the pretension to knowing its mechanism, would be equal to trying to be God. Abnegation, through humbleness, defined as the only way to salvation, cannot be destroyed by the hubris of the utopist who believes himself qualified, just by possessing his individual reason, to build a better reality.<sup>136</sup> This subversion of the spontaneous order would even be more reproachable when based on a false transcendent justification, such as the liberation theology.<sup>137</sup> The *Orvil*, the notorious military’s secret report from the mid-1980s, was very concerned about what they understood as “Marxist” utopian thinking in both Catholic and protestant circles. To the authors, to build the “Kingdom of God on Earth” or in other words “socialism” equaled to not believing in a second life anymore and, consequently, defending a “theology of God’s death”.<sup>138</sup> Also in Hayek’s view, the ideal to which humanity should return is, once again, the Middle Ages, a period when the state did not have the competence to legislate, by creating or abolishing laws, but only to manifest or discover (in the original sense of uncovering something previously existent) divinely given laws, as any other attitude would have been a rebellion against God.<sup>139</sup> Thus, liberal thought removes from all the utopias – and from all progressivism – their right to exist.

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134 Quoted in Cockett 1995: 139.

135 Constantino 2009.

136 Hayek, 2010 [1944]: 47–53.

137 Hayek 1995 [1988]: 93.

138 *Orvil* n.d.: 858–859.

139 Hayek 1983 [1960]: 174–175.



Hayek was aware of the difficulty to convince human beings, in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, to submit themselves to a superior, unexplainable force, something that had worked in the past through the authority of religion, unless the force of the market itself gained the quality of a sacrosanct authority.<sup>140</sup> The need not only to repress any social utopia but to apprehend the best of it and promote their own utopia with the logic of the market, has been mature in Hayek's thought since the moment he founded the MPS:

What we lack is a liberal Utopia, a program which seems neither a mere defense as they are not a diluted kind of socialism but a truly liberal radicalism, which does not spare the susceptibilities of the mighty [...], which is not too severely practical, and which does not confine itself to what appears today as politically possible. We need intellectual leaders who are willing to work for an ideal, however small may be the prospects of its early realization. [...] The main lesson which the true liberals must learn from the success of the socialists is that it was their courage to be Utopian which gained them the support of the intellectuals and therefore an influence on public opinion which is daily making possible what only recently seemed utterly remote.<sup>141</sup>

Which utopia would that be, then? At a first, more obvious and political level, it would be the promise of a better future, whose realization would be conditioned to the acceptance of the ropes proposed by the liberal wing of the Bolsonaro government: the dismantling through austerity policies, freezing of wage ceiling, cash transference reduction, cutting public infrastructure spending, among other policies typically applied to achieve the forthcoming prosperity of the eternal tomorrow. Notwithstanding, rational market utopia has limited persuasiveness, given the popular experience of its effects. It is only the technical means (freeing from vile structures) to reach a "true" utopia of the re-established harmony between human existence and its transcendental significance, revealed by a sublime order, conveyed by conservative thought. It is in this sense that the New Right combines economic liberalism with conservative values, market freedom (individualist, competitive and of *laissez faire*) with the adoption of collective and traditional moral values, against the state, on behalf of a supposed nation from the "deep Brazil" and based on a monarchic legacy.

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140 Hayek 2010 [1944]: 193.

141 Hayek 1960 [1949]: 384.

## Evangelicals as Liberal Political Actors

As shown above, the liberal evangelization since the end of the Second World War and the liberal outbreak in the 1980s, in Brazil and elsewhere, depended to a large degree on the action of a network of Think Tanks, “some of them sustained or supported by similar foreign institutes”, as Antonio Paim proudly declares in his foreword to the most disseminated liberal textbook.<sup>142</sup> The other evangelization by Pentecostal churches also created a network but with more indirect effects. Their modernization and politicization during the 1980s and their strategic conquest of media channels – starting with the *Record* Network in 1989 and today commanding at least ten own channels<sup>143</sup> – turned them into a new political actor with certainly more presence than the previous Catholic groups. Although the Catholic super priest Marcelo Rossi had a great success in 2003 with his movie “Mary, mother of the son of God”,<sup>144</sup> evangelicals still make more and more competent use of these resources than Catholics. But we will see in the next chapter that Catholics are catching up, especially regarding social media.

Pentecostalism consolidated as a network of political actors during the 1980s. In the Constituent Assembly in 1987 they had their first unexpected appearance on political stage, including 33 evangelicals who lobbied heavily for a strictly conservative agenda: against abortion, homosexuality, feminism, contraceptive methods, pornography, pedophilia, drugs, violence and “communism”, as well as in favor of censorship in mass media, religious education in schools and TV, and even death penalty.<sup>145</sup> However, they did not grow into a similar role as the conservative Catholics’ during the 1930s. Despite being on their way to become a majoritarian group sometime in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, their origin as a minority, scattered in uncoordinated groups, always under risk of Catholic and other authoritarian oppression, besides the elitist prejudice against them, is part of their collective identity.<sup>146</sup> During the military governments evangelical groups were active on both sides, even among the armed struggle group *Ação Popular*.<sup>147</sup> Presbyterian reverend Jaime Wright had a central role in denouncing the crimes of the repressive forces in the large project “Brasil: Nunca Mais” [Brazil: Never Again], and evangelicals contributed to the National Human Rights movement.

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142 Paim 2019b: 12.

143 Santos 2006; Cunha 2017a: 206–209.

144 Santos & Capparelli 2004: 6–12.

145 Sousa 2020: 82.

146 Machado & Burity 2014: 614; Mariano 2012 [1999]: 87.

147 Burity 2011; Cowan 2021: 100–105.

The Lausanne Covenant in 1974 had similar importance for the support of social movements and an ecumenical vision of religious diversity as the Second Vatican Council.<sup>148</sup> The accusation of “Marxism” worked for both evangelicals and followers of the liberation theology.<sup>149</sup> Robinson Cavalcanti, whom I have cited several times in this book, belonged to the Biblical University Alliance with close relations to the Workers’ Party. On the other hand, evangelical churches collaborated with the military, such as under the last president general Figueiredo, who – already during the opening period – sponsored a “Crusade for Morality” conducted by the evangelical pastor (and ESG-graduate) Nilson Fanini.<sup>150</sup> Locally strong alliances emerged, like between Baptists and the military government’s party National Renewal Alliance (ARENA) in Bahia, where an evangelical was nominated mayor of the capital in 1979, probably for the first time in Brazil.<sup>151</sup>

For evangelicals, the return to democracy was parallel to the fulfillment of their long struggle for recognition.<sup>152</sup> This is also perceptible in Edir Macedo’s much noticed 2008 manifest *Plano de Poder* [Plan for Power], in which he tries to convince evangelicals that God did care about temporal matters as he had in mind a “political nation-building project” designed for “his people”. Therefore, evangelicals are invited to overcome their concerns about politics, to effectively turn into a social movement, to vote for their interests and to aspire political posts, even the presidency.<sup>153</sup> The title of this book sounds more ambitious than the content actually is, as it does not present a different vision for the country but argues for more – in a way proportional, given the number of evangelicals – lobbying in the existing structures. It is not a revolutionary or counter-revolutionary plan to change them, and Macedo makes clear from the beginning that his book “does not propose to incite a theocratic regime. Especially because the Brazilian state is secular and the freedom of religion is constitutionally guaranteed”.<sup>154</sup> It is a democratic commitment, even though not in a civic-republican sense (that is, to defend the commonwealth or participatory democracy) but in a liberal one, to defend personal liberties, self-responsibility and prosperity.<sup>155</sup> Certainly, the evangelical “theory of dominion”, developed in the 1990s, expects evangelicals to fight the devil

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148 Freston 2019: 124.

149 Cunha et al. 2017: 124–126.

150 Cowan 2016: 148.

151 Silva 2019a: 245.

152 Fonseca 2008: 186–187.

153 Macedo & Oliveira 2008: 8, 23–30, 122; Vital & Lopes 2013: 178–179.

154 Macedo & Oliveira 2008: 10.

155 Machado & Burity 2014: 611.

like soldiers. This is not a metaphor, in the sense of a battle of ideas but very concrete: the devil provokes diseases, material poverty and quarrels among the family, and the “Holy War” aims at defeating him through exorcism.<sup>156</sup> Nevertheless, this is more of a private issue than a question of society, and the devil does not correspond neatly to determinant social actors as for conservative Catholics (all those who threaten their own established order), in whose view evangelicals themselves are part of this diabolic circle and they are probably aware of that. Still, it does not prevent evangelicals from demonizing other religions, with special emphasis to Afro-Brazilian. Edir Macedo’s previous 1997 book *Orixás, Caboclos e Guias, deuses ou demônios?* [Orixás, Caboclos and Guias, Gods or Demons?] sold more than three million copies and is one of the most successful religious books (and books in general) ever published in Brazil.<sup>157</sup> This has led more and more frequently to violent acts against religious sites and a new worrying phenomenon is the formation of evangelical militias – often by converted ex-narcotraffickers – to control order in favela neighborhoods, especially in Rio de Janeiro.<sup>158</sup> But differently from the conservative Catholicism’s battles, these are fought at the perceived margin of society, which means among the most vulnerable, and there is no political enemy to be annihilated.

Deeply rooted in the lower classes and snubbed by the elites, evangelicals are naturally not relegated to their “natural” status and even supported an argument which fits the Integrist idea of communist subversion of the natural order: “Every serious nation, one that wishes to achieve the status of first world, must understand that it will always be excluded from that classification if there are, among its children, a great number of socially excluded ones.”<sup>159</sup> The ideal world of the evangelicals does not depend on a social hierarchy and in principle everybody could have a same sized house with a diversity of garden gnomes, Scruton’s liberal nightmare. This explains evangelicals’ ambiguous relationship to progressive political forces. Depending on the options and the alliances, they opposed (during the 1990s) or supported them (during the 2000s). The interesting question remains why since 2014 evangelicals have committed to the Brazilian Right and are increasingly associated with violent, anti-democratic and intolerant practices based on a strict morality, which will be explored in chapter eight.

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156 Mariano 2012 [1999]: 110, 153–155. Mariano 2003: 24.

157 Macedo 1997; Mariano 2003: 25–27.

158 Cunha et al. 2017: 114–115; Antonopoulos et al. 2020: 250.

159 Macedo & Oliveira 2008: 109.

## 6 The Guru's Reaction

SONNET OF THE SERIOUS STUDENT  
to Olavo de Carvalho

*Now that I've read so much, as many works  
As I could, by real enfants terribles  
I am afraid nothing at all remains  
Of all the vile passions of my youth.*

*How false my world was, and how often I  
so readily was bending over backwards  
For being eager to maintain my attitude  
Just immune to every kind of maneuver.*

*I was a fool, just like he who believes  
He's not manipulated by the press  
In all of the issues of human life.*

*No one is discharged from this asylum.  
Without the self-humiliation and  
sacrifice of little provincial heads.*

Felipe Moura Brasil<sup>1</sup>

*WHO DID IT? [...] WHO gave a nobody without regular education or even a lower secondary diploma the means to become a scholar who is recognized by dozens of intellectuals in this country and abroad, and to eventually be acknowledged as the greatest or the only intellectual authority in a country with two hundred million inhabitants? WHO has spread among his enemies such a mental confusion that they can't write three words against him without contradicting themselves in the most grotesque ways and being demoralized without him having to give any answer? WHO was responsible for, without a single centimeter of space in the mainstream media nor any hype in newspapers or on TV, making his voice become so influential to the extent of echoing around the streets and squares at big popular demonstrations? WHO was responsible for making him, without*

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1 Felipe Moura Brasil, Facebook post, June 19, 2012: <https://www.facebook.com/felipe.m.brasil/posts/10151077973561874>.

*ever giving a hang about moral and virtue, able to explain the words of Jesus to priests, bishops and pastors with such simplicity and power of persuasion that, when they don't like what he says, all they can do is curse him from afar and make themselves the objects of mockery? WHO was responsible for, without even a little note in the newspaper or two seconds of promotion on TV, making his books reach print runs of hundreds of thousands of copies, surpassing by far those of his most hyped competitors in the media and the establishment? WHO made it possible for him, virtually or literally by himself, to dig a huge hole in a five-decade intellectual hegemony, making space for the circulation of new ideas so far absolutely inaudible in the public space? WHO did all that? If it wasn't God, then it sure wasn't me. My life is a succession of such evident miracles and prodigies that whoever contemplates it for minutes and does not exclaim "Glory to God!" is a stony, blind soul, insensitive to a divine Presence that shouts from the rooftops. That is why I laugh inside when, feigning disregard for high culture, some sacristy cockroaches come talk to me of poor, simple humble little men to whom God reveals what He withholds from doctors.*

*I KNOW that God does that. He did it to me.*

Olavo de Carvalho<sup>2</sup>

The revival of conservatism as a fashionable tendency among a broader public in the 2010s is tied to the years-long ideological groundwork prepared by its main protagonist, the already mentioned journalist and philosopher Olavo de Carvalho. As his role for the rise of the New Right is so central and as he is has been until very recently in full activity, Carvalho deserves special attention in this book. Like Gustavo Corção and Lenildo Tabosa Pessoa did previously, first he became famous as a conservative polemic in mainstream journalism and created a loyal readership in the main Brazilian newspapers. Having become intolerable because of his increasingly hyperbolic opinions and attitudes in the mid-2000s, he shifted his sphere of activity to independent online media, in fact as one of the first journalists in Brazil, which consolidated him as the central ideologue and influencer of the Brazilian Right. Through his cyberactivism he contributed significantly – as will be shown in chapter seven – to its rise and even the election of president Bolsonaro. This chapter explores mainly the phenomenon of how Olavo de Carvalho, during the 1990s and 2000s, managed to impart the somehow *démodé*

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2 Olavo de Carvalho, Facebook post, May 22, 2017, <https://facebook.com/carvalho.olavo/posts/834502023368540>.

conservative tradition, by recycling ideas and presenting them in a new fashionable way and through new channels, while the next chapter focuses on his political impact. To understand this performance, it is insightful to look closer at his biography and professional career.<sup>3</sup>

Olavo de Carvalho started early to work in the media, as proofreader, reporter and editor, building through decades a robust expertise on texts. As he informs, in his youth he collaborated with the Brazilian Communist Party for two years, whatever this meant practically. At least it allows him to pretend to have an insider view of communist organizations. Not having completed secondary school, he preferred to achieve his education outside academia, through persistent and broad reading and carefully seeking selected private instruction. His first study focus, in the 1970s and early 1980s, was on astrology and he even became a collaborator of the Brazilian edition of the famous French magazine *Planète*. This brought him fame as an “astrologer” and leads to misjudgments until today. It is the reason why he now rejects vehemently – but only strategically – this label and even happens to distance himself from his whole first intellectual formation, his early publications and teaching activities, which after all lasted until he reached the respectable age of his mid-forties. The predominating and certainly banalizing understanding of “astrology” in the common sense differs substantially from what Carvalho discovered as the area of knowledge fundamental to universal epistemology and which in light of its millenary tradition only recently was neglected in modern science: “The model of vision of the world based on planetary cycles and the spheres was prevailing for millennia [...] Astrology is an obligatory element, thus those who haven’t studied it haven’t studied anything, and are illiterate, stupid.”<sup>4</sup> As we will see, in this sense Carvalho continues to be an “astrologer” just like most pre-modern thinkers, even if he denies it in public.<sup>5</sup>

This first period of his intellectual formation until the mid-1980s brought him into close contact with what is more strictly defined as “traditionalism”. Not in the generical sense I have employed this term so far but as a sectarian international movement of anti-modernist thinkers who argue to have access to traditional “eternal” knowledge which reveals a primordial truth.<sup>6</sup> Apparently, Carvalho’s first contact with “traditionalism” was through his reading in 1977 of the edited volume *The Sword of Gnosis: Metaphysics, Cosmology, Tradition, Symbolism* (1974),

3 For a detailed exposition of Carvalho’s intellectual formation, see Wink 2022.

4 Tórtora 2000.

5 Olavo de Carvalho, debate in TV Cultura, July 29, 1989, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H4BMOuYPd4o>.

6 For details on this traditionalist period of Carvalho’s, see Sedgwick 2020.

edited by Jakob Needleman, later the mentor of Steve Bannon, who then was for a while Donald Trump's chief-strategist.<sup>7</sup> Carvalho's major impact certainly came from René Guénon (1886–1951), who created in the 1920s the basis of anti-modernist traditionalist philosophy against "exoteric" Christianity. The Occident, as he explains in his seminal book from 1927, *The Crisis of the Modern World*, translated to Portuguese in 1948 (and not to be confused, though possibly related, with Father Franca's identical title from 1941), could only be redeemed through the restoration of a spiritual elite willing to assimilate the metaphysical principles of Islam, especially as preserved in Sufism.<sup>8</sup> Guénon's writings oriented Carvalho in his search for the *sophia perennis*, a "primordial, universal and eternal tradition, which is the deposit of the revealed wisdom", different from "contemporary distortions" and "simulacrum and parody", and he even translated Guénon's short introduction *Oriental Metaphysics* in 1983.<sup>9</sup> Like with Astrology, Carvalho later tried to distance himself from Guénon, but even if he clearly did not share his Islamizing therapy and opposed Islam as a globalizing imperialist force (I will get back to this soon), he certainly agreed on his diagnosis of the crisis of modernity.

As one could expect, at that time Carvalho sought illumination in practical experience too, entering several pseudo-esoteric communities under *sufi* orientation and even managing his own *tariqa*. However, in early 1987 he abandoned this way of what he now perceived as "New Age" misguidance, though without ever getting rid of it. Just as his "astrological" past disqualifies him in the eyes of academics, his esoteric experience – during which he obviously had to formally convert to Islam – disqualifies him in the eyes of some conservative Catholics. The last is a limiting factor of his influence on the New Right to which I will get back in the next chapter.<sup>10</sup>

At this moment of his life, Carvalho discovers Christianity. By his own account, this revelation was due to his studies of the miracles of Father Pio (1887–1968), which made him perceive that "the miracles

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7 Teitelbaum 2020: 129.

8 For traditionalism as a specific movement of thought and especially for René Guénon, see Sedgwick 2004.

9 Carvalho 1986: 13–15, 31.

10 Carvalho's ex-disciple and renegade Carlos Velasco (2014 and 2017) provides an intriguing documentation on this period on various online platforms. The documentation includes letters that prove Carvalho's conversion to Islam, as Sidi Muhammad Ibrahim, for which the specialized Islam scholar Sedgwick (2020: 13) sees no indicator to doubt the authenticity. One of Carvalho's sons, Muhammad 'Isa, continues to lead a branch of the *tariqa* "Alaviyya" in São Paulo (Silva Filho 2012: 147) while another one, Luiz Gonzaga de Carvalho, has founded the traditionalist "Cultural Institute" *Lux et Sapientia* (<https://icls.com.br>).



of the great saint escaped every possibility of 'metaphysical' explanation, since they reflected the divine freedom and not the permanent structures of the spiritual world, and thus transcended, in practice, all esoteric and initiatory perspective".<sup>11</sup> Consequently, Carvalho decided that from now on his "only guru would be Our Lord Jesus Christ IN PERSON and not the corresponding 'cosmic function' for whom the traditionalists mistake Him for".<sup>12</sup> In Carvalho's self-perception, his experiences in Islamic mysticism had only strengthened his unconditional Christian faith.

From a theological perspective, this was certainly a tremendous change. From my scientific perspective it indicates more a continuity in Carvalho's thought, in the sense of justifying apodictically the possession of the one and only truth, now through the lens of Catholicism (independently if Guénon's truth was insufficient, it was still a universal metaphysical convergence of truths, notwithstanding Carvalho's different conception of "individual conscience", for Guénon a typical error of modernism). The core of Carvalho's thinking and the recipe of his success is that behind all complexity, whether in the field of religion, philosophy, science or the manifested world itself, there is a "metaphysical unity", God's infinite and eternal "first principle". This "universal reality" rules the world through innumerable reflections on all levels and plans of existence. The knowledge of this reality is conditioned by individual consciousness of the spiritual meaning of empirical phenomena that enable the perception of reality by intuition without abstraction, what he conceptualized as "knowledge through presence": the intuitive experience of God's revealed presence, objectively and physically, not theologically but as "fact". The evidence, manifested for example in the resurrection of Christ and since then in the saints and miracles, offers the initiate the complete certainty of the truth and emancipates him from the need for proof and logic. It is a truth transmissible only through the cognitive method of directly experiencing the universality of God.<sup>13</sup> Carvalho's reduction of complexity is astonishing and, to be frank, might sound quite attractive for somebody in the search of whatever certainty.

The experimental proofs of the divine action on the world are so abundant that anyone who dares engage in discussing the existence of God without having studied them should be considered an incurable

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11 Olavo de Carvalho, Facebook post, Jan 24, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/carvalho.olavo/photos/em-pleno-surto-de-deslumbramento-pela-escola-tradicionalista-de-gu%C3%A9non-e-schuon-/438251306326949>.

12 Carvalho 2015a, original emphasis.

13 I synthesize this core of Carvalho's thought from various of his writings, including his textbooks and other course material.

charlatan. What is a saint of the Catholic Church? It's an individual who, through a life of prayers, fasting, moral focus and sacrifice, removed the obstacles that were stopping God from manifesting Himself in him, and his intercession, from the other world, continues to operate miracles. All that tested and documented by the strictest scientific criteria by an institution that is more committed to warding off false miracles than trumpeting the real ones.<sup>14</sup>

All this obviously echoes Thomism. Carvalho perfectly aligned his perspective with the Neo-Thomist quest enthusiastically defined by the Brazilian philosopher Father Werner von und zur Mühlen (1874–1939) in 1912:

First the truth! And then the truth! And always the truth! [...] Scholasticism is the passion of truth. Therefore, it generally also presents itself as simple and unadorned as truth itself. It deeply upsets everything that can veil, alter, adulterate, disguise the truth. [...] It is science, not art; it is study, not entertainment; it writes the explanation for the Universe, not, like Bergson, a novel of the universe; it teaches what it observes, not, like Fechner [Gustav Theodor Fechner, German experimental psychologist, philosopher and physicist] or Zend-Avest [The *Avesta* is the primary collection of religious texts of Zoroastrianism], what they imagine; it says what is, not what would be beautiful, if it were.<sup>15</sup>

He also went back to the Aristotelian roots of Thomism, “one of these treasures [...] that the present generation needs to rediscover more urgently”<sup>16</sup>, just like Farias Brito, who later was interpreted as the Brazilian father of Neo-Thomism. The following passage from the early 20<sup>th</sup> could perfectly have been written by Carvalho himself, especially regarding the re-reading of Aristotle:

Aristotle, studying the mechanism of reasoning under the name of syllogism, adds demonstration as a condition for the scientific truth of the syllogism. That equals to saying: being coherent is not enough; it's necessary to be true. Truth is, thus, the essential condition for science. How does one recognize, however, the truth of the conclusion in the syllogism? By the truth of the *premises*. But accidental truth is not enough, linked to the individual, linked, therefore, to what goes by and disappears, to the transitory element of existence the truth must be eternal, that is, reducible to propositions where the connection between the attribute

14 Olavo de Carvalho, Facebook post, Dec 12, 2017, <https://olavodecarvalhofb.wordpress.com/2017/12/12/a-acao-divina>.

15 Quoted in Moura 1978: 79.

16 Carvalho 2018b.

and the subject are essential and universal and for all the time and all the possible circumstances.<sup>17</sup>

My insistence on focusing on the mostly unspoken premises of New Right thinking, rather than the discursive variations of the argument, takes into account this central axiom of Thomism. Another one quite aware of this question was Plínio Salgado, who understood that the truth is not affected by the form it is communicated and defended, as its function was to convince, not to persuade, or, in other words, to reveal, not to conceal.<sup>18</sup>

The question if Carvalho, who almost never refers to the Brazilian Neo-Thomist canon (and silences about Plínio Salgado and Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira), omits this tradition either for drawing directly on the foundational sources or for highlighting his own exegesis is irrelevant for my purpose. He certainly claims the former, for the reason of avoiding distortion during the long history of reception and not repeating the errors of 20<sup>th</sup> century Neo-Thomism which led to “conclusions Saint Thomas never would have accepted” and the “self-destruction of the Catholic Church”, especially through the “pervert and mendacious Jacques Maritain”.<sup>19</sup> His followers may consider him a great philosopher in his own right and believe Carvalho when he asserts: “I am not talking about the thought of others. Now it’s mine, it’s my philosophy.” At the same time, he likes to present himself, within the illustrious tradition of conservative thinking, as “the smallest and most cannibal”.<sup>20</sup> What is important is that Carvalho masters a respectable secular philosophical tradition, plucked out texts almost fallen into obscurity and that his synthesis represents again, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the core ideas of conservative Catholic and philosophical thought, between natural law and Integrism, as I presented in the previous chapters.<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, it is a misunderstanding when João Cezar de Castro Rocha calls Olavo de Carvalho in his otherwise brilliant book *Guerra Cultural e Retórica do Ódio* [Culture War and Hate Rhetoric] from 2021 a “madhouse Napoleon”, somebody who insists on conclusions just to corroborate his premises. Given the nature of Carvalho’s premises, it has to be like that, as there is no escape from “truth”. For another reason, it would also be a misleading to see him as an offshoot of neo- or

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17 Farias Brito 2006 [1912]: 99, my emphasis.

18 Olavo de Carvalho, COF 524, June 27, 2020; Chasin 1979: 607.

19 Carvalho 2020.

20 Carvalho 2015; statement in Youtube video, Dec 13, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=unMpVTz3mVE>.

21 For example, the reading list “125 books recommended by Olavo de Carvalho” (<http://olavodecarvalho.org/dicas-de-estudo>) and other bibliographies available on his online platforms.

paleoconservatism in the U.S. because Carvalho does not refer to these “doctrinarian thinkers”, though he occasionally mentions for example Russell Kirk, Roger Scruton, Jordan Peterson and Paul Gottfried just to confirm his own visions. For him, these are just ideologues, while his interest lies in political philosophy in the line of Eric Voegelin (1901–1985) for whom, as Carvalho writes, Kirk was “only a boy, so vast is the distance between ideological discourse and political science”.<sup>22</sup> However, whatever Carvalho’s interest, it is impossible not to note the similarity between his and Kristol’s journalistic writing.<sup>23</sup> But the point is that what Carvalho claims to defend is the “truth” which to him is only *coincidentally* a conservative position, and consequently not ideological:

A fundamental distinction, one which manifestly escapes all the tipsters who give their opinion about me in the media and almost the whole academic world, is the one between a “conservative thinker”, essentially dedicated to the exposition and defense of conservative ideals, and a philosopher per se, whose sphere of interests and achievements infinitely transcends that of conservatism, which enters as just a part, not a living articulating center of the whole. [...] I can’t see how, for example, one can call my analysis of Aristotle and Descartes “conservative doctrines” (or anti-conservative) [...].<sup>24</sup>

Voegelin’s political philosophy, though previously introduced in Brazil to selected circles by his disciple José Arthur Rios, professor of Vêlez Rodríguez at the PUC-RJ, became available only in 1979 with the translation of *The New Science of Politics* (1952), with an introduction from Galvão de Sousa. Voegelin is indeed one of Carvalho’s central references and, as mentioned above, he even managed to pass this reference on to the Bolsonaros. The central argument of Voegelin, which perfectly matched the Brazilian conservative thinking, affirms that since the 12th century the world has degenerated by trying to put into practice Utopian ideas, giving rise to “political religions” such as progressivism, positivism, Marxism, communism, fascism and National Socialism and their “satanic” regimes. Voegelin calls this phenomenon “Gnosticism” because it challenged the perfection of God’s creation. Olavo adapts this premise in his critique against “messianic heresiarchs”, guided by “Promethean ambitions of planned society, omnipotent state and collective happiness”.<sup>25</sup> According

22 Olavo de Carvalho, Facebook post, Feb 23, 2019, <https://olavodecarvalhofb.wordpress.com/2019/02/23>.

23 For example, Kristol 1995: 439, 441, 233, 385.

24 Olavo de Carvalho, Facebook post, Sept 14, 2020, <https://facebook.com/carvalho.olavo/posts/1741212239364176>.

25 Carvalho 2001a and 2007b.

to Voegelin, what could reorient man, a spiritual eunuch since the Middle Ages, would be the return of human soul from ignorance to the truth of God. This would consist in the recovery of *Ordnungswissen* (knowledge of the sublime order), inferred from religion and philosophy, as the orientation toward the transcendent reality instead of the disorientation by mundane existence, as the only basis for the creation of a stable political order.

Some say Olavo de Carvalho was guided in this religious conversion and acquisition of the true Catholic wisdom by the Catholic philosopher Antônio Donato Paulo Rosa, author of a master thesis from 1993 which circulates broadly and anonymously under the title *A educação segundo a filosofia perene* [Education According to Perennial Philosophy], and today lecturer in private philosophy courses and in addition a discreet anti-abortion activist. Though the idea that there was a troublesome “Olavo-Donatism” which some ultra-conservative Catholics promote<sup>26</sup> might be exaggerated, Carvalho himself says about him:

My friend Antônio Donato, for example, who is the best religious instructor I've had in my life, a saint man. Donato is really a saint, I have no doubt. But Donato is not an ordained priest. He is the best priest in Brazil, and he says he is not ready to be ordained priest. It means God in Heaven has already ordained him a thousand times; He gives him sacerdotal ordination every day. However, Donato does not lead any movement, he is not the head of a sect. He is a religion teacher, the best one I have seen. [...] If you really want the business of religion, look for Antônio Donato Paulo Rosa. He is the best in Brazil, if not the best in the world.<sup>27</sup>

What is more certain is the influence of the Latvian Neo-Thomist father Staņislavs Ladusāns, founder of the Brazilian Society of Catholic Philosophers (1970), the journal *Presença Filosófica* (1973) and above all the Group of Philosophical Studies (*Conjunto de Pesquisa Filosófica*, CONPEFIL), established in 1974 at the Jesuit *Faculdades Anchieta*. Between 1981 and 1983, CONPEFIL was transferred to Rio de Janeiro and attached to the Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro.<sup>28</sup> The relocation from São Paulo – where Galvão de Sousa had been among Ladusāns' disciples – to Rio de Janeiro was possibly in search for exile from São Paulo's progressive archbishop Paulo Evaristo Arns. Carvalho started to visit Ladusāns' non-credit extension seminars on Saturdays in

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26 Príncipe dos Cruzados 2009.

27 Olavo de Carvalho, COF 37, Dec 19, 2009.

28 Jaime 1991.

the early 1990s.<sup>29</sup> Ladusāns introduced him to one more contemporary thinker, besides Voegelin, which he assumes as a reference: the at that time almost forgotten Brazilian philosopher Mário Ferreira dos Santos (1907–1968), in Carvalho’s words “a mix of Proudhonian anarchist, Thomist Catholic and Pythagorean gnostic”.<sup>30</sup> His monumental oeuvre aimed at a somehow similar goal: to grasp the occult core of “that which everyone, everywhere, has always believed in”, the transcendent unity of philosophies.<sup>31</sup> Carvalho’s studies soon ended when Ladusāns decided to dissolve CONPEFIL and return to his home country, which had achieved independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. There he started to lecture at the Riga Catholic Theological Seminary but died two years later, on a visit to Rio de Janeiro.<sup>32</sup> At the age of 46, Olavo de Carvalho was a newborn philosopher who has just lost his *alma mater*.

### **From Intellectual Outsider to Anti-Academic**

Under these circumstances, Olavo de Carvalho constructed his own independent career as a philosopher and spiritual leader but also his own academia; first as private institutes (*Instituto de Artes Liberais; Instituto Brasileiro de Humanidades*) and then in the extension of the emergent private university *Faculdade da Cidade*, later *Centro Universitário do RJ-UniverCidade*, the same place where the above-mentioned Paulo Mercadante also taught philosophy. At *UniverCidade*, which later went bankrupt under scandalous circumstances, Carvalho had full trust of the owner Ronald Lewinsohn. He signed responsible for the university’s publishing program and contributed to the translation and re-edition of conservative authors, including himself. Some years later, Carvalho offered full courses in Philosophy and Humanities at the Catholic University of Paraná, probably also in the extension program. He was also invited to conferences and to coordinate editorial projects.

An episode already in 1994 marked the beginning of Carvalho’s open conflict with the Brazilian academia. He submitted an article to the renowned journal *Ciência Hoje* [Science Today], house organ of the Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Science (SBPC); as he likes to stress, only to please one of his students who was member of the Society.

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29 Carvalho 1998a: 17–19.

30 Carvalho 1996b: 164.

31 Carvalho 1997b: 64.

32 Carlos Frederico Calvet da Silveira Gurgel, interview with author, Rio de Janeiro, Nov 16, 2020. Olavo de Carvalho presents a different and for him more convenient version alleging that the Catholic University – run by “communists” – closed CONPEFIL against Ladusāns’ will.

The proposed contribution “Uma Filosofia Aristotélica da Cultura” [An Aristotelian Philosophy of Culture] was evaluated, after a first technical misunderstanding, as not meeting the scientific standard of the journal because for the reviewer the text did not dialogue with the state of the art and ignored the fundamental epistemological difference between a scientific, philosophical, theological and literary approach.<sup>33</sup> Ironically, the topic of the article was precisely Carvalho’s new theory of a largely unperceived interdisciplinarity of Aristotle’s four disciplines or discourses as variants of a “unique” and all-encompassing “science” before modernist rationalist limitations. As this will turn out important to understand Carvalho’s philosophy, I need to explain it briefly: Aristotle’s four disciplines are usually distinguished in a way that the discourse of poetics has the function of opening the imagination by indicating possibilities (similar to images), while supplementary rhetoric suggests verisimilar probabilities (examples, concepts) which allow to create systems of belief. Dialectics examine the premises of these beliefs and lead to their judgment (the area of philosophy), while logic analyses their veracity and allow for apodictical “scientific” certainties (the area of rationality).<sup>34</sup>

According to Carvalho, all four are necessarily entwined. Faithful to his sublime principle, Carvalho developed this theory in analogy to the Christian Cross which symbolizes the metaphysical unity of two axes: the vertical between God and the human soul, the horizontal between the human world (society, positive law, history) and the natural world (cosmos, natural law, materiality), or indeed, the interpenetration of the spiritual eternity (God and the souls) and the temporal (the natural and human world). This cross, as the core symbol of his “truth”, is reproduced in the three books of his most important trilogy, which I will present in the next section.<sup>35</sup> Obviously, this contribution was unacceptable for a science journal, which consequently recommended to publish the text in a philosophical periodical. But the episode showcased a major problem: Carvalho’s incompatibility with academia and any scientific procedure in the modern sense and his reluctance to recognize this. He considered the reviewer non-qualified and brought – or accepted to bring – the issue to the newspapers which provoked a major scandal. His text, which anyway was about to be published as a monograph due to the delay in the peer review, then gained in 1996 an amplified second edition, under the title

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33 My thanks to Marcelo Moraes Caetano from the Rio de Janeiro State University for his very helpful assessment of SBPC’s assessment.

34 Carvalho 1994d.

35 Carvalho 1996a: 41–48. For the reproduction of the diagram, see Carvalho 1994a: 13; 2015 [1995]: 251 and 1996b: 30.

*Aristóteles em Nova Perspectiva* [Aristotle in New Perspective], which includes a sardonic documentation of the quarrel.

A few weeks after this episode, in late 1994, Olavo de Carvalho declared total war against the Brazilian intelligentsia. Instead of academic glory for his discovery on Aristotle, he earned fame as journalistic provocateur. In two polemical articles with the title “Entre Bandidos & Letrados” [Among Bandits & Scholars] in the *Jornal do Brasil*, he accused all Brazilian intellectuals of ignorance, imposture, communist subversion, toxicomania and, consequently, collusion with organized crime – accusations he has carefully fueled until the present days.<sup>36</sup> In contrast, he stylized himself as the last of the Mohicans of true intellectuality and with grand gesture savior of academia from a “catastrophic state of intellectual favelization”, entrusted with the lonely mission to continue the circulation of ideas in the world.<sup>37</sup> A reader’s letter, by the lawyer Luiz Paulo Viveiros de Castro, reacted to Carvalho’s first article hoping the second part would not be published. Maybe different from the reception today, he understood immediately from which background Carvalho attacked, even including the odd similarity to Pentecostal discourses:

By publishing “philosopher” Olavo de Carvalho’s fatuity under the title “Bandits & Scholars I”, JB seemed to be threatening its readers with new articles signed by the same citizen. [...] I was astounded to read the so-called philosopher’s nonsense to the point of asking myself if I wasn’t reading a rag by some sort of TFP or a tabloid from “bishop” Macedo’s “church”. [...] After all, seeing someone reduce the whole cultural output in the country in the last 60 years to a mere consequence of “platitudes that the Comintern ordered to be spread in the 1930s” is an agony the readers do not deserve to go through a second time.<sup>38</sup>

The reader was profoundly mistaken in his prophecy regarding Carvalho’s future collaboration with mainstream media. Carvalho’s inexorable emergence as a mainstream journalist coincided with the disappearance of two former prominent conservative voices in the media, the liberal economist Roberto Campos and the anti-communist journalist Paulo Francis, for whom the angry philosopher was expected to be a worthy substitute.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, he fulfilled this task assiduously for a decade, until the mid-2000s, in the *Folha da Manhã*, *O Globo*, *Zero Hora*, *Folha de S. Paulo*, *Jornal do Brasil*, *Diário do Comércio* and several magazines.

