



# THINKING ABOUT BRAZIL, since Philosophy

*PENSAR O BRASIL, desde a Filosofia*

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“*Determinism* is absent only where there is mystery. But what does that have to do with us?  
[...] *Our independence* has not yet been proclaimed.

Oswald de Andrade, *Anthropophagic Manifesto*, Year 374 of the Swallowing of *Bishop Sardinha*,  
May 1928<sup>1</sup>

“Having brought our ways of life, our institutions and our vision of the world<sup>2</sup> and endeavoring to  
maintain all this in an often unfavorable and hostile environment, we remain outcasts in our own  
land.”

Sergio Buarque de Holanda, *Raízes do Brasil* [Roots of Brazil], 1936

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps foreshadowing the anthropophagic imagination that was on its way, Mário de Andrade, in 1926, recorded: “*We are not what we are, we are what others want us to be.*” (PAU-DALHO, pseudonym of MÁRIO de ANDRADE, 2013, p. 159).”

<sup>2</sup> From a conservative and dated point of view, check out the chapter “*Mundividência brasilíndia*” (VITA, 1967, pp. 35-45).

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**Abstract**

*In order to facilitate the exercise of thinking about Brazil in the present time, the essay investigates the symptoms and clues of the difficulty in producing a national philosophical thought. Along with the need for philosophical decolonization. As a hypothesis, it is suggested to think since of the place from the perspective of Brazil, and not in a foreign way, as has been the case. To this end, the essay is based on the spectrum of Oswaldian anthropophagic invention, by revisiting the critical propositions of Cruz Costa, Roberto Gomes and Paulo Arantes about the problem.*

**Keywords:** *Think about Brazil. Oswaldian anthropophagy. Cruz Costa. Roberto Gomes. Paulo Arantes. Own philosophical thought.*

**Resumo**

*Para propiciar o exercício de pensar o Brasil do tempo presente, o ensaio investiga os sintomas e indícios da dificuldade de produção de um pensamento filosófico próprio, nacional. De par com a necessidade da descolonização filosófica. Como hipótese, sugere-se pensar o país desde o lugar Brasil, e não de forma estrangeirada, como tem ocorrido. Para tanto, o ensaio funda-se no espectro da invenção antropofágica oswaldiana, ao revisar as proposições críticas de Cruz Costa, Roberto Gomes e Paulo Arantes acerca do problema.*

**Palavras-chave:** *Pensar o Brasil. Antropofagia oswaldiana. Cruz Costa. Roberto Gomes. Paulo Arantes. Pensamento filosófico próprio.*

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## Symptoms and signs of philosophy in Brazil

Cohering the anamnesis of the anniversary of Brazil's Independence, the article "200 years, 200 books",<sup>3</sup> in the "Ilustríssima" section of Folha de São Paulo on May 4, 2022, brought a list of books to "understand Brazil", the result of a consultation with one hundred and sixty-nine intellectuals. It was headed by the novel *Quarto de despejo*, by Carolina de Jesus (1960), followed by *Grande Sertão: Veredas*, by Guimarães Rosa (1956), tied with the mythical and autobiographical account, *The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman*, by Davi Kopenawa and Bruce Albert (2015). The former with twenty-nine nominations, the latter with twenty each. However, in the field of philosophy, only the essay *Brazil: founding myth and authoritarian society* by Marilena Chauí (2000) was mentioned. It should be noted that the list includes forty-eight books on the condition of Afro-descendants and sixteen on the condition of indigenous peoples.