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36 Carvalho 1994b: 11 and 1994c: 11.

37 Carvalho 2013a: 282.

38 Castro 1994: 11, original emphasis.

39 Fleichman 2012.



In parallel, Carvalho matured his thought in a popular trilogy which consolidated his readership and allowed him to apply his philosophy to what he calls “social critique”. In the first, *A nova era e a revolução cultural: Fritjof Capra & Antonio Gramsci* [New Age and Cultural Revolution] from 1994, he deconstructs cultural Marxism and New Age pseudo-esoterism, both ideologies to alienate people from the roots of certainty and real experience and to persuade them to believe blindly in a utopic future without God. The second book of the trilogy, from 1995, his only real monograph and not a collection of texts, *O Jardim das Aflições* [The Garden of Afflictions], explains the modern crisis through the loss of primary Christianity since the 12<sup>th</sup> century. This implied the strengthening of the state apparatus and its indoctrination of “progress” as “civil religion”, in substitution of previous organic communities and the individual Christian conscience of divinity, and fostered the immorality of society to destroy individual morality, just like Niebuhr had advised in 1932.<sup>40</sup> A new aspect to conservative Catholicism is for him that the institutionalization of the Church contributed to the crisis, and much before the betrayal of the Second Vatican Council: already in the Middle Ages, the Church had worked toward substituting the “esoteric” spiritual hierarchy by an “exoteric” temporal ecclesiastical hierarchy and therefore committed the historical error to join the state in the Gnostic aim to establish a unified Christian Empire (which he calls pejoratively the *Fifth Empire*, the Occidental quest to reconstruct Rome). However, in spite of this devastating diagnosis, Carvalho still defends the Church as an anti-modernist institution and cares for his own image as zealous Catholic, as it would be counter-productive to “beat one who’s already being beaten”.<sup>41</sup> The third book, *O imbecil coletivo* (1996), bundles up journalistic essays, most of them as republications, to illustrate the main effect of Gramscian cultural Marxism: not the emergence of a “collective intellectual”, organized organic intellectuals with the function to represent the unrepresented, but the “collective idiot”. As such he defined the amorphous mass of ideologically intoxicated pseudo-intellectuals to support by omission the suppression of truth in the name of “progress”, similar to Plínio Salgado’s “useful innocents”, those who did not believe in “communism” but more or less unknowingly helped to implement it and then served it.

With these works, Olavo de Carvalho’s thought reached its plenitude. The only significant alteration will be the role he attributes to the U.S., from the “synthesis of liberal economy, socialist bureaucracy and fascist

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40 Carvalho 1994b and 2006; Niebuhr 1932.

41 Carvalho 2000b.

militarism” to the last oasis of true conservative hinterland people, not yet separated from the meaning of life.<sup>42</sup> This coincided with his resettlement in Richmond, Virginia in 2005, which, as he alleges, was due to the public pressure against him (and his life) and because of the end time shock of Lula’s election in 2002, which reminded him of historical “pre-Nazi Germany”.<sup>43</sup> Actually, since the early 2000s his meteoric success as journalistic provocateur has declined and he has slowly become *persona non grata* in most of the newspapers and magazines that a decade before had hired him to cosset the conservative soul in face of increasing social claims in democratic Brazil. An exception was the *Jornal do Comércio*, directed by our old acquaintance, the liberal monarchist João de Scantimburgo, and house organ of São Paulo’s Chamber of Commerce, for which he continued working as foreign correspondent (which proves once more the inscrutability of the liberal spirit). The reason for all the other gazettes discontinuing Carvalho was his second declaration of war, this time against mass media themselves: for their betrayal of the memory of the “revolution of 1964” and their looking away and silence in face of what he denounced as the communist plan of taking over Latin America – the São Paulo Forum.

### **Serving Military Revisionism**

During the 1990s, Olavo de Carvalho approached the military, as editor of four luxury volumes on the history of the Brazilian army and frequently invited speaker and contributor for military journals.<sup>44</sup> When under the pressure of civil society several official commissions started to question the military about the intervention in 1964 and political crimes committed during their governments (the precautionary general amnesty law from 1979 did not allow for more than questioning), Carvalho started to advocate for the military in his articles. This debate already began in 1979 when the project “Brazil: Never Again” under the co-ordination of São Paulo’s archbishop Arns revisited more than 700 military trials and around ten thousand documents and collected the information in 12 volumes. The publication of the short version in 1985 provoked a year later, as the unauthorized response, the bestseller *Brasil sempre* [Brazil Forever], written by the army lieutenant Marco Pollo Giordani, who had worked for years in the Department of Information Operations, Center for Internal Defense Operations (DOI-CODI), the army’s intelligence

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42 Carvalho 1998a: 126.

43 Carvalho 2013a: 319 (article originally published under the title “A Revolução dos Loucos” in *Zero Hora* on Mar 24, 2002).

44 Leirner 2020: 30–34; Santos 2009: 50, 115.

and political repression agency. His insider information presented in his book built the fundament for military revisionism. At the same time the more famous anonymous army report *Orvil* [a palindrome of *livro*, “book”] was prepared, ordered by the Minister of the Army Leônidas Pires Gonçalves, but kept – for whatever reason, as the presented information is similar to *Brasil sempre* – under secret until 2009, and therefore only circulated as manuscript copy in military circles. As it can be expected, Giordani justifies repression as a response to a communist attack, but what is more insightful is the way the military man does it. He does not only defend his moral Christian values and attacks the “progressive Church (mere euphemism for Marxist)”, which would be a commonplace, but refers explicitly to TFP, in his eyes “the only right, civil organization that courageously never silenced, never bent to progressive pressures”.<sup>45</sup> Even more, he espouses the central argument of conservative Catholics (and Olavo de Carvalho’s) which explains the crisis of modernity due to the loss of faith in the coming Kingdom: “I incite everyone who suffers in the immediatist illusion of total realization in this life to try the eternal, to search for the beyond, to enjoy limitless peace, confidence and courage. [...] Let us raise this banner at work, school, anywhere: GOD EXISTS! This is our fortress, not broken by cyclones, attacked by rust or destroyed by worms.” Apparently a pious torturer, Giordani then asks himself why the ecumenic coordinators of “Brazil: Never Again”, who tried to clarify these crimes, have not ascertained the truth, citing Bolsonaro’s favorite verse, John (8, 32): “Haven’t they known the truth yet or has the truth not set them free?”<sup>46</sup>

Both *Brasil sempre* and *Orvil* take as their starting point the “1935 communist uprising”, as a somehow hysterical historical trauma, taking the form of a “ritualized anticommunist celebration”. But soon opponent turns out to be any social change, a stance which went so far that in 1962, shortly before the putsch, the military accused communists of something abominable they never did in any other country: to come to power through democratic elections!<sup>47</sup> In the 1980s, the military became aware that communists had transformed their own military defeat as armed resistance through mass indoctrination into a political victory. The *Orvil* understands this still very conventionally as a psychological war like in the early 1960s but occasionally also surmises the full dimension of what the previous conservative sources already had conceptualized as cultural Marxism: “undermining the belief in the values of western society”,

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45 Giordani 1986: 7–8, 243.

46 Giordani 1986: 238, original emphasis.

47 Motta 2000: 212, 309–310. *Orvil* n.d.: xvi.

“controlling the administrative structure”, “influencing governmental decisions” and above all to reeducate the population. Against this communist seize of power, possibly due to the return of the “paradoxical regime” of democracy which again allowed “their enemies to prepare for taking the power under the shelter of the law”, the military lost all power, the *Orvil* writes, except for a series of means introduced in the new Constitution known as “emergency safeguards” (among them the infamous article 142 to which I will get back soon).<sup>48</sup>

Still, the military’s concept of communism was too narrow. If they had read thoroughly Carvalho’s explanations on the Gnostic origin of Marxism, they would have been familiar with communism in its broader sense: not related to the collectivization of means of production (an ambition abandoned long time ago), neither to political systems implemented in the past (just historical agents of genocide) or the attempts to implement them. Carvalho, like the first Integrists a century before, understands communism as the driving force of modernization, omnipresent in education, the psychological indoctrination of the masses, in family relationships, in public and private morality, in short: everywhere communists could implement their modernizing agenda: abortion under protection of the state, the state supply of drugs to the population, the destruction of traditional religiosity, the state control of the possession of weapons, the intervention of the state in private conduct, the creation of cultural identities sustained in the separation of races, “and so on”.<sup>49</sup> What makes this agenda viable was the “shattering of consciousness by the empire of propaganda”, by intellectuals and journalists, Carvalho’s favorite enemies. Anti-intellectualism, against the “communist” establishment, is a red thread in his work and the alert against cultural Marxism in Brazil, represented by the PT, was the issue of his first political comments, as early as 1987.<sup>50</sup> In 2002, at the eve of PT’s electoral victory, Carvalho concluded that brainwashing in Brazil had achieved its objectives and that the new hegemony was already in place in form of the alternation in power of the moderate social-democratic (PSDB) and radical Left (PT), all according to Stalin’s scissors strategy.<sup>51</sup>

Unaware of these tendencies, what the military did not expect at this point was that they themselves, as the last institution of resistance after the Fall of the Church, could also be subverted by communism. When in 2015 Olavo de Carvalho received the *Orvil*, finally published in 2012,

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48 *Orvil* n.d.: 6, 839–841.

49 Carvalho 2015 [1995]: 77.

50 Carvalho 1994a: 37.

51 Carvalho 2002a and 2002b.

as a present from the Bolsonaro family, he thanked them mannerly. On other occasions, he complained that the military had not listened to any of his warnings during the 1990s and now were caught in the communist trap themselves.<sup>52</sup> Giordani was a better listener. In his second amplified edition of *Brasil sempre* (2014), with over 700 pages and new sections on the victory of cultural Marxism disguised as democracy, he refers often to the “great and brave Brazilian philosopher of today”. He also includes, as a statement of divorce from the armed forces, a public letter he had written in 2006 to the commander of the Brazilian Army, general Albuquerque, in protest against the decoration of high-rank PT politicians in government, where it reads in best Olavist style: “All the elements of the Left, with no exception, are undignified because they are fratricides, adept of an alien and assassin ideology. So, I understand, today, at the age of 57, that they should be eliminated, never spared or amnestied.”<sup>53</sup>

This sounds exactly like Bolsonaro, who has made similar statements, but not alone. Bolsonaro however seems more inclined to another military revisionist, Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra. He owes his fame to his juridical recognition as a torturer, as the only closed case, and his *A Verdade sufocada* [Suffocated Truth] from 2006 is the president's favorite bedtime reading, as Bolsonaro likes to joke. Like Giordani's book, it targets the new generation who only knew the military dictatorship from distorted history books while the “disciplined” armed forces “kept quiet”.<sup>54</sup> Even under such discipline, it was not Ustra's first book on the issue. As early as 1987 he published *Rompendo o silêncio* [Breaking the Silence], an astonishing personal account on caring for his prisoners, including birthday and Christmas celebrations, inmate handicraft courses offered by his wife and prisoners volunteering as babysitters of his children; all undocumented, as they did not have the “terrorists' craftiness” to take pictures for later proof. Documented and stimulating greater reflection is the grateful letter of a female prisoner's father (a lawyer) after her release, thanking Ustra for having liberated his daughter – not from prison but from subversive communist abuse, followed by many lines of enthusiastic praise of the Military Government.<sup>55</sup> Maybe it is the overdose of heartiness which makes Bolsonaro prefer Ustra's second title.

Ustra's *A verdade sufocada* pays tribute to Giordani and other military but thanks explicitly “Doutor Plínio” for the annual meetings with “old comrade-in-arms”. As this is how Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira was called

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52 See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UK-fvzJ8fD4>.

53 Giordani 2014: 439.

54 Ustra 2007 [2006]: 11–12.

55 Ustra 1987: 8–9, 149–151.

by his intimates and as his given name has the peculiar feature of lacking the mandatory accent (different from Plínio Salgado, for example) he certainly refers to the famous TFP leader. Ustra owes special thanks to another celebrity: Olavo de Carvalho. And he has good reason, after all it was him to first point to the arrangement of the big farce of the “coup d’état” (in *Época* from Feb 17, 2001) and to the activities of KGB in Brazil (in Carvalho’s blog on Sept 18, 2002). These became later the two central elements of military revisionism, and they both were made plausible and public by Olavo de Carvalho as the military’s advocate. The torturer consults the philosopher also in matters of taxation and apparently got a choking assessment: “According to philosopher Olavo de Carvalho [...], each capitalist in Brazil, the more he earns, the more he will have to give the government and that’s more money to the machine that tomorrow will strangle him.”<sup>56</sup> Ustra closes his book with a long quote from Carvalho’s *Jardim das Aflições*, under the heading “To meditate on”, giving special emphasis to the following thought:

The incapacity of a people to perceive the dangers that threaten it, is one of the greatest signs of the self-destructive depression that foreshadows great social defeats. Apathy, indifference toward its own destiny, concentration of attention on secondary subjects, together with total negligence in essential, urgent matters, mark the torpor of the victim who, foreseeing a blow that is stronger than he can stand, prepares, by means of an anesthetic reflex, to surrender unarmed and half-fainted in the hands of the executioner, like the lamb that offers its neck to the blade. But when the torpor invades not only the people’s soul but also seizes the minds of intellectuals, and the voices of the greatest are not raised but to echo the hypnotic chanting, then the last hope of a new awakening goes out.<sup>57</sup>

That at some point relevant parts of the military accepted Carvalho’s thesis on cultural Marxism and closely related with Bolsonaro’s government, is central to the understanding of their later and still ongoing “hybrid war”, as we will see in chapter eight.<sup>58</sup>

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56 Ustra 2007 [2006]: 14, 120–121, 559.

57 Ustra 2007 [2006]: 564.

58 Leirner 2020: 277–278.

## The Media's "Stab in the Back"

Still, not even the military took Olavo de Carvalho's warning against the São Paulo Forum seriously. Giordani has no problem to understand what this organization was, as it is "very well defined by Wikipedia" as "a meeting of political parties and non-governmental organizations of Latin America and the Caribbean Left [...] to discuss alternatives to the neoliberal politics dominant in 1990s Latin America and promote the region's economic, political and cultural integration".<sup>59</sup> But despite all efforts, and maybe because Wikipedia cites a couple of other similar and apparently decent organizations, such the Centrist Democrat International, the International Democrat Union and the Liberal International, he has flagrant problems to link this phenomenon to communist subversion. Instead, he reproduces a full article written by Olavo de Carvalho to explain that behind the Forum stands the KGB. Ustra is at least aware of the risk that "although it's not a secret organization" the Forum had the objective to create the "Union of Socialist Republics of Latin America" (URSAL), taking seriously an ironic joke on conspiracy theorists, and that the election of the PT government in 2002 was just the first step in this process.<sup>60</sup> From Olavo de Carvalho's perspective, better than nothing but still poor, as Ustra could have known earlier and better.

After all, it was in dozens of articles and interviews that Carvalho tried to convince public opinion of the existence of this criminal organization of narco-communists which were seizing full control of power in Latin America through a war of cultural hegemony (as well as terrorism, kidnapping and narcotrafficking).<sup>61</sup> Apparently, Olavo de Carvalho was inspired for this hyperbolic interpretation of an increasingly boring discussion forum by the edited 1993 volume *The Plot to Annihilate the Armed Forces and the Nations of Ibero-America*. Published by the above-mentioned Lyndon LaRouche in his conspiratory *Executive Intelligence Review*, the secret plans were translated in Brazil in 1997. One of the volume's authors, the Mexican-Brazilian Lorenzo Carrasco, offers the convenient "facts" on the Forum, such as the financial conspiracy of banker families, the existence of a UN world government, the defense of environment and Indigenous rights as means to internationalize Amazonia, as well as among other insights the Movement of Landless Workers serving as armed militia for the PT. These ideas had some repercussion in military circles, a strong influence on the ephemeral Party of the Reconstruction of the National Order (PRONA) and its eccentric leader Enéias Carneiro

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59 Giordani 2014: 293.

60 Ustra 2007 [2006]: 556.

61 Carvalho 2010a, 2002c and 2004a.

and apparently also on Olavo de Carvalho.<sup>62</sup> In 1998, Helga LaRouche, the German spouse of Lyndon, was received by the Brazilian lawyer José Carlos Graça Wagner to exchange supposedly incriminating material on the Forum, which was made public soon after.<sup>63</sup> With almost no public reaction, Carvalho started the campaign to disseminate the conspiracy that nobody else perceived. First of all, he accused the media of having hidden the existence of the Forum, as if the mass media's notorious lack of interest in covering leftists' political events could not have other imaginable reasons. But to understand this as collusion is evidently the basis of the whole conspiracy theory.

The other conspiracy Carvalho has been insisting on for more than two decades, is of even bigger dimensions: Globalisms, three of them. The first one is a quite old idea, brought up by the proven hoax *Report from Iron Mountain* (1967), which revealed a conspiracy to scandalize public opinion for environmental pollution to distract it from the collusion of a few billionaires to make their deals. This later went by the name of "The Syndicate", Carvalho's main reference, a bodged report which concludes with the announcement of an upcoming satanic freemasonry world government.<sup>64</sup> Carvalho calls the Syndicate "metacapitalists", organized in the Bilderberg Group, the Council on Foreign Relations and others (curiously he never mentions the MPS), and too rich to submit themselves to the rules of free market and therefore building communist state apparatuses under their control to serve their capitalist interests.<sup>65</sup> This was compatible with his earlier critique of neoliberal tendencies, the withdrawal of the state from economy, which only shifted power to carry out the psycho-social administration of private life, "the socialism of inner life" against the families "that constitute the last protection of human intimacy".<sup>66</sup> As Carvalho stated earlier:

I believe there are universal moral principles, permanent ones, which are discerned by intelligence under the accidental variation in the norms and customs, and I believe, anyway, that there are the right and the wrong. But, for that very reason, imposing what is right is wrong, unless in matters of life and death. Religious authority should be limited to

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62 Carvalho 2009b.

63 Caldeira Neto 2016: 285.

64 Hagger 2004.

65 Carvalho & Dugin 2012; Carvalho 2013a: 220.

66 Carvalho 2015 [1995]: 362. His example to give evidence on this alliance: "Also, it's not a coincidence that in Brazil the most popular advocate of neoliberalism, mayor Paulo Salim Maluf, is also the first governor to try to decisively interfere in the private habits of citizens through laws on the use of seatbelts and the consumption of cigarettes." (Carvalho 2015 [1995]: 352 footnote 233).



teaching what is right, with total patience, without trying to forcibly expel the sins from the world. And if not even the religious ones, who have the authority to talk about these things for their dedication to inner life, should impose moral rules forcibly, let alone the state, which after all is nothing but an administrative management, the most mundane and prosaic thing that exists. The laws should be founded only on practical considerations of order, security and collective interest, very ordinary ones, and never on pretentiously elevated reasons of ethics, which ended up turning state bureaucracy into a new clergy, and the Penal Code into a new Decalogue. The most disgusting thing that exists is state metaphysics.<sup>67</sup>

This first Globalism, representing the dynastic historical force, had already implemented a “planetary administration” by the United Nations and, as the recent pandemic has shown, especially through the World Health Organization.<sup>68</sup> The second, ideological Globalism, was the Russian-Chinese complex, the “neo-communist enemies of the Occident”, “imperialist and fascist”, acting through military power. The third Globalism, the religious one, is the Islamic Imperialism to submit the Occident to its spiritual authority and temporal power and establish a Universal Caliphate, as one can read in *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis* (2005) authored by Bat Ye’or [pseudonym for Gisèle Littman].<sup>69</sup> Yet the champion among the three competitors must be globalist communism or China, as he would simplify today, because this force controlled both financial capital and Islamic terrorism.<sup>70</sup> Mainly for this reason, the debate with the Russian traditionalist Aleksandr Dugin, arranged by Carvalho’s pupils and published in 2012, failed completely.

Carvalho’s persistence in accusing his peers of becoming complicit of an upcoming catastrophe for the continent and the world made him fall from favor and most journals dispensed his collaboration until 2005. For the older, Carvalho’s quixotic communophobia might have reminded them of Carlos Pena Botto, anticommunist crusader in the 1950s (he even made it to the WACL in the late 1970s<sup>71</sup>) who had warned against the presence of several thousand soviet agents in Brazil who could not

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67 Carvalho 1998c.

68 Carvalho 2013a: 149 and 2004b; paper presented in online conference “China e Globalismo na pandemia”, on May 8, 2020, panel “Pandemia, globalismo e bloco Russo-Chinês”. The conference was organized by the webpage “Estudos Nacionais”, created by Carvalho’s students (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jX5fcDsem5U>).

69 Carvalho 2007f. See also Carvalho 2016a and 2018a.

70 Carvalho & Dugin 2012: 33–38.

71 Cowan 2021: 157.

be caught because they took pills to make them invisible.<sup>72</sup> The disregard of Carvalho's warnings and the confirmation of his prophecies by Lula's election in 2002 seem to have been a traumatic experience, so frequently has the author returned to this subject until today. After all, the only thing he was concerned with was to bless humanity with "truth brought to light":

All I have ever desired in life was to investigate certain questions, be they philosophical ones or from the political scene, seeking not the defense of this or that body of principles and values, but the simple solution to some cognitive difficulty, the clarifying of some obscurity. Even in my articles more frequently labeled as "polemic" – those I dedicated to the São Paulo Forum – I never spoke in the key of "for or against" but just sought to bring to light a set of essential data that the media and the political class concealed for sixteen years, and without which nothing could be understood about Brazilian and Latin-American politics.<sup>73</sup>

This trauma might also have been the final decision to leave the country for the U.S. and to start fighting alone. However, this change turned out as having a positive effect for Carvalho because the dismissal from mass media actually increased even more his outreach. The only way to fight his "cultural and political combat", in the sense of a reverse culture war, with scarce resources and geographically distant from his potential supporter basis, was a virtual war. For more than twenty years he has been investing heavily in cyber-journalism. His very first homepage dates from 1998, and in 2002 he created the blog *Mídia Sem Máscara* [Media Without Mask] as an online observatory of the elections and which he has continued until today. Since then, he has been firing on all available online channels: previously the now extinct Orkut with tens of communities related to him, later Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Instagram, Telegram; on his various homepages and blogs; through his online radio program *True outspread*; and last the online newspaper *Brasil Sem Medo* [Brazil Without Fear]. Some of these channels are followed, subscribed or liked by around half a million viewers.<sup>74</sup> During the rise of the New Right in the 2010s and especially at the eve of Bolsonaro's triumph, his books got reedited, not only by conservative niche editors but also by Record, one of the most traditional publishers in Brazil, which – as chief-editor Carlos Andreazza confirmed – decided to hype Carvalho.<sup>75</sup> In comparison, Carvalho's

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72 Motta 2000: 180–182.

73 Carvalho 2020.

74 Puglia 2020.

75 Silva 2018: 81.

more conventional strategy to create an “Inter-American Institute for Philosophy, Government and Social Thought” with nineteen carefully selected invited scholars and ex-politicians as fellows (among them Paul Gottfried), was a flop. Idealized as his own Think Tank, the institute conducted few activities besides a humble blog and closed in 2017.<sup>76</sup> Definitely, Olavo de Carvalho’s talent was mass agitation.

### **Unrecognized Saviors: Carvalho’s Spiritual Kinship with Plínio Salgado**

In the third chapter, I drew attention to the common origin and the resemblances between Integrism and Integralism. That Integralism is not considered a vivid element of the Brazilian New Right is more an effect of the lack of relevant political organization than the circulation of ideas, which – as the previous chapters indicated – have continued to play a role in political thought in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They might even play a role for the New Right today, if we consider the striking proximity between the discourses of their main leaders, Plínio Salgado and Olavo de Carvalho. Hussne is very right to suspect that Olavism did not arise as an abnormality in Brazilian history but as a continuity, and that Integralism (and Integrism, we must add) are part of this.<sup>77</sup> Carvalho does not refer explicitly to Salgado, which does not necessarily mean that he did not receive and include his ideas; indeed, it could perfectly indicate the opposite, like in the case of the equally not cited Brazilian Neo-Thomist canon, from Farias Brito to Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira. But he does not distance himself from Salgado either and he would probably feel positively honored by my comparison. In one comment on Miguel Reale, he questions Salgado’s style and the political strategy of AIB but not his ideas: “Today, Plínio’s writings seem mawkish to us and with a delirious hyperbolicism. Politically, their only sin is the complete silliness. Morally, they are unexceptionable. Moreover, Integralism was Catholic [...]. What shame is there of having followed that leader? None, evidently.”<sup>78</sup>

Olavo de Carvalho and Plínio Salgado have much in common. This is not meant to label Carvalho as a “fascist”, as I have made clear that this categorization does not even hold for Salgado himself, but both as conservative Catholics or Integrists who felt a special vocation to lead their people out from modernist slavery. As people did not quite follow, they both had to present themselves as misunderstood prophets.

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76 See <http://theinteramerican.org> and <https://web.archive.org/web/20170704115600/http://theinteramerican.org>.

77 Hussne 2020.

78 Carvalho 2000a.

Carvalho's self-victimizing presentations of his volumes on the collective idiot and his minimal recipe for not being an individual one, is almost as ingenious as Salgado's "Aviso às pessoas sensatas" [Warning to sensible people], in which he moans that his book was "perfectly useless" because "the sensible men did not give him credit" with the result that "the catastrophe ensued, surprising everyone", reason why he desisted from recommending his book to "individuals who judge themselves as having logical thinking, those who boast of possessing absolute mental balance". As always, only the crazy perceive the truth, in the 1940s as well as the 1990s. This is because apparently communism is too crazy itself to be understood by decent people: "It's the devil's logic, and the devil is not an individual that's subject to the interpretation of so-called sensible people, that is: narrow-minded and formalists." That is why only a crazy seer like Salgado can interpret "to the letter the logic of Satan" in the book he wants to sell.<sup>79</sup> Carvalho's warning of the invisible communism (even worse than Carlos Pena Botto's invisible communists) has been the only possible answer to Salgado, regarding the blatantly not communist social and political structures in Brazil:

Where is communism? And the bourgeoisie, the capitalists, the politicians, the men of common-sense answer: nowhere. They will say, at best, that it's nothing but half a dozen idealists without a big electorate. Conclusion: there is no communism. Hence, those who affirm the existence of communism, who report its dissimulations, who reveal its power, who demonstrate its plans, who direct warnings to the threatened Nation, are considered men out of realities, imaginative individuals and even men who make up stories to raise supporters or collaborators.<sup>80</sup>

Apparently, this assessment of reality by the bourgeoisie has changed (if it has ever been like that, which I doubt). Just like Carvalho counted on the elites' disconcertion after redemocratization, Salgado gave a comforting meaning of vanguardism and even victimization to a probably widespread feeling among the elites in recently democratized post-1945 Brazil, which feared to lose some of their vast collection of privileges (and perhaps were even aware of how they had achieved these privileges). It is tempting to identify with Salgado's "madman", especially if no material constraints – like working in shifts – hinders living out this passion:

This book, therefore, is dedicated to the madmen. To those who devote their time, energies and intelligence to the fight against what the sensible men say does not exist. To those who are consumed through sleepless

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<sup>79</sup> Salgado 1947: 7.

<sup>80</sup> Salgado 1947: 7.

nights, in the holy insomnia when the spirit is tormented as it considers the danger that loom in the horizon of a gloomy future. To those who spend their last cents in printing clarifying books and brochures. To those who sustain scarce newspapers, whose accounts the retailers and industrialists do not attend with their ads for fear of retaliation by communists, whose existence, as danger, they contradictorily deny. To those who walk, from one city to another, talking to the people, since they cannot obtain the resources to speak on the radio. To those who try to organize, amid general indifference, something that can constitute the core of national resistance when the catastrophe comes. [...] To those crazy, obsessed, paranoid men who watch the country's honor and human dignity I dedicate this book. Those who are not of the stripe of these sublime madmen, do not read these pages...<sup>81</sup>

Carvalho's expositions of cultural Marxism are just an echo of Salgado's equally inspired insistence on shifting the focus from the conventional means of communist power, the Fifth Column (active propaganda, spying, secret services, diplomacy, cultural, humanitarian and religious cooperation), to the Sixth and much more dangerous column to disorient the minds and prepare the grounds for the Fifth's invasion:

Teachers of the three grades, journalists who say they are merely professional, congressmen elected through liberal-democratic parties and whose attitudes very often reveal an evident anti-communism, magistrates (some of them at high courts), military, even senior officers, who do not leave traces of Marxist convictions, writers, painters, sculptors and musicians falsely worried only about their art, scientists who instate materialism.<sup>82</sup>

Salgado, perhaps more than Carvalho half a century later, was aware that it did not matter that these representatives of the Sixth Column were not recognizable as such but indirectly by their disguised action:

Those who read these lines shall say: by the look of it, the world is communist. But I answer: that's not what I meant. I do state, in my right mind, I will never be able to report as communist a member of the "sixth column". And that's logical. Because the essence of the "sixth column" lies in its formidable and multiform capacity for disguise. There is, however, in the Gospel, a sentence that helps us: a tree is known by its fruit.<sup>83</sup>

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81 Salgado 1947: 8–9.

82 Salgado 1947: 18–19.

83 Salgado 1947: 19.

This evokes a certain proximity to conspiracy theories, of which Salgado's mentioned "Plano Cohen" is just the point of the iceberg, comparable to Carvalho's denouncement of the secret plans of the São Paulo Forum.<sup>84</sup> As early as 1931 it was clear for Salgado that communism had already infected "powerful macrocapitalist spheres" and that "the world is, today, in the hands of unknown powers that rule backstage".<sup>85</sup> What makes the action of these crypto-communist capitalists even less predictable is their pathological character. For Salgado, communism started as a "simple idea in the patient's brain" who then developed a "mental disintegration", which in the end leads to a reasoning which is well known as "manic-depressive psychosis". For him, it is therefore possible to recognize a communist (and, as I imagine, the hidden soldiers of the Sixth Column) by the "simple inspection of the lineaments and representations of the visage".<sup>86</sup> This skill, of course, Carvalho never would claim for himself. As we will see in the next section, to him, diagnosing the clinical picture of communism still depends on his analysis of the patients' written or oral expression.

As Carvalho was never interested in a political career, he does not need to exempt future fellow politicians from this pathology, while Salgado had to grant them that they were "as if inebriated by marijuana or cocaine". However, he defends that the apathy of Brazilian politicians and opinion makers to fight communism was, as in Salgado's words, a "heinous crime committed, through omission, by everyone who watched and twiddled their thumbs". With regard to those who influence public opinion, any account which endangers the determined roles of the Good and the Evil are refuted by pointing to the principally major guilt of the Evils. For Carvalho, Brazilian torture – if it ever happened – is obviously a petty crime in comparison to the *gulags* communists would have implemented in Brazil. Equally, Salgado returned a report on the bombing of Guernica, written by Jacinto Benavente (a republican Spanish dramatist and for him a typical "wolf in sheep's clothing" intellectual) with the imaginary question "I wonder why the Spanish churches were burned?" For Salgado, already in the 1930s the media was in the hand of communism and these proto-Cultural Marxists worked in collusion with the "international capitalism that enslaves Brazil".<sup>87</sup> This anticipates Carvalho's theory on globalisms, including the role of the future "planetary administration" which Salgado spotted as early as the foundation of the United Nations.<sup>88</sup>

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84 Tanagiro 2016: 173.

85 Salgado 1931: 46.

86 Salgado 1947: 21–22.

87 Salgado 1937: 6, 65, 145–146, 156, 160 and 1933: 27.

88 Salgado 1947: 48.

To Salgado and Carvalho there is only one way to fight this overpowering enemy and its psychological war: through education, creating access to the “real” knowledge which cultural Marxism has censored. Surprisingly, Carvalho’s constant lament that conservative books were systematically excluded from the editorial market in Brazil comes from much earlier. Not only does Salgado use this argument, when complaining that liberal books had to be paid by the authors from their own pocket and conservative books simply did not exist.<sup>89</sup> Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira already knew in 1933 that European Catholic and conservative knowledge on communism (that it actually was the “conspiracy of a Jewish plutocracy and of masonry, which has been undermining Christian civilization for a long time”) was ignored in Brazil because of the “blockade that most of our bookstores impose on all the conservative and Catholic works coming from Europe”.<sup>90</sup> Carvalho’s scenarios of “Marxist hegemony” in higher education which he always contrasts with the idealized situation before the 1960s lose a bit of their persuasiveness if we consider that Salgado said exactly the same in 1947, two decades before the supposed moment of decline:

Faculties where they pontificate Bolsheviks, these are the ones that provide teachers to junior highs and training schools. What can we expect from boys who, going through those institutions, enter universities tomorrow? Will they be communism’s passive elements, promoting those deleterious agitations our country has been witnessing? As for the scientific or literary preparation, it’s null in this generation criminally handed to the zeal of perfidious masters.<sup>91</sup>

In other words, the military governments who after 1964 handed over education and culture to the communists to make them compliant just repeated the error of the Vargas government:

In Brazil it’s been agreed that communism is an evil. The party was closed (it was the evil’s tangible appearance), leaving communism to, itself, start acting freely. It is the biggest absurdity. Because if the communist, as teacher, as employee, journalist, writer, painter, sculptor, politician infiltrated in the tolerant parties, can work openly, poisoning the people’s souls, corrupting youth, undermining institutions, sabotaging the country’s production and the national defense, in a word, disarming Brazil of all its capacity to resist the foreigner invader, then I ask: why

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89 Salgado 1953 [1933].

90 Corrêa de Oliveira 1933: 555.

91 Salgado 1947: 121.

was the communist party closed? Our press has already been pampered by bolshevists [...].<sup>92</sup>

If phenomena like the effects of cultural Marxism on education, media and culture as well as the worldwide capitalist-communist conspiracy, which Carvalho explains through historically dated processes, turn out to be much older, this might indicate that the problem is in fact even bigger and the reasons, deeper. Or indeed that the phenomena as such are quite doubtful and could also be explained by the subjective and convenient self-victimizing stance of a fictional “David versus Goliath” narrative. Anyway, for our pious thinkers these details are minor in comparison to the main and decisive struggle between Christ and Anti-Christ:

The God whose name we inscribe on our flags is the One to which Thomas Aquinas takes us by the five luminous roads that converge at Him; it’s the personal God, creator of all the things, formed man, giving him a soul and a destiny, laying down his rights and duties; it’s the God of the Gospel, who granted us intelligent and freedom and wanted us to call Him Lord and Father. The problem of today’s world is summed by the dilemma: with God or against God! All the other questions are secondary. At issue is the destiny of Man! The 20<sup>th</sup> century is the great crossroads.<sup>93</sup>

This is an old dogma of conservatism and a safe haven for anybody desperate with the analysis of the world, already promoted by Buckley and Kirk, for whom political problems were intrinsically religious and moral problems. It had a revival through Olavism, which teaches that in comparison with this core problem all other – he mentions racism, poverty, social injustice and the corruption of politicians – are mere “ordinary inconveniences”.<sup>94</sup>

In addition, Carvalho and Salgado share some common features of how they show off themselves and their life work. Both presented an artificially inflated vast oeuvre which consists of many repetitions and even republications of the same texts. Both deny any critique not based on the knowledge of all texts and are deeply concerned with reorganizing them in the future, a preoccupation which marked Salgado’s last public speech in the Federal Chamber of Deputies in 1974.<sup>95</sup> Both adopt a grandiloquent style, share the same passion for highlighting central expressions in capital letters and the same pedantism in finding formal errors in their enemies’ texts. Both encourage hate against their favorite

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92 Salgado 1947: 119.

93 Salgado 1979 [1945]: 45.

94 Buckley 1951: xii; Carvalho 2015 [1995]: 117; Catharino 2017: 244.

95 Chasin 1978: 491; Gonçalves 2012: 269.



enemies, be they called Lula da Silva (who Carvalho likes to name “goat rapist”) or Luiz Carlos Prestes, whose imprisonment in 1935 Salgado commemorates: “There he is, finally! My eyes fall on his photography. My heart tightens. It’s my enemy. It’s the opposite pole. The antipode.”<sup>96</sup> Still, neither assume any responsibility for the political effects of their writing (in the case of Salgado, not even for the attempted putsch in 1938), defending themselves as commentators. Carvalho likes to compare himself to the Russian writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and in parallel to remember that “a great writer is like a second government”.<sup>97</sup> Salgado never assumed the role of doctrinarian agitator, and certainly he did not feel “extremist”:

In Brazil, the laws only capitulate as “extremism” the acts unmistakably preparatory for the coup d’état, the war propaganda and the violent methods. I ask: has Integralism done that? Integralism has not preached anything but the respect for the Order, the march of the Nation, in the electoral rhythm, for the realization of the perfect democracy, that is, the corporative democracy? Have we ever even been caught conspiring? On the contrary. [...] I have never taken part, never led, never applauded any revolution in the country, because I have always understood that the fundamental work, the responsibility work is the one that aims to form the national consciousness, crystalize a philosophical thought, outline a safe route, and that is not carried out with riots and mutinies but with unambitious work and persevering suffering. In 30, my word was the same as in 32: it’s necessary to educate, educate, educate. Today I add another word: educate and surveil. Yes, because through the lack of education for the masses, the disorientation created by the ones responsible for the destiny of Brazil, we have come to the brink of terrible dangers. Today we have to educate with a sentinel at the door of the Great School. Because if the Huns of Moscow still intend to destroy that which is dearest to the Brazilian people, the Great School of civism, moral, dignity, our spiritualism will transform instantly into combat groups and we will know how to die, for the honor of Brazil. If that is called “extremism”, then I do not know what dignity will mean.<sup>98</sup>

Brazil’s New Right also rejects vehemently the label of “extremism” and instead projects it on mainstream media or center parties. How the defense of an intuited unextreme truth against the extremist PT-Huns of the 21<sup>st</sup>

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96 Salgado 1937: 77.