What has been the most general symptom of philosophy in Brazil? Why has not Brazilian philosophical thought been created yet? Why have we not overcome the ongoing philosophical colonization following the application of the Jesuits' *Ratio Studiorum*, which was provided to students at the Jesuit College in the city of Salvador da Bahia between 1553 and 1759, within the scope of the Baroque spirit? A spirit that was perpetuated, even after the Jesuits' philosophical catechesis had ended, in view of the political-cultural turn instituted by the Marquis of Pombal, with the intention of renewing the culture of Portugal and the colonies, at the beginning of the Enlightenment. Why is there still no critical study of Brazilian philosophical conception,<sup>4</sup> along the lines of Antonio Candido's studies of the "conception" of Brazilian literature, Caio Prado Júnior's studies of politics and Celso Furtado's studies of economics in the middle of the last century? In the case of economics, the problem was deepened and realigned by Francisco de Oliveira, in *Crítica à Razão Dualista / O ornitorrinco* (1981), when he took up Furtado's thesis that national economic planning is designed to reinforce the maintenance of social inequality and poverty. In addition to the works of the Brazilian interpreters, *Casa Grande & Senzala*, by Gilberto Freyre, *Raízes do Brasil*, by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda and *A revolução burguesa no Brasil*, by Florestan Fernandes. In fact, Florestan completes the roster of intellectuals who critically filtered the foreign production of the sociologies of Durkheim, Marx and Weber at the time they were received, in order to see how they could assist in thinking and understanding Brazil. Florestan initially adhered to functionalism and then to Marxism.

However, the book *Filosofia no Brasil: legados e perspectivas. Ensaios Metafilosóficos* (Metaphilosophical Essays), by Ivan Domingues, is the most elaborate effort to understand and evaluate the symptoms and obstacles to the production of a Brazilian philosophy, by linking, in detail, history and philosophical acceptance in Brazil. Above all, by analyzing the (in)glorious undertakings of Sylvio Romero, Tobias Barreto, and Farias Brito, which can be read in "Step 3", entitled "*Independência, Império e República Velha: o intelectual estrangeirado* (DOMINGUES, 2017, pp. 207-332)." Among other exemplary "Steps" of critical analysis of the state of the art of philosophy in Brazil, starting from the unavoidable fact that "an original thinker did not emerge and, with him, the first Brazilian philosophical school". On the other hand, the author highlights the emergence of pragmatism, establishing North American

<sup>3</sup> Incidentally, see the article on the two hundred years of Brazil's Independence. Available at:

<https://arte.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrissima/2022/05/04/200-livros-importantes-para-entender-o-brasil/>; and

<https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/independencia-200/2021/05/conheca-200-importantes-livros-para-entender-o-brasil.shtml>. Accessed on October 1, 2022.

<sup>4</sup> "... with Paulo Arantes dedicating his book to the formation of USP and opening the way for what would be USP's conception of Brazilian philosophy, which has not yet come to light. However, if there is no book yet, we do not lack the experience and reality of a fresh start, with the post-conception agenda now on the foreground... (DOMINGUES, 2017, p. 50)."

philosophy, the first created in the Americas (DOMINGUES, 2017, p. 50).<sup>5</sup> Of course, one must also consider the cultural background of North American poetry, especially that of Walt Whitman, the North American poet who expressed the poetic and historical dream of the country's early opulence (PAZ, 2012, p. 305), prior to that philosophical creation, while the poet Emerson stuck to naturalism, in a register prior to opulence. Now, poets and novelists fulfilled the task of thinking Brazil, which will be seen below. Without dispensing with Amerindian and African knowledge, which necessarily subsidized Brazilian thinking in an extended way.

*Continuing.* In the wake of *Ratio Studiorum*, from the start to the tide of romantic inspiration in search of a national identity, Brazilianness – the substratum of the "Brazilian soul" – was found in the purity of the native, to the sound of Rousseauian echoes. In concert with the incorporation of the spiritualist eclecticism of Victor Cousin and the positivism, practically *in natura*, of Auguste Comte or mediated by Sylvio Romero and Tobias Barreto, in the context of the Recife School created in the mid-19th century (PAIM, 1966). Without resonating every echo of the acceptance and assimilation of European philosophy from the 19th century onwards, what we have today in the realm of national philosophical studies still seems to be the scales of colonialism, of all kinds, at the whim of decadent Europe ruminating on its ghosts, with no relevant novelties, apart from the remorse of having invented Enlightenment, its consequences and criticisms, under the falsely scorching roof of the nihilistic crossing and the existentialist suffering of the Heideggerian matrix. – "But what does that have to do with us?" Oswald de Andrade – *the most perfect chef of the souls of this world* – had cried out when he conceived anthropophagy, the cultural particularity that "unites us socially, economically, philosophically (ANDRADE, 1928, 1972, p. 226)." As Brazil has almost nothing to do with what united Europeans until the disenchantment with the Enlightenment.