97 Olavo de Carvalho, Facebook post, Nov 3, 2018, <https://facebook.com/carvalho.olavo/posts/1158608520957887>.

98 Salgado 1937: 61–67.

century is idealized and organized, will be shown in the next chapter on the militancy of Olavism.

## 7 Bolsolavism

*Mr. Nyquist: So Brazil is struggling against a communist power that has gotten inside the government.*

*Mr. Carvalho: But they don't control only the government. They control all the media, with one or two small exceptions. They control all the universities. They control all the cultural institutions. They control practically everything. The people have no channel to express their opinion. The reason so many people went to the streets to scream and to protest is because it's their only recourse.*

*N.: And now Jair Bolsonaro is the candidate of a new political party, which is conservative, and he is threatening to overturn the communist control of the executive branch of Brazil's federal government. Is that right?*

*C.: Yes, that's right. Of course, the communists are reacting violently, accusing Bolsonaro of being a fascist, a Nazi, and so on. They are even creating some false Nazi crimes in order to accuse him. These accusations are ridiculous and childish.*

*N.: Are these accusations fronted by the Brazilian media?*

*C.: All the media gives space to them. It is not only Haddad who is saying this. It is all the big newspapers, the big TV channels, and so on. [...] There is a global slander campaign underway. Someone posted on my Facebook a list of more than 200 media organizations that have slandered Bolsonaro from around the world. It is a very serious matter. On the other side, Bolsonaro suffered an attempt on his life and the investigation does not appear in any media. Total silence. [...]*

*N.: First the socialists slander Bolsonaro, then they try to murder him.*

*C.: Yes, yes, yes.*

*N.: What are they so afraid of?*

*C.: They have committed so many crimes while holding power that they cannot permit another party to take power now—because they know they'll be punished.*

*N.: Is there a threat of civil war in Brazil?*

*C.: No, because the people have no weapons. They will be sitting ducks. This is not a civil war.*

*N.: The army won't protect the people?*

C.: *I really don't believe they will follow orders to shoot the people. But neither will they mobilize to defend the people.*  
[...]

N.: *Are the Chinese supporting the Workers' Party?*

C.: *Sure, sure, and also the Iranians.*

N.: *And if Bolsonaro wins the election, what changes will he bring?*

C.: *First, he will have to repress the drug dealers. The drug dealers make a lot of money. They bribe everybody. They control a huge part of the country. [...] and [they] are protected by the Workers' Party and the government.*

N.: *So the communists are using drug trafficking and organized crime?*

C.: *Yes. [...] FARC is a member of the São Paulo Forum, which is an organization of 200 parties that are all communist. It is the new Communist International in Latin America. It was founded and presided over by Lula da Silva, the Workers' Party president. So they are all partners—the FARC, the Workers' Party, and so on.*  
[...]

C.: *For the first time, between 2013 and 2015, the people rose as if they were one man, against all these things. It was a very heroic moment. A very beautiful thing to see. And now Bolsonaro's candidacy is a natural continuation of that movement—a second chapter of this movement. I call this the Brazilian Revolution.<sup>1</sup>*

“Bolsolavism” is a jocular term which came up in the endeavor to understand the symbiosis of Olavo de Carvalho’s ideas and the way they are being reproduced by supporters of the political project of Jair Bolsonaro, a bit like in the unintentionally hilarious interview I reproduced in parts at the top. But it is not only about his ideas. The newspeak of Bolsolavism has been well analyzed by João Cezar Castro Rocha in his book on the rhetoric of hate. I would go one step further and propose that certain strategies which can be associated with Olavism such as the pretention of academic merit, the obsession to rhetorically destroy personal opponents,

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1 Nyquist 2018, Interview in *Epoch Times*, Oct 25, 2018. Carvalho is presented as president of The Inter-American Institute and Distinguished Senior Fellow in Philosophy, Political Science and the Humanities. The Institute was at that time already closed and Carvalho did not hold any institutional fellowship.

the self-victimizing as persecuted outsider, and at the same time self-aggrandizing as the only illuminated to resist an oppressive collective idiocy, are traces that can be found among the New Right as a whole. To explore this impact of Olavism on Bolsonarism is the objective of this chapter.

### The Philosophical “Cybersect”

As assiduous reader of Gramsci, Olavo de Carvalho knows perfectly that mass agitation without an intellectual elite has no chance to change any structure. In 2009, Olavo de Carvalho launched his paid online philosophy course (COF) with the seductive proposal that turns any humanist scholar green with envy: an “integral activity of intelligence oriented to all the fields of knowledge and experience in search of its unity, fundament and utmost significance to the human consciousness” and an “integral education, a sort of general introduction to higher studies in its totality”.<sup>2</sup> Since then, more than 20,000 students “graduated” in his “genius factory”.<sup>3</sup> The course offers live-streamed sessions every Saturday, the duration of the education is estimated at five years and since 2009 the course material has accumulated to an archive of over 560 video classes. These online classes are better described as monological lectures with the possibility that students can send questions, some of them being answered occasionally. In principle, they follow disciplinary cycles of philosophy, political theory and social critique. However, during the last years they have tended more to spontaneous political comments, rebuttal of critics or simply angry outbursts. Also, the average duration of each class has declined from around three hours to often less than one hour. The objective of COF was to form single-handedly a new generation of “intellectuals”, called with a wink the *olavetes* (I prefer to call them “Olavists”), multipliers of Carvalho’s truth and seeds of a future Brazilian intelligentsia, as the “surveyors of collective intelligence”.

Several accounts of dissidents, as well as class videos, transcriptions and other course material, besides Carvalho’s own explanations, give some insights in how COF works. From the first moment, his new disciples are made aware of their task to “recover high culture” and “to save Brazil” by reverting indoctrination (which he calls “communist censorship”), with absolute priority in the field of public education. Ideally, as Carvalho

2 See the promotion of Carvalho’s online philosophy course at <https://olavodecarvalho.org/o-seminario-de-filosofia>.

3 Olavo de Carvalho, acceptance speech on receiving the Order of Rio Branco in the top rank Grand Cross, Aug 29, 2019, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QIVFC\\_s-QPA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QIVFC_s-QPA).

admits, they would enter his course without any previous knowledge, in sharp contrast to any other education program I have come across. As this was impossible due to the omnipresent indoctrination of cultural Marxism, his students would have to do the superhuman effort to abdicate of all their contaminated convictions and vow “abstinence in terms of opinion”. This initial purge has the obvious advantage of preparing his pupils for the “total acceptance of reality above any of our desires”.<sup>4</sup> To avoid any misunderstanding, Carvalho advises foresightedly that in his classes he will not prove any theory but just show reality, and that his students will have to avoid any critical analysis of these accounts of reality and only concentrate on understanding the symbolic meaning implied in his explanations. To realize this “mutual” exchange of “sincerity”, he expects them to submit themselves to the “discipline of sincerity” which will become “slowly, gradually and safely” (an expression he borrows from the motto which, in the eyes of the military governments, guided redemocratization) a path of spiritual asceticism, “the development of the personal sense of truth”.<sup>5</sup> Conveniently, for Carvalho, “truth is inexpressible”, only “transmissible” from one conscious individual to the other, “as long as the latter consents to redoing a spiritual itinerary that will lead him to know that truth in an analogous way to the one the person who transmitted it did”.<sup>6</sup> To prevent any doubt from disturbing this process, his disciples are strictly forbidden to use the online forum of COF for discussions; only the exchange of information and mutual assistance are allowed. Furthermore, they are advised that the knowledge they will acquire will only be comprehensible by people who will exist in the future. Therefore, they should also refrain from intervening in any debate in their life outside COF, necessarily corrupted by cultural Marxism, except to denounce “certain people”.<sup>7</sup> If this made them feel lonely, they would be comforted to find “true friends” – though only virtual ones – among their peer students.

The persuasiveness of this pedagogical project, which looks more like an apostolate (or indeed the formation of a sect), might stem from many factors. COF seduces with a promise of secret knowledge, prohibited in the world outside. The convenience of acquiring knowledge as a single thought, devoid of the complexity of what Carvalho calls the “universal muddle”, makes this knowledge easily digestible. Furthermore, Carvalho passes on this knowledge in a personal and entertaining way, without any cognitive effort of his students, without debate, active participation

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4 Chainho & Rodrigues s/d.: 13, 18, 20, 26.

5 See <https://www.seminariodefilosofia.org/o-seminario>.

6 Carvalho 1997c: 8.

7 Chainho & Rodrigues s/d.: 121.

or any evaluation. To this good learning atmosphere also contributes the constant recourse to “politically incorrect” common sense, counting on the students’ cheers and knowing their privileged social position which allows them to pay for an education and invest working hours without achieving any diploma. Last, a central element is Carvalho’s charisma, as wise old man, and the personality cult around him, together with the constant staging of his archenemies and the pleasure of seeing them humiliated by their guru in class.

Martim Vasques da Cunha, one of Carvalho’s ex-students and most active renegade (amazingly still agreeing with most of his philosophy), denounced in detail the personality cult, the authoritarianism which does not allow for any discordance and the arbitrariness of his ex- master, who alone dictates the study form, content, and decides about progress and graduation.<sup>8</sup> Another ex-student, Joel Pinheiro da Fonseca, warns in his article under the title “We must talk about Olavo de Carvalho” against

[...] the personal dependence, the exacerbated trust, the annihilation of the critical sense in favor of a supposedly deeper view, the practice of stupefied admiration. In each one of these, just one conclusion: Olavo is the only safe channel of contact with reality. Hence his followers’ belligerent defense. If Olavo falls, that is, if it becomes patent that he is not that great luminary of thought that was sold to them, the disciples’ world will fall.<sup>9</sup>

All this, and especially the indoctrination of a parallel system of truth, evidently gives the impression of a sect and of course I am not the first one to say this. The named dissident ex-disciples and another, Josué A. Ribeiro, who besides that still praises him as a great philosopher, confirms the sectarian character of COF.<sup>10</sup> Olavo de Carvalho has always rejected this vehemently, alleging his yearslong experience in this matter which even turned him – as member of a *tariqa* – into a victim of sectarian activities, including juridical persecution after his withdrawal.<sup>11</sup> But like any expert, he can use this expertise against or for sectarianism, at least of his own. He is certainly right that a virtual community naturally lacks the physical conditions for building a sect.<sup>12</sup> He does not monitor his students’ conduct but their ideas. He does not involve them in rites or the consumption of hallucinogenic substances, but he swears them in on a single perception of reality, independent of what they might be used to perceive as such.

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8 Cunha 2019b.

9 Fonseca 2017.

10 Ribeiro 2020.

11 Carvalho 2007a.

12 Carvalho 2012a.

If in his classes he portrays Brazilian universities as centers of drug trade (Bolsonaro's Minister of Education and Carvalho's good friend Abraham Weintraub even considered them places of drug cultivation) and unofficial swinger-clubs, somebody who never set a foot on a campus is certainly in his right to believe this, but not someone with a university degree like many of his followers (and Weintraub). The fact that they accept this truth against better knowledge indicates an alienation from reality, even if only strategical. Last, it is true that Carvalho does not make a secret out of his activities as one would expect the leader of a sect to do, but this might be an easy concession as he sits out of reach of anybody to question his activities in his house in Virginia. This is probably not enough to evaluate if COF corresponds to what we could call a sect. On the other hand, Carvalho is very generous in using this label for other communities which for sure do not meet his sharp criteria either. Therefore, I consider it pertinent to propose that COF is a community with features analogous to those of a sect, in expectation of more substantial studies on the still novel and under-researched phenomenon of "cybersectarianism". In the light of what I presented above, it is safe to say that signing up for his courses means more than just an intellectual affiliation but – as Hussne calls it – a "conversion to Olavism".<sup>13</sup>

Another approach to analyze COF could be the concept of the "Digital Prince", a fourth updated understanding of governance power in the tradition of Machiavelli, after the modern and electronic Prince, pointing to the confluence of virtual communities of anonymous multitudes, guided by an opinion leader, but this goes beyond the scope of my purpose.<sup>14</sup> Independent if Olavism constitutes a sect, it offers the followers the reduction of uncertainties in a complex world, increased self-esteem as owner of insider knowledge and the social comfort of forming part of a privileged group of initiated. This would also explain why the more special the Olavist insights, the more central they become as the followers' personal identification and the less susceptible they get for counter-arguments, as these would cause the collapse of their whole identity construction.

Without going so far as to accuse Olavo de Carvalho of being a master in "deceiving people, manipulating them, destroying their individuality, inducing them to blind devotion to the guru"<sup>15</sup>, as the renegade Velasco does, there are somehow suggestive ambiguities which deserve attention. A curious trait of his public personality is that many actions or attitudes

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13 Hussne 2020.

14 Maia 2016: 26–27.

15 Velasco 2020: 156.



he projects on his enemy and explains psychologically are evidently part of his own repertoire too. This goes for example for the “self-hypnotic habit with which the emitter of the message persuades himself and his audience”<sup>16</sup> and the technique where “by narrowing the consciousness horizon, he expels the fighting forces from his visual field, and seeks to persuade himself that everything he does not see does not exist”.<sup>17</sup> Notwithstanding, this strategy of projection on the other is exactly what he blames his enemies for, recalling an unconfirmed quote generally attributed to Lenin: “Accuse them of what you do, call them names that describe what you are.”<sup>18</sup> When he analyzes that “there is a great difference between the indoctrinator who simply sticks a wrong idea into people’s head and the wizard who makes them sick, debilitating their intelligences so that they never again become aware of the right idea”, it is difficult not to agree but also not to relate this to his own counter-revolutionary war, considering the samples given in this chapter.<sup>19</sup> In the same sense it can be significant that in his fascination for psychological diagnoses he often appears to be speaking of himself, rather than of his enemy, for example when he states that he has never met “a single leftist, PTist, gayzista, Africanist or feminist leader who does not correspond, item by item, [...] to the classical case of hysteria. The hysterical do not feel what they perceive but what they imagine”.<sup>20</sup> Or, more concretely, one cannot help but think of him when he accuses a critic of presenting unquestionable certainties on something he has no idea about, which, in Carvalho’s eyes, is not “very normal, psychologically”.<sup>21</sup> As a side note, if the same was indeed valid for him, at least he had to be acquitted of the suspicion of acting intentionally, and his proclaimed attempt to save the world would have to be recognized as sincere quest.

Olavo de Carvalho has created a system which efficiently shields his ideology and makes his arguments irrefutable. The ritual answer to any critique of single aspects of his work is to deny anybody this competence without having read his entire oeuvre: “No one is qualified to have a critical view of this body of work without years of study.”<sup>22</sup> Moreover, in anticipation of somebody doing so, he declares preventively that the core of his ideas was not yet published and remains scattered in his more

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16 Carvalho 2019.

17 Carvalho 2015 [1995]: 261.

18 Carvalho 2016b.

19 Carvalho 2015 [1995]: 28.

20 Carvalho 2012c.

21 Carvalho 1997d and 2001b.

22 Olavo de Carvalho, Facebook post, Dec 3, 2018, <https://facebook.com/carvalho.olavo/posts/1179628045522601>.

than 500 online classes and other course material. No doubt this is a good marketing strategy, but one might wonder about the reasons to submit only less important thoughts to his readers' scrutiny. Just as one may wonder why he is at the same time complaining about critics picking up his polemical social media statements and posting them in admirable quantities – and recently publishing his “best texts published in social media” as the first volume of a “philosophical diary”, with no less than 736 pages.<sup>23</sup> However, in the rare case of a yearslong student who has done his extensive reading workload still voicing criticism, the critic is deprived of this right for not having duly understood the argument. Ultimately, only after having lived with him (he uses the word “conviviality”), like Aristotle and Plato (again his words), one would be able to judge his ideas.<sup>24</sup> Under these conditions, it is difficult to imagine any eligible critic of his thought besides himself.

As his own critic, he likes to remember Aristotle's distinction between the four connected levels of discourse, from the mere possibility to absolute certainty, and that in COF he trains his students in becoming aware of their own level of ignorance implied in their thoughts, the “repertoire of ignorance”.<sup>25</sup> As teacher, he probably should set a decent example – “I therefore stand by what I can comprehend”<sup>26</sup>, he once modestly declared – with the effect that most of his so-called social critique might be just on the level of poetics, such as the communist conspiracy of the São Paulo Forum is certainly a winsome image. However, this is not so. Olavo de Carvalho defends with the same bluster a whole collection of unproven assertions, among them the systemic fraud of the Brazilian electronic ballot boxes, the satanic rites of Marx, the use of cells from aborted fetuses as sweetener in soft drinks, the carcinogenic risk of homosexual relations, the pedophilia and necrophilia as elements of PT's public policies and countless other examples.<sup>27</sup> All this is presented in an apodictical language, with abundant use of reinforcing linguistic means of hyperbole, generalization and totalization such as “always”, “entirely”, “everybody”, “absolutely”, “totally”, “without exception”, “obviously”. Rocha analyzed this technique as the domestication of an absurd statement by an eloquent style.<sup>28</sup> In his classes, the risk of somebody questioning his certainties does not exist, as he leaves it explicitly for the students'

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23 Carvalho 2021.

24 Olavo de Carvalho, COF 82, Nov 6, 2010.

25 Chainho & Rodrigues s/d.: 23.

26 Carvalho 2015 [1995]: 364.

27 See for these examples Carvalho 2013a: 288, 2007d, 2002d and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wtz9DSO9CEg>.

28 Rocha 2021.

responsibility to relate his statements to the four levels of certainty.<sup>29</sup> Does this mean that his bustling dissemination of the most banal fake news (that is, objectively falsifiable with a few clicks)<sup>30</sup> is intended just as poetry, to open the imagination by indicating possibilities? I am sure most of his audience does not read them like this.

To Olavo de Carvalho it seems to be alien what runs in the blood of any real thinker: That we walk on isolated stones in an endless swamp of ignorance and that with all our effort we might be able to add some more stepping-stones to improve or even extend a provisional path. Instead, he acts as an *Übermensch* who – to stay within the metaphor – has drained the whole swamp because his revealed divine truth opened his eyes and made him know the plug. For him, understanding scientifically society “does not amount to any greater surprise than the one you have when you leave your broken car at the mechanic and the next day the car is running” – naturally after having knocked any phenomenon of the world into shape so that it fits into his hypotheses.<sup>31</sup>

Carvalho has in common with Voegelin not admitting non-initiated as critics with the obvious effect of his work being largely ignored and only picked up by loyal and uncritical disciples. Even more, there is no chance of a fruitful dialogue if one side defends with the same vehemence a mere superficial opinion and core expertise. The inability of Olavo de Carvalho to position his argument in relation to his own “map of ignorance” makes any criticism of his work a painful and practically infinite process which in turn explains the reluctance of scholars to engage in it. After all, Carvalho might even be aware of this tragical limitation, as he certainly knows that this exchange is a rare preciousness for any intellectual endeavor:

Since I started reading books, my dream was to one day emerge from the culturally depressive social environment and have a circle of friends I could talk seriously about art, literature, philosophy, religion, the moral perplexities of existence and the search for the meaning of life – the necessary environment for a writer to develop his self-awareness and talents. [...] I have never realized that dream, never had that stimulating environment. When I was about forty years old, I understood I would

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29 Chainho & Rodrigues s/d.: 184.

30 As just one out of innumerable examples, see the “exposure” of the well-known right-wing activist Jason Tankersley, one of the Capitol invaders, as supposed Antifa-member (<https://phillyantifa.org/keystone-united-exposed-day-15-jason-tankersley>). On fake news, see Empoli 2019.

31 Carvalho 2005.

never have it, and decided that my obligation was to do everything so that others would have it.<sup>32</sup>

Which in practical terms means that no one was qualified to dialogue with him but some elected were allowed to listen to him and believe whatever he tells. How to reconcile this reality with his pretended highest standards of critical thinking? The only coherent solution would be to admit that any lie can contribute to a greater truth. The more plausible solution would be that the whole system of certainties depends on his personal priority given to a topic and his wishful thinking about its nature. Any affirmation of his opinion then is good and genial, any contradiction evil and idiot. This would explain his enthusiasm for even the most self-disqualifying attempts to represent his thought, for example the podcast “Olivertalk: Olavo de Carvalho: life, work and philosophy”.<sup>33</sup> Obviously, it got the enthusiastic approval of the honored master, though a similarly humble product, say on the life, work and philosophy of Leandro Konder, one of his favorite enemies, would be completely dispelled by Carvalho, until the last detail. Still, for Olavo de Carvalho this might be a question of the difference between a doctrine (Konder) and revealed reality (himself).

Among Carvalho’s followers, what is important is that “Olavo is right!”, a slogan that came up in social media in 2013, then appeared stamped on the T-shirts of anti-PT protesters in 2015, and now gives the title to a crowdfunded documentary, directed by Mauro Ventura, with the premiere announced for the end of 2021.<sup>34</sup> João Cezar de Castro Rocha has drawn attention to the fact that this system of belief, which develops any argument from a pre-established conclusion, has its roots in Italian fascism, “*Mussolini ha sempre ragione*”.<sup>35</sup> It has also been imitated by Hitler, “*Der Führer hat immer recht*”. What distinguishes “*Olavo tem razão*” is the suppression of the adverb, which suggests the avoidance of a redundancy: Olavo is right as a matter of principle, not because of his argument or his authority but of his revealed truth. It is not only his students who are expected to abdicate from any opinion to be ready for Olavo’s truth, it goes for any reader of his oeuvre. His bestseller *O mínimo que você precisa saber para não ser um idiota* [The minimum you need to know not to be an idiot], one of the books president-elect Bolsonaro exhibited during his first live, explains in the preface, written by the journalist – and as we have seen hobby poet – Felipe Moura Brasil, that the implied reader knew

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32 Olavo de Carvalho, Facebook post, May 14, 2014, [https://facebook.com/olavo.decarvalho/posts/10152389839982192?\\_\\_tn\\_\\_=H-R](https://facebook.com/olavo.decarvalho/posts/10152389839982192?__tn__=H-R).

33 See [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2Vzd\\_0YmVE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2Vzd_0YmVE).

34 About the production of the movie, see <https://olavotemrazao.com>.

35 Rocha 2021.

nothing about reality so far, but that the book will make him understand. No doubt truth sells.

### **Whoever Is Not With Me Is Against Me**

As these rules and practices of the game are not very inviting – or indeed invite to prejudgments, as the philosopher Julio Cabrera warned<sup>36</sup> – the lack of critical academic reception is no mystery. Even less so if we recall that Carvalho has categorically incapacitated academics in general, and in special in Brazil, from the very beginning of his public life in 1994, as semi-alphabets or creatures in even worse cognitive conditions. Since then, his portraying of other intellectuals than himself has only turned more radical and reached new scatological heights. This, much more than his outsider position regarding academia (and the lack of a diploma, as he always suspects) might explain the lack of scientific dialogue with his oeuvre. Under these conditions, any unprejudiced debate seems unlikely and when these attempts happen, they just contribute to hardening the fronts. This was the case of the short assessment on Carvalho's critique of Immanuel Kant, requested by the newspaper *O Globo* to three academic specialists, among them the president of the Brazilian Kant Society. The change was a criminal charge alleging insult and slander which the judiciary returned to Carvalho, due to the quantity of insulting and slandering content in the charge.<sup>37</sup>

On the other hand, Olavism as a phenomenon has been taken up by several social scientists, resulting in substantial work on a number of aspects, most of them considered for my own exploration of this topic.<sup>38</sup> The response to these studies – as well as any other comment, even if insignificant, on his work – takes up large part of his professional life, testified by uncountable tweets, posts and videos (including official COF classes) to try to destroy rhetorically anybody who dared to utter something critical about his work or any argument which goes against his opinion. João Cezar de Castro Rocha called these notorious and almost folkloric attacks *ad personam* the “rhetoric of hate”. In the case of Denis Russo Burgierman, again an ex-disciple, who in 2019 authored a revelation report in the magazine *Época*, Carvalho orchestrated in response a verbal counterattack through social media, calling his followers to collect information about the critic. This was promptly attended by many, among

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36 Cabrera 2020.

37 Peres 2019; Varón 2019.

38 Without intending exhaustiveness, these previous studies are Patschiki 2012; Chaloub & Perlatto 2016; Fausto 2017; Santos Jr. 2019; Hussne 2020; Puglia 2020; Mariutti 2020; Rocha 2021.

them a chief of police. Later he published on the internet Burgierman's picture and private address, a strategy of intimidation known as *doxxing*.<sup>39</sup> When one of the so far most elaborated critiques of his thought was published under pseudonym, precisely to dribble this strategy, Carvalho got confused.<sup>40</sup> The very first thing he did was to call his followers to discover the identity of the author. Without achieving this objective, his replica against an unknown enemy, by force limited to the argument as such, is probably the most uneasy text he ever produced.

However, this reaction is part of Carvalho's strategy toward opponents: "Do not start discussion of ideas. Investigate some dirty trick by the fellow and destroy him."<sup>41</sup> Following his diagnosis of cultural Marxism, as these intellectuals necessarily all fall into his category of "communists", and for these he recommends as communicative strategy: "Never treat a communist with respect, let alone friendship. All of them are abject moral deformities, camouflaged as innocent 'divergence of ideas'. They know they are it, and that is the reason why they just see the evil in everything. To cover up the seriousness of their crimes, only the sum of all the evil in the world."<sup>42</sup> Of course, there are good reasons besides questions of civility, why academic critique is not able to dialogue with his work, due to his above-mentioned theological premises on the revealed truth, which are incompatible with a scientific approach.<sup>43</sup> The public scientific debate the feminist anthropologist Debora Diniz proposed on the question of abortion had to die aborning, as Carvalho – coherently – remembered her that for him there are obviously no pros and cons to discuss; not because of the issue but because of his access to truth beyond dialectics.<sup>44</sup> To discuss this would be like attempting to argue with Donoso Cortés, who Carvalho read attentively, about the existence of God, when the one affirms:

Every word that leaves the lips of men is an affirmation of divinity, even the word that libels or denies it. The one who, turning against God, frantically cries out: "I detest you, you do not exist", exposes a complete system of theology, the same way as the one who raises to Him his remorseful heart and say: "Lord, injure your servant who adores you." The first one throws a blasphemy to his face, the second places a prayer

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39 Silva 2019b.

40 Guimarães 2019.

41 Quoted in Carvalho & Bugalho 2020: 10.

42 Olavo de Carvalho, Facebook post, Feb 10, 2021, [https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?id=445300615668959&story\\_fbid=1562612200604456](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?id=445300615668959&story_fbid=1562612200604456).

43 See Wink 2021b.

44 Diniz 2019.

at his feet; both, nevertheless, affirm him, although each his way, because both utter his incommunicable name.<sup>45</sup>

Carvalho uses the same argumentative scheme when he justifies his conceptualization of miracles as evidence for political analysis:

To explain a fact by a supernatural cause is to presuppose that there are facts with non-supernatural causes, but since God, theologically speaking, is the ultimate or first cause of everything that happens, then that is a merely tautological statement; to say that something happened because God wanted it to happen is to imply that other things may happen without God wanting them to, which is contradictory to the definition of God as omnipotent and as first cause. In the miracle of Fatima, for instance, the vision that the children had – the miraculous cures, the lights that appeared in the sky, the dance of the sun, the Russian Revolution, World War II – all this is shown as bearing internal connections, which we usually fail to see. This means that the miraculous event cannot be explained in itself, yet by itself and its own material structure it throws light on causal connections that we cannot usually see.<sup>46</sup>

Still, a few critics are epistemologically enabled to discuss on equal terms and produced the so far most detailed studies on Carvalho's work. These are grouped around Orlando Fedeli, the mentioned TFP-dissident and Carvalho's main competitor in building a new generation of "true" intellectuals, as well as more recently Carvalho's former friend Carlos Nogue, dissident of the CDB. Their main concern is the master's "gnostic heresy": Olavo de Carvalho is accused to be a false Christian for offering his own path to spirituality – not least because of his passage through Sufism – for pursuing a project of power, including his unauthorized plea for excommunication of several hierarchical leaders, among them Pope Francis, and finally for using swearwords. This provoked a long debate, in hundreds of pages of *syllabi* pointing to each other's sophisms and doctrinal errors, and it was fought out with all rhetorical weapons theologians had developed into the art form of *odium theologicum*, including the somehow hypocritical appeal to pray for Carvalho's redemption.<sup>47</sup> With the old TFP

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45 Donoso Cortés 1993 [1851]: 366.

46 Carvalho 2009a.

47 Cox 2016: 24. For the debate, see Fedeli 2001 and Fedeli & Schlithler 2019. For recent quarrels between the successors of Fedeli (who died in 2010), see the "Syllabus Olavo de Carvalho: o falsa-direita" published online on the anonymous webpage "O Príncipe dos Cruzados", probably managed by Fedeli's successor Alberto Zucchi and his former student Felipe Coelho (see <http://www.oprincipedoscruzados.com.br/2017/07/o-falsa-direita-olavo-de-carvalho-ma.html> and Coelho n.d.). In addition, see the statements of the *Instituto Jackson de Figueiredo*, close to Carlos Nogue

of Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira, Carvalho has had a neutral relationship or at least no conflict, also because his rise was subsequent to the death of the leader and the schism at this traditional institution.<sup>48</sup> This is not to suggest any connection between Tefepism and Olavism, though they spring from the same thought and in principle aim at similar objectives. They differed, in Carvalho's view, just with regard to institutional design, communication strategy and target group: "The institution he [Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira] founded, with all the money he received from Lindenberg and other sponsors, never produced the practical results I produced with no sponsor. Dr. Plínio's problem is that he is too chic. To talk to the heart of the people a certain dose of congenital corniness is needed."<sup>49</sup> In terms of mass impact, he is certainly right. Similar distant relations Carvalho has to the above-mentioned institutions Opus Dei and FSSPX, though not real dogmatic divergences (as defender of Lefebvre especially not with the latter). The conservative Catholic hierarchy appreciates his efforts to stimulate a culture war but also sees him as not enough committed to the Church as institution. They remember well his "gnostic" past and consider him to be too unpredictable in his opinions, too independent, and certainly a competitor. Differently from what Carvalho thinks, this does not mean that conservative Catholics did not adopt his ideas in mass.<sup>50</sup> And the same goes for "liberals": Between 2000 and 2005 Carvalho has been a frequent guest at their most important annual meeting, the *Fórum da Liberdade* (Liberty Forum), and in 2019 he participated again via video link. Though cultivating with joy a yearslong personal feud with Rodrigo Constantino,<sup>51</sup> Carvalho agrees with the broad liberal-conservative consensus, obviously except for questions of cultural liberalism – "abortism", "gayzism" and "liberation of drugs", which Brazilian self-declared liberals do not defend anyway – and the liberals' perception of globalization in a more economic than political dimension.<sup>52</sup> As for the reception of Olavism among liberal-conservatives, I will explore it in the following chapter eight.

Not all of Olavo de Carvalho's reception is critical in the original sense of being able to discern. With this I am not referring to sycophant homages as in the documentary "O Jardim das Aflições", directed by Josias Teófilo and launched in 2016, nor to sonnets like the one I used

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(<https://www.institutojacksondefigueiredo.org/variedades/sete-motivos-pelos-quais-nenhum-catolico-deve-seguir-olavo-de-carvalho>).

48 Carvalho 2000b.

49 Olavo de Carvalho, Facebook post, May 2, 2015, <https://olavodecarvalhofb.wordpress.com/2015/06/page/5>.

50 Carvalho 2012a.

51 See the summary of the feud in Salles 2017 and Constantino 2019.

52 Carvalho 2012a.



as a motto for the previous chapter or the songs composed to venerate the master that Castro Rocha analyzes in his book.<sup>53</sup> A few of his pupils presented texts which claim to meet academic standards, though they are better understood as more or less extensive summaries of his philosophical and social thought. Despite the fact that his best ideas are still unknown, at least we are fortunate that “what he has published is enough to provide us with material for an introductory walk through his thought”, according to the “first scientific article” on Olavo de Carvalho.<sup>54</sup> Written by Victor Bruno, who obtained a B.A. in Journalism & Philosophy from the Federal University of Piauí in 2020, this treatise was published in the traditional journal *The Political Science Reviewer* (which apparently has overworked peer reviewers). The article actually reads as a well-intentioned undergraduate assignment, not even able to address the problem statement to find out “if Bolsonaro puts Olavo de Carvalho’s political philosophy in practice”. Under the motto *Ad maiorem Dei gloriam* [For the greater glory of God] and in the first paragraph positioning himself as sympathizer of “rightism”, Bruno’s text reproduces in an openly favorable manner the script of Olavo de Carvalhos’ self-portrayal, coming close to a ragged hagiography. Not a problem for Bruno, who comments *en passant* that his individual consciousness must be kept clean against ideological filters, which tellingly for him does not mean neutrality but avoiding revolutionary ideologies.

More substance is offered by Ronald Robson, Carvalho’s favorite disciple. His book *Conhecimento por presença: em torno da filosofia de Olavo de Carvalho* [Knowledge by Presence: on Olavo de Carvalho’s Philosophy] from 2020, an extended version of his unpublished 2013 summary “Elementos da filosofia de Olavo de Carvalho” [Elements of Olavo de Carvalho’s Philosophy], merits the laurels for having coherently systematized his master’s oeuvre, in spite of the fact that, as we already have heard, the most significant part remains inedited. But intentionally he is not going any further to make it a critical treatise, for example relating it – without using Carvalho’s lenses only – to other philosophical ideas, accepting the premise that these might exist. The announcement of the “amplification (although deviant or even corrective) by means of my philosopheme” sounds rather grandiloquent, after having read the more than 600 pages of submissive adulation in which sporadic “objections” only serve to reaffirm the master’s truth. It is bizarre and reminds one of the question of the sectarian character of COF that Robson ends his postscript worrying that his book might have been too critical toward the Master: “[This book] might not show with clarity, on the other hand,

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53 Rudnitzki & Oliveira 2019.

54 Derosa 2019; Bruno 2019.

the admiration I nurture for that greatness.”<sup>55</sup> It certainly does show and much beyond the limits of what is intellectually bearable.

Other works the philosopher likes to praise as his intellectual sprouts eventually reproduce his ideas in arguments on a variety of topics, without bothering to examine if these are appropriate to explore the scientific problem in question. Besides the already mentioned disciples Bruno and Robson, these academics are five: Bruno Garschagen, a key figure of the Brazilian Right (I will get back to him in the next chapter) and author of a 2011 Master thesis on revolutionary utopias in Lenin and Hitler which quickly started to be called a “PhD thesis” by Carvalho; the scholar of constitutional law Luis Virgílio de la Rosa, who dedicated his published Master thesis from 2002 personally to Carvalho; Fausto Zamboni, who applied Olavism in his PhD thesis against the education system (*Contra a Escola: Ensaio Sobre Literatura, Ensino e Educação Liberal* from 2016); Carvalho’s disciple Nuno Morgado’s 2017 PhD thesis, *Towards the New World Order? A Geopolitical Study of Neo-urasianism and Meridionalism*; and finally the anthropologist Flavio Gordon, who presents in *A corrupção da inteligência* from 2017 an intelligence corrupting account on cultural Marxism – or the “matured consequence of Olavo de Carvalho’s work”, as Rodrigo Gurgel prefers to call it in the preface.<sup>56</sup>

As this is not much, for somebody who claims to be the most influential contemporary thinker of Brazil, almost anything goes for Carvalho to invent an authoritative critical reception. A good example are his comments on an article I wrote about him as key thinker of the radical Right,<sup>57</sup> which the editor kindly shared with Olavo de Carvalho to give him the opportunity to comment on the draft. In his answer, which the editor forwarded to me (after having filtered the objective information and deleted all vituperations), Carvalho showed himself irate about the omission of “dozens of university theses” and “dozens and dozens of samples of serious academic studies” dedicated to his work and thought.<sup>58</sup> Generously, he made available a list of 34 “serious academic studies”. Nineteen turned out to be oral presentations by his disciples in Portugal who apparently gathered on Nov 25, 2019, in the *Sociedade Geográfica de Lisboa*, an event that is not even mentioned in the calendar of the host institution, which suggests that they just used the facilities privately. From the remaining fifteen, five are identical to the already

55 Robson 2020: 7, 27, 621. For examples of pseudo-objections, see Robson 2020: 143–149.

56 Gurgel 2017: 15.

57 Wink 2022.

58 Comments of Olavo de Carvalho on the draft of “Olavo de Carvalho e a Verdade de Deus”, attached to e-mail edited and forwarded by Mark Sedgwick, June 17, 2020.

cited works, besides some pearls which in fact escaped my attention: two articles in low-category online journals (PhD student Hilton Boenos Aires' "Los Maquiavelos de Strauss y Skinner" from 2016 and doctor Hélio Angotti-Neto's "The Four Aristotelian Discourses in Medicine: Educational Tools for Physicians" from 2014, which painfully recalls the limits of interdisciplinarity); besides two Bachelor theses and two Master thesis, one citing him twice, the other not citing him (but we can still assume that his ideas are somehow present). Furthermore, a blog article and an interview with the U.S. theologian Steve Turley. The factory of geniuses to substitute the Brazilian intelligentsia seems to be still in the phase of testing prototypes.

All this leads one to understand that the ability to distinguish between adulation and critical reception is impeded by Olavo de Carvalho's apodictical approach and his particular position in the epistemological field. Instead, he was forced to counterbalance this absence by creating his own imaginary critical reception from admirers. Yet these long lists, the backbone of his public relations, unite personalities which are rather close to him ideologically or personally. They include, not very surprisingly, short statements by several of the liberal-conservatives so far mentioned, such as Miguel Reale, Roberto Campos, Paulo Mercadante, Alejandro Chafuen, José Osvaldo de Meira Penna; besides his friend and interviewer, the "American writer" Jeffrey Nyquist, for Carvalho the best political analyst in America,<sup>59</sup> and the traditionalist mathematician Wolfgang Smith. They also include names of celebrities, not known as experts in the respective fields to give their opinion any weight and without any concrete reference to Carvalho's work, such as ex-president Itamar Franco, apparently a non-communist, or the Brazilian writer Jorge Amado.<sup>60</sup> Obviously, it would be rather overblown to call these polite and rather meaningless statements a "reception".

Curiously, despite his disdain for the academia, Carvalho cannot resist granting himself some academic laurels, preferably from outside Brazil, and this is where his self-adulation turns into a caricature. The three cases I have examined, shed an interesting light on Carvalho's practices. Among the international academic authorities he most frequently cites is Amy Colin, the "director of the foundation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Unesco, Paris", where she was actually a post-doc fellow in 1997 and co-organized the conference "Forms and Dynamics of Exclusion". Carvalho participated, presenting himself as scholar from the Rio de Janeiro State

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59 Olavo de Carvalho, Tweet, Oct 23, 2020, <https://twitter.com/opropriolavo/status/1319481514359508994>.

60 Roveran 2017.

University, with the paper “Os mais excluídos dos excluídos” [The most excluded of the excluded], a text published in his *O Futuro do Pensamento Brasileiro* (1997). Colin, today at the University of Pittsburgh, apparently commented his paper at that conference with the single word “fascinating”, though today she is completely uninformed about him and cannot remember what was so fascinating about him or his paper.<sup>61</sup>

Another case is Bryan McCann, professor of Latin American History at Georgetown University. He invited Carvalho for a talk to his students in the fall of 2005 as he invited many other political scholars and activists. The statement Carvalho uses in his public relations is copied from a letter of recommendation his wife later asked McCann to write for him to support his application for a Green Card.<sup>62</sup> I myself have written several of these recommendations on request of Brazilian colleagues in the U.S. and I can certainly affirm that this text genre differs from a scientific assessment. Of course, Carvalho got the Green Card, like several thousand each year (and the colleagues I did that favor for) which is certainly a motive of pride, though the statement “I was invited to LIVE here. How many ‘Brazilian academics’ live in the United States with a similar visa?” sounds hyperbolic.<sup>63</sup>

The third and most disappointing case is his supposed invitation to the First Congress of Universal Logic (UNILOG) in Montreux. Carvalho proudly informs in this respect: “It is the biggest and most prestigious conference on the planet, a kind of world summary of the important discoveries in this field. In the year I participated in it, only six Brazilians were invited. [...] In scientific conferences, most participants are not invited. They ask for registration and pay. Only special speakers are invited.”<sup>64</sup> Surprisingly, the Congress webpage does not list Carvalho among the 16 invited speakers but among the 146 other participants (13 of them from Brazil), those who – like he explains correctly – submitted a proposal for a paper and paid the participation fee. We could pardon this

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61 Several e-mails from Amy Colin, May 26, 2020, and May 28, 2020. For the program and Carvalho’s paper, see <http://www.peace-culture.org/research-network/history/forms-and-dynamics-of-exclusion>. For his published text, see Carvalho 1997a.

62 Several e-mails from Bryan McCann, Apr 22, 2020, and Apr 24, 2020. The quote from the letter of recommendation which Carvalho uses in his public relations is: “Professor Carvalho has been one of the most astute analysts of Brazilian politics. He has courageously attacked official corruption and its broader cultural consequences. He has been a strong defender of the interests of the United States and a critic of simplistic anti-Americanism. His is an important voice in hemispheric political debates.”

63 Olavo de Carvalho, Facebook post, Feb 17, 2016, <https://facebook.com/carvalho.olavo/posts/598344336984311>, original emphasis.

64 Olavo de Carvalho, Facebook post, Feb 17, 2016, <https://facebook.com/carvalho.olavo/posts/598344336984311>.

as just a blague, but it becomes imposture by the fact that his paper does not appear in the conference program and that he did not even show up, as confirmed by the main organizer.<sup>65</sup>

When Carvalho prides himself of the originality of his work, the question arises why he never did any attempt to make his groundbreaking insights available to specialists beyond the “decadent” Brazilian academia. The principal question is not why his thesis on Aristotle, according to Carvalho “the FIRST AND ONLY one – I repeat: the first and only – original Brazilian contribution to a two and a half millennia tradition of Aristotelian studies”<sup>66</sup>, did not receive any real attention in the sense of being incorporated in theoretical and methodological frameworks. “Reception” is obviously not a private letter of a Portuguese professor of philosophy (and a Voegelin specialist), as Robson thinks.<sup>67</sup> The International Aristotle Bibliography of Brill Publishers, one of the most complete databases on Aristotelian scholarship, unites more than 50,000 texts but none of Carvalho’s authorship. One could certainly object that this can be explained by the epistemological asymmetry which discriminates against scholars from the “South”. But why did he not even attempt to translate his books or at least a summary into a more accessible language to the international community of specialists on Aristotle? Or, in other words, why is he insisting on writing exclusively for those he so deeply disdains? The obvious answer that he is prioritizing the rehabilitation of culture in his home country seems unsatisfying to me.

If Carvalho in his own words has carried out what the German philosopher Edmund Husserl only intended to do,<sup>68</sup> why should his perfection of Husserl not be of at least some interest for the German Society for Phenomenological Research, with a history of half a century developing studies and a network of 50 research centers and associated scholars only in Europe? One objection could be that he does not know German, but on the other side this does not prevent him from publishing a whole book on Husserl (*Edmund Husserl: contra o psicologismo*, from 2020). Just like it was not a problem to launch in 2003 his commented translation of Arthur Schopenhauer’s posthumously published *Eristische Dialektik*, under the title *Como vencer um debate sem precisar ter razão em 38 estratégias* [How to Win an Argument Regardless of Being Right in 38

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65 See the Conference webpage <https://www.uni-log.org/one2.html>; e-mail from Jean-Yves Béziau, Mar 8, 2021.

66 Olavo de Carvalho, Facebook post, Jan 31, 2019, <https://olavodecarvalhofb.wordpress.com/2019/01/31/31-1-2019>, original emphasis.

67 Robson 2020: 132.

68 Carvalho 1995.

Stratagems].<sup>69</sup> In his translation, based on a Spanish edition, Carvalho makes a comment that nicely illustrates what in my eyes indicates the deeper problem: Schopenhauer, he argues, distinguished between the expressions “Recht haben” and “Recht halten” with different connotations: the first to be in one’s right and the second to perform as a know-it-all. To start with, the second one is grammatically inexistent (correct would be the infinitive “Recht behalten”) which sheds a rather bad light on the seriousness of his translation. But above all, for both expressions the connotations are quite ambiguous as Schopenhauer’s whole text is highly ironic, and reading attentively the Second Fragment of his text, Olavo de Carvalho himself might be considered prototypical for the *Rechtshaber*, the one who knows it all.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, Carvalho’s way of arguing and that of most conservative thinkers presented so far corresponds astonishingly to several of Schopenhauer’s methods, such as to generalize a category like “communism” and disqualify all which then appears to be part of it; to avoid giving an answer by posing a distracting counterquestion; and especially the very last method, to assail the opponent personally. Several of Carvalho’s books are “dedicated” to a selected enemy, sometimes without any relevance for his argument. In *Jardim das Aflições*, the philosopher José Américo Motta Pessanha is bitten incredible 94 times (the book has around 400 pages), for the only reason that Carvalho did not agree with the positive reaction of the audience to one of Pessanha’s speeches. In his biographical anecdotes, Carvalho likes to mention that he passed the first seven years of his life in the world of imagination, bedridden due to a chronic disease. When healed, he discovered a strange world where everybody but him seemed to be in possession of full knowledge.<sup>71</sup> It might be a good sign for Carvalho’s mental health that apparently at a certain point he managed to convince himself that the situation had inverted.

However, the most striking inconsistency is much more general and concerns Carvalho’s political project as a whole. As demonstrated in countless occasions, he hates no one more than Gramsci, the “prophet of imbecility, the guide of hordes of imbeciles to whom the truth is the lie and the lie, the truth”.<sup>72</sup> It is difficult not to see in Olavo de Carvalho an authentic organic intellectual, and in his anti-communist campaign and philosophical school a culture war which meticulously follows the recipe: to occupy positions in civil society (which today includes virtual

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69 Troster 2019.

70 Schopenhauer 1997: 95 footnote 48.

71 Carvalho 2004c.

72 Carvalho 1994a: 55.

associations), to influence public opinion, establish a cultural hegemony (which is of course never absolute but at least efficiently rehabilitated Brazil's conservative legacy from post-dictatorship modesty) and to conquer political power with massive popular support, which will be the next topic.<sup>73</sup>

### **The Midwife of the New Right**

The scene has probably been seen by most Brazilians, many with satisfaction, many others with astonishment. On the 28th of October 2018, Jair Bolsonaro held his first live stream after his electoral victory. On his desk, he had four books, three of them he cited in his short speech. The Brazilian edition of a simplistic version of the Bible, called "The message" and well known among evangelicals in the U.S., the Federal Constitution of Brazil; the Portuguese translation of Churchill's *Memoirs of the Second World War* (the summary of his book serial) – these were the cited books – and Olavo de Carvalho's best-seller *The Minimum You Need to Know not to be an Idiot*.<sup>74</sup> Whoever arranged this with whatever sophisticated effects in mind, the minimum we can agree on is that it was an attempt to symbolize Bolsonaro's commitment to religion, democracy, something like Western civilization and Olavism, the force that had brought him into power. The question why he did not expose this last book like the others will probably remain a secret. Maybe he suddenly perceived that it could be inappropriate for the maximal authority of Chief of State to pose as one just minimally distinguishable from an idiot, maybe he just forgot it. But how did Olavism help to elect him?

First, Olavo de Carvalho had a significant contribution to a change in the way ideologies were represented in the media. As a journalist, he inherited in the 1990s the place of an important "institution" in Brazilian print journalism which was occupied by Paulo Francis since the 1980s: the one who writes what many just believe to be reality, without any knowledge about it, and persuades them by pretending to have this knowledge.<sup>75</sup> This is about a strategic populist polemic whose lifeblood is sarcasm, humor, and verbal violence. More than that, Carvalho's example served as inspiration for a first squad of epigones which multiplied in the 2000s, also on radio and TV. Veteran journalists took up his fancy ideas in their articles but also in a couple of bestsellers which incorporated Carvalho's hypotheses as premises: Demétrio Magnoli, Marco Antonio Villa, Reinaldo Azevedo, Luiz Felipe Pondé, Rodrigo Constantino,

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73 Carvalho 2002e; Puglia 2018: 7–12.

74 I owe Hussne 2020 the observation on the version of the Bible.

75 See Kucinski 2000.

Guilherme Fiuza, Denis Lerrer Rosenfield, Arnaldo Jabor, Diogo Mainardi and many others gained the appreciation of a readership, either bored or worried, or both, about the political change in the aftermath of Lula's election and seduced by the "politically incorrect".<sup>76</sup> In their provocation of the "leftist" government, they included the ideology of Olavism – either assuming it or not – and turned into authentic journalists of the New Right; despite the current regrets and contrary statements of some of them and despite the disdain Carvalho has always shown for his epigones. But his own more reliable co-religionaries, the journalist Percival Puggina (an important reference in Giordani's *Brasil sempre*) and the psychoanalyst and hobby political scientist Heitor de Paola<sup>77</sup>, as well as Carvalho's own intellectual breed, also conquered space in online media. The most visible ones are the already mentioned Felipe Moura Brasil (journalist at *Radio Jovem Pan*), Leandro Narloch (author of a "politically incorrect" book series), Paulo Briguet and Silvio Grimaldo (who manages Carvalho's platform *Brasil Sem Medo*), Flávio Morgenstern (whose real surname is Abujamra, the pseudo-Germanophile editor of the site *Senso Incomum*) and the self-exiled Youtuber and indicted fake news manufacturer Allan dos Santos (channel *Terça Livre*).

Second, this was already the preliminary outcome of his priority to create out of his philosophical school a political militancy, a plan outlined as early as 2010, well before the first wave of protests against the PT-government in 2013:

Militancy, in turn, is not created overnight. It starts with very small circles of intellectuals that, for years, do not do anything but discuss and discuss, daily analyzing, with obsessive meticulousness, a political conjuncture they do not have the least power to interfere in. It's from their endless debate that, little by little, certain ways of thinking and speaking emerge, which, consolidated and simplified in repetitive schemes, spontaneously become the language of the unsatisfied in general. When they accept the language of the intellectual core as the expression of their grievance (much as that language is objectively inadequate), that's when the

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76 Chaloub & Perlatto 2015; Batista 2016: 12–18; Di Karlo & Kamradt 2018. For example, see Azevedo's *Vêja* articles "Gramsci, o parasita do amarelo ideológico" (Aug 8, 2007), "Direito Achado na Rua: gramscianos, 'gramsciados' e reclamações" (Aug 26, 2008) and his book *O país dos Petralhas* (2008); Pondé's books *Contra um mundo melhor: Ensaios do Afeto* (2010) and *Por que virei à direita* (2012, co-authored with João Pereira Coutinho and Denis Rosenfield); Constantino's book *Esquerda caviar: a hipocrisia dos artistas e intelectuais progressistas no Brasil e no mundo* (2013) and Mainardi's *Lula é minha Anta*, (2007).

77 *O Eixo do Mal Latino-Americano e a Nova Ordem Mundial*, 2008. See also Cruz 2019: 217.



militancy training per se starts. At first, its initiatives may seem out of place and puerile, but they do not aim at achieving any objective result: they are just immanent action, destined to consolidate militancy. That is so important, so vital, that every serious political movement has to start by scarifying elections and offices to the idol of militant solidarity.<sup>78</sup>

As soon as Carvalho perceived the fortunate conjuncture after the June 2013 protests, he called his militancy into action.<sup>79</sup> This meant above all cyberactivism against the governing party which still won the elections in 2014. Then, agitating in favor of a complete system change (the impeachment as such being in his eyes a futile maneuver) and to support the candidacy of Jair Bolsonaro. During this period, several of these militants created institutions molded after Carvalho's COF, offering free contents and paid online courses, benefiting from his blueprint and prestige.<sup>80</sup> This propaganda machine worked almost automatically as an organic movement, without the necessity of a centralized direction, thanks to the army of followers he had built up during more than a decade. Therefore, there is no doubt about the influence of "his revolution" on the election of Jair Bolsonaro, which he typified as a "miracle" (meant in a literal sense), comparable only to the independence leader and first president George Washington, for both "didn't know something was impossible, so they just went and did it".<sup>81</sup>

Olavo de Carvalho's decisive contribution to the election of Jair Bolsonaro has been broadly recognized by the new government. Bolsonaro's son, the Federal Deputy Eduardo Bolsonaro (and unofficially right hand of his father in the executive), who as ex-student of the COF in 2017 is closer to the philosopher, made this quite clear: "It wouldn't have been possible to win the elections without Olavo. Without Olavo, there wouldn't be president Bolsonaro." More recently, he confirmed that his teacher's influence goes beyond preparing the minds for the political change, as he was to the government "our philosophical basis". Even if he applied this term in a generic and popular sense, it meant the ideological orientation, the "philosophy" of the government. In this sense, even Jair Bolsonaro declared himself "his student".<sup>82</sup> The "liberal" part of the government, represented by Paulo Guedes, also paid Carvalho tribute – "You are the

78 Carvalho 2010b.

79 "Hangout" with Olavo de Carvalho, Jair Bolsonaro, Flávio Bolsonaro and Carlos Bolsonaro, Feb 14, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMpoOJ-NAzg&t=0s>.

80 Rodrigues 2018: 279.

81 Winter 2018.

82 See Federal Deputy Jair Bolsonaro's video interview with Olavo de Carvalho at the Conference "Conclave de Brasília pela democracia", May 13, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dd7PBZyynAE&t=1345s>.

leader of the Revolution!” – and Alejandro Chafuen, the scholastic-liberal, lauded him at the Brazilian Liberty Forum in 2019 as outstanding political analyst. For real political scientists who observed the growing influence of Olavism in society, this came as something predictable, as the pertinent sources I mentioned in the introduction show, but it was still a surprise gift for the unsuspecting business world: “Bolsonaro president wouldn’t exist without Olavo de Carvalho”, commented the economist Alan Ghani on the site *Infomoney*, finally realizing that “there is an underexplored variable by the analysts that was fundamental to explain ‘Bolsonaro president’. That variable is called ‘Olavo de Carvalho’”.<sup>83</sup> Olavo de Carvalho, who in 2012 had been awarded Rio de Janeiro’s Tiradentes medal by Flávio Bolsonaro (another son, this one elected to the Senate), received in 2019 the highest decoration of the Brazilian State, the Order of Rio Branco in the top rank Grand Cross. A more symbolic weight to acknowledge his merit for the existence of the Bolsonaro government would be impossible.

Under the new government, Carvalho’s task seemed to be completed. After having been persecuted “with the single intention to remove from the scene someone whose mere intellectual superiority makes him dangerous for all the ambitious mediocrities” and even though having guaranteed alone “the function of breathing hole for the great circulation of ideas of the world, which should have been done by the academic class as a whole”,<sup>84</sup> he was confident that Bolsonaro would guide the country out of half a century of darkness and rescue traditional values. When asked to take over the Ministry of Education, which would have certainly been Bolsonaro’s most coherent decision to accelerate the “inverse culture war” (and for Carvalho a chance to fulfill what for Plínio Salgado had remained a dream<sup>85</sup>), he declined. Suddenly he declared himself a humble philosopher who did not even know the address of this Ministry. Instead, he suggested that the only public office he would be willing to accept was as Ambassador in Washington DC. The curious justification sheds again a light on his – fading? – ability to pretend, this time as crafty businessman: “What Brazil most urgently needs is money, and as ambassador in the U.S. I would know how to make money. I got the hang of this international trade stuff during the time I lived in Romania.”<sup>86</sup> If anybody believed this statement, it must have been shocking to hear a few years later that he actually went to Bucharest in 2002 escaping from death threats, as he

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83 Ghani 2018.

84 Olavo de Carvalho, Facebook post, June 15, 2018, <https://facebook.com/carvalho.olavo/posts/1041730505979023> and Carvalho 2011a.

85 Fausto 2001: 12.

86 See *Congresso Em Foco* 2018 and Carvalho’s YouTube video “Eu no governo?”, Nov 5, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wh9B4SCbWxI>.

alleges, and that there the Ambassador arranged for him a “shitty job” to sell Brazilian soap operas to Romanian TV stations, a business from which he soon desisted to return to Brazil.<sup>87</sup> As his wish had to be turned down, probably due to his lack of additional qualifications besides having traded in Romania, he still had enough authority to indicate to Bolsonaro not only the Minister of Education (the already mentioned Ricardo Vélez Rodríguez) but also the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ernesto Araújo (on whom I will get back soon).<sup>88</sup> In addition, several of Carvalho’s disciples were nominated – though some discontinued for several reasons – to occupy chief positions in strategic government bodies, such as Ricardo da Costa as assessor in the Ministry of Education, Rafael Nogueira for the National Library Foundation, Dante Mantovani for the National Foundation for the Arts (Funarte), Murilo Resende and Alexandre Lopes for the National Institute responsible for the high school graduation exams, Carlos Nadalim as the Secretary of Alphabetization responsible for didactical material in public education, besides the already mentioned assessor to the president Filipe Garcia Martins and possibly others I have not come across.

One of the strongest indicators of Olavo de Carvalho’s influence on the Bolsonaro government is certainly how it handled the Ministry of Education (MEC). Thanks to Vélez Rodríguez memoirs, we know that the transition team consisted almost exclusively of followers of Carvalho and Donato, besides military officers. Vélez Rodríguez, with the help of the intelligence service of the army and the air force, elaborated a target plan to clean the Ministry from PT-militants, an operation called “Lava-Jato do MEC”. He then formed a new nucleus of disciples from the two “grand educators”: Carvalho, obviously, but also Antonio Paim, the liberal fan of Pinochet, to set the course for a new liberal-conservative inspired “humanistic training”.<sup>89</sup>

Depending on the audience and situation, Carvalho either denies any political influence or boasts about his “wide audience in government circles” and being a “very influent voice in Brazilian politics”. When denying, he usually refers to the lack of interlocution and it is certainly true that he was only scarcely in contact with the Bolsonaro family.<sup>90</sup>

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87 Olavo de Carvalho, COF 551, Jan 20, 2021.

88 Bulla 2018, interview with Olavo de Carvalho.

89 Vélez Rodríguez 2020: 296, 288, 303, 358, 379.

90 As a matter of fact, only two visits of Bolsonaro’s sons to Olavo de Carvalho are officially known, as well as the famous meeting with President Jair Bolsonaro in the Brazilian Embassy in Washington DC on Mar 17, 2019. Virtually, the dialogue has a long history in several online debate sessions (“Hangouts”) broadcasted on Youtube on Feb 14, 2014, July 26, 2015 and Apr 28, 2016.

How this should have lessened the reception of his ideology, which is not even dependent on him being alive, only makes sense if we accept as premise Carvalho's affirmation that no real conservative ideology existed in Brazil which would be able to "suppress or disregard internal contradictions [...] to foster the feeling of unity". Yet this would deny, in one sentence, everything this book has presented so far about the existence of a conservative ideology and the unifying effects it has produced for a hundred years. This goes beyond the doubtlessly crucial "symbolic unit in the person of a leader, Bolsonaro", in his eyes the ultimate stage so far achieved.<sup>91</sup> What seems to be limited is actually the implementation of Carvalho's claims for escalating the radicalism of the government in its just war against the "enemies", the only concern he has raised against Bolsonaro, whom he otherwise has been fully supporting until the present moment.

### **Not Breaking the Legs**

After several months of Bolsonaro government, it became clear that the renaissance of Brazil was not that easy and fast. The "revolution" in 2018 came too early. As Carvalho had advised, the average time of transforming a culture war into political domination was around 30 years, not around a decade.<sup>92</sup> He saw himself again in the obligation to intervene for consolidating the change, not to miss the unique opportunity given by the electors. What could in his eyes guarantee the continuity of Bolsonaro's politics, against the growing resistance of the legislative and judiciary powers as well as part of the contrite media, was "an organized Bolsonarist militancy". It should not stick to ideas (in lack of a generally binding ideology, as he claimed) but commit to political action and unconditional active support to Bolsonaro: "Politics is not a battle of ideas; it's a battle of people and groups."<sup>93</sup> Allan dos Santos and others, using the hashtag *#EstouComBolsonaro*, promoted the creation of a national register of supporters.

This moment of a first frustration revealed an authoritarian dimension of Carvalho's, which publicly has always defended that his militancy should refrain from trying to occupy posts in the state administration and rather make sure to occupy as a first necessary step the churches,

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91 Olavo de Carvalho, Facebook post, Feb 23, 2019, <https://olavodecarvalhofb.wordpress.com/2019/02/23>.

92 Carvalho 1998a: 182.

93 Olavo de Carvalho, statement in Youtube video, Sept 17, 2019, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gh\\_CISd1wU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gh_CISd1wU).

schools, and the associations.<sup>94</sup> However, it was not quite the case, and possibly more of a lip service. What is more important is to remember that several journalists had observed during reportages Carvalho's foible for firearms: "Above the bed where he sleeps, he hung a Remington rifle Model 12. In the next room, next to a box with toys, he spread over 30 hunting rifles. Opposite his working desk, he hung pistols and revolvers."<sup>95</sup> The interview, reproduced at the beginning of this chapter, reveals his somehow disappointed statement on the unviability of a civil war due to the lack of arms in the hands of citizens others than him. A sympathizer of Brazil's mouthpiece of the movement for the right to keep, bear and use arms, Bene Barbosa, Carvalho has already argued against disarmament as indispensable part of the communist passive revolution with the effect to divide the country "between the armed and the unarmed".<sup>96</sup> As far as he was concerned, he had eliminated the risk of personal insecurity due to the favorite laws in his adopted homeland:

I am my own armed guard. Mine and my family's. Every citizen should have the right to do the same. God made us male so that we defend the female, the children and the incapacitated, not for us to delegate that task to other males. If you hand over the protection of your wife, you should just go on and hand over the whole wife. Why should he keep just the dangerous part and you, the easy life?<sup>97</sup>

Sitting well self-protected in his armchair in Virginia, he already had made statements of the caliber that João Goulart should have been sentenced and shot by the military for "high treason".<sup>98</sup> Later he thundered through the net that if Bolsonaro wanted to survive politically, he would have to infiltrate the state apparatus to disarticulate the state and provoke its collapse. Tactics he recommended were political persecution, through military action ("do harm to the enemies" and to "remove the garbage") as well as lawfare (using systematically an "intimidating force", something he does himself with his critiques, as mentioned above).<sup>99</sup> This in order to do the first and most necessary step, to be completed as soon as in power, as he has been repeating uncountable times in his videos: "break your enemies' legs, mercilessly". To break somebody's legs, done impiously or

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94 Cunha 2019c: 246.

95 Fellet 2016.

96 Carvalho 1999a; Barbosa 2018.

97 Olavo de Carvalho, Facebook post, Oct 23, 2015, <https://olavodecarvalhofb.wordpress.com/2015/10/23/dialetica-novo-artigo-e-hangout>.

98 "Hangout" with Olavo de Carvalho, Jair Bolsonaro, Flávio Bolsonaro and Carlos Bolsonaro, Feb 14, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMpoOJ-NAzg&t=0s>.

99 On lawfare, see Romano 2019 and Martins et al. 2019.

piously, is a Portuguese expression for immobilizing permanently, though the related expression “to break a leg” in the sense of desiring good luck also exists. One could say that for Carvalho, Bolsonaro has not broken his leg in breaking others’ legs. This was something to be urgently inverted and the main goal his government should have, like the philosopher has always sermonized: “Destroying the Left, destroying it and that being leftist becomes a shame that no one dares confess in public.”<sup>100</sup> Obviously, this was justified as a tit for tat, reacting against the “Left’s” project to destroy the right “politically, socially, culturally, so that it never again stands up”, by the way in his eyes concluded, so the Brazilian “revolution” must have been a miracle.<sup>101</sup> To react, any means were legitimate, “taking those guys out in any way and never letting them come back”, including his well-trained strategy of destroying the enemy’s personal reputation. On a practical level, this had to be flanked with the closing of “leftist” parties, the cassation of their mandates and their political rights “for at least 200 years”. Any shortage of staff in public administration this might provoke, could easily be compensated by the personal resources of the military forces which in the long run could substitute public functionaries.<sup>102</sup>

This discourse goes slightly beyond the aims of conquering “cultural hegemony” in Gramsci’s original sense. In fact, it reminds one of Bannon, who was fired (but who can fire Carvalho?) for much less radical statements on “crashing political opponents” after the “Unite the Right” manifestation in Charlottesville in August 2017 – which for Carvalho was a manifestation invented by communists.<sup>103</sup> It denies the “Left” the condition of adversary and turns it into an “enemy”, as the New Right’s parlance prefers, maintaining a tradition which started with father Vital in chapter three. Even more, it denies the enemy the right of public existence, to be fought until “the last one of them is extirpated from national public life forever”.<sup>104</sup> Bolsonaro understood this in his own way, a few days before his victory: “Petralhada, go all of you to ‘the end of the beach’ [Restinga da Marambaia, a notorious military execution site during dictatorship]. You won’t have any chance in our country.”<sup>105</sup> However, what sounds

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100 Carvalho 2013b.

101 Carvalho 2013a: 103.

102 “Hangout” with Olavo de Carvalho, Jair Bolsonaro, Flávio Bolsonaro and Carlos Bolsonaro, Feb 14, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMpoOJ-NAzg&t=0s>. See also *Revista Forum* 2019.

103 Bianchi & Melo 2018: 69. Olavo de Carvalho, Facebook post, Aug 14, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/carvalho.olavo/posts/880548642097211>.

104 “Hangout” with Olavo de Carvalho, Jair Bolsonaro, Marcello Reis and Beatriz Kicis, July 26, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rr6OdEhphAg>.

105 Jair Bolsonaro, public discourse via mobile phone, transmitted to supporter manifestation in São Paulo, Oct 22, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=at8qr1MeO6g>.

as a typical case of “hate speech” is, in Carvalho’s eyes, just a Christian duty, based on the above-mentioned Papal sentences and therefore incorporated in the Church doctrine.<sup>106</sup> The same way, this endeavor is not a menace to democracy for him. The democratic institutions which need to be destroyed were not authentically democratic because – we already know it – they were controlled by a minority of “communist” politicians, journalists and academics. As such, they would not function democratically in reality but only in the “delusion of journalists’ psychotic language” and their “apology for democratic institutions”. Democracy’s aim was indeed to impede that “the people” imposed their sovereign will. And only the last element would correctly define a democracy, as “the government of the people, by the people and for the people” in which democratic institutions are “under the control of the people, and not the people under their control”.<sup>107</sup>

Without excluding the possibility that Carvalho is here addressing a central problem of representative democracies, broadly discussed in society and even by “communists”, the mean trick in his appropriation of this debate is to identify “people” with the interest of the elite. This is a phenomenon commonly defined as populism and perfectly compatible with the fact that a significant part of these people (though not “almost the totality”, as he likes to say) supports an autocratic leader who promises them to better represent their interests than any democratic institution. Likewise, the only supporter basis of his own Olavism which Carvalho recognizes is “the people”.

The only “Right” on which I may have had some influence is therefore the anonymous and inorganic mass of my readers, listeners and students that is, those Brazilians who are typically separated by huge distances, socially isolated, deprived of any channel of political action, unassisted and orphans to whom neither the “liberal” nor the “conservative” Right, equally, have had anything to say for many years. These are the ones who listen to me, at least because no one else talks to them or, when they do, they only give rise to yawns, or even sadness and hopelessness.<sup>108</sup>

The main function of Bolsolavism is the destruction of the existing structure, a drastic cure with a high potential to kill the patient, as no substantial plans are presented in substitution other than authoritarian improvisation. In Carvalho’s logic there is no need to think about what to construct instead, as the amputation of the democratic structures

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106 Carvalho 1999b. “Petralhada” is a pejorative term for PT electors.

107 Carvalho 2019.

108 Carvalho 2012a.

alone would somehow liberate a true and organically organized Brazil in which the elites will suddenly be willing to share their privileges with the people, without any pressure from democratic institutions. In Carvalho's own charming style, "to fight communism, you don't need any alternative proposal. When you take a dick out of your ass, you don't ask what you're going to put in its place".<sup>109</sup> Whatever the result of this pull out, Olavism is immune to refutation: if the Bolsonaro government fails, there is always the subterfuge of blaming the "Left", the bureaucratic state or the floppy government itself and to accuse it to have betrayed ideas which had a guarantee of effectiveness. This would allow Olavism to continue vigorously as political ideology, independently if its implementation failed.

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109 Olavo de Carvalho, Tweet, Nov 17, 2017, <https://twitter.com/OdeCarvalho/status/931479832696950786>. In this respect, Teitelbaum 2020 has perfectly observed that Bolsonaro's agenda of destruction bears similarities to the ideology behind Trump.



## 8 The New Right Today

*The Left is violence, the cruel blow, the cold assassination, mass defloration, organized plunder, the massacre, the fire, the blasphemy. The Right is the sacred union around the Country Flag, and the national traditions. It's virtue, chastity, heroism, religiosity, the delicacy of feelings, it's the individual modesty the sacrifice, the honor of a Nation.*

Plínio Salgado<sup>1</sup>

In the previous chapters, I have traced the continuity of conservative ideas in Brazil during a period of approximately a hundred years. My attempt was to demonstrate that these ideas were picked up by various political and social actors, institutions and movements, sometimes altering their form and being communicated in different ways by the ideological brokers of each epoch, many times preserved almost unmodified but, in the end, abiding by an indisputable core of premises with conservative objectives. The remaining big question is how this long tradition affects the actors of the New Right today. By today, I understand the years after the election of Lula in 2002 and the “connected reaction”<sup>2</sup> to this political change. In some cases, I have already mentioned selected aspects of this influence above. This chapter systematizes the full range of effects and shows how conservative actors today draw heavily on the described liberal-conservative tradition in their self-understanding and their political action.

### **The Catholic Revival**

Jair Bolsonaro was never declared the official candidate of Catholics. In the second decisive round he “only” received 51% of the Catholic votes against his opponent Fernando Haddad from the PT. Still he got open support from the, as we have seen, historically conservative archdiocese of Rio de Janeiro. Archbishop since 2009, Dom Orani João Tempesta, as well as Monsignor Jonas Abib, the founder of the influential charismatic media network *Canção Nova* [New Song], signed before the elections

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1 Salgado 1937: 22.

2 Puglia 2020.

with Bolsonaro a memorandum of understanding on the defense of the traditional family and religious liberty (which means against secular policies) as well as on the inadmissibility of abortion and any drug consumption.<sup>3</sup> More explicitly, Father Lourenço Fleichman (he was one of those personally consecrated by Lefebvre) from the resilient group *Permanência*, founded by Gustavo Corção and Lourenço's father Julio Fleichman in 1968, provided to the Catholic population unambiguous political orientations for the upcoming elections, “according to the criteria and principles of the Gospel, the laws of the Church and the virtues, mainly of prudence, justice and the gifts of advice and science”. As Catholics were forbidden to vote for “communists, socialists, freemasons, etc.” under the risk of excommunication – which it is always good to remember, as weird as it may sound – this already excluded most of the candidates. Among those were of course Haddad but surprisingly also Opus Dei-member Geraldo Alckmin for having erred in supposedly tolerating gender ideology and hereby having promoted the destruction of the natural family (the term “gender ideology” was actually coined during the First International Congress on Gender Ideology at the Opus Dei University of Navarra in 2011).<sup>4</sup> This prohibition was also valid for the “ultraliberals” Henrique Meirelles and João Amoêdo, though lauded as competent in economic matters, because of their vagueness in the defense of traditional values. Last, Jair Bolsonaro, could in Fleichman's eyes well give the impression of “a rough person, a little dumb”, but, as he writes, he was the only one to side with conservative Catholics in the defense against the enemies: anti-Catholic globalists, the “dictatorship” of Paulo Freire's pedagogical methods inspired in liberation theology, and the spurious mass media. Besides that, as a convenient side effect, Bolsonaro defended the private initiative, tax reductions and a pension reform. Therefore, *Permanência* recommended voting for Bolsonaro as well as his allied candidates for the Congress.<sup>5</sup>

These are certainly isolated voices. However, they might indicate a new trend among the Catholic hierarchy. When in July 2020, after a long silence on the political turmoil and in the middle of the pandemic, bishops of the CNBB presented their “Letter to God's People” in which they protested against the incapacity and incompetence of the Federal government to handle the situation, this was certainly a courageous manifestation.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, one could ask why only 152 bishops

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3 Moreira 2019: 113.

4 Junqueira 2018: 455.

5 Fleichman 2018b.

6 See the public letter at <https://crbnacional.org.br/carta-ao-povo-de-deus>.

– not even a third of the CNBB – signed the letter and why the CNBB as organization remained silent and did not even support the initiative. My interview partners at IPCO asserted that this manifestation was more a sign of weakness than of strength and that a generation shift was underway to strengthen even more the conservative wing of Catholicism. Quite differently, the same CNBB had in the 1980s and 1990s insisted on its political responsibility, supported social movements against neoliberalism and somehow subordinated their continuous defense of traditional morals to these goals.<sup>7</sup>

The paradigmatic institution for this change is the Center Dom Bosco (CDB) in Rio de Janeiro which I mentioned in the introduction. Almost a repetition of the history in the 1920s, the center was created in 2016 under the patronage of the conservative archdiocese of Rio de Janeiro and was conceived as the stem cell of a network of similar centers under a variety of denominations in all capitals and most major cities. Together these centers form the League of Christ the King (*Liga Cristo Rei*), a defense strategy of decentralization to avoid vulnerability in face of the enemy. This was a lesson learned from the prohibition and expulsion of the Jesuit order, CDB's vice president Álvaro Mendes told me, so if today one center gets closed, others continue or may reopen.<sup>8</sup> As he also explained and can be read on their homepage, CDB is based on three pillars, "life of prayers, life of studies and apologetical life", to which the center's president Pedro Affonseca later added "friendship and family".<sup>9</sup> In the introduction I mentioned the central role of publishing for CDB, both financially and propagandistically. Again, the situation seems to repeat the 1920s, facing the challenge to overcome the apathy of Catholics, the inactivity of the clergy, and to learn from the enemy, as Sebastião Leme preached in 1916: "Why don't we imitate the sons of darkness? Enhancing the spirit of propaganda animates them. Let us do the same."<sup>10</sup>

The young collaborators of CDB replay with ability episodes of a century of conservative campaigning. Obviously, they do this with much more efficient means, as any occasional public protest turns into a permanent virtual event, circulating in social media channels. One example is the relaunch in March 2018 of the single-issue journal *O indivíduo*, which in 1997 caused a major scandal, now under the name *O universitário*. Both journals intended to be improvised fanzines, contained short provocative articles, and targeted especially at students at the Catholic

7 Azevedo 2004: 117. See also Della Cava 1989 and Smith & Prokopy 1990.

8 Álvaro Mendes, interview with author, Rio de Janeiro, Nov 19, 2020.