In fact, considerable time was lost scrutinizing the philosophical thought of Europeans and Americans, studied, commented, reviewed, and understood to the limit of rejection, in minutiae. Why persist in the incoherent task of competing with the great dissectors of philosophical lineages, who have an unreachable initial delta, starting with knowledge of Greek, Latin, native languages, as well as the cultural and historical broth of their own production of (their) philosophies? – That is the question! What to do? Rather, what not to do? The anthropophagic calculation foresees devouring everything from foreign cultural production, but symbolically leaving it up to the large intestine to *decide* the choice for *our* appropriation, if it is opportune and necessary for understanding Brazil. Similar to what the Tupinambá did, subjecting their enemies to fattening processes before literally devouring them in order to assimilate as much of their spirit and strength as possible. Apart from this, what could possibly be of interest to philosophy teachers and researchers in Brazil? *If* we can't even emulate the philosophy produced in Europe and the desiccated American philosophy, at the time of reproducing them. – This is the drama of the philosophical colonization just outlined. Perhaps the excess of rigor in the study of philosophical texts, based on structural readings and disregarding the historical contexts of their production, may have inhibited or delayed the experience of free, contradictory and imaginative philosophizing in the Brazilian academic environment, under expectations of the Belgian (1908) and French (1934) missions. The former had organized the Philosophy course at the São Bento College, under a Thomist orientation (MUCHAIL, 1992); the latter, called the "French Overseas Department" – an

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<sup>5</sup> In this regard, Lima Vaz said: "At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, when North American society was growing at a faster pace, we saw the emergence of philosophical currents such as pragmatism, Deweyian instrumentalism and operationalism, which formed a typically North American philosophical thinking. (VAZ, 1978, p. 13)."

expression derived from a joke by Michel Foucault – created the course at USP (ARANTES, 1994). Both in the city of São Paulo.

However, in the continuing tide of updating broadly, a low relief replica of the Prussian political invention of the mid-19th century, we have recently been riding the wave of biopolitics, after that of necropolitics and, today, that of decolonization. The former considered under a French and European perspective. Of course, the notion of necropolitics may be of interest, if assimilated critically. And decolonization surely, if we look at the past contributions that have long pointed to the need of thinking philosophically about the problems of Brazil, the reality of Brazil. But not based on foreign themes and problems, created elsewhere with specific causal links. Rather Brazilian themes and problems, which are different in substance from those theorized by Europeans, for Europeans. Were we a colony, are we still colonized? In what sense? *Literature ahead of time*. Certainly, Machado de Assis, from a burst of comprehension of Europeanized colonialism, had imagined the philosophy of "humanitism", from the proclaimed grievance of the absence of a national philosophy. Such a philosophy would fall under the genre of *satire*, in the Roman sense of the term, educating by debauchery, by mockery. The work of the character Quincas Borba, "who carried a little grain of lunacy", "that same castaway of existence" from *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas*, "beggar, unexpected heir, and inventor of a philosophy", the humanitist (MACHADO de ASSIS, 2015, p. 740). Whose general principle, "Humanitas", is "substance or truth", an "indestructible principle. [...] I call it so because it sums up the universe, and the universe is man." Quincas then tells his friend and caretaker, Rubião, the initial steps of his ingenuity:

"There is no death. The encounter of said expansions, or the expansion of two forms, can determine the suppression of one of them; but, strictly speaking, there is no death, there is life, because the suppression of one is the condition for the survival of the other, and the destruction does not reach the universal and common principle. Hence the conservative and beneficial character of the war. Suppose a potato field and two hungry tribes. The potatoes only serve to feed one of the tribes, which thus acquires strength to cross the mountain and go to the other side, where potatoes are in abundance, but if the two tribes divide the potatoes from the field in peace, they do not get enough nutrition and die of starvation. Peace, in this case, is destruction; war is conservation. One of the tribes exterminates the other and collects the spoils. Hence the joy of victory, the hymns, acclamations, public rewards and all other effects of war actions. If the war were not that, such demonstrations would not be able to happen, for the real reason that man only celebrates and loves what is pleasurable or advantageous, and for the rational reason that no person canonizes an action that virtually destroys him. To the loser, hatred or compassion; to the winner, the potatoes (MACHADO de ASSIS, 1891, 2015, p. 741)."

The doctrinal exposure of Quincas Borba, an idle millionaire transfigured into a philosopher of prosaic rhetoric, combines the modern nuances of philosophy and science, unveiling a pattern of mockery of humanism, that is to say, to classical humanism, positivism and Darwinian evolutionism, backed by the growing social Darwinism.<sup>6</sup> By extension, also to liberalism with its empty promises, but,

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<sup>6</sup> "Critics, especially Barreto Filho, who studied the case best, interpret Humanitism as a satire on Positivism and 19th century philosophical Naturalism in general, mainly from the point of view of the Darwinian theory of the struggle for life with survival of the fittest. But there is also a broader connotation, which transcends satire and sees man as a devouring being in whose dynamics the survival of the fittest is an episode and a particular case. This general and deaf devouring tends to turn man into an instrument of man, and in this respect Machado's work ties in much more than it might seem at first glance with the concepts of alienation and the resulting reification of the personality, dominant in Marxist thought and criticism today and already illustrated by the work of great realists, men as unlike him as Balzac and Zola (ANTONIO CANDIDO, 2011, p. 29)." However, Faoro interprets the Humanitas philosophical program politically: "The end of the program is the real program: to overthrow the ministry. A philosophical doctrine would justify the ambition for power, mitigated and embellished in its coarseness. But philosophy, in essence, teaches no more than the displacement of the party

from a place of backwardness, taking evolutionism as the short straw in the fight against backwardness of all kinds in Brazilian society. This was in contrast to the frivolity of some philosophy professors, who assimilated and incorporated foreign doctrines without the necessary critical cleavage and parsimonious distrust. – Could only a rich man project an extemporaneous philosophy in Brazil, after the Proclamation of the Republic? According to Schwarz, the national backwardness subsidizes Machado's work, which, from a certain point in his literary production, makes use of humor, irony and paraphrase, as he opens the door wide to Brazil's misery, starting with the heinous burden of slavery, among other similar burdens of varying importance, in progress (SCHWARZ, January 1973).<sup>7</sup> In this way, the philosopher Quincas Borba shows what seems to be the combination of subtlety and satire in the background of the drama of Brazil on the periphery of the capitalist order. The motto certainly testifies to an imaginary model for contemporary Brazilian philosophers. Of course, determined by the gravity required of the new miseries of indefinite duration.

– *By any chance*, is it still possible for a philosopher Machado de Assis to appear in Brazil after so much philosophical accumulation and consolidation? A Euclides da Cunha? Another Guimarães Rosa? Is there still a philosopher at the same erudition and intellectual levels of Sergio Buarque de Holanda and Antonio Candido?

*Underpinning the symptoms.* Three questions from Brazilian philosophers, which, under the appropriate explanations and analysis, based on history and everyday life, point to the probable future horizon of a Brazilian philosophy. - Or do they not?