9 See <http://centrodombosco.org> and the video presentation "O que é o Centro Dom Bosco" on <https://youtu.be/kALXxBPRYhE>.

10 Leme 2019 [1916]: 102.

University of Rio de Janeiro. More than to convince sympathetic readers, their desired effect was to provoke a strong spontaneous and therefore – in their eyes – implicating reaction of their opponents. The twelve pages of *O indivíduo* from 1997 criticized among other issues the recently discussed affirmative action policies at the Catholic University, which seemed to threaten the privilege of the upper-class, not by coincidence strongly represented by the editors. The editorial pondered on the recovery of individual conscience and access to eternal truth, which soon confirmed that *O indivíduo* was a product of disciples and sympathizers of Olavo de Carvalho. It was then him to defend the initiative against the strongly negative reaction (the journal was even confiscated by the University) and to destroy any critics in a media polemic that stretched over three weeks, above all in the *Jornal do Brasil*. The remake from 2018, *O universitário* caused much less reaction, though the cover page displayed open support for Jair Bolsonaro’s candidacy. Again, the editorial attests rudiments of Olavism: “In a country dominated for decades by voices that cannot see that ‘the grass is green’, ‘the sky is blue’ and ‘water is wet’ [...] we write for you who understands that the grass is green and that something must be done. That’s what we are here for. We ask God to help us, and you to take this journal to everyone!”<sup>11</sup> Carvalho is also present with an interview on cultural Marxism, and so are the previously mentioned veteran Catholic Carlos Noguê (who later left CDB because of his feud with Olavo de Carvalho<sup>12</sup>), CDB’s political arm, Chris Tonietto (elected federal deputy by PSL in 2018 and president of the Parliamentary Inquiry Commission on the São Paulo Forum) as well as several frequent columnist of the New Right like the ex-volleyball star Ana Paula Henkel and the Youtuber and co-director of Carvalho’s online journal *Brasil Sem Medo*, Bernardo Küster.

CDB does not miss an opportunity to support the New Right’s agenda. The center participated in the protests against the visit of Judith Butler in 2017, against the exposition *Queermuseu* in 2018, against Afro-Brazilian Masses on the Black Consciousness Day and became famous because of their juridical action against the “blasphemous” comedy group *Porta dos Fundos*, an episode I described in the introduction. Recently CDB invested in videos promoting prophylactic anti-COVID treatments and calling for the boycott of the yearly Lent campaign *Campanha da Fraternidade* because of “protestant infiltration” in the ecumenic movement.

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11 Evaristo 2018: 8.

12 See the justification in the blog “SalveRoma” (<https://salveroma.com/2020/05/04/10-vezes-em-que-o-centro-dom-bosco-ou-a-liga-cristo-rei-agradeceram-e-favoreceram-a-olavo-de-carvalho>).

The center collaborates closely with the IPCO in São Paulo – one could almost say that they are their Rio branch – as well as through the CDB collaborator Sidney Silveira (the brother of the mentioned Ricardo da Costa) with monarchists.

IPCO has in addition concentrated on illuminating a new problem of apocalyptic dimensions which shook the Vatican in 2013: the election of Pope Francis and the supposed paradigm shift he soon provoked, especially through the encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium*, in which he addressed the economy of exclusion and inequality, the myth of the so-called “trickle-down effects” and the deification of the “market”.<sup>13</sup> IPCO dedicated a monograph, authored by José Antonio Ureta, to this worrying tendency which in their eyes Pope Paul VI had prophesized in 1972 as “the smoke of Satan entering the temple of God”.<sup>14</sup> The book with a preface of Bertrand de Orléans e Bragança argues on 200 pages that the auto-demolition of the Church, the chaos and confusion are due to the new Pope’s “culture revolution”, which introduced erroneously “an unusual interpretative principle to give a completely different orientation to the whole teaching of the Church”.<sup>15</sup> Not all bad, this confirmed Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira’s prophecy. Back in 1951, the TFP leader inferred from the oracles of the Mother of God during the miracle of Fátima that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (or maybe then in the 21<sup>st</sup>) a decisive battle would start between the “kingdoms of Christ and Satan” and end with the “immense triumph” of the former.<sup>16</sup> However, Ureta is cautious enough not to conclude explicitly on antidogmatic sedevacantism. He only expresses his hope for “a following solution for the present crisis of self-demolition of the Church through the intervention of Mary Most Holy” (this is the coming of the mentioned Kingdom of Maria) and to declare his love for the Papacy and the desire to see the Holy See “radiate with renewed splendor”.<sup>17</sup>

Like any other phenomenon of this world, for the IPCO the COVID-19 policies matched perfectly Corrêa de Oliveira’s prophecies in the mid-1960s.<sup>18</sup> In a publication from April 2020, the center explains the pandemic as planned maneuver with four beneficiaries: the Chinese Communist Party by expanding their international economic and

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13 Francis 2013.

14 Guercio 2018.

15 Ureta 2018: 16.

16 Corrêa de Oliveira 1951. See the facsimile of the transcriptions of the prophecies of the miracle of Fátima on [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20000626\\_message-fatima\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000626_message-fatima_en.html).

17 Ureta 2018: 214–215.

18 Corrêa de Oliveira 1965 [1963].

political influence; the ecologists following up on pandemic restrictions; the globalists by usurping power in a world government; and the radical Left by reinventing communism as science-based global collaboration and the reestablishment of public control of strategic sectors like public health.<sup>19</sup> For Olavo de Carvalho's intuition, it is about more than just control but indeed the communist-metacapitalist plan to enslave the world population: "The most obvious phenomenon in the world is the project of the mega billionaire elite – already active – to reduce all the middle classes of the world to SLAVERY THROUGH DEBT."<sup>20</sup> For Ureta, the expert on the Vatican's satanism, the main problem was even deeper because of the effects of social distancing. Not so much for corresponding to home prison, as he also mentions, but as a strategy to proletarianize life through the relaxation of good manners in the private sphere – for example, regarding the adequate choice of cutlery – which makes everybody ending up as "Indians in a *taba* [indigenous village]".<sup>21</sup>

As the last example illustrates, IPCO and CDB are still reserved elite circles, despite the occasional caravans of the former and protest events of the latter. Their novel collaboration with the Catholic Charismatic Renovation (RCC) added to this Catholic Action of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the much-needed popular partner to reach out to the broader public. As we have seen, this has always been the weak spot of conservative Catholics, except during their collaboration with the Integralists in the early 1930s and with oppositional movements in the early 1960s. RCC was brought to Brazil in the end of the 1960s by the American father Haroldo Joseph Rahm and his Jesuit partner Eduardo Doughert, and spread as the Catholic version of the appealing Pentecostal event liturgy: mega-shows, targeted at a popular and younger audience, with chanted prayers and spiritual "healings". This was obviously a sharp contrast to both the traditional Catholic liturgy on one side, and the liberation theology approach on the other. At the beginning, RCC had also in common with Pentecostals the distance to political militancy and the lack of interest in collective issues, as their focus was on private redemption through the control of bad habits.<sup>22</sup> Since the mid-1990s, in parallel and miniature, RCC also developed a politicized wing through the Humanist Party of Solidarity (PHS, now part of the "we can" party *Podemos*) and similarly built-up communication channels like the TV stations *Rede Vida* [Life Network]

19 IPCO 2020: 13–18.

20 Olavo de Carvalho, Telegram post, Mar 18, 2021, <https://t.me/s/opropriolavo>, original emphasis.

21 José Antonio Ureta at the "Simpósio de Estudos e Ação Contra-Revolucionária", IPCO, São Paulo, 13–16, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJVKCHqdVQA&t=0s>.

22 Prandi 1997: 15; Lopes 2012: 7–10.

and the mentioned *Canção Nova*.<sup>23</sup> Since 2009, RCC and Pentecostals are even collaborating on a regular basis, theologically in the “Meeting of Christians in Search of Unity and Holiness” (ENCRISTUS), socially in projects on drug addiction and economically as stakeholders of the biggest music market in Brazil.<sup>24</sup>

With these characteristics, pop culture RCC had to represent for conservative Catholics the same heresy of spiritualism and fundamentalist reading of the Bible, besides charlatanism, the “awareness of faith through a method that denies intelligence”.<sup>25</sup> This changed after the political landslide of the 2002 elections. For conservatism under pressure, RCC’s loyalty to their traditional values became strategically appealing and after all they were more acceptable than Pentecostals who also defended them – and whom CDB, we remember, threatened by telling them “to go back home” in their 2017 campaign. In the effort to integrate RCC, Marianism turned out as an important point of convergence – in line with the vivid legacy of Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira – and as a distinction between them and Pentecostals because Marianism obviously depends on the for Pentecostals alien acceptance of Mary’s role as Mother of God.<sup>26</sup> Today, IPCO and especially CDB have an unproblematic and close relationship with RCC.

This is above all due to the integrating figure of the charismatic Paulo Ricardo, since 2006 RCC’s outstanding priest and staunch defender of the traditional values of TFP, whose members like to respectfully call him “a Plínio in cassock”.<sup>27</sup> The secret of his evangelizing success lies in his book *A resposta católica: um pequeno manual para grandes questões* [The Catholic Answer: a Small Manual for Big Questions], a refreshing update of Sigaud’s anticommunist catechism from the 1960s, which today might be a dull reading for some. Nevertheless, Ricardo essentially gets across in kinder words and applied to the readers’ realities the same message: that there is only one true religion, that the devil is a reality and capital punishment a necessity; that abortion, vasectomy and masturbation are forbidden (even for medical exams); just like sex in a second marriage, tattoos and piercings, remembering that the body also resuscitates and that one should think twice before showing any body art to God.<sup>28</sup> Paulo Ricardo provides the reader with clear instructions to form a personal

23 Machado 2015: 49–56; Oro & Alves 2016: 223–227.

24 Mariz 2016: 8; Oro & Alves 2013: 135–138.

25 Moura 1978: 208.

26 Pierucci & Prandi 1996: 124–125.

27 Frederico Viotti and Bertrand de Orléans e Bragança, interview with author, São Paulo, Nov 11, 2020.

28 Ricardo 2013.

bulwark against the “dictatorship of relativism”. What he seeks and sells is the truth, not just any competitive ideology or religion, and like Olavo de Carvalho he is grateful that this truth turned out coinciding with Catholic doctrines, as in his quite revealing comment: “We always seek the reality of things. And once we find it, without any doubt, we Catholics have the full certainty that truth will never contradict our Catholic faith and that which is the magisterium of the Church.”<sup>29</sup>

With Carvalho, his teacher, he has an intimate relationship: “I can say my intellectual life is divided between before Olavo and after Olavo.” What made him a follower, he says, was a *O Globo* article published by Carvalho in 2002, on the topic “A hundred years of pedophilia” (evidently as practiced by “communo-gayzists”, and not by any clergymen).<sup>30</sup> Ricardo and Carvalho indeed do combine perfectly in the sense that they both renovated the form of conservative indoctrination and adapted it to new audiences and forms of communication, one in the field of theology, the other in philosophy and social critique. If it is in behalf of proselytism, even the philosopher’s swearwords are welcomed by the priest:

I’d hand my nephews over to be disciplined and educated by Olavo de Carvalho, with any of the swearwords, and I would not hand them over to many religious Catholic schools, as a matter of fact, most of them for a very simple reason, they would learn the truth with Olavo as a teacher, and in these schools they would learn a revolutionary mentality [...]. With his swearwords, Professor Olavo has already brought to Catholic faith dozens of people, I testify to it [...] If he is succeeding in bringing people back to the Catholic Church with swearwords, blessed be the swearwords [...].<sup>31</sup>

In February 2021, in the middle of the pandemic, IPCO held the in-person, four-day seminar “Symposium of Studies and Counter-Revolutionary Action”. Nothing appears to have changed, on the contrary, the expressions of opinion were more radical than ever. Only interrupted by coughing attacks, Dom Bertrand complained about the omnipresent “immoralities and amoralities” that he seemingly expected to have already been annihilated by the new government. He also lamented the recent conspiratory assault on the United States Capitol, as

29 “Hangout” with Olavo de Carvalho and Paulo Ricardo, Mar 12, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ynik0oAaAbs>.

30 YouTube video “Ao vivo com Padre Paulo Ricardo”, Sept 12, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FCgZjtUxDvM>; Paulo Ricardo, Paulo Ricardo, statement on his homepage <http://padrepauloricardo.org>, Apr 29, 2013; Carvalho 2002d.

31 YouTube video “Ao vivo com Padre Paulo Ricardo”, Sept 12, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FCgZjtUxDvM>.



an attempt to break the conservative triumph, just like the media attacks, garnished with expletives, against the honorable president Bolsonaro. A fortiori, the conservative Catholics' task was to assume the identity of *Miles Christi*, the soldiers of Christ, and to fight until the state again existed in the function of sustaining the Holy Church, just like Pope Pius IX had ordered. He closes with the encouraging and irrefutable words that, for the first time in history, both recently elected presidents of the Congress chambers were not from the "extreme Left" – and both personal supporters of Bolsonaro – so there should be hope.<sup>32</sup> The conservative's special perception of the political spectrum in Brazil where the extreme Left covers all but the tiny right margin has doubtlessly reached a new climax. IPCO's director Lindenberg seconded Bertrand in his optimism. As long as one fuels the "population's hate for PT", he says, Bolsonaro would have a chance to continue governing.<sup>33</sup>

### **Pentecostal Pawns**

The support of the New Right by many Pentecostals, among them the influential political pastor Silas Malafaia, with whom Jair Bolsonaro collaborates closely in political events, but also Marco Feliciano, Everaldo Dias Pereira, Magno Malta and Edir Macedo, has been much franker than the discreet lobbying of conservative Catholics. Since Pentecostals had politicized in the late 1980s, when they became aware that political representation was crucial for their expansion, they have been defending a mainly conservative agenda in Brazilian politics. With almost no variation, this agenda has been based on three claims: Symbolic politics, such as the adaption of the Constitution's preamble from "all power emanates from the people" to "all power emanates from God"<sup>34</sup>; enhanced moral education, such as the teaching of religion in public schools, the introduction of Bible Kits in basic education and the inclusion of creationism or intelligent design in the curricula<sup>35</sup>; the opposition against LGBTQ and reproductive rights as well as the defense of the "natural" family against the relativization of gender roles. One could add here the lobbying for corporatist interests, that is, the preservation of fiscal benefits for churches regarding exemption from taxes on income, property and added value on their

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32 Arthur Lira from the paradoxically named Progressist Party (PP) and Rodrigo Pacheco from the Democrats (DEM), with roots in ARENA, the party of the Military governments.

33 IPCO, Simpósio de Estudos e Ação Contra-Revolucionária, Feb 13–16, 2021, [https://youtu.be/hr--1IGh\\_t8](https://youtu.be/hr--1IGh_t8).

34 Sousa 2020: 87.

35 Cunha et al. 2017: 117; Sousa 2020: 88–94.

well selling products, which under Bolsonaro has been prolonged until 2032. While their political lobbying is not a unique phenomenon in countries with a strong Pentecostal presence, their electoral corporativism certainly is. Since redemocratization and their paradigm shift from “believers don’t mess with politics” to “brother votes for brother”<sup>36</sup>, Pentecostal denominations – starting with the IURD and followed by several Assemblies of God (AD) – presented official candidates. At the beginning, these were strategically placed in several parties and later in parties controlled by themselves, such as IURD’s Liberal Party (PL), today called the *Republicanos*, and the Social Christian Party of the Assemblies of God (PSC), Bolsonaro’s former party.<sup>37</sup> Pentecostal candidates got elected through a centrally and even IT based coordination system to avoid the pulverization of votes.<sup>38</sup> In a very pragmatic way, they forged alliances with parties of most political orientations, depending on their chances of success, and therefore happened to support most elected candidates for presidency, including the PT-candidates Lula and Dilma Rousseff.<sup>39</sup> The Evangelical Parliamentary Group (FPE), created in 2003 in alliance with PT, prospered under Lula, notwithstanding their mission to “influence the government’s policies, defending society and family, concerning morals and common decency”.<sup>40</sup> Today FPE is considered tendentially a supporter of the New Right, differently from the much bigger and also quite conservative *Frente Parlamentar Mista Católica Apostólica Romana*, created in 2015, with whom they collaborate on most matters of customs.<sup>41</sup>

This pragmatic approach to politics changed in 2014 and turned into an ideological approach when the polls indicated equal chances for both candidates. The new situation led Pentecostals to a new protagonism as self-declared “conservative” and “right-wing” movement. As their electorate is mainly composed of members of the lower classes, which hardly can be expected to identify with liberal-conservative positions on pension and labor reforms, the Pentecostal agenda had to mask this incongruence. One strategy was to concentrate increasingly on moral issues and the opposition to an “evil” enemy, associated by them with “leftist” parties, for which the Pentecostal theology of dominion provided a theological basis.<sup>42</sup> Member of an Assembly of God and president of the Chamber of Deputies, Eduardo Cunha, turned into the key figure who in

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36 Freston 1993.

37 Machado & Burity 2014: 606.

38 Freston 2019: 113; Suruagy 2011: 30–40.

39 Mariano 2012 [1999]: 92.

40 Suruagy 2011: 51.

41 Carranza & Cunha 2018: 496; Moreira 2019: 107–108.

42 Burity 2018: 17, 36, 40.

2015 enabled the impeachment of president Dilma Rousseff. In parallel, the *Operação Lava Jato*, the Federal Police anti-corruption investigation led by the evangelical Deltan Dallagnol, which targeted selectively at PT circles (and has recently come heavily under critique because of its lawfare methods), gained the symbolic status of a “mission” against the Anti-Christ, personalized in Lula. In 2018, Bolsonaro, who as federal deputy has always been an active supporter of the Pentecostals’ moral agenda<sup>43</sup>, received the almost unconditional support of all main Brazilian Pentecostal leaders and could benefit from their media channels with mass impact.<sup>44</sup>

Linked to a rather moderate Baptist community through his wife, Bolsonaro organized strategically and with highly symbolic value his baptism in the Jordan river while still declaring himself a Catholic. Not only was the rite important but the place too, and it explains the new government’s priority given to Israel in foreign politics. For eschatological reasons – the Jewish people’s reclaim of the Promised Land being seen as a necessary step toward Christ’s second coming – evangelicals have been fierce supporters of the state of Israel.<sup>45</sup> This might be one reason for the absence of antisemitism in the Brazilian New Right’s discourse. Another is certainly the adoption of the idea of a “Judeo-Christian-Alliance”, prominently defended by Olavo de Carvalho (“It is not possible, for the Catholic, to be a Christian without being Judeo-Christian”<sup>46</sup>), whether inspired or not in Will Herberg’s construction of this alliance against corrosive secularism and communism back in the 1950s and soon picked up by William F. Buckley and Reinhold Niebuhr. With 69% of the evangelical votes, Bolsonaro clearly had a higher support in this religious group than from Catholics.<sup>47</sup> However, it would be wrong to take his welcoming of electoral support as open doors for participating in political power. His cabinet includes only one Pentecostal representative, the Minister of Women, Family and Human Rights Damarens Alves, in recognition of her yearslong relentless work as juridical assessor in the Parliament and driving force to translate the moral agenda into policies, as well as her ability as a trained Pentecostal pastor to reach out to the masses.<sup>48</sup>

Despite their mass presence in civil society and their representation in the lower political clergy, what still distinguishes Pentecostal from Catholic

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43 Gonçalves 2016: 216.

44 Pérez 2019: 82–83.

45 Antonopoulos et al. 2020: 262; Gonçalves 2016: 97–99, 106, 130.

46 Olavo de Carvalho, Facebook post, Jan 9, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/carvalho.olavo/posts/954534324698642>.

47 Almeida 2019 and 2020.

48 Suruagy 2011: 198, 254; Oliveira 2020a: 12–13.

conservatives and relativizes their political role within the New Right is the absence of intellectual advisers and of a substantial project for the country, this in a sharp contrast with the Evangelical Right in the U.S.<sup>49</sup> For this reason, and for their relative novelty as political actors, they have been less present in this book. But this might be about to change. As soon as the elections were over, the FPE launched in 2018 a manifesto to the nation, under the thought-provoking title “Brazil for Brazilians”. In this pamphlet, they fully assume their new importance and responsibility: “We understand that the time has come for us to give a greater contribution to society, one which is coherent with over 45 million Brazilian electors who profess the evangelical faith.” Their contribution concentrates on four main proposals, three of them – the modernization of the state, juridical and fiscal security – reflecting moderate center positions with a certain tendency toward a nostalgic liberalism which I described in chapter five (for example, claiming a “new opening of ports to the friend nations”). Still, the fourth proposal, which extends over nine pages, deals with something more concrete, the “revolution in education”.

This is where we can perceive the influence of Olavism. First, by stating a decline in the quality of education (without any historical evidence for this) and the loss of higher education as capital for the elites, due to the expansion of access and – between the lines, as it might annoy their systematically deprived clientele – affirmative action policies.<sup>50</sup> The reason for this “tragedy” is soon given and echoes Carvalho’s main thesis, cultural Marxism: “The political-partisan use of public schools and universities, which became ideological instruments that prepare young people for the communist revolution, the totalitarian dictatorship following the example of the Soviet Union and other bloodthirsty regimes.” The remedy is the banning of ideology and partisanship in education, a claim which has been defended since 2004 and with growing influence by the organization “School without Political Party” (*Escola sem Partido*): “Freeing public education from the authoritarianism of gender and pornography ideologies, and returning to the family the right to the sexual education of their children and adolescents.”<sup>51</sup> Even though Carvalho has patronaged the movement at the beginning,<sup>52</sup> they did not quite grasp his argument, which seemingly annoyed him. While he would certainly agree with the diagnosis that educational policies of the PT had the objective to “destroy the foundations of Civilization as

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49 Gottfried & Fleming 1988: 78; Mariz 2016: 12.

50 FPE 2018: 2, 41, 52.

51 FPE 2018: 53–54.

52 Carvalho 2003.

the preliminary condition for the creation of the objective conditions to establish a totalitarian dictatorship, enslaving consciousness through the force of the state”, and would applaud any measures against “enemy” indoctrination, he would never abdicate from indoctrinating the ideology itself, which is the essence of his concept of a reverse culture war.<sup>53</sup> Still, the proclaimed anti-ideological quest of the FPE members does not meet their own standards. After all, the proposed reintroduction of cross-disciplinary teaching contents on “moral, ethics and civism” is an explicit reference to Salgado and his curricula during the military governments.

For Olavo de Carvalho, continue suspicious because he spotted among some evangelical organizations the main responsables for the communist subversion of religion:

Before you accuse the Catholic Church of the Theology of Liberation (which in itself is blaming the victim instead of the criminal), ask how many Protestant churches belong to the World Council of Churches and to the National Council of Churches in the United States, two COMMUNIST ORGANS DIRECTED BY THE KGB AND FOUNDED AT LEAST TWENTY YEARS BEFORE THE APPEARANCE OF THE THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION.<sup>54</sup>

Indeed, the above-mentioned Lent campaign in 2021, organized by the National Council of Christian Churches (CONIC) was initiated with strong Lutheran participation and was attacked without mercy not by AD or IURD but conservative Catholics. At least IURD seems to respect individual decisions about moral questions such as contraception and to follow, more or less pro-actively, an inclusive policy of “prohibited to prohibit”.<sup>55</sup> Recent studies, not yet commented by the self-declared guardians of civilization, have pointed to new “communist” activities – which others call solidarity economy – through Pentecostal communities in Rio de Janeiro’s favelas.<sup>56</sup> Repeatedly, the main results of scholarly empirical work on Pentecostal attitudes have indicated a general discrepancy between more conservative religious and political leaders and more progressive congregants. In comparison, the latter are not significantly more radical than Catholics (and even less on issues such as the liberation of firearms).<sup>57</sup> Or seeing it from the other side: the typical focus on single policy issues (abortion and homosexuality) in the discourses of their leaders permits no

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53 FPE 2018: 55.

54 Olavo de Carvalho, Facebook post, Sept 4, 2018, <https://olavodecarvalhofb.wordpress.com/2018/09/04>, original emphasis.

55 Mariano 2012 [1999]: 193–211.

56 Miller 2019.

57 Cunha et al. 2017: 119–120; Smith 2019: 61.

conclusion about what Pentecostals think about a range of other issues.<sup>58</sup> These apparent contradictions are less surprising if we consider the well-known dispersion into 1,500 denominations with different profiles and the historically polycentric structure of Pentecostalism that allowed for more diversity and local participation.<sup>59</sup> In this respect, Pentecostals might even redeem the accusation Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira made against them in his 1976 edition of *Revolução e Contra-Revolução*. At this moment he added to his central theory of revolution a fourth stage which he called “tribalism”: new forms of social relations which build collectives of like-minded, inspired in primitive groups and indoctrinated by cultural structuralism, a phenomenon he spotted among nudist hippies – and Pentecostal churches.<sup>60</sup>

The Pentecostal impact on the New Right is limited by their commitment to democracy (which after all guarantees their arduously conquered status) and by their large organized social basis conservative Catholics can only dream of, which gives them an advantage in playing the democratic game of majority vote. They are not afraid of democracy as a “terrorism of the majority”. As a subaltern actor, they aim at becoming this majority. Their own ideological references, the prosperity and dominion theologies, are micro-approaches, too narrow to provide an imperial vision for the state. Significantly, there is no overlap between Pentecostalism and neo-monarchism. On the other hand, this lack of a larger ideological framework makes their discourses susceptible for the grand conservative ideas but not exclusively. Even promoting authoritarian and discriminatory values, their origin is pluralist, and their strategy has been collaborative, a stance which at least admits competitors. Therefore, Pentecostals end up playing the role of the liberal-conservatives’ junior partner who coordinates the masses and provides the votes. They are the pawns in the New Right’s chess game, somehow similar to Integralists in the 1930s, and like those they might be a welcomed partner unless they get too powerful.

### **Integralism in Traditionalist Translation**

Self-assumed Integralists did not manage to organize a similar revival and the punitive action against *Porta dos Fundos* was an isolated act of heroism. However, they never ceased to exist. During the 1980s, old Integralist cadres rearticulated the movement with a new generation and in 1987

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58 Sousa 2020: 82.

59 Burity 2018: 16

60 Corrêa de Oliveira 2017 [1959]: 83–87, 144–147.

even the AIB was recreated by Anésio Lara Campos under the patronage of the first civilian president José Sarney's Minister of Planning, Aníbal Teixeira.<sup>61</sup> Not very present publicly in re-democratized Brazil, Neo-Integralists remained concentrated on their own organization, especially the foundation of the *Centro Cultural Plínio Salgado* by Arcy Lopes Estrella in 1995.<sup>62</sup> Like any other anti-progressive tendency, Integralism had a certain comeback in the early 2000s under the charismatic figure of Marcelo Mendez, founder of the Center for Integralist Studies and Debates (CEDI). Mendez was a full "Integralist" in the sense I explained in chapter three: a fierce combatant against cultural Marxism, a member of *Pró-Monarquia* and a sympathizer of TFP's legacy and its successor IPCO. With them, he even had great plans to join forces, reason why he designed for CEDI an inclusive symbology with Our Lady of Fátima as the center's patron saint and TFP's traditional Lion – sided with Salgado's portrait – in its rather crowded iconography.<sup>63</sup> This initiative received the support of part of the Catholic hierarchy and the monarchists: the milestone of his movement was the official inauguration of CEDI in June 2001 with a mass celebrated by the Integralist priest Afonso Crispim in the presence of high-rank monarchists – at other occasions CEDI even collaborated with António and Luís, Bertrand's brothers.<sup>64</sup> What started so promising ended suddenly with Mendez' suicide in early 2002, committed as a political act in the Integralist Mausoleum in Rio de Janeiro. In his last e-mail he accused his co-religionaries to have facilitated the inclusion of skinheads and other Neo-Nazi organizations in the movement.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, this approximation has been facilitated by Lara Campos in the late 1980s and has been a constant offense for Mendez.<sup>66</sup> This confirms again the deep and still common association of Integralism with a "fascist" ideology, attracting those fascistoid extremists, while – like I have shown in chapter three – their orientation has always been and continues to be more symbiotic with conservative Catholic and monarchist ideas.

Neo-Integralism was not able to reestablish this alliance with conservative Catholics and monarchists. Though never under the full dominion of skinheads, the movement drifted seemingly toward a more

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61 Barbosa 2015; Gonçalves & Caldeira Neto 2020: 134.

62 Gonçalves & Caldeira Neto 2020: 180.

63 Gonçalves & Caldeira Neto 2020: 149–152, 160.

64 Carneiro 2007: 277–278.

65 I could only locate the full version of Mendez' last e-mail in Spanish translation. See the online archive of the Spanish neo-francoist organization *Falange*: [http://community.fortunecity.ws/rainbow/snowwhite/42/noticia\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_21.htm](http://community.fortunecity.ws/rainbow/snowwhite/42/noticia_____21.htm)

66 Barbosa 2016: 84–88; Barbosa 2015: 281–284.

authoritarian milieu.<sup>67</sup> The First Integralist Congress, in 2004, and the following (the last and fourth was held in 2012) could not attain a broader reorganization either. Significantly, the congress was held in the headquarters of another failed organization, the Nationalist Democratic Union (UND), founded in 2003 and inspired in the anti-Vargas party of the post-war, but never achieving the status of a political party. Among the 159 participants were ex-officers from the political police DOPS, representatives of the landowner lobby group Democratic Association of Ruralists (UDR), alumni of the ESG, members of the Enéias Carneiro's party PRONA (I will get back to them soon) and other die-hard anti-communists, as well as some anti-abortion activists. Despite these attempts to integrate the movement, it split into basically three groups: the Revolutionary Integralist Action (AIR), a one-man show only present in social media; the sectarian Brazilian Integralist and Linearist Movement (MIL-B) in Campinas, led by the Federal Police officer Cássio Guilherme Reis Silveira and inspired in an eclectic mix of scholastic thinking, metaphysic mathematics, para-psychology and astrology, with some banal reception of Olavism and a dose of Gustavo Barroso's anti-Semitism; and finally the Brazilian Integralist Front (FIB). This last one is the most active Neo-Integralist group today, maintaining the site *Nova Offensiva* and the podcast *A voz do Sigma* as well as making ample use of social media.<sup>68</sup> Currently presided by the "philosopher" Moisés Lima – who unfortunately did not accept my interview requests – the FIB presented in 2009 the "Guanabara Manifesto", as an update of Salgado's October manifesto from 1932, an impressive document to testify the total agreement of the "soldiers of God and Fatherland" with conservative Catholic positions, as defended by CDB or IPCO, unambiguously from the beginning:

Art. 1 – Integralism is a Doctrine that, for God, Supreme and Absolute Being, for the Country, Land of the Parents, which is also ours and our children's, either born or to be born, and for the Family, cellula mater of Society, comprehends the Universe in an integral way, intending to build a New State, the New Society and the New Civilization according to the hierarchy of its spiritual and material values, according to the laws that govern its movements and under the dependence of God, who created Man in his own image and likeness, conferring on him a superior destiny, a transcendent destination.<sup>69</sup>

67 On Brazilian skinheads, see Almeida & Costa 2011.

68 Gonçalves & Caldeira Neto 2020: 157–158, 163–171, 171–177.

69 See <https://www.integralismo.org.br/manifesto-da-guanabara>.



Equally, the manifesto's conclusion leaves no doubt about the political program, again in full accordance with the teachings of Olavo de Carvalho: "The time has come to restore the Primacy of the Spirit and the Perennial Philosophy and reconduct Legal Science to classical Natural Law, Society to Tradition and international relations to personalist Universalism so well realized by the Middle Ages."

Two collaborations draw the attention and show that like in the 1930s the borders between conservative groups are porous. One is that of Paulo Fernando Melo da Costa, vice president of the anti-abortionist *Associação Nacional Pró-Vida e Pró-Família* (area of action of Antônio Donato, Olavo de Carvalho's theological instructor) and FIB's juridical secretary. The other was with PRONA, the personal political project of the military and physician Enéias Carneiro, which started in 1989 and ended in 2006 when the party fused with the Liberal Party to become the *Republicanos*, followed by the death of its founder in 2007.<sup>70</sup> Enéias Carneiro is in a certain way a progenitor of Jair Bolsonaro who ran for president three times without success but then got elected Federal Deputy for São Paulo with impressive 1.6 million votes in 2002. He anticipated Bolsonaro's pseudo-apolitical discourse, the Manichaeism between order and disorder, the hate against the internal enemy and the struggle against the global enemy and the "bankers" behind. Enéias Carneiro is remembered for his foible for producing an atomic bomb and for defending together with parts of the military (his candidate for vice presidency was the Admiral Roberto Gama e Filho) a nationalist agenda against an international conspiracy of environmentalists against the Brazilian economic use of the Amazon region, inspired in the disclosures of the already mentioned *Executive Intelligence Review* from the Schiller Institute. But above all, he also represented in every detail the conservative moral agenda through the language of Integralist thought, as Odilon Caldeira Neto has shown in his seminal PhD thesis.<sup>71</sup>

FIB then joined the anti-PT movement and later sided euphorically with Bolsonaro's supporter basis, radicalizing under the influence of extreme-right groups like *Ultra Defesa*, *Carecas do Subúrbio* and *Frente Nacionalista* as well as collaborating increasingly with established parties like the mentioned PP, the Brazilian Labor Renewal Party (PRTB) under the leadership of Levy Fidélix, *Patriota* (through Paulo Fernando Melo da Costa, now assisting secretary at Damares Alves' Ministry) and of course Bolsonaro's former party PSL (through the Federal Deputy for Rio de Janeiro Carlos Jordy, among others). With the attentat against *Porta dos*

70 Gonçalves & Caldeira Neto 2020: 177, 179.

71 Caldeira Neto 2016: 190–192, 268.

*Fundos* in 2019, executed by the obscure Popular Nationalist Insurgency Command of the Large Brazilian Integralist Family, public opinion firstly noted what so far has been underestimated: that Integralism was back as a political actor. Furthermore, as the police found a copy of Carvalho's *Imbecil Coletivo* in the apartment of the chief suspect, the mainstream media understood that Neo-Integralism was not isolated but connected to Bolsolavism.<sup>72</sup> However, this did not indicate that the Brazilian New Right had suddenly taken a "fascist" or "extremist" turn but just that the New Right shared with Neo-Integralists the same conservative roots, though these were certainly extremist. That Bolsonaro supporters like to unite under the slogan "God, nation, family" – identical to AIB's motto from the 1930s – is not an anachronism but the loyalty to a tradition which has never discontinued. The fact that Neo-Integralists, just like conservative Catholics and – as we will see soon – monarchists, do not aim at creating a political party conforms to the ideal of Integralism to which AIB has been a failed detour. As Gustavo Barroso always stressed, the movement was not a political party to represent partial interests but the whole nation; not a program for a specific mandate but a doctrine as "a set of philosophical, moral and scientific principles, on which a political system is based for indeterminate time".<sup>73</sup> The same could also be said for Bolsonaro's failed attempt to create an "Alliance for Brazil". On the other hand, Integralists' political electoral capital is quite low, due to their reputation for anachronism and political radicalism, quite contrary to the capital of Bolsolavism.

Who best represents Integralism in Bolsonaro's government is Olavo de Carvalho's second indication, Ernesto Araújo, Minister of Foreign Relations until March 2021. Not a high rank diplomat, shortly before the indication Araújo has called in 2017 the attention of Carvalho as the author of the extraordinary article "Trump e o Ocidente" [Trump and the Occident], for Carvalho a sign that intelligent life still existed in Brazil.<sup>74</sup> What was so important about this article to catapult him to the leadership of the Itamaraty was the uncommonly open commitment to what in other contexts is called "traditionalism", and to the U.S. as savior of tradition. The script is known from Steve Bannon but had never been published in Brazil with this clarity in an academic journal: Araújo affirms that the West's spirit was fatally threatened, despite all worldly success. The disease was the suffering of the "profound" Occident, abandoned

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72 Gonçalves & Caldeira Neto 2020: 181–191, 196–198.

73 Barroso 1935: 9–16.

74 Olavo de Carvalho, Facebook post, May 30, 2018, <https://olavodecarvalhofb.wordpress.com/2018/05/30/30-5-2018>.

by a materialist and cosmopolitan elite which repressed the common people's desire for God (the billionaire, as he notes sagely, does not need any God). This situation had been disrupted by Trump's speech in Warsaw which gave to understand that today faith and nationalism were only defended by the U.S., as Europe's heir and last defender. Araújo states this referring to the scientific authority of Christian Kopff, director of the Center for Western Civilization at the University of Colorado in Boulder and translator of the extremist Italian traditionalist Julius Evola.<sup>75</sup> This author, writes Araújo, should be read again, just like Oswald Spengler and René Guénon, Olavo de Carvalho's first intellectual awakening, as it was "impossible not to hear echoes of Guénon in Trump's speech".<sup>76</sup> In order to resist the internal enemy, countries such as the U.S., at that moment potentially Brazil (and to a certain degree Russia), would have to redefine international relations as "metapolitics", the combination of geopolitics and theopolitics, a term coined by Aleksandr Dugin – one could also say a global culture war.<sup>77</sup> The Internet allowed traditionalists to rise and reconquer language and the symbolic space dominated by the state. Araújo ends with updating Heidegger, who today would certainly confirm that "only Trump can still save the Occident".<sup>78</sup>

After Bolsonaro's victory and in charge of Brazil's Foreign Ministry, Araújo could declare triumphantly in his interview to *The New Criterion*: "So, what has broken the system? Olavo de Carvalho, Operation *Lava Jato* and Jair Bolsonaro."<sup>79</sup> The police investigation for having dismantled the atheist and corrupt regime ("maybe the greatest criminal endeavor of all times"); Bolsonaro ("the only truly nationalist Brazilian politician in the last one hundred years"), for having incorporated the desire of the "profound" Brazil; and Carvalho for having disseminated through the Internet since the mid-1990s the "new strange ideas" and being perhaps "the first person in the world" to point to the real global struggle and to the understanding of the enemy force as "communist". A "miracle", like Carvalho had repeated many times before, and a sign of "divine providence". Thus Araújo can conclude that under these new conditions ("God is back, and the nation is back: a nation with God; God through the nation") it was finally possible to live in a world "where the criminal can be arrested, people from every social strata can have the opportunities

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75 Araújo 2017: 325–346.

76 Araújo 2017: 347.

77 Metapolitics, often also named "Third Position" or indeed the "Fourth Political Theory", has also other followers in Brazil in the *Nova Resistência* movement (see <https://legio-victrix.blogspot.com>) but so far apparently without a relevant reception.

78 Araújo 2017: 354, 356.

79 Araújo 2019.

they deserve and we can be proud of our symbols and practice our faith”. If anybody believed this, three years later one might doubt some of these promised achievements.

Araújo did not only pay tribute to Olavism. He also appreciated the contribution of conservative Catholics. In his speech at the III Forum of the Lige Christ the King, invited by Chris Tonietto, he expresses his satisfaction that Christian faith finally starts to enrich politics, of course in his eyes something completely different from the Marxist infiltration through liberation theology. This was perceptible for example by the attempt to create the “Alliance for Brazil”, for the first time a party “that puts God in its program” and would correspond to the symbolism of the Christian Cross, integrating the mystic dimension with the political. And again, Araújo leaves no doubt that this “gigantic change” was all due to the “break of the barrier between faith and politics, between social life and faith, which is embodied in several moments: for example, in the motto ‘Brazil above everything, God above everyone’”.<sup>80</sup>

This Brazilian variant of traditionalism has found two intellectual apologists in the new generation of intellectuals: One is Cesar Ranquetat Jr., called by Araújo to integrate the examination board of the Ministry’s diplomatic school Instituto Rio Branco. He was one of the few – another was FIB-leader Victor Barbuy – to discuss personally with Dugin during his visit to Brazil.<sup>81</sup> His book *Da Direita Moderna à Direita Tradicional* [From the Modern to the Traditional Right] from 2019 is an adaption of Olavism, supplementing his thought with traditionalism and strengthening the value of order (here he discovers again Galvão de Sousa) over individual consciousness, which brings him into a certain opposition to economic liberalism.<sup>82</sup> This shows again that if fissures appear between conservatives and liberals within the New Right, they usually are a result of a superficial understanding of the key thinkers of liberalism such as Hayek, missing the metaphysical dimension of his thought and generalizing his theory for the Brazilian structures instead of adapting, as discussed in chapter five. The other epigone is Alexandre Costa, also deeply influenced by Olavo de Carvalho, who in his book *Introdução à Nova Ordem Mundial* [Introduction to the New World Order] from 2015 reveals the mechanism of globalisms through the lens of traditionalist key thinkers, and in *O Brasil na nova ordem mundial* [Brazil in the New World Order] from 2018 explains the

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80 Message from the Minister of Foreign Relations, ambassador Ernesto Araújo, to the participants of the III Fórum Nacional da Liga Cristo Rei, no Rio de Janeiro, Nov 23, 2019, <http://funag.gov.br/index.php/pt-br/2015-02-12-19-38-42/3285>.

81 El Coyote 2019.

82 Ranquetat 2019: 21, 119.

new reality of a globalist dominion over the world and its shocking implications for Brazil.

### **Bolsolavism in Arms**

The military participation in Bolsonaro's government – in the vice presidency, about a third of the ministers and around 6,000 nominated positions in the high rank state bureaucracy – has been a matter of broad concern. Surprising was that apparently the military wing of the government did not assume the role of the radical driving force but rather promoted themselves as moderate, not ideological, and barely technical experts, in the sense of reassuming the “reserve power” to tutor politics from a neutral and truly national position. The military has been a particularly discreet political actor during Brazil's democratic Sixth Republic. Especially under the PT-governments, they received attentive consideration paired with financial generosity. Even under the crisis, political statements were at most symbolic, like awarding the highest military order to Sérgio Moro, the judge and at the same time mastermind of the Operation *Lava Jato*, just a few days before the final decision on Rousseff's impeachment was taken.<sup>83</sup> The rupture with this democratic appearance happened half-a-year before the elections, in April 2018, when general Villas Bôas, the commander of the army, commented the possibility of the Federal Supreme Court issuing a *habeas corpus* for Lula, which would have allowed him to await the end of his trial in liberty. He did this through the popular channel Twitter and with ambiguous words whose implication only became clear later. What he tweeted at the eve of the Court's decision was that the army shared the “aspiration of all the good citizens to repudiate impunity and to respect the Constitution, social peace and democracy” as well as that the army was keeping “attention on its institutional missions”<sup>84</sup>. This was an implicit reference to article 142 of Brazil's Constitution, which gives the military the authority to act to maintain order, if called by any of the three constitutional powers. After Bolsonaro's election, Villas Bôas justified this unusual statement by confessing in an interview that the army had been at its “limits” and without his pronouncement “things could get out of our control”.<sup>85</sup> I do not know what is more worrying: that an army commander tried to pressure the Supreme Court to take the “right” decision or that it was necessary to tranquilize the military corporation not to react against an

83 Freixo 2019.

84 General Villa Bôas, Tweet, Apr 4, 2018, [https://twitter.com/Gen\\_VillasBoas/status/981315180226318336](https://twitter.com/Gen_VillasBoas/status/981315180226318336).

85 Gielow 2018.

inconvenient decision of the highest juridical authority in the country. The legitimacy of a military intervention was seconded by two generals who a few years later would occupy decisive positions in Bolsonaro's government: Hamilton Mourão as his vice president (who added in his characteristic frankness that in April 2018 the military already had all plans ready for an intervention<sup>86</sup>) and General Augusto Heleno as chief of Bolsonaro's Institutional Security Cabinet in the rank of a Minister, considered one of the closest advisors of the president.

Heleno was hand-picked and indicated by Villas Bôas, still commander of the army until 2019. He is not just any military expert but one with a curriculum that qualified him in a special way. Back in the days of the military government and at the eve of the opening process, the hardliners of the military rebelled against the military president Geisel in 1977 and tried to impose their own candidate for his succession. They were led by his Army Minister General Sylvio Frota, our old acquaintance Ustra, a certain major Curió and Frota's young assistant Heleno.<sup>87</sup> Removed from office, Frota made public a manifesto in which he accused Geisel of having abandoned the "revolution", to be promoting communism – especially through his dialogue with China, "the first step of the socialist escalation with the intention to dominate the country" – and therefore he had the moral obligation to renounce.<sup>88</sup> So much about history. Today, the military presence in Bolsonaro's government does not just show the political engagement of the corporation as such but that of specific hardliners within the military.<sup>89</sup> Heleno's ideological references are the books of the General Sérgio Augusto de Avellar Coutinho, *Revolução Gramscista no Ocidente* [Gramscian Revolution in the West] from 2002 and *Cadernos da Liberdade* [Notebooks of Liberty] from 2003.<sup>90</sup> Nothing new for somebody who had read Olavo de Carvalho's respective ideas but important as mediator and certifier of these ideas within the military circle, the first title being the most sold ever in the history of the army publisher, the *Biblioteca do Exército*. On the occasion of Coutinho's death in 2011, Carvalho praised these books as the "first sign that someone had paid me any attention" and "spectacular books, technically perfect", though "unfortunately published too late to inspire any effective action against the project of hegemonic control of the Brazilian society, at that time already victorious".<sup>91</sup> In such ways illuminated, the military – despite

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86 Pinto 2019: 20.

87 Leirner 2020: 208; Chirio 2018 [2009]: 200–204.

88 In *Journal do Brasil*, Oct 12, 1972.

89 Boulos 2019.

90 Pinto 2019: 6–13.

91 Carvalho 2012b.

all, still suspect of positivism and republicanism – even became a welcomed guest at IPCO, as my interview partners stressed.<sup>92</sup>

Hamilton Mourão distinguished himself as one of the rare political voices coming from within the usually discreet military during the 2010s. It was him to praise the impeachment as “the disposal of incompetence, bad administration and corruption” and it was him as commander to honor in a public event Coronel Ustra. At that time his political protagonism still provoked his relocation, then his retirement, and lastly, the nomination as president of the prestigious *Clube Militar*. This institution is not just a “pajamas club”, as some believe, but a powerful multiplier of ideas, invincible fortress of classical anti-communism and new mouthpiece of Bolsolavism, as any of the recent editions of the *Revista do Club Militar* can attest.<sup>93</sup> In practice, this meant that Mourão was given liberty to do politics, mainly in the mainstream media which eagerly took advantage of this rare opportunity of a “general giving interviews”.<sup>94</sup>

Mourão and Bolsonaro both studied at the Military Academy Agulhas Negras and belonged to the 8<sup>th</sup> Parachutist Field Artillery Group which is considered one of the tightest within the military. Bolsonaro’s motto, “Brazil above all!”, is nothing else than the official battle cry of the parachutists. They probably only came into contact in 2015 and had no reason not to sympathize. Mourão frequented similar milieus: he too is a practicing Christian, prefers to inform himself through New Right sites like “O antagonista” (workplace of Felipe Moura Brasil and Diogo Mainardi, among others), has as intellectual guide an epigone of Olavo de Carvalho, the mentioned philosophy professor Denis Lerrer Rosenfield (by the way co-founder of the liberal IMIL). In addition, Mourão receives his ideas about geopolitics from a traditionalist, the general Carlos de Meira Mattos (1913–2007), professor of the ESG, author of *Geopolítica e Trópicos* (1984) – and a friend of Olavo de Carvalho.<sup>95</sup> This might explain why Mourão, different from possibly still existing developmentalist tendencies in the military<sup>96</sup>, fully supports the liberal wing of the government: “I have followed Paulo Guedes for years. I always read his column in *O Globo* newspaper and I would say: ‘This guy writes what I think’.”<sup>97</sup> Heleno is even more precise in defending a neoliberal agenda, as differently from

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92 Frederico Viotti and Bertrand de Orléans e Bragança, interview with author, São Paulo, Nov 11, 2020.

93 The *Revista do Clube Militar* can be accessed under <https://pt.calameo.com/books/0018195987dfcc46fa1>.

94 Victor 2018.

95 Carvalho 2007e.

96 Pinto 2019: 16.

97 Victor 2018.

the late 1960s, no state is needed to promote economic growth: “National developmentalism arose from the lack of conditions for the existence of considerable investment in the country that was not coming from the state. But today there is no obsession for nationalization. On the contrary, we, in time, started to become aware that the state only needed to do those basic things, it was no use nationalizing.”<sup>98</sup>

However, national developmentalism continues to be the military’s recipe for the backlands, especially the vast and not yet economically explored lands of the Amazon region – also due to questions of national security as these represent the “open flank” of the country. This is more than a military question. In this respect, conservatives, from Integralists over conservative Catholics to monarchists have always supported the agenda of Agribusiness. Already Salgado had believed that the economic development would benefit from concentrating on Brazil’s comparative advantages, the climate, soil, and vast lands. While industrialization would stall at a certain point, due to automatization and the loss of value of the products, in the future the production of goods “to feed the world” would be a crucial question and allow Brazil to finally play its card: “The countries with vast landed estates will have economic hegemony.”<sup>99</sup> Even more than an economic question, the agrarian society also symbolized the imagined return to the country’s “roots” and the original “valorization of the vocation for primary activities”.<sup>100</sup> This gained a theological meaning in the eyes of TFP, who fought incessantly for the agrarian sector: “God made the virgin woodland so that men explored it. The fight against wild nature is full of glory, and it’s because our greatest ones thought this way that Brazil exists. This fight is therefore not ‘unhuman’ except in a false and adulcorated sense of the term.”<sup>101</sup> Supporting the agribusiness was therefore perceived as defending a “sacred essence” and to follow its own path, independently of the foreign modernizing influences that brought industrialization and hereby class struggle.<sup>102</sup> The obstacle was alien environmentalism. Already mentioned several times in this book, Dom Bertrand made this argument popular by not just defending, like TFP has done for more than half a century, the corporate interests of agribusiness but by addressing the subversion of its interests. He reveals this new “green communism” – the above-mentioned thesis of the Schiller Institute, though Bertrand could draw on Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira himself, who once again had forecasted it all – in his book

98 Quoted in Victor 2018.

99 Salgado 1934: 75–76.

100 Cepêda 2010: 209

101 Sigaud et al. 1960: 74.

102 Vasconcelos 1979: 53.



*Psicose ambientalista* [Environmentalist Psychosis] from 2012, distributed in thousands of free copies all over Brazil. A few years later, IPCO's president Lindenberg seconded him by refuting any green-communist appeal on the "exaggerated consumption existent in rich countries" and the "depletion of natural resources of our planet, as well as extreme poverty present in underdeveloped countries".<sup>103</sup> His argument has a certain logic, as there might be no limits for sustainable consumption of a few privileged, if only the vast majority of the Earth's population is re-conducted to the appreciation of spiritual instead of material values.

### The Parallel Monarchy

The monarchy has somehow ceased to be an issue in democratic Brazil after the awkward plebiscite held in 1993: as agreed in the 1988 Constitution, citizens were summoned to decide on nothing less than the form and system of government, republican or monarchical, presidential or parliamentary. The decision was quite clear (49% voted for the republic, 7.5% for the monarchy, blank votes and abstentions totaled 43.5%<sup>104</sup>). But the mere fact that this plebiscite (one of only two in the Sixth Republic, the other one was on the disarmament statute to which I will return soon) reminds us that the monarchic past, different from other ex-monarchies, was still vivid in the country's memory after a century of the Republic. Considering the previous chapters, this can be explained by the subliminal persistence of this tradition through conservative Catholicism. In preparation for the plebiscite, monarchists reorganized themselves in the Association *Pró-Monarquia* (1990), linked to the headquarters of the dynasty, the *Casa Imperial Brasileira*. The monarchist Armando Alexandre dos Santos and others published their books praising the monarchic form of government. Later, the *Instituto Brasil Imperial* (1994) followed, as well as two other institutions, less known, because not associated with the royal family, the *Instituto Mukharajj Brasilan* (1997) and the *Instituto Cultural D. Isabel 1 a Redentora* (2001). While the latter aims almost exclusively at cultivating the memory of Dom Pedro II's daughter, the liberator of slaves, the former is more curious, starting with the name. Mukharajj refers to an ancient Egyptian game which symbolizes the institute's interest in studying the "sacred geometry". This could just appear as an extravagant hobby, if it did not serve the main objective of "discovering" hidden divine interferences in historical processes which obviously re-affirms

103 Lindenberg 2017: 9.

104 See [www.tse.gov.br](http://www.tse.gov.br). On the monarchist promotion of their goals before the plebiscite, see Zanotto 2012: 214–218.

the Christian legacy of the Portuguese Empire. Even more interesting, the institute received support from Rio de Janeiro's archbishop Orani Tempesta, who considered Mukharajj's approach relevant enough to collaborate with it on the creation of the first Brazilian "university" course in political science whose contents were firmly based on Neo-Thomist thought.<sup>105</sup> Just like liberals, these last remaining monarchists also reacted to the milestone of 2002, and institutions with a more popular outreach were created to promote what they called the "crowned conservatism": the *Instituto Brasileiro de Estudos Monárquicos* (2003), the "*Causa Imperial*" (2006), the *Círculo Monárquico Brasileiro* (2013) with groups in most federal states, and lastly, the *Burke Instituto Conservador* (2017), domain of the monarchist José Lorêdo Filho, founder of the important New Right publishing house *Resistência Cultural*.<sup>106</sup> Most of these institutions follow Olavo de Carvalho's example and offer online courses in history, philosophy and political science as well as invest in editorial projects.

The other moment of direct democracy which I mentioned above was the plebiscite on the disarmament statute, where monarchists joined the broad alliance of defenders of the freedom to possess, carry and use firearms. Like in the case of Olavo de Carvalho, this should not be explained by a personal foible for weapons, though it might be tempting: the Sportsman Dom Bertrand's first leisure activity after COVID-19 social isolation was to practice target shooting. More important is the question of self-defense, and so Bertrand did not miss the opportunity to reaffirm for monarchic media his commitment as "a staunch advocate of holding and carrying of firearms, so that Brazilians of good will have the necessary means to guarantee self-defense".<sup>107</sup> The argument was not so much practical ("disarmament does not solve the problem of criminality, only aggravates it") but a question of principle: certain rights should not be delegated to an untrustworthy government, as this would be like "removing the lock from all houses".<sup>108</sup> The fetish of the armed self-defending citizen – or indeed the citizen army, in the case of Integralists<sup>109</sup> – is one more integrating factor among the New Right. It also includes conservative Catholics, as we have seen above with regard to Olavo de Carvalho, and even Father Paulo Ricardo insisted on posing holding a rifle during a meeting with the philosopher in Virginia.

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105 Instituto Mukharajj Brasilan, Facebook post, Aug 18, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/mukharajj/posts/1434940623208046>.

106 Quadros 2017.

107 Pró-Monarquia, Tweet "Agenda dos Príncipes", Oct 27, 2020, <https://twitter.com/promonarquia/status/1321135081944211461>).

108 Quoted in Zanotto 2007: 146.

109 Doria 2020: 12.

In this way surfing the same wave of “pop conservatism” and “anti-PT” militancy as Olavo de Carvalho’s epigones, monarchists managed to get the attention of public opinion through a bestselling book whose ideas then spread through social media.<sup>110</sup> The debut of Leandro Narloch’s politically incorrect book series, *Guia politicamente incorreto da história do Brasil* [The Politically Incorrect Guide to the History of Brazil] from 2009 presents a general provocative revision of Brazil’s history and intends to ridicule the official pedagogical historiography which the author confuses with the academic state of the art. The main objective was to discredit any policy aimed at compensating historical debt, such as regarding indigenous lands, *quilombo* territories for communities descending from escaped slaves and affirmative action for racial minorities. This makes no sense for Narloch, as the autochthonous population had been perfectly “acculturated” and Afro-Brazilians the main responsible for slave trade. The main message of the book is again that Brazil’s history has been instrumentalized by cultural Marxism to alienate the population from its roots and to instigate social and racial conflict. The monarchy is part of these roots but does not receive special attention. This however changed drastically in the second edition from 2013 – which makes one suspect of correcting advice – where the author added a new full-length chapter, “Império: Elogio à Monarquia” [Empire: Praise for Monarchy], to rehabilitate Brazil’s monarchic past. When one overlooks the notorious generalizations and exaggerations, in line with the editorial project, the book’s argument is not essentially wrong and considers some of the most authoritative academic sources on this period (José Murilo de Carvalho, Lúcia Bastos Pereira das Neves, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, Isabel Lustosa, among others). Though, it reproduces uncritically the Empire’s discourse which I presented in the second chapter and all the clichés, from the contrast between Brazilian order and chaos in Hispano America to the role of the Viscount of Cairu. Interestingly, the book grasps well the dubious proclamation of the Republic as military coup d’état, described with basis on some scientific sources, but not the particularities of Brazil’s “independence”, also a well-researched topic among Brazilian historians, from which the book’s argument could have benefitted.<sup>111</sup>

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110 In Brazil, the category “bestseller” is usually used for books which sell more than 50,000 copies, as average numbers are between five and ten thousand. The *Guia politicamente incorreto da história do Brasil* was sold more than 250,000 times and occupied high ranks in the non-fictional sector between 2010 and 2015. As a comparison, Olavo de Carvalho’s most popular book *O mínimo que você precisa saber para não ser um idiota* sold around 320,000 copies. See [www.publishnews.com.br](http://www.publishnews.com.br). About the new editorial segment of conservative books, see Silva 2018.

111 Narloch 2013: 271–276, 281–282.

The rehabilitation of Brazil's imperial past and the subtle propaganda for neo-monarchism shortly after found an even more effective vehicle: the producer of documentaries *Brasil Paralelo*<sup>112</sup> (BP), founded in 2016 by Leandro Ruschel, an economist and student of Olavo de Carvalho's COE. The production company, which counts on the collaboration of Narloch, was first based in Porto Alegre, but its economic success recently allowed them to move into sophisticated facilities in the center of São Paulo. The company has so far launched several documentary series about Brazil. Some of them deal with contemporary politics, such as for example "Congresso Brasil Paralelo" (about the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff in 2016), "O Dia depois da Eleição" (on the economic cost of electoral results), "O teatro das Tesouras" (on how PSDB and PT follow Stalin's scissors strategy), the trilogy "A Pátria Educadora" (a critique of the Brazilian educational system) and "Os 11 Supremos" (on the members of the Brazilian Federal Supreme Court). Other productions cover a variety of topics, from denouncing the consequences of COVID-19 policies to globalization, freedom of expression, minority rights of majorities and the end of nations. But BP devoted most of its attention to revisionist historical documentaries such as "1964: entre Armas e Livros" (on the civil-military coup) and above all "Brasil, a Última Cruzada" (a reinterpretation of the historical national imagination of Brazil). These documentaries are available on their homepage and Youtube channel. "Brazil: The Last Crusade" even made it to open TV and was broadcasted at prime time in December 2019 by the state channel TV Escola. This station is run by the Ministry of Education, which, after Bolsonaro came into office, was led by two Ministers sympathetic to monarchist ideas and committed to Olavism, first the already mentioned Vélez Rodríguez, then Abraham Weintraub.

Besides that, BP offers exclusive paid contents (what they call the "training center") consisting of around 300 interviews the team conducted in preparation for the movies, as well as more than twenty online courses on core topics of the humanities, with emphasis on philosophical, political, historical, cultural and economic key concepts, clearly inspired by Olavo de Carvalho's product. The webpage informs that BP has achieved more than 20,000 subscribers and that their documentaries have been watched by more than ten million viewers – only their Youtube channel has two million followers. These are impressive numbers, and they attest to the considerable impact of their ideas – even in comparison with traditional mass media. The mission of BP fits into Olavo de Carvalho's master plan:

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112 See [www.brasilparalelo.com.br](http://www.brasilparalelo.com.br) and [www.youtube.com/channel/UCKDjjeBmdaiicey2nImISw](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKDjjeBmdaiicey2nImISw).

“transform Brazilian popular imaginary”.<sup>113</sup> But their ideas also influence the Bolsonaro government, which frequently refers to the scientific authority of the company. Evidently, several members of the government are proud subscribers, among them the President.<sup>114</sup> BP is probably not only the most successful cultural agent of the New Right; it is also – or perhaps that is the reason – the most inclusive. Among the collaborators is the whole nomenclature of the New Right from all tendencies, be that conservative, liberal, authoritarian, or monarchist. No other initiative, except for the common goal to bring Bolsonaro into presidency, has so far managed to engender such a broad and diverse collaboration and it is not exaggerated to describe it as “soundboard” of the New Right.<sup>115</sup>

Monarchist ideas are subtly present in all their arguments but especially in the series “Brazil, the Last Crusade”, divided into six episodes, launched between September 2017 and April 2018: “The Cross and the Sword”, “A Vila Rica”, “The Guillotine of Equality”, “Independence or Death”, “The Last Kingship” and “Vargas Era: The Twilight of an Idol”. In a nutshell, the series presents a narrative which is fully based on the tradition of the Fifth Empire, even though not mentioning the concept explicitly, be it for not being familiar with it (it has lost most of its status, as explained in the second chapter) or for the influence of Olavo de Carvalho, the principal voice of the narrative, who uses it differently, as corruptive appropriation of the Church by the state since the Middle Ages. Brazil’s history is presented in a teleological way in the heroic perspective of the Christian hierarchs and their most prominent orders, the Knights Templar and their Portuguese successors, the Military Order of Christ. Those had created in Brazil, during the passing of four centuries, a Catholic-monarchic legacy of social harmony, right to life, property and happiness which the proclamation of the Republic in 1889 suddenly destroyed.<sup>116</sup> Since then, so the plot, what has reigned is the aberration of this sacred principle, the eternal conflict between classes, the corrupt state and a society alienated from its roots. These religious warriors are presented as agents of the grand divine plan for humanity and serve as example to justify the contemporary struggle on two fronts: against international “communism”, in alliance

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113 So informs *Brasil Paralelo* on Facebook, under the title “What is Brasil Paralelo” (<https://www.facebook.com/brasilparalelo/posts/646625992393742>).

114 Pereira & Santos 2020: 330–332.

115 Firmino 2020: 162. BP brought together a greater diversity of representatives of the New Right than the Brazilian edition of the *Conservative Political Action Conference* (CPAC), legendary in the U.S., which for the first time was held in October 2019 and is considered a milestone in the consolidation of the New Right.

116 About the resurrection of monarchism among the New Right in Brazil, see Wink 2021a.

with globalist capitalists (we recognize here Olavo de Carvalho's thesis) and against the Islamist heretics, the religious competitor in full expansion. By this, the documentaries provide a historical and metaphysical basis for two of the central concerns of the Brazilian Right, especially as they point out that the objective to rehabilitate and present this history (as actually it is the case with any historiography) is both retro- and prospective: "It's not about not forgetting where we come from. It's about not forgetting where we are going."<sup>117</sup>

The central motif of the narration is that of a Christian legacy of crusades – "the partial, late answer to the greatest imperialist oppression that Europa had suffered", as Olavo de Carvalho argues – whose reanimation, so they suggest, was the only way to reconcile Brazil with its past and to put the country back on its natural track. Two figures, "Deus vult" [God wills it!] and "crusade", are incessantly repeated in the narration, both borrowed from the Middle Ages and traced to Pope Urban II's agitation in the year 1095 to convince Christians to engage in a final struggle against Muslims in order to reclaim the Holy Land. These keywords were rapidly incorporated into the repertoire of the New Right. "The new crusade is proclaimed. Deus vult!", Olavo de Carvalho's student, Filipe Garcia Martins, celebrated on twitter Bolsonaro's electoral victory. Martins already exercised a central coordinating function in his campaign team and had been designated as assessor for international affairs of the new president, an influential position he still occupies today. When Bolsonaro took office, Martins commented again in this particular anachronistic manner: "The new era has begun. It's all ours! Deus vult!" Other supporters of Bolsonaro got inspired by BP's narrative: "We need a Saint Bernard of Clairvaux [abode commissioned by the Pope to preach the Second Crusade] to animate new Crusades. ENOUGH", wrote the already mentioned Youtuber Bernardo P. Küster, referring to the alleged persecution of Catholics in the world.<sup>118</sup>

Analyzing BP's documentaries, it becomes clear that the political objective predominates over any historical interest. The material is political propaganda, even if the producers would deny this. As any propaganda agency, BP affirms to disseminate "the truth of facts only", free of any ideological bias, but evidently also free of any reflection about their own intuitive access to "truth" in which one recognizes the rather ideological teaching of the master Olavo de Carvalho.<sup>119</sup> These "facts" are presented

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117 According to the teaser of "A última cruzada", <https://site.brasilparalelo.com.br/series/brasil-a-ultima-cruzada>.

118 Pachá 2019.

119 *Brasil Paralelo* 2020, 467–468.

by a conveniently selected group of co-religionary “experts”, being the most highlighted one Olavo de Carvalho, which present Brazil’s past as a hidden history of heroes and their deeds, brought to light by them. To avoid inconsistencies with the not considered scientific expertise on all the presented topics, this knowledge must be delegitimized from the beginning as contaminated by cultural Marxism. This brings about that the state of the art is largely ignored as supposedly biased, even though innumerable specialized works could have supported – or refuted – most of the alleged arguments, though obviously not the banalized version of a unidimensional historical process.<sup>120</sup> In some cases this has counter-productive effects, for example when BP still clings to the republican version of the “escape” of King João VI from Portugal. In others, it would throw overboard the whole argument, as in the case of the non-observance of the Catholic influence on the New State. The most propagandistic elements are however not the contents but the form of presentation, the apocalyptic discourse of the “last crusade” of the Good against the Evil, not by coincidence figuring in the title. This contemporary crusade, to which the documentaries call the audience, does not aim at Jerusalem but to demolish the state, based on a progressist hegemony, in order to set free an oppressed natural “deep Brazil”: “Preserving this place is up to us. We can’t let them steal the stairs of our civilization.”

In a certain way BP’s audiovisual products resemble Steve Bannon’s earlier documentaries “Generation Zero”, “Battle for America”, “The Undefeated” (all from 2010) and “Torchbearer” (2011) which all attempt to reconstruct the foundational myths of the country. Bannon, an admirer of Maurras, was deeply inspired by the legacy of *Action Française*.<sup>121</sup> But in Brazil, an own conservative tradition, between integrism and monarchism, and especially its remake by Olavo de Carvalho offers an even more obvious and convincing source of inspiration.

### **Love at Second Sight – Economic Liberalism and Monarchism**

As described in chapter five, the activities of liberals through their Think Tanks slowed down during the economically “neoliberal” governments of Fernando Henrique Cardoso. But the elections in 2002 showed that the struggle for ideas was not won yet. In direct reaction, previously existing Think Tanks were reactivated – for example, the Liberal Institute of Rio Grande do Sul in 2004 as new *Instituto Liberdade* – and several new ILs

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120 Carvalho & Roviada 2018.

121 Crowley 2017.

were created. This time the objective was more ambitious: these Think Tanks should not just re-align policy makers with the liberal economic agenda but convert public opinion for more sustainable effects. This meant that several new Think Tanks moved from discreet lobbying to open political militancy – and it is precisely at this time that the term “think tank”, not much used before, was established in the media’s vocabulary.<sup>122</sup> While the Competitive Brazil Movement (2001, founded by contractor Jorge Gerdau Johannpeter) still focused on consulting, including “leftist” parties like the PT, the Interdisciplinary Center for Ethics and Personalist Economics (2002, with the participation of the before-mentioned Ives Gandra da Silva Martins, member of Opus Dei) supported liberal ideas with a religious-conservative substratum. The LIDE Group of Business Leaders (an exclusive group of millionaires, founded in 2003 by João Doria, now governor of São Paulo) bombarded the population, and especially the emerging middle class, with his magazine LIDE (and 18 other titles, all distributed free of charge in hotels and airports, each with a circulation of 10 to 40 thousand copies). In 2005, alongside the Liberal Institutes, a second great promoter of liberalism appeared, the Millennium Institute (IMIL), co-founded by the Chicago boy and today Minister of Economy Paulo Guedes to “revolutionize the political agenda”. This happened at the above-mentioned Liberty Forum, an annual conference organized in Porto Alegre since 1988 – which means 13 years before the first “leftist” World Social Forum in the same city. The other founder, at the same time president of the IL, was the already mentioned Rodrigo Constantino. IMIL counts on around 300 collaborators and receives generous funding.<sup>123</sup> In 2012, the institute started two campaigns to promote the Austrian Economic School, “IMIL in the classroom” and “IMIL in the newsrooms”,<sup>124</sup> in addition to reinforced journalistic activity through blogs.<sup>125</sup> As an ally in this endeavor, the *Instituto Mises Brasil* was created in 2010 by the banker Hélio Coutinho Beltrão, besides the *Instituto Ordem Livre* (2007) and the Brazilian branch of Students for Liberty (2012). There is also the Institute for the Formation of Leaders

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122 Carlotto 2018: 75–76.

123 Among the sponsors of IMIL are the Bank of America and Merrill Lynch, the companies Thomson Reuters, M&M, RBS, Gerdau, Localiza, Líder, Master, Ultra-Ipiranga; Amcham Brazil (the platform for U.S.-companies in Brazil), besides opinion-makers such as Antônio Carlos Pereira (editor of *Estado de S.Paulo*), João Roberto Marinho and Luis Eduardo Vasconcelos (*Globo*), Roberto Civita (*Abril*), the economist and ex-President of the Central Bank Armínio Fraga, among others (Alexandre 2017: 51–55).

124 Alexandre 2017: 51–55.

125 Silveira 2013.



(2014), linked to the Foundation *Liberdade e Cidadania* of the Democrats' Party, which regularly publishes the homonymous electronic magazine.

This powerful third generation of Think Tanks did not only act as a doctrinarian multiplier of liberal ideas but also as coordinator of social movements which arose in opposition to the PT governments – providing human resources, logistics and communication. Several movements emerged, such as “Endireita Brasil” (founded in 2006 and led by Ricardo Salles); “Cansei” (2007, by João Doria); the “Revoltados Online” (2010, by businessman Marcello Reis); and the “Movimento Brasil Livre”, linked to the “Movimento Renovação Liberal” (2014, by Renan Santos, Kim Kataguirí, Fernando Holiday and others – the last two then elected by the liberal party DEM). Through these product designed organizations and their street activism, Think Tanks reached out and managed to create real and virtual “counter publics” for all those who somehow were disappointed by the PT government. Their young and cool militants even penetrated the milieux of counterculture, as the appropriation of the “Marcha da Maconha” (a manifestation for the legalization of cannabis) and its transformation into “Liberty March” showed.<sup>126</sup> All these Think Tanks and their extended arm of the movements and activists gave full support to Paulo Guedes and hereby indirectly to Jair Bolsonaro.<sup>127</sup> Symptomatically is the “Movement Brasil 200”, created in 2018 (referring to the almost 200 years of independence) just before the start of the election campaigns, and later turned into the Institute Brazil 200 (IB200) which includes entrepreneurs from a variety of national brands, such as Havan (and its notorious CEO Luciano Hang), the private university chain Estácio, Raio Drogasil, Riachuelo, Habib's, Multilaser, Polishop, Itaú Unibanco, Hering, Natura, Óticas Carol, and others.<sup>128</sup>

This would not indicate any new insight on what I have previously explained about the conservative revival, if it was not for a curious encounter of this liberal tendency with neo-monarchism. How can in the 21<sup>st</sup> century monarchists be in a relevant position to dialogue with liberals? The mentioning of Bannon in the previous section gives a hint on what we can expect from the interest in monarchism from an economic liberal side – and this is where a new scion of the Brazilian dynasty and advocate for entrepreneurial interests comes in. Luiz Philippe de Orléans e Bragança, a successful and cosmopolitan businessman and a frequent like-minded interlocutor of Olavo de Carvalho, was elected Federal Deputy in 2018 by the same Social-Liberal Party as Jair Bolsonaro. Moreover, he

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126 Rocha 2018: 19–22, 155.

127 Constantino 2018; Bishop 2019.

128 Bortone 2020: 64.

had been previously designated as his vice president, until the day before the deadline established by the Superior Electoral Court when he was substituted by the retired general Hamilton Mourão. As even my interview partners at IPCO confirmed, the reasons for this political maneuver were not transparent at all and are still unknown. The pretext was a forged dossier which suggested Luiz Philippe's lack of decorum for this office – including homosexual inclinations – which was said to be a problem for Bolsonaro. We could also read it as a military attempt to reconquer a symbolic position of moderating power which they had usurped from the Crown in 1889 and lost in the Sixth Republic – to not let it fall to a member of the royal family again. But this is obviously speculative, as many other reasons may have been at stake too. Notwithstanding the last-minute decision, the temporary nomination (and not just consideration) of Luiz Philippe is significant. What made him an interesting candidate is his integrating position as royal conservative and liberal entrepreneur who had become famous due to his 2017 book *Por que o Brasil é um país atrasado?* [Why is Brazil a Backward Country?]<sup>129</sup>

Different from the titles mentioned above, this is a constructive and reconciling book, not concerned with “the enemy” but above all with presenting a solution to what the author sees as the country's dilemma. The argument follows an almost ingenious strategy to compensate the necessary demolition of the state as the main problem with the retrotopic recreation of a symbolic “Brazil”. Luiz Philippe does not explicitly defend the monarchy since his status as a member of the Imperial House could make him suspicious of corporate interests, and at the eve of his political career he even abdicated his title as potential successor of the Crown in a hypothetical monarchic system. He does it in a subtle way, exploring all alternatives and pointing out their harmful effects, so that the unspoken and barely suggested option appears to be the only viable one to cure Brazil from its chronic delay. He begins by affirming what has already become some kind of “truth” through Narloch's book (and the other texts I discussed in the previous chapters, not least Olavo de Carvalho's): the alienation of Brazilians from reality due to the false premise that Brazil would be a capitalist republican democracy.<sup>130</sup> Obviously, if the country's political system is in reality subverted by communism, which is presented not only as a premise but as “empirical” fact, it can be neither democratic nor truly capitalist. What is interesting is the mentioning of the republic,

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129 *Por que o Brasil é um país atrasado?* also falls into the category of bestseller, with 60,000 sold copies, not counting the Kindle version which was not available for the previously cited bestseller titles.

130 Bragança 2017: 9–10.

in principle perfectly compatible with a dictatorship of the proletariat. But mingling it with the two “lies”, the author rescues its opposite, the monarchy, as a superior and authentic system in accordance with the Brazilian tradition.

The implicit legitimacy of the monarchy derives, in Luiz Philippe’s argumentation, from a distortion or even more from a gap. In the presidential system, he writes, there is no distinction between state and government, since temporary rulers would try to perpetuate themselves in the permanent state, mainly by creating the bureaucratic state apparatus (in the sense Olavo de Carvalho also gives to it). To achieve a balance, not only between but also within each of the three powers (senate versus chamber of deputies, courts versus public prosecutors), it was necessary to separate, within the executive, the head of government from the head of state.<sup>131</sup> Only an impartial and disinterested power to lead the state on behalf of the people would limit the government’s political greed. The book does not say who this might be, but the whole preface by the well-known businessman Stephen Kanitz deals with the advantage of the aristocrat who, by *noblesse oblige* and in contrast to corrupt career politicians, does not seek power and abuse of it for personal enrichment.<sup>132</sup> The book does not mention it, but it reminds one of the fame of Patrianovist Arlindo Veiga dos Santos, who categorically had refused any public office and even rejected the offer to become Secretary of Education of the State of São Paulo in the 1930s for not wanting to benefit from what he called the “republican ham” and only worked in private schools.<sup>133</sup>

Still, this essential separation of head of government and head of state could be done within several forms of (semi) parliamentarism. However, for the author there is no need to specify this, since Brazil’s long and concrete historical experience as a constitutional monarchy with the independent “moderating power” of the emperor, supposedly acting in organic agreement with the *volonté générale*, comes close to the author’s ideal: “[The] organized society and the state are, in fact, allies, united against the harmful actions of the government and the bureaucracy.” Such a limitation of potential abuses of government would then allow molding the state in an appropriate minimal size, though it would preserve among its basic functions the moral order.<sup>134</sup> A requirement would be a constitution to limit the government instead of establishing “excessive” rights such as to health and education. Interestingly, Luiz Philippe separates

131 Bragança 2017: 18, 135.

132 Kanitz 2017: 5.

133 Domingues 2006: 521.

134 Bragança 2017: 25, 30. His main reference for this argument is Mises, confirming again the preference of the New Right for the Austrian School of Economics.

his analysis of Brazil's constitutional realities between “before and after” Getúlio Vargas and avoids any reference to the rupture of 1889, which could appear nostalgic or even selfish: “From 1824 to 1930 [...] Brazil was a nation of liberal politics and economy, with a deregulated open market, non-interventionist, and consequently small, constitutional state, only costing the equivalent to 13% of the gross domestic product (GDP) in taxes.” The history of independent Brazil is divided into two periods: the liberal (1824–1930) and the socialist (1930 until now) eras.<sup>135</sup>

Then it soon becomes clear that the potential of the monarchy was greater than that of the republic. First of all, in the empire, “the wealth accumulation was not seen as a problem to be controlled or taxed by the state”, which inspires a tax reform that would eliminate the progressive table of income taxes and, among other measures, abolish the odious inheritance taxes. However, he seems to be aware that neither the praise for a moderate fiscal policy in a pre-welfare state, nor the concentration of wealth in a brutally unequal society convince as development path for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For this reason, Luiz Philippe alleges that the empire had been predestined to enable meritocracy in a favorable context of industrialization, if only there had been time. Unfortunately, so he writes, due to the historical process, barely a year after the abolition of slavery by the imperial government which would have created fair opportunities for everybody, the proclamation of the Republic started the “perverse cycle” of state co-optation by the new elites and the exclusion of the common people which lasted until recently. Now in 2017, he follows, the never completed welfare state in Brazil has become superfluous due to a context of new economic freedom, but only if executing a “revision” of those human rights that limit the rights of economic freedom. An example he cites is how the right to property is constrained by the environmental legislation. Another key to success would be the principle of subsidiarity, according to which the government only assumes functions when the basic units of society, the family and local communities, declare their disability (that is, as it gives to understand, home and private schooling as a principle, public education as a provisional measure if requested to the government).<sup>136</sup>

For Luiz Philippe, this liberalism depended on the monarchy for a simple reason: several political orientations have had the opportunity to show their potential (in his eyes, the conservative Right until 1930, the progressive Left until 2002, the revolutionary Left from 2002 to 2015),

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135 Bragança 2017: 37, 62, 90–91, 101–102.

136 Bragança 2017: 91, 96, 136–137, 145. The only critique against monarchy in the whole book is on monarchic centralism.

except for the only one never to participate in power: the “libertarian Right”. As presidentialism had failed for all these governments, the New Right needed to take their first chance on a new and better basis. The book, published exactly one year before the 2018 elections, does not refrain from giving electoral orientation. Again, the strategy is well thought out. “Will we have to place our bets on another savior-of-the-nation messianic leader?”, Luiz Philippe asks rhetorically, referring to the “populist” presidents from Vargas to Lula, those responsible for the Brazilian tragedy as the reader has already inferred. But, surprisingly, not every populist leader is bad. As he explains, this type of salvation has worked only once in history, in the case of the “aristocrat” Lucius Cincinnatus, who “for his vast military experience and popularity [...] was summoned by the consuls of Rome, in 458 B.C., to assume dictatorial powers. His priority missions were reestablishing law and order [...]. And so he did: once in power, he fulfilled his role”. If in times of crisis, one might indeed need a savior of the nation, so why not the candidate the author openly supports, Jair Bolsonaro?<sup>137</sup>

Luiz Philippe claims to have written this book as an objective scientist, against the hegemony of corrupted Marxist intellectuals (the only Brazilian “scientific authority” he cites is the above-mentioned Olavist Bruno Garschagen) who have all abdicated scientific rigor and began to manipulate the imaginary of the people with a false version of history and fantastic political possibilities of getting out of the crisis: “They seek to build a comfortable view, one that is easy to digest by the masses, and gain power and control. They are agents who make use of chameleonic language to obtain perfect acceptance in the segments they wish to convince and control.”<sup>138</sup> With these words, the author describes, involuntarily and with all clarity, the project of power of the New Right, such as for example the “academic” activities of his reference scientist Garschagen, who sells his course in “Political Science” as self-help to better defend one’s own political orientation:

This course will be useful for you who can’t stand anymore listening to conversations on several political topics, about the Bolsonaro administration, STF, Lula, Left, Right, conservatism, liberalism, fascism, and have no information or arguments to refute that coworker, the barbecue uncle or the annoying stranger, either in person or on social media. One of the purposes of the course is to prevent you from feeling anger or shame during discussions for not having anything to say or for

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137 Bragança 2017: 131–132, 169.

138 Bragança 2017: 8.

feeling you could speak with more conviction, were you better prepared. And, while you're at it, this course will help you understand the country and the world you live in.<sup>139</sup>

It is comforting that the political scientist Garschagen did not forget to include in the last sentence that his teachings will not only enable one to persuade any political opponent but also – as “extra bonus” – help to understand the world. His own course description certainly helps to understand the world of the New Right.

But back to Luiz Philippe: his propagation of the return to a nineteenth-century political system would have limited persuasive power, safe for the seductive appeal past glory might awaken in some. In fact, what the monarchical discourse conveys subliminally is the implementation of parliamentarism, in the Brazilian context intrinsically associated with monarchism, as the best guarantee for the successful liberal-conservative transition.<sup>140</sup> Luiz Philippe says it explicitly only once, when he advises that the fragmentation of the executive power should be done by a parliamentary system and the pure district vote. If in the past the Brazilian Congress, predominantly conservative and hesitant to reform the social status quo, had had the opportunity to choose as the head of government a prime minister instead of the people electing a president, this certainly should not have been Lula nor Rouseff or any other reformist. With only one candidate elected with a simple majority in each district, the composition of the congress would be even more intersectionally biased. Technically, both measures aim to lower the representativeness in terms of governance.

The reduction of representativeness is essential to the liberal project since its policies to implement the minimal state and a deregulated economy represent unpopular measures in the majority of the electorate's opinion. The suggested monarchy, even though not realizable, plays a double central role: it diverts attention from the demolition of the state, which represents, in all discourses of the Brazilian New Right, the major evil, and fills in the post-utopian gap of the – supposedly socialist – failed state.<sup>141</sup> The monarchical past offers a symbolic repertoire, recognized, and even felt as belonging to the nation, which after more than a century

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139 See <https://www.cursology.com.br/cursos/politica>.

140 This measure has been used and shown efficiency in a comparable situation. When the progressive vice president João Goulart took office in 1961, the legislative decided on interim parliamentarism to control him. A plebiscite annulated this measure. 14 months after this return to the presidential system, the military carried out the coup d'état. Consequently, parliamentarism could have the potential to make future coups superfluous for aligning the executive with the legislative.

141 About the retrotopia of Brazilian liberal-monarchism, see Wink 2021a.

of Republic and in the trend of political incorrectness may appear even “fresh” and at least clearly distinguishable from the “hegemonic Marxist–developmentalist” narrative. Therefore, part of the new Brazilian Right capitalizes on it as an imaginary of collective identification. This explains why the monarchical movement has not yet developed a strong political arm and why it is doubtful if it intends to develop it, since it acts more efficiently in the strategic space of national imaginaries. It is a characteristic of monarchists to avoid appearing as one more “just political” actor. This should not make people underestimate their political power, because it is part of their strategy.<sup>142</sup> However, they are present not only as providers of ideas but also in key political positions, though not identifying openly as such. This includes several of the previously mentioned Olavists such as the chancellor Ernesto Araújo, the ex–Ministers of Education Ricardo Vélez Rodríguez and Abraham Weintraub, Rafael Nogueira (collaborator of BP) nominated president of the National Library Foundation, besides several congressmen from various parties who act as informal “monarchist caucus”.<sup>143</sup>

The attempt to avoid the conventional way of creating political representation through parties has led to a curious revival of the conservative Catholics’ most efficient tool in the early 1930s, the Catholic Electoral League. During the municipal elections in 2020, a newly founded Brazilian Conservative Institute (IBCON) appeared in the political arena, which carefully avoids informing who the heads are (who by the published photos can be expected to pertain to the operational center of Bolsolavism). They started to certify with IBCON’s hallmark of excellence candidates who officially adopted a basic government program elaborated and prescribed by IBCON, called “contract for Brazil”.<sup>144</sup> The Institute does not refer to the 1930s but instead affirms that their inspiration was the “Contract with America”. This contract was offered to Republican candidates for the Congress elections in 1994 – the Brazilian version refers to quotes from Reagan and pamphlets of the Heritage

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142 Monarchists do not prioritize the formation of political parties. When such initiatives were started by their militance (such as the proposed parties *Real Democracia Parlamentar* (RDP), *Partido Monárquico Parlamentarista Brasileiro* (PMPB), *Partido do Movimento Monarquista do Brasil* (PMMB) and *Partido da Construção Imperial* (PCI), none of them with the register concluded by the Superior Electoral Court) they never got the approval of the royal family and the monarchist leadership. Jean Tamazato, president of Pró–Monarquia, and IPCO’s executive editor José Carlos Sepúlveda da Fonseca, interview with author, São Paulo, Nov 12, 2020.

143 Members of the informal monarchist group in the Congress are Senator Márcio Bittar (MDB) as well as the Federal Deputies Paulo Martins (PSC), Delegado Waldir (PSL), Clara Zambelli (PSL) and Enrico Misasi (PV, the Green Party).

144 See <https://www.ibcon.com.br>.

Foundation – and the instrument is the same. Several center-right parties but also a few candidates from the MDB signed this term for commitment in 2020, which includes twenty commitments for mayors and fifteen for city councilors.<sup>145</sup> Among the provisions, one finds common rules of accountability and good governance (which are legally binding laws anyway) but also the protection of “God, Nation and Family”, which means the protection of life from conception (obliging elected mayors to nominate a “pro-life” leader of the municipality’s chamber and as general prosecutor), of the so-called traditional family, and of private property – all based on natural law. Item three establishes to commit to anti-communism; four, to anti-globalism; five, to implement laws to facilitate self-defense; and six, to enable the cooperation between the political and religious spheres. IBCON stresses, like almost a century before the CDV did, that the quality seal did not mean an indication for voters, just a statement from an “academic” Institute. But in the following sentence it becomes clear that all this scientific neutrality is to make voters aware of candidates who “better represent the conservative values we hold dear”. It is actually not only about “conservative” values. Whoever reads the contract until the end will see that a candidate also signs to work toward the fostering of free enterprise and the “limitation of government”.

In the first chapter, I proposed a working definition of a liberal-conservative New Right, based on conceptual and theoretical considerations, the hypothesis of an intimate ideological family assemblance and the promotion of this joint identity by many of the New Right’s leaders. At the end of this last chapter, the indicators which motivated this decision might have become clearer and stronger. In the last endeavor to inventory the evolution of conservative ideas in Brazil, by Vélez Rodríguez, the distinction between liberals and conservatives tends to disappear completely. He later incorporated the fusion into the title of his memoirs, *Da esquerda para a direita: minha opção liberal conservadora* [From Left to Right: My Liberal-Conservative Option], which he ends with an optimistic outlook: The New Right in power had successfully reanimated Brazil’s “bottom of conservative mentality” and opened the country to modernization as “self-government”. Therefore, a “liberal-conservative agenda” would certainly be the country’s coherent path into the future.<sup>146</sup> The fusionist term is promoted in liberal textbooks,<sup>147</sup> and objections, if any, do not address the liberal-conservative project as such but hypothetical

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145 Among the candidates who signed IBCON’s contract were members of the already mentioned parties PRTB, *Republicanos*, the new PL, DC, PP, PTB, PTC, PSD, as well as *Avante* and *Patriota*.

146 Vélez Rodríguez 2015 and 2020.

147 Catharino 2019a: 25; Penna 2019 [1987]: 119.



populist and authoritarian excesses. Symptomatically, the one who warns about this, the liberal journalist and influencer Rodrigo Constantino, is also a fierce defender of notorious authoritarian perspectives and an unconditional supporter of Bolsonaro's populism.<sup>148</sup>

It could be a signal of the forced strategic use of the fusion term that one of the most recent initiatives of the Bolsonaro wing in the government to enhance the institutionalization of their ideological references was baptized as Conservative-Liberal Institute (ICL).<sup>149</sup> Founded by Eduardo Bolsonaro and Sérgio Sant'Ana at the end of 2020 as a simulacrum of the Heritage Foundation, it received Olavo de Carvalho's enthusiastic approval. The institute aims at disseminating conservative-liberal values such as the "comprehension of truth", natural law and the "human rights derived from it, cognoscible via natural reason", the "respect for God", the liberty of religious expression or the "fight against any form of discrimination, hostility and disregard for religion". Besides that, the usual anti-communist, anti-abortionist, pro-family and pro "legitimate defense" (of life, property and liberty) vows. Like IBCON, the sister-institute ICL also includes the confession to economically liberal claims. But above all, conservatism, from Burke to Olavo de Carvalho, is naturally present in the Institute's purpose to "qualify intellectual exponents through the development of paradigms of excellence; respect the fundamentals on which our community was historically formed and developed; considering the will of previous generations". In September 2021, ICL organized the second Brazilian edition of CPAC, the Conservative Political Action Conference, under the motto "Liberty and Truth" with the declared objective to fight secularization, "progressism" and the "evils of modernity". The president himself, besides the ex-ministers Ernesto Araújo and Ricardo Salles as well as several of the mentioned Bolsolavist ideologues of the New Right honored the event as speakers. The liberal-conservative fusion in Brazil apparently found its home in neo-Integrism.

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148 Constantino 2019.

149 See <https://www.facebook.com/institutoclbr>. On the opening ceremony, see Alencar 2020 and Bergamasco 2020.

# Conclusion

*Brazil is not an open land where we intend to build things for our people. We have to deconstruct a lot of things, undo a lot of things.*

Jair Bolsonaro<sup>1</sup>

*The destruction of the civilizational bases of human existence does not start at battlefields or stock markets: it starts in tranquil offices where apparently harmless men – be they philosophers or UN bureaucrats — attempt to be wiser than God. It makes no sense to dissociate from the crisis of self-awareness the progressive modern rejection of the sense of eternity, and it's not possible to accept the dissolution of self-awareness while trying to preserve, at the same time, high moral standards of conduct. In this end of an era, the historical consequences of intellectual decisions taken three, four, five centuries ago take the form of totalitarianism, widespread violence, genocide and, above all, the universal empire of lies.*

Olavo de Carvalho<sup>2</sup>

The eruption of the New Right during the last decade could give the impression of just being a unique accident of Brazil's history. A concatenation of unfortunate circumstances seems to have brought into power a gruff, radicalized and seemingly overstrained backbencher who builds his political philosophy on the dubious pipe dreams of a careworn outsider in the Virginian woods and governs rather badly with the help of his sons and some old and new comrades – who all have in common the absence of expertise to carry out their functions, combined with obstinate advice resistance. All this being faithfully applauded by some resentful middle-classes and evangelical fundamentalists, as if they were cheering for an unlucky football club. The New Right might further appear to be a motley movement with no clear direction, factional infighting and

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1 Speech of Jair Bolsonaro, at Olavo de Carvalho's side, at the legendary meeting with conservatives from politics and media at the Brazilian Embassy in Washington DC on Mar 17, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0GtNa-VHqM>.

2 Carvalho 2012c.

personal feuds which already provoked splits in the government. All this is true, even though the cacophony on the political stage is probably more an effect of how to divide the sudden power which dropped into the New Right's lap, while certainly fueled by the egocentric bigotry of some actors.

Yet I think the problem has deeper roots. The last chapters revealed that the New Right includes more personnel than just the seemingly deranged main protagonists. Among those, especially vice president Mourão and other military men have given the impression of being relatively reasonable, compared to the far-out excrescences of the Bolsolavist wing. However, this is illusive because the apparently more reasonable ones share with the less reasonable the same foundations of thinking, and they build their policies on the same old premises I worked out in detail, even though they might not be fully aware of it – and if they are, behave prudently enough to frame them diplomatically. That the New Right is more serious, more established and more united was a first central finding of my research. To realize this, one must go beyond political practices and include ideology to a much larger degree. By this approach I do not only mean to analyze the ideological manifestations in the rhetoric of the New Right but figuring out what ideas fuel these discourses. These ideas do not automatically stand out and call attention because they are often taken for granted by their propagators themselves and therefore only implied between the lines. It is the acceptance of certain unquestionable ideological *premises* that keeps the New Right together and makes others support them.

These premises are not a pick-and-mix of imported ideas, as it might appear at first glance, especially if looking at Bolsonaro's political communication strategy. They form a matured and coherent system of belief that derives from an identifiable core of thought with its main roots in medieval Thomism. It has been rehabilitated as the ideological fundament of late 19<sup>th</sup> century Integrism and since then has developed into a rich canon of genuine Brazilian *conservative* thinking. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many thinkers, most of them presented in this book, contributed to this canon and created plain answers to the complex Brazilian social and political challenges. By doing this, conservatism has proven an extraordinary ability to assimilate. It incorporated the early Brazilian colonial imaginary such as the Fifth Empire, integrated the monarchic past as realization of a divine vocation, harmonized with the republican system and absorbed eventual competitors like the Integralists. Conservatism even accomplished to accommodate nationalist, authoritarian and above all liberal tendencies. This mingling with liberalism is especially remarkable,

as it is not only strategical – like in other contexts – but ideological, rooting liberal ideas back in Scholasticism and transcendentizing liberal economic theory through the divinization of market mechanisms.

This conservative ideological core is of impressive resilience: it has survived, almost unchanged, for more than a century, and its persuasive ideas have apparently not lost any of their feasibility. They served as ideological framework for political reactions against any perceived periodical threat to the status quo – or in other words to defend “the order”, not by coincidence title of the first important conservative journal in Brazil. As peaks of conservative reaction, I examined the 1930s, the early 1960s, the re-democratization in the 1980s and most recently the rise of the New Right as reaction to PT-reformism. This continuity shows that what appears to be a New Right is indeed an old Right. Their common denominators are the perennial Thomistic premises – more or less explicitly assumed and more or less banalized by their protagonists – and the ever-same basic sources of the conservative canon through which the old and new Right justifies the primacy of God-given natural law and order over any man-made social contract. This is an inherently anti-modernist project in the full sense of the words. What makes the New Right appear new is the fact that they just reassumed their place in the political landscape after a period of loss of prestige due to the end of the military governments and within the adverse context of democratization. What gives the New Right a distinct look is their partly renovated rhetoric, especially through Olavism, and their populist outreach through cyberactivism.

Studying conservatism in Brazil resembles opening a can of worms, so manifold are the connections with the economic elite and the ruling political class and so reiterative are the appearances of its representatives in different occasions and positions. Conservatives of all kinds, from monarchists to Chicago Boys, from devote Neo-Thomists to specialists on military repression, fluctuated among the various tendencies and established an obscure network. Their capability to collaborate, in harmonized, connected or even concerted actions, is again remarkable. Brazilian conservatives have been realizing successfully for one hundred years what internationally are still isolated achievements. As a comparison, one could think of the transnational organization “World Congress of Families”, created in 1995 by Allan Carlson and Anatoly Antonov, and recently in full activity. It unites ecumenically members of all Christian Churches and activists from both Russia and the U.S., who suddenly are all able to forget their differences when the issue is to defend something they

hold dear, agree upon and believe to be under menace.<sup>3</sup> Recapitulating the history of conservative thought and action in Brazil, this inclusiveness is probably what describes best its strength and unparalleled success.

The question if this is the result of a rationally planned and executed project or just the organic accumulation of independent subjective actions does not change the result. These actors were at least aware of their like-minded and even more aware of what was at stake for them and how to conserve it. It is important to remember that the conservative ideal is spontaneous and practical acting without any planning, just based on individualist experience and rooted in locally perceived subjective realities. To defend the order and its implied privileges one benefits from, is a genuinely clear cause and can, at least to some degree, dispense with a plan of action or a conductor. It is self-evident that the one in need of a plan is the one who intends to establish *another* order, and it is also self-evident that any reaction to the “enemy’s” intentions can easily concentrate on these subversive plans as a target circle. Still, what my analysis shows is that despite this ideal, conservatives collaborated proactively, anticipating the plans of the “other” to justify carrying out their own unwritten plans.

As one can suspect and as I alleged above, both the ability to collaborate and the reluctance to accept any change in the social hierarchy might not be only a question of defending religious or ideological interests. It might also relate to concrete interests to conserve exclusive privileges this order provides, something I did not include in my analysis, but which can possibly be deduced from the social implications of a conservative thought that has evidenced a strong authoritarian dimension. In his insightful book on the *Reactionary Mind*, Corey Robin alerts us to pay more attention to the question of who, in a conservative worldview, has the prerogative of agency and who has the duty of submission, and how this relates to the conservative perception of society as extended family relations. Men do not recognize women in government because they also do not recognize them in the home, and “behind the riot in the street or debate in parliament is the maid talking back to her mistress”.<sup>4</sup> This comment is thought-provoking with regard to Brazil where conservatism has been an almost exclusive male domain and the granting of labor rights to domestic servants in 2015 was probably a main trigger of anti-PT attitudes.<sup>5</sup> Already twenty years earlier, Olavo de Carvalho had warned about maids possibly taking legal proceedings against sexual harassment of their employers:

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3 Stoeckl 2020.

4 Robin 2011: 7–10.

5 Porto 2022.

Until some decades ago, the family man who made a pass at his maid would draw to himself the disapproval of his wife, children, neighbors, and the parish – a moral punishment spontaneously inflicted by the community. [...] When to moral punishment the criminal and administrative penalty is added, however, the case goes from the ethical sphere to the legal one – and the state, under the pretext of protecting offended maids, is actually usurping one of the basic functions of community, which is to supervise its members' moral conduct.<sup>6</sup>

He is certainly right that for a sex offender to run one risk of being reproved is better than two risks, especially if the additional one implies possible legal punishment and not just a vague peer disapproval (one could also consider the hypothesis that the maid just gets fired and pursued because of slander). What strikes is the open authoritarianism it implies: the right of the more powerful to coerce the weaker and the denial of a neutral public appeal body to intervene in this private coercion. The creation of the Leviathan, the modernist relativization of personal authority and its delegation to the state with the monopoly on the use of force, is a central point of critique in conservatism and perennial issue of abhorrence in Olavism. The New Right incorporated this as premise for claiming the private reconquest of – even armed – authority from the state. The battle cry one could read and hear in uncountable manifestations during the last years, “I want my country back!”, does not only express the desire for a reset to the golden times before the PT-government (and for some, before redemocratization). What is meant by this country is “Brazil” as symbolic “natural” order, which turns out incompatible with the Brazilian “state”, the one which in principle should be the administrator of the legal order as social contract. This parallelism of orders in Brazil is subtly present even in the Brazilian democratic constitution from 1988 in the mentioned article 142, which determines the right of the armed forces to guarantee “law and order”. As Felipe Miguel observed, what is the necessity and the function to add “order” as an abstract concept to the “law”, the binding legal order?<sup>7</sup> As we know now, the reason is that in a conservative perspective, “order” does not just correspond in a technical sense to public order. What gives special authority to the military is the sublime “natural” order, which is superior to the democratically established state order written in a social contract.

This makes it possible to claim what appears to be a paradox: “Brazil” as a true order can be liberated from the “state” as a false order. The

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6 Carvalho 2015 [1995]: 353.

7 Miguel 2019: 102.

friendly-fire of especially eager conservative Catholics who blamed Bolsonaro for putting incorrectly “Brasil acima de tudo” (and not as it should be the Church above everyone) misses the point that with “Brazil” he does not refer to the modern state Brazil but to the transcendental imaginary of “Brazil” as an idea, which can only be resuscitated through the destruction of the state structure – as I quoted him at the top of this conclusion. This does not necessarily mean a return to a pre-modern political system but – as I explained in the last chapter – first of all a limitation of public representativity and state agency, compensated by an ever-dawning monarchy and Christianity shining in new splendor for symbolic identification. Jessé Souza has warned in several of his books that this state bashing could provoke drastic results. If the state is predominantly pictured as enemy and problem rather than only possible protector of the public interest, who else could be the appeal body to defend the rights of those who do not have the power or the money to defend them on their own? And what if the state becomes to be seen as so irreversibly deficient that the only solution – and the neoliberal dream – appears to be the dismantling of the state?<sup>8</sup> Apparently, Brazil has reached this point exactly at a moment when an unpredictable pandemic reminded the world of the urgency of state action and investment.

In the New Right, liberal-conservative state-skepticism joined ufanist nationalism in Afonso Celso’s tradition: the state is “evil”, and Brazil is “good”. What for Celso at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a question of prioritizing elements of national imaginary in which the state (and especially not the republican state) had no weight, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which I covered in my research, consolidated in the conservative strategy to disregard and thwart the development of the state, whenever – and this is important – not serving the own interests. One hundred years later this turned into an explosive mixture: the New Right’s aim to destroy – or to minimalize, as a liberal would say – a state corrupted by cultural Marxists, to substitute it with a medieval fantasy of “Brazil” and to justify this as last defense of Occidental civilization. This is a significantly new quality of state skepticism. After almost three years of Bolsonaro government, the possibly far-reaching consequences of this endeavor are already perceptible and are vehemently addressed by a growing opposition to his politics. Still, I do not think it is sufficiently clear that this destruction of the state is not only driven by anti-PT resentment and by the business strategy to see in its ruins a welcome opportunity for a neoliberal takeover. This destruction is systematic and the necessary outcome of ideological belief.

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8 Souza 2015: 21.

The Brazilian New Right apparently produced a high level of radicalness. Even its ideological quintessence of conservative thought is indeed so radical that it can be compared to the thought of an ideologist who went quite far to put his ideas into practice. I am referring to Anders Behring Breivik, the Norwegian extremist who in 2011 killed by his own hands 69 participants of a summer camp of the Workers' Youth League (55 of them teenagers), besides other eight by a bomb attack in Oslo's government quarter. In the 1515 pages of his so-called political manifesto, a compendium written together with several pseudonymous collaborators, most thoughts overlap with Brazilian conservatism as presented in this book.<sup>9</sup> The manifesto's core arguments astonishingly remind one of Olavo de Carvalho's writings. This goes especially for cultural Marxism – Breivik is, like Carvalho, deeply fascinated by Gramsci – and Islamism, where both authors refer to Bat Ye'or and at the same time feel attracted to Islam's spirituality through Guénon and Sufism. Most striking are Breivik's conservative Catholic references, though not having a personal Catholic background. The whole manifesto's idea – expressed in the subtitle *De Laude Novae Militiae. Pauperes commilitones Christi Templique Solomonici* [In Praise of the New Knighthood. The poor fellow-soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon] – is to provide a guideline for a new crusade of 21<sup>st</sup> century Knights Templar, inspired by the same medieval Christian military order as, after him, *Brasil Paralelo*. Integrist thinking extends blatantly over dozens of pages, including the equation of Satanism and Communism, the role of the Catholic Church as the only guardian of truth, the necessary substitution of Social Science by Bible Studies, the betrayal of the Second Vatican Council, and so forth. Any differences from Brazilian conservatism are limited to theological sophistry and occasionally divergent expectations on the uncertain geopolitical roles of the U.S. and Russia, while all the historical, cultural, social, and political diagnoses are simply and hauntingly identical.

Obviously Breivik did not read Carvalho's books and – like Carvalho – he refers only superficially to some of the common conservative sources mentioned in the introduction (such as Burke, Hayek, Scruton, and some more left out by me such as Pat Buchanan, author of 2001 book *The Death of the West*, and Robert Spencer, author of the *Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam*). To top it off, he builds his whole oeuvre on a popularized second-hand version of radical thinking which in Brazil is called Olavism, and in Norway, far-right extremism. Apparently, accepting the same premises

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9 Berwick (ed.) 2011.



leads almost necessarily to the same conclusions, though obviously not to the same actions.<sup>10</sup>

How is it possible that Brazilian conservatism shares the same ideological basis with Norwegian far-right extremism? As a matter of fact, the whole Brazilian spectrum of political orientation seems to be so strongly shifted that, besides self-declared conservatism, the only remaining orientation is the fraction called “communism”. If the New Right monopolized conservatism in an extremist interpretation, this is obviously hyper-polarizing. Most of the Brazilian parties, including social-democrats and to some degree the workers party, pursue a rather conservative political agenda, given the extreme distortions of Brazil’s society and the urgent demands for modernizing change. What distinguishes them from “conservatism”, without making them automatically progressive, seems to be a minimal acceptance of a certain human dignity in this world (and not only the next), the awareness of the indispensability of basic social justice – even if only promising equal conditions for meritocracy – and the recognition of the state as mediating instance and guarantor of a social contract.

A recurring aspect of Brazilian conservatism, which might have caught the reader’s attention, is the reluctance against literally *any* attempt to promote social reform. Even under conditions of extreme social inequality and even if the reformers only intended palliative measures, they were understood as triggering a supposed revolution. In a certain sense, this might be the perpetuation of *Haitianism* from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, as historians call the elite’s fear to free the slaves without any guarantee to be able to impede them to start a revolution against their ex-masters, as it happened in Haiti in 1791. In the case of Brazil, this fear perhaps contributed to inhibit the elsewhere common conservative strategy to mitigate social tensions at least to some degree as prevention against revolutions, such as for example through 19<sup>th</sup> century Prussian social policies or British Tory paternalism. This British political strategy became famous as “One-Nationism” through Benjamin Disraeli, a conservative writer who served twice as prime minister of the United Kingdom and as early as 1845 denounced the existence of social segregation in Britain in his novel *Sybil, or The Two Nations*.<sup>11</sup>

Brazil had many Disraelis. The existence of separate “Brazils”, a little wealthy one and a giant poor one, and the need to overcome this division as precondition to develop the country economically and socially, was most prominently addressed by the sociologist Florestan Fernandes in the

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10 Olavo de Carvalho did not seem particularly interested in the case and limited himself to uncover *en passant* Breivik as a KGB agent (Carvalho 2011b).

11 Carvalho 2000c; Disraeli 1999 [1845]: 66.

1950s but indeed also dates back to Disraeli's 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even the earliest discussions about abolition at the time of the Brazilian independence were tied to the urgency of a redistributive land reform, for the sake of social peace and economic progress.<sup>12</sup> But, and this is the point, this awareness was never seriously taken up by conservatives of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who, in rare cases, limited themselves to the lip service of assuming a hypothetical openness of conservatism towards "reform", such as in the words of the above-mentioned João Camilo de Oliveira Torres:

What is the conservative's position concerning reforms? The core principle is that we can only conserve by reforming. Reforms are in themselves necessary. It's not fit to precipitate it, nor to take the initiative for them. The conservatives, habitually, do not start reforms. In special cases, when a reform is necessary to avoid the revolution, the conservative can take the initiative. But, anyway, once the reform is carried out, the conservative accepts it, adapting it to the preexisting conditions, validate it. The conservatives certainly did not take the initiative in the social reforms undertaken in England since the Victorian era – but validated them, making union leaders barons and viscounts.<sup>13</sup>

A few pages further on, Oliveira Torres warns against a merely "reactionary" attitude of categorically blocking any progress, based on metaphysical considerations in which we can recognize conservative Catholicism: "The failures of the Soviet regimes in certain fields – and success in others – show that we cannot adopt a single line, a strictly uniform orientation. Univocalism can be an important philosophical principle, applicable to elevated metaphysical matters, but of little avail in the simple, shallow fields of politics and economy."<sup>14</sup>

In the light of the real political action of Brazilian conservatism, directed rigidly against any modest reformism à la Disraeli and therefore indeed reactionary in Oliveira Torres' sense, one could get to the conclusion that the real Brazilian conservatives, those who happen to "accept" a reform, are "communist" parties from PSDB to PT. After all, the reformist development path which elsewhere began in late 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century came to fruition under the designation Fordism remains in today's Brazil, where mass consumption is still limited to an upper-class niche, a distant *fata morgana*. Here we must remember that in the Brazilian social hierarchy a per capita income of 2,800 R\$ (around 500 US\$) per month makes one belong to the 10% richest –

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12 See Bonifácio 1821.

13 Torres 2016 [1968]: 42.

14 Torres 2016 [1968]: 44.

while 90% of the Brazilians earn less than this value and can hardly be considered mass consumers. We must also remember that the Brazilian median income (not the average income but the midpoint of the income distribution, half of the economically active population earning more, and half less) lies *below* the level of the official minimum salary.<sup>15</sup> Whatever the government, Brazil never realized any real redistribution of the historically accumulated wealth – a pathbreaking development step in Europe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>16</sup> A welfare state for the broader population never existed not even rudimentarily and the “poor-law tradition of private family responsibility” – now fancied again by conservatives in the U.S. – never ceased to be the only effective social security.<sup>17</sup> To establish with a delay of one hundred years in the 21<sup>st</sup> century a minimum rudimentary basis of the welfare state is what the PT-governments actually promised,<sup>18</sup> reason why it would be historically more accurate to compare Lula to the father of the New Deal, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and not to Mitterrand as I did in the introduction. But as we have seen, for Brazilian conservatives and liberals, a welfare state is a heresy against “natural order”. The fact that Disraeli is highly regarded by many Brazilian conservatives, without perceiving the contradiction of not applying his ideas when they question the own status quo, is perturbing. This absence of any social dimension in the Brazilian version of liberal-conservatism, not even as a stage on the way to a mass consumption economy with potentially interesting business opportunities, is perplexing and demands an explanation to which my findings on the particularities of the formation of conservative ideas in Brazil can possibly contribute.

On the other hand, the inability to change perspective and the complete lack of empathy with the reality of “common people” does not prevent conservatives from cheap populism. From time to time, the “people” turn into object of conservative reflection and even imaginative identification. Olavo de Carvalho counts himself in the “humiliated class” for being “a laundress’s grandson and a blue-collar worker’s son” while preferring not to exhibit his father’s profession, a not that humiliated lawyer.<sup>19</sup> As I have pointed to on several occasions, to care for the “people” is a favorite story of conservatism. Carvalho even concedes them the extraordinary right to improve their material conditions, as this would give them “an opportunity to *vacare Deo*”, time to be with God. This is certainly an improvement compared to just spending time working in

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15 Duque & Esteves 2020; Hoffmann 2019.

16 Piketty 2020.

17 Cooper 2017: 19–21.

18 See the analysis of Saad-Filho & Morais 2018.

19 Carvalho, Telegram post, Feb 10, 2021; Carvalho 2013a: 79, 243.

shifts or even longer in an uberized or completely informal economy.<sup>20</sup> But this benevolence has narrow limits, just like his intuitive perception of reality, when he adverts that without conservative intervention the world would soon become “an immense English-speaking Sweden”.<sup>21</sup> I guess for many Brazilian sub-citizens life like in Sweden might represent a slightly less dystopian vision than for the philosopher, unless they really believe this country to be a double of Breivik’s “extreme Marxist dictatorship Norway”.

How is it possible for the Brazilian version of conservatism to blank out so effectively the country’s blatant social realities? In my eyes, the main trick is that it agrees on an extraordinarily remote fixed point of ideological convergence. In principle, conservatism can choose any previous historical moment to preserve or to restore. However, choosing the Middle Ages as an idealized reference period has significant implications for Brazil. It is not only that any symptom of modernity must appear as degeneration when seen with medieval eyes. This perspective also allows for the convenient denial of any commitment to the formation of the Brazilian colonial structures, based on European expansion through conquest and the establishment of a slave economy, and hereby to delegate any responsibility for the historical process to erring modernization. As such, there is no need to even address that the Brazilian “natural” order stems from a highly artificial and purely man-made historical colonization process, which alone brought about the Brazilian social hierarchy. (Not that anywhere else social order was “natural”, the point is the undeniable impact of this very process on Brazil’s society structures today.) Thus, only by abstracting from Brazil’s colonial formation can any social difference be declared by doctrine as “natural”. This means that conservatism in Brazil is not only anti-modernist before anti-democratic but also anti-Brazilian, blind for the country’s idiosyncrasies of coloniality that have guaranteed its position as persisting champion in terms of social and racial inequality.

The main implication of this colonial Brazilian conservatism is certainly the exclusion of any race-related question in conservative social thought. Tellingly, these have been almost absent from this book, only because conservatives meticulously avoid bringing them up, alleging instead the “natural” a-racist character of the Brazilian society. This explains why, among Brazilian conservatives, there was no demand to discuss racial segregation or racism. Nor has there been any necessity to defend or promote them in the ways it happened in Europe and the U.S., not even in “fascist” Integralism. The myth of “racial democracy”, despite

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20 Carvalho 2015 [1995]: 161 footnote 88.

21 Carvalho 1998b.

all scientific counterevidence gathered during more than half a century, still lives on vividly in conservative thinking. Olavo de Carvalho intuits that “in Brazil it’s very common, really banal, that millionaires develop friendships with the common men, and people of one race marry people from the other”.<sup>22</sup> The issue of racial discrimination only comes convenient to *negate* the existence of racism, especially when fighting affirmative action policies with a racial dimension or any other such policy to revise “natural” differences.<sup>23</sup> For the same reason it is possible for conservatives to insist on policies to perpetuate the colonial social hierarchy, for example through a *de facto* regressive tax system, through an artificially blown up public debt for the benefit of rentiers, the systematic underfinancing of public services and the self-isolation of a wealthy minority in a privately organized parallel society, to mention just a few of Brazil’s notorious structural problems. All these exhaustively studied political interferences, which perpetuate a racially and socially biased artificial social order, do not seem to have any relevance for conservatives who subsume them under a “normality” threatened by supposedly hallucinated “progressists”.

In the introduction, I asked if conservatives were talking seriously. This is indeed more than a rhetorical question, though in the end irrelevant for the result it produces. Even if they were just carefully performing a role of metaphysical pathos, without in fact believing in their own propagated ideology and God’s blessing of their own mission, the effectiveness of propaganda would depend on negating its performative character. How does this conservative narrative of “liberating Brazil” gain plausibility? Though I did not even touch on the very relevant empirical question of the popular impact of conservative thought, my findings suggest that the success of Brazilian conservatism in perpetuating coloniality could stem from a century old endeavor to combine old and new motives of fright. For the believer, conservatism alleged that any attempt to alter the given order meant exclusion from the immense treasure in the other life. The humblest redistribution or at least some equaling of chances in this world was equated with an abstruse concept of the, in Brazil, unfamiliar, never experienced and somehow abstract “communism”. This assumption certainly benefitted from the Church’s authority to decree automatic excommunication in the case of “communist” followship. If one buys this story, the risk of arguing for a little share in this world must appear to be less attractive than to wait for the big share in the eternal future.

This unjust system of compensating both privation and deprivation through the same transcendental performance bonus has obviously limited

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22 Carvalho 1998a.

23 See Wink 2018b.

persuasiveness and contradicts the also very Christian urge for solidarity. Why then should the privileged not give up a little something to at least mitigate suffering on Earth? It could further raise the suspicion that this reluctance to share was a sign that the privileged in reality do *not* believe in this better life after death, as they insist on enjoying it during lifetime. If this narrative comes under pressure – as it did – the “natural” order can be upheld only by sharing at least some of the existing wealth, like the One-Nationism did, or by adding force. In Brazil, conservatives preferred to rely on what still today are the twin pillars of Brazil’s social order: the Church and the military or in other words, persuasion and coercion.<sup>24</sup> A sign that this strategy worked is that even today these are still the institutions which receive the highest levels of trust among the Brazilian population, more than the media, almost the double of the Judiciary, five times the Congress, ten times the government (before Bolsonaro’s election though) or any party.<sup>25</sup> Even more, this strategy benefits from presenting coercion as protection against an almighty enemy – in the form of anti-communism, which, as we have seen, has been built up as a powerful narrative since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

However, after the collapse of most communist states and the failure of Brazil’s authoritarian period, an updated version of this narrative was needed to which Olavism contributed substantially. As described, the trick is to suggest that the redistribution of wealth and the equaling of chances is orchestrated exactly by those who wish to keep and increase their own wealth, the “MetaCapitalists”. Paradoxically, supporting “communism” would therefore prepare the grounds for a global communist government controlled by the globalist economic elite. As these MetaCapitalists are invisible and untouchable, on the practical side the call for a conservative defense reaction only targets the MetaCapitalists’ visible front, those who struggle for redistribution and equal rights. Also quite conveniently, the focus on an abstract conspiracy of hidden high-muck-a-mucks who own the world makes it somehow superfluous to examine the concrete lobbying and financing of political campaigns (company X in country Y with party Z), or the in principle interesting activities of the Bilderberg Group, the World Economic Forum or the above-mentioned Mont Pèlerin Society. Once again, conservatism only offers one “true” option: independently of the preference for saving up for a life in another world or claiming a share here and now, in the logic construction of Brazilian conservatism there appears to be only one reasonable choice for the deprived majority or those who sympathize with them: to combat any attempt to question the

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24 Patterson 2005: 48.

25 According to *Latinobarómetro* (2018: 47–56).

existing hierarchy because both avoiding the worse on Earth and hoping for the better in Heaven makes it mandatory to conserve the status quo.

Obviously, the persuasiveness of this post-Cold War version of anti-communism reframed as anti-globalism depends on the plausible staging of this threat. Hence the conservative strenuousness to explain not only opposing ideas and actions but also general phenomena, even pandemics, as genuine signs of a conspiratory communist cultural or biological war. To make the stance of resistance plausible, the very reverse culture war – as practiced by Olavo de Carvalho and nicely defined in his motto at the top of this conclusion, if we read it against the grain – and the conservative power position itself among the economic and political elites needs to be carefully veiled. The enemy must be presented *as if* he were already close to winning, as an *almost* hegemon, though both this enemy's victory and his defeat are out of question: the first case for his factual inexistence because who could win are moderate reformists, the second because his imaginary existence is vital for maintaining the state of emergency to defend the people against their future MetaCapitalist explorers, even if they come disguised as defenders of a more inclusive and democratic project of the nation.

The cooption of the Brazilian majority of working poor against their own interests is a well-researched socio-political phenomenon.<sup>26</sup> The above discussed implications of the conservative ideology, built up over a century, might be a major factor in this process. For this very reason, what happens in Brazil cannot be explained as a variant of Bauman's famous concept of "retrotopia", which describes so well the stagnation of social utopian thinking in the first world.<sup>27</sup> The vast majority of Brazilians did not naturally perceive a relative deprivation compared to previous generations or a disillusion regarding the developing function of the state, nor did they give up utopian hope for a better future. Sub-citizens for centuries, their conditions could only improve and, as all socioeconomic data makes evident, these were indeed improving since the consolidation of the New Republic in the mid-1990s and especially in the 2000s. These future citizens were longing for a country of the present, not of the past, and had to be skillfully persuaded that behind incipient socioeconomic progress from which they themselves could be the major beneficiaries, "communism" was lurking around, bent on destroying their spirituality, their values and their freedom.

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26 On cooption, see for example the excellent and still topical study Cohen 1989.

27 Baumann 2017.

Conservatism has so far been able to foil any attempt to reform the hierarchical social order in Brazil. With this historical background, it becomes clearer that the last reformist effort by the PT-governments also had to come to a sudden end. The thirteen years of PT-government, not only for what they did slightly differently in reformist policies but maybe even more for what they represented symbolically – a laborer and a woman presiding the nation –, should be better understood as a hiatus to refresh forces for a conservative rollback, though it took a while to bypass, through political-juridical means, the problem of the people apparently insisting on reelecting them. Not the judiciary, public control bodies or the free media impeded the parliamentary coup d'état to depose President Dilma Rousseff, nor did they interfere in the elimination of the only candidate who had a chance to defeat Bolsonaro.<sup>28</sup> Conservatives, their supporters and a bunch of free riders justified this as self-defense against the “dictatorship” of cultural Marxism, which allowed “communists” to take the government through democratic means by election. But the main point is that this last reaction of the New Right did not only seek to reestablish the previous order, which has proven to be vulnerable once. It aims at subverting the state as liberal democracy. Considering the broadness, strength and resilience of conservatism, it seems delusive that this armored system of thought and influential network would simply vanish or adapt to the rules of the democratic game, if these did not work out in their favor.

This might be the most important lesson this book can offer, especially thinking about a post-Bolsonaro future. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to imagine how Brazil could retrieve its progressive vigor to overcome its main moral blemish, social injustice and development obstacle, the excrescent inequality. If a democracy turns intolerable as soon as the Gini-Index of income inequality appears to fall under 0.50 (which was the case in 2015, still representing one of the highest income inequality levels in the world), the services of a housekeeping maid become a luxury good and airports get crowded by common passengers who should have taken the bus – not only common complaints about tiny leveling effects of the PT-governments but also even more common phenomena of the very capitalist first world – what is, according to the New Right, Brazil's destiny? After all that we have seen in this book, the only possible direction seems to be backwards, into an idealized Golden Medieval Age of pristine Christianity to emerge in Brazil. A pre-modern wonderland “Brazil”, based on God-given natural law and freedom from the modernizing state, where in convenient order every monkey sits on his

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28 See Miguel 2019.



branch. A land of the past, preached without tangency of present realities and detouring the historical and present effects of coloniality – and at the same time appropriating law and state to conserve for a happy few the real privileges these very processes and structures produced and continue to produce. If this is the New Right's neo-Integrist quest behind all liberal-conservative rhetorical fireworks, it should be accurately addressed as such. This would be the basis for the citizens of republican Brazil to assume their natural and imprescriptible right to decide to follow it or not.

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# Index of Names and Institutions

- Ação Imperial Patrianovista Brasileira 72-73, 85-87, 95, 102  
Ação Popular (People's Action) 157  
Acción Española 73-74  
Ackel, Ibrahim Abi 104  
Action Française 72-73, 76, 82, 84, 94  
Adorno, Theodor 35  
Affonseca, Pedro 3-4, 18, 223  
Afonso I 49, 100  
Alckmin, Geraldo 128, 222  
Alves, Damares 231, 237  
Amaral, Antônio José de Azevedo 87  
Andrada, José Bonifácio de 53  
AntonoAnatoly 267  
Aquinas, Thomas 5, 7, 9, 24, 26, 119, 121, 126, 146-147, 188  
Araipe Jr., Tristão de Alencar 59  
Araújo, Ernesto 11, 215, 238-240, 259, 261  
Arendt, Hannah 37  
Aristotle 25-26, 166, 168, 171-172, 198, 209  
Arns, Paulo Evaristo 170, 174  
Assemblies of God (AD) 230  
Atlantic Institute (Brazil) 142  
Avante [Forward party] 260  
Azevedo, Reinaldo 211  
  
Backheuser, Everardo 89  
Bannon, Steve 164, 218, 251, 253  
Barbosa, Bene 217  
Barbosa, Rui 67  
Barbuy, Victor 240  
Barroso, Gustavo 79, 86, 89, 236, 238  
Barros, Roque Spencer Maciel de 11, 18, 31, 33, 39, 114, 134-135, 137, 151  
Bat Ye'or (Gisèle Littman) 181, 269  
Beltrão, Hélio Coutinho 252  
Bergson, Henri 68, 166  
Berlanza, Lucas 38  
Bernardes, Artur da Silva 71  
Bilac, Olavo 71  
Bilderberg Group 275  
Bittar, Márcio 259  
Blackwell, Morton 102, 124  
Boaventura, Jorge 129, 138  
Bobbio, Norberto 38  
Boff, Leonardo 115  
Bola de Neve Church 145  
Bolsonaro, Carlos 5, 213, 217-218  
Bolsonaro, Eduardo 213  
Bolsonaro, Flávio 5, 213-214, 217-218  
Bolsonaro, Jair 1, 3, 5-6, 10-12, 17, 32, 36-37, 41, 43, 84, 90, 95, 100-101, 103, 108, 112, 137, 141, 156, 162, 175, 177-178, 182, 191-192, 196, 200, 205, 211, 213-218, 220-222, 224, 229-231, 237-239, 241-243, 248-250, 253-254, 257, 261, 265, 268, 277  
Bonald, Louis de 24, 26  
Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva, José 271  
Botto, Carlos Pena 182, 184  
Bragança, Antônio de Orléans e 235  
Bragança, Bertrand de Orléans e 3, 13-14, 18, 73, 75, 103-104, 113, 123, 225, 227-228, 235, 243-244, 246  
Bragança, Luís de Orléans e 113, 124, 235  
Bragança, Luiz Philippe de Orléans e 253-258  
Bragança, Pedro Henrique de Orléans e 73, 87-88  
Brandão, Ambrósio Fernandes 48  
Brasil Paralelo (BP) 131, 248-251, 259

- Brasil Sem Medo 182, 212, 224  
 Brazilian Bar Association (OAB) 141  
 Brazilian Communist Party (PCB)  
     116, 122  
 Brazilian Conservative Institute  
     (IBCON) 259-261  
 Brazilian Democratic Movement  
     (MDB) 259-260  
 Brazilian Democratic Movement Party  
     (PMDB) 122  
 Brazilian Institute of Democratic  
     Action (IBAD) 138-139  
 Brazilian Institute of Philosophy (IBF)  
     118  
 Brazilian Integralist Action (AIB) 8,  
     78-82, 86, 235, 238  
 Brazilian Integralist and Linearist  
     Movement (MIL-B) 236  
 Brazilian Integralist Front (FIB) 236-  
     237, 240  
 Brazilian Labor Party (PTB) 260  
 Brazilian Labor Renewal Party  
     (PRTB) 237, 260  
 Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB) 122  
 Brazilian Society for the Advancement  
     of Science (SBPC) 171  
 Brazilian Society for the Defense of  
     Tradition, Family and Property  
     (TFP) 1-3, 11-13, 75, 95, 103-105,  
     108-128, 148, 150, 172, 175, 178,  
     203, 225, 227, 235, 244  
 Breivik, Anders Behring 269, 273  
 Bruno, Victor 205-206  
 Buchanan, Pat 269  
 Buckley, William 22, 188, 231  
 Buffon, Georges-Louis Leclerc Comte  
     de 47  
 Burgierman, Denis Russo 201-202  
 Burke Conservative Institute 26, 246  
 Burke, Edmund 16, 24, 26, 38-39, 74,  
     130, 261, 269  
 Butler, Judith 224  
 Buzaid, Alfredo 89, 104, 118  
 Câmara, Hélder 14, 86, 113, 115  
 Campanella, Tommaso de 51  
 Campos, Anésio Lara 235  
 Campos, Francisco 88  
 Campos, Roberto 140-141, 172, 207  
 Canning, George 45, 57  
 Cardim, Fernão 48  
 Cardoso, Fernando Henrique 142,  
     251  
 Carlos II 51  
 Carlos V 51, 56  
 Carlson, Allan 267  
 Carneiro, Enéias 41, 180, 236, 237  
 Carpeaux, Otto-Maria 34  
 Carvalho, Heloísa de 202  
 Carvalho, Luiz Gonzaga de 164  
 Carvalho, Olavo de 5, 10, 12, 18, 26-  
     27, 34-35, 37-38, 43, 65, 75, 79-80,  
     95, 97, 100, 116, 119, 123, 125-126,  
     133, 138, 161-220, 224, 226, 228,  
     231-233, 237-240, 242-243, 246-  
     251, 253-255, 261, 265, 268-269,  
     272, 274, 276  
 Carvalho, Tales de 164  
 Casa Imperial Brasileira 245  
 Cascudo, Luís da Câmara 86  
 Casseb, Adib 118  
 Castelo Branco, Humberto de Alencar  
     105, 140  
 Castro, Fidel 5  
 Castro, Paulo Rabello de 142  
 Catharino, Alex 146, 188, 260  
 Catholic Charismatic Renewal (RCC)  
     226-227  
 Catholic Electoral League 77, 96, 259  
 Catholic Ligue of Christ the King 3,  
     223, 240  
 Catholic University Action (AUC)  
     77, 82, 96  
 Celso, Afonso 60-62, 69, 268  
 Center Dom Bosco (CDB) 3-4, 18,  
     203, 223-227, 236

- Center Dom Vital (CDV) 18, 70-72, 75-76, 83-84, 86, 89, 93-94, 96, 98, 105, 114, 117, 119, 121, 139
- Center for Integralist Studies and Debates (CEDI) 235
- Chafuen, Alejandro 136, 148-149, 207, 214
- Chambers, Whittaker 25
- Christian Democracy Party (DC) 260
- Christian Democratic Party (PDC) 96
- Christian Labor Party (PTC) 260
- Círculo Monárquico Brasileiro 246
- Civita, Roberto 252
- Clá Dias, João Scognamiglio 123, 126-128
- Coelho, Felipe 203
- Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB) 122
- Comte, Auguste 59-60, 68, 72
- Conservative Liberal Institute (ICL) 261
- Conservative-Liberal Institute (ICL) 261
- Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) 249, 261
- Constantino, Rodrigo 32, 155, 204, 211, 261
- Corção, Gustavo 114, 117-118, 139, 162, 222
- Corrêa de Oliveira, Plínio 1-3, 10-13, 15, 18, 50, 71, 73, 75, 77, 80-81, 83, 93-98, 101-107, 109-113, 116-117, 121-127, 133, 145, 148, 178, 183, 187, 204, 225, 227, 234, 244
- Correia, Alexandre 119
- Costa, Alexandre 240
- Costa, Paulo Fernando Melo da 237
- Costa, Ricardo da 215, 225
- Coutinho, Rodrigo de Souza 130
- Coutinho, Sérgio Augusto de Avellar 242
- Coutinho, Vicente de Paulo Dale 45, 62
- Crato, Antônio Prior do 48
- Crippa, Adolpho 118, 137, 139
- Crispim, Afonso 235
- Cunha, Eduardo 230
- Cunha, Martim Vasques da 217
- Dallagnol, Deltan 231
- Delegado Waldir [Waldir Soares de Oliveira] 259
- Democratic Association of Ruralists (UDR) 236
- Democratic Labor Party (PDT) 122
- Democrats (DEM) 229, 253
- Department of Information Operations/Center for Internal Defense Operations (DOI-CODI) 175
- Department of Political and Social Order (DOPS) 236
- Dias, Álvaro 142
- Disraeli, Benjamin 270-271
- Donato (Paulo Rosa), Antônio 169, 215, 237
- Donoso Cortés, Juan 74, 99, 203
- Dorea, Gumercindo Rocha 139
- Doria, João 252
- Doughert, Eduardo 226
- Dugin, Aleksandr 180-181, 239-240
- Engelke, Inocêncio 108
- Escrivá de Balaguer, Josemaría 128
- Estrella, Arcy Lopes 235
- Evangelical Parliamentary Group (FPE) 230, 232-233
- Evola, Julius 239
- Fajardo, Diego Saavedra 51
- Faria, Octávio de 89
- Farias Brito, Raymundo 67-70, 82, 166-167, 183
- Fedeli, Orlando 123, 150, 203
- Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo (FIESP) 129, 139, 151
- Feliciano, Marco 229
- Felipe II 51, 56



- Ferdinand I 56  
 Ferreira, Silvestre Pinheiro 54  
 Fidélix, Levy 237  
 Figueiredo, Jackson de 63, 70-75, 82, 88, 105, 121, 124  
 Figueiredo, João 158  
 First Capital Command (PCC) 37  
 Fisher, Antony 135, 155  
 Fiuza, Guilherme 212  
 Fleischman, Júlio 118, 222  
 Fleischman, Lourenço 118, 172, 222  
 Florencia, Francisco de 51  
 Fonseca, Deodoro da 67  
 Fraga, Armínio 252  
 Franca, Leonel 94-97, 107, 164  
 Francis I 56  
 Francis, Paulo 172, 211  
 Francis (Pope) 203, 225  
 Franco, Itamar 207  
 Fraternal Society of St. Pius x (FSSPX) 113, 204  
 Fromm, Erich 35  
 Frota, Sylvio 242  
 Fundação Casa Imperial 18
- Galvão de Sousa, José Pedro 99-101, 118, 168-169, 240  
 Garrigou-Lagrange, Réginald 40  
 Garschagen, Bruno 206, 257, 258  
 Geisel, Ernesto 116, 118, 242  
 Gerdau Johannpeter, Jorge 252  
 Giordani, Marco Pollo 175, 177-179  
 Gonçalves, Leônidas Pires 175  
 GorbacheMikhail 2  
 Gordon, Flávio 206  
 Gottfried, Paul Edward 26, 42, 144, 168, 183, 232  
 Goulart, João 33, 99, 104, 110, 113, 139, 217, 258  
 Gramsci, Antonio 6, 10, 15, 34-35, 173, 193, 210, 218  
 Group of Philosophical Studies (CONPEFIL)  
 Guedes, Paulo 6, 141, 213, 243, 252
- Guénon, René 94, 164-165, 239  
 Gurgel, Rodrigo 206  
 Gutiérrez, Gustavo 114
- Hagger, Nicholas 180  
 Hagin, Kenneth E. 144-145  
 Hasslocher, Ivan 138-139  
 Hayek, Friedrich August 21-22, 26, 30-32, 38, 135, 138, 140, 142-143, 147, 151, 153, 155-156, 240, 269  
 Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich 94  
 Heidegger, Martin 239  
 Heleno, Augusto 242-243  
 Henkel, Ana Paula 224  
 Heralds of the Gospel (Arautos do Evangelho) 123  
 Herberg, Will 231  
 Herder, Johann Gottfried von 47  
 Heritage Foundation 102, 135, 261  
 Hitler, Adolf 200, 206  
 Huerta de Soto, José 150, 154  
 Hugon, Édouard 10  
 Humanist Party of Solidarity (PHS) 226  
 Husserl, Edmund 209
- Institute Brazil 200 (IB200) 253  
 Institute for Entrepreneurial Studies (IEE) 140  
 Institute for the Formation of Leaders 252  
 Institute of Research and Social Studies (IPES) 138-139  
 Institute Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira (IPCO) 1, 3, 84, 121, 124, 128, 149-150, 223, 225-229, 235-236, 243, 245, 254  
 Instituto Brasileiro de Estudos Monárquicos 246  
 Instituto Brasil Imperial 245  
 Instituto Cultural D. Isabel I a Redentora 245  
 Instituto Imperial 18  
 Instituto Jackson de Figueiredo 203

- Instituto Mises Brasil 252  
 Instituto Mukharajj Brasilan 245-246  
 Instituto Ordem Livre 252  
 Inter-American Institute for Philosophy, Government, and Social Thought 183  
 International Grace of God Church (IIGD) 145  
 International Policy Forum (IPF) 102  
 Iorio, Ubiratan Jorge 32
- Jabor, Arnaldo 212  
 João VI 52-55, 57, 130, 251  
 John Paul II (Pope) 3, 115, 128  
 John XXIII (Pope) 95, 112  
 Jordy, Carlos 237  
 José I 48
- Kanitz, Stephen 255  
 Kant, Immanuel 94, 201  
 Kicis, Beatriz 218  
 Kirk, Russell 25-26, 30, 138, 168, 188  
 Kissinger, Henry 35  
 Kloppenburg, Boaventura 65  
 Kopff, Christian 239  
 Kristol, Irving 26-27, 168  
 Kubitschek, Juscelino 100  
 Küster, Bernardo 224, 250
- Labin, Susanne 139  
 Lacerda, Carlos 139  
 Lacunza y Diaz, Manuel 51  
 Ladusāns, Staņislavs 169, 170  
 Laet, Carlos de 69  
 Lafitte, Pierre 59  
 LaRouche, Helga 180  
 LaRouche, Lyndon 35, 179  
 Lefebvre, Marcel 3, 113, 117, 204, 222  
 Leme, Og 32, 135, 140  
 Leme, Paulo 135  
 Leme, Sebastião 5, 70-71, 76-77, 83-84, 90, 94, 223  
 Lemos, Miguel 59
- Leo XIII (Pope) 66-68, 76, 83, 102, 138  
 Lewinsohn, Ronald 170  
 Liberal Institute (IL)  
 Liberal Party (PL) 230, 237, 260  
 Lima, Alceu Amoroso 45, 63, 67, 68, 75, 76-78, 82-86, 89, 93-94, 111-112, 114, 117, 121  
 Lima, Manoel de Oliveira 49, 60  
 Lima, Moisés 236  
 Lindenberg, Adolpho 88, 121, 124, 149-151, 204, 229, 245  
 Lind, William S. 35  
 Lippmann, Walter 135  
 Lisboa, José da Silva (Viscount of Cairu) 53, 130-131  
 Lombaerde, Júlio Maria de 4, 67  
 Lopes, Moacir Araújo 104  
 Lorêdo Filho, José 246  
 Lubambo, Manuel 140, 147-148  
 Lukács, György 11, 23  
 Lula da Silva, Luiz Inácio 10, 33, 134, 174, 182, 189, 192, 212, 221, 230-231, 241, 257, 258, 272  
 Luther, Martin 66, 89, 94, 97
- Macedo, Edir 145, 158-159, 172, 229  
 Macedo, Ubiratan Borges de 100, 106, 116, 135, 137-138, 141, 148  
 Magnoli, Demétrio 211  
 Mainardi, Diogo 212, 243  
 Maistre, Joseph de 74-76, 95, 98, 102, 119  
 Maksoud, Henry 140-141  
 Malafaia, Silas 145, 229  
 Maldonado, Juan de 51  
 Mannheim, Karl 23, 25, 27  
 Manoilescu, Mihail 87  
 Manuel I 48  
 Marcuse, Herbert 30  
 Maria Leopoldina of Austria 56  
 Marinho, João Roberto 252  
 Maritain, Jacques 76, 138, 167  
 Martins, Filipe Garcia 215, 250

- Martins, Ives Gandra da Silva 128,  
 149, 252  
 Martins, Paulo 259  
 Marx, Karl 3, 42, 198  
 Mattei, Roberto de 73, 76, 94-95, 126  
 Mattos, Carlos de Meira 243  
 Maurras, Charles 72-74, 76, 82, 102,  
 117, 119, 140  
 Mayer, Antônio de Castro 14, 94, 96,  
 109, 113, 123  
 Medici, Catherine de' 48  
 Médici, Emílio Garrastazu 89, 104,  
 116  
 Meeting of Christians in Search of  
 Unity and Holiness (ENCRIS-  
 TUS) 227  
 Mendes, Álvaro 3-5, 18, 223  
 Mendes, Raimundo Teixeira 59  
 Mendez, Marcelo 235  
 Menzel, Adolf 13  
 Mercadante, Paulo 21-23, 118, 137,  
 170, 207  
 Merquior, José Guilherme 31-32  
 Mídia Sem Máscara 182  
 Minnicino, Michael 35  
 Misasi, Enrico 259  
 Mises, Ludwig Heinrich 30-32, 135,  
 151-153  
 Mitterrand, François 1-2, 10, 102  
 Monsaraz, Alberto 74, 85  
 Montaigne, Michel de 47  
 Montesquieu, Charles-Louis de  
 Secondat 47  
 Mont Pèlerin Society (MPS) 135-  
 138, 140-142, 147-148, 180, 275  
 Morais, Alexandre José de Melo 52  
 More, Thomas 46  
 Morgenstern (Abujamra), Flávio 212  
 Moro, Sérgio 241  
 Moura Brasil, Felipe 161, 200, 212,  
 243  
 Moura, Odilão 112  
 Mourão, Hamilton 84, 242-243, 254  
 Mussolini, Benito 74, 83, 200  
 Nadalim, Carlos 215  
 Narloch, Leandro 212, 247-248, 254  
 Nash, George H. 16, 26  
 National Bank for Economic and  
 Social Development (BNDES) 142  
 National Conference of Bishops of  
 Brazil (CNBB) 105, 112-113, 122,  
 222-223  
 National Council of Christian  
 Churches of Brazil (CONIC) 233  
 National Democratic Union (UDN)  
 96, 133  
 Nationalist Democratic Union (UND)  
 236  
 National Renewal Alliance (ARENA)  
 158, 229  
 National War College (ESG) 106, 107,  
 117, 129, 138, 141, 158, 236, 243  
 Needleman, Jakob 164  
 Niebuhr, Reinhold 173, 231  
 Nietzsche, Friedrich 94  
 Nisbet, Robert 23-26, 138  
 Nóbrega, Manuel da 48  
 Noguê, Carlos 203, 224  
 Nogueira, Rafael 215, 259  
 Novak, Michael 138  
 Nyquist, Jeffrey 191-192, 207  
  
 Oakeshott, Michael 22, 26-28  
 Oman, Charles 52  
 Online Course in Philosophy (COF)  
 167, 169, 193-196, 198, 201, 205,  
 213, 215, 248  
 Opus Dei 9, 128-129, 149, 204, 222  
 Ousset, Jean 117  
  
 Padilha, Raimundo 104  
 Paim, Antonio 131, 137-138, 157, 215  
 Paola, Heitor de 212  
 Party of Brazilian Social Democracy  
 (PSDB) 95, 141-142, 176, 248

- Party of the Reconstruction of the National Order (PRONA) 236-237
- Patriota [Patriotic party] 237, 260
- Paul VI (Pope) 25, 112, 114, 117, 225
- Pauw, Corneille de 47
- Pedro I 52, 55-57, 64
- Pedro II 3, 57-58, 64, 72, 95, 245
- Penna, José Osvaldo de Meira 11, 30, 114, 134-135, 137, 141, 207, 260
- Pereira, Antônio Carlos 252
- Pereira, Everaldo Dias 229
- Pereira, Guilherme Döring Cunha 128
- Pereira, Merval 142
- Pereira, Rinaldo Luis de Seixas 145
- Pereira, Ruy 48
- Pessoa, Epitácio Lindolfo da Silva 71
- Pessoa, Lenildo Tabosa 118, 162
- Pinochet, Augusto 30, 33, 215
- Pio, Padre 165
- Pita, Sebastião da Rocha 48
- Pitt, William 53
- Pius IX (Pope) 65, 66
- Pius XII (Pope) 84, 95, 110, 125
- Pius XI (Pope) 73, 76
- Pius X (Pope) 70, 113
- Plato 26, 198
- Pondé, Luiz Felipe 211
- Popper, Karl 135, 143
- Prado, Eduardo 59-60, 69
- Prestes, Luiz Carlos 189
- Primo de Rivera, Miguel 74
- Progressist Party (PP) 229, 237, 260
- Pró-Monarquia 18, 235, 245-246, 259
- Puggina, Percival 212
- Rademaker, Augusto 104
- Rahm, Haroldo Joseph 226
- Ranquetat Jr., Cesar 43, 240
- Raynal, Guilherme Thomas François 47
- Reagan, Ronald 102, 136, 144-145, 259
- Reale, Miguel 79, 85-87, 105, 118, 138-139, 207
- Rebelo, Pequito 74
- Reborn in Christ Church (IARC) 145
- Reis, Marcello 218, 253
- Republicanos (party) 230, 237, 260
- Revolutionary Integralist Action (AIR) 236
- Ribeiro, Josué A. 195
- Ricardo, Paulo 227-228, 246
- Rios, José Arthur 168
- Robson, Ronald 205-206, 209
- Roosevelt, Franklin D. 272
- Rosenfield, Denis Lerrer 212, 243
- Rothbard, Murray N. 147, 149
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 47
- Rousseff, Dilma 5, 10, 17, 37, 79, 230-231, 241, 248, 258, 277
- Ruschel, Leandro 248
- Salgado, Plínio 8, 10-11, 39, 69, 75-76, 78, 80-86, 88-90, 97, 100-101, 103-104, 107, 124, 126, 133, 139, 167, 173, 178, 183-190, 214, 221, 233, 235-236, 244
- Salles, Ricardo 103, 253, 261
- Sant'Ana, Sérgio 261
- Santiago, Valdemiro 145
- Santos, Allan dos 212-216
- Santos, Arlindo Veiga dos 72-73, 86, 100, 104, 255
- Santos, Armando Alexandre dos 103, 245
- Santos, Gustavo Adolfo 32
- Santos, Mário Ferreira dos 170
- São Paulo Forum 179, 182, 186, 198, 224
- Sardinha, Antônio 73
- Sarney, José 235
- Scantimburgo, João de 32, 73, 86, 118, 174
- Schäffer, Georg Anton von 56
- Schiller Institute 237, 244

- Schmitt, Carl 12  
 Schopenhauer, Arthur 209-210  
 Schwarz, Fred 139  
 Scruton, Roger 22-23, 25-27, 29-31, 33, 39-40, 152, 154, 159, 168, 269  
 Sebastião I 49  
 Sentroul, Charles 67  
 Sigaud, Geraldo de Proença 3-4, 94, 109-110, 112-113, 115, 227, 244  
 Silva, Golbery do Couto e 106, 138  
 Silva, Vicente Ferreira da 118  
 Silveira, Cássio Guilherme Reis 236  
 Silveira, Sidney 225  
 Smith, Adam 26, 130, 136, 143, 146  
 Soares, Gabriel 48  
 Soares, R.R. 145  
 Sobral Pinto, Heráclito Fontoura 83  
 Social Christian Party (PSC) 230  
 Social-Democratic Party (PSD) 260  
 Society of Political Studies (SEP) 83, 86  
 Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr 189  
 Sousa, Irineu Evangelista de (Viscount of Mauá) 131  
 Special Public Relations Advisory Office (AERP) 62  
 Spencer, Robert 269  
 Spengler, Oswald 239  
 Stewart, Donald 33, 135, 140-142  
 Strauss, Leo 24, 26  
 Students for Liberty 252  
 Suárez, Francisco 50, 146  
 Swaggart, Jimmy 144
- Teixeira, Aníbal 235  
 Tejada, Francisco Elias de 100  
 Temer, Michel 7, 8, 142  
 Tempesta, Orani João 221, 246  
 Tenorio, Gonzalo 51  
 Teófilo, Josias 204  
 Thatcher, Margaret 136  
 Tocqueville, Alexis de 26, 29  
 Tonietto, Chris 224, 240  
 Torres, Alberto 69, 106
- Torres, João Camilo de Oliveira 62, 68, 71, 84-85, 88, 98-100, 118, 122-123, 138, 271  
 Trump, Donald 164, 220, 238-239
- Unified Workers' Central (CUT) 142  
 Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (IURD) 145, 230, 233  
 Urban II (Pope) 250  
 Ureta, José Antonio 225-226  
 Ustra, Carlos Alberto Brilhante 177-179, 242-243
- Vargas, Getúlio 17, 63, 76-77, 83-84, 86-88, 93, 187, 236, 256-257  
 Varnhagen, Francisco Adolfo de 52, 54-55  
 Vasconcelos, Luis Eduardo 252  
 Vasques da Cunha, Martim 195  
 Vatican 3, 12, 14, 63, 66, 70, 94-95, 112, 115, 117, 122, 126-127, 143, 158, 173, 225-226  
 Vélez Rodríguez, Ricardo 11, 137, 138, 168, 215, 248, 259-260  
 Velloso, João Paulo dos Reis 104  
 Vianna, Francisco José de Oliveira 33, 58, 69, 88, 101, 106, 133, 137-138  
 Vicente de Salvador 48  
 Vieira, Antônio 49-51, 58, 61-62, 99  
 Vieira, Antônio Paim 87  
 Villa, Marco Antonio 211  
 Villas Bôas, Eduardo 241-242  
 Viotti, Frederico 1, 2, 18, 117, 227, 243  
 Vital, Maria Gonçalves de Oliveira 64-65, 67, 88, 218  
 Voegelin, Eric 7, 100, 153, 168-170, 199, 209
- Wagner, José Carlos Graça 180  
 Weaver, Richard M. 26, 30, 151-152  
 Weintraub, Abraham 196, 248, 259  
 Weyrich, Paul 102, 124  
 White, Reginald James 22

- Women's Campaign for Democracy  
(CAMDE) 105
- Women's Civic Union (UCF) 105
- Women's League for Democracy  
(LIMDE) 105
- Workers' Party (PT) 5-7, 33, 37,  
42-43, 95, 122, 134, 176-177, 179-  
180, 198, 200, 212, 215, 219, 221,  
229-232, 237, 241, 247-248, 277
- World Anti-Communist League  
(WACL) 102, 129, 182
- World Church of God's Power  
(IMPD) 145
- World Congress of Families 267
- World Economic Forum 275
- Zweig, Stefan 61-62