### ***A philosophical understanding of Brazil***

Let us ponder with Cruz Costa (1904-1978), the first doctor of philosophy at USP, about the philosophical understanding of Brazil, its acceptance and the drama of "what to do". In *Contribution to the History of Ideas in Brazil: the development of philosophy in Brazil and a national historical evolution*, published in 1956, he argued that philosophy studies in Brazil should focus on the philosophical understanding of the country. Originally, it was a thesis presented to the College of Philosophy, Sciences and Language of the University of São Paulo, a partial requirement for the chair of Philosophy. At the outset, Cruz Costa argued:

"For thought not to be mere useless fantasy - as King Duarte used to say - it must not lose touch with history, with the real problems of life. [...] (Since) Philosophy is not mere speculation in a vacuum or a simple game of abstract concepts. It is work on real experience and it must be carried out without losing this concrete sense of what it is [...], 'this wisdom born of experience'" (CRUZ COSTA, 1956, pp. 7 e 22).

To which Cruz Costa asked: "What value can a culture have that does not aim to understand what we are, that moves away from the conditions of the land and that does not attend to the curious lines of our destiny?" And he added, avoiding the latent trap:

"Without rejecting foreign cultures that express a richer historical experience than ours - which is a precious inheritance we have received - we must draw from them a lesson that allows us, first and foremost, to understand who we are." For, "we would be more than ineffective, we would be

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in charge by another that wants to be in charge. In this manipulation of formulas and words, the ingredients of the two traditional parties were mixed and confused: 'defending the healthy principles of freedom and conservation'. (FAORO, 1976, p. 167)."

<sup>7</sup> On the subject of "Misplaced ideas" (1973), see "Why 'misplaced ideas'?" (SCHWARZ, 2012, pp. 165-172).

ridiculous, if after the lesson that these cultures teaches us, we still remained inattentive to the fascinating problems that touch us most closely (CRUZ COSTA, 1956, p. 7)."

At the same time, he recalled that by "Europe's hand [...] we made our entrance onto the stage of history at a time of crisis for Western culture." "Europe imposed its languages, its religion, its ways of life on us, in short, its civilization." So much so that no cultural bias was in force in the lands invaded by the colonizers. Religion, rites, caring for nature, food, raising children, etc. However, if

"We in America have no right to speak of a properly American civilization," yet "we can [...] speak of an American experience, one that has been slowly formed over these four centuries of dramatic efforts to build peoples and adapt Western civilization to the conditions of our continent. However, our life has taken place in a different setting and our actors belong to all shades of humanity." To conclude, "In this scenario, time has also passed, history has also been made and from this history comes a human experience, a philosophy that has only been sketched out, but which, for us, is of the highest value (CRUZ COSTA, 1956, p. 14)."

Based – in passing – on the historicist thinking of Benedetto Croce, he wrote: "We must not forget, however, that history excludes certain restorations. It is not designed to restore, but to free (itself) from the past." Thus, "philosophy finds truth in its adequacy to reality." To which he added: "This reality is not permanent, but historical. When history changes, philosophy must necessarily also change (CRUZ COSTA, 1956, p. 24)."

Antonio Candido said that "Cruz Costa insisted ceaselessly on the need to apply reflection to Brazil, even if this meant departing from a strictly conceived philosophy (ARANTES, 1993, p. 23).<sup>8</sup>

– *By any chance*, had Cruz Costa entered Oswald's anthropophagic conception? Of course, he had not been immune to it, he had touched on it without fully embracing it.

### ***Critique of Tupiniquim Reason***

*Disquiet*. Roberto Gomes, in *Critique of Tupiniquim Reason*, 1977, questions what a "tupiniquim reason" might be; certainly, one that considers the Brazilian way of thinking philosophically, in its own way, considering, above all, the place Brazil, its original locus. Not from elsewhere. So, emblematically, without Cartesian sternness, the mask of excessive seriousness, at least apparent, of the Europeans, which, in a generic way, we try to reproduce. That of tedious ideas, clear and distinct. Remembering President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, in a radio address on a Friday morning, he came out with this: "I'm a Cartesian with one foot in Candomblé". Foreseen by Paulo Leminski who, in *Catatau*, transformed Descartes into a military dandy in the army of Maurício de Nassau, who landed in Recife at the time of Dutch Brazil. From where Cartesian rationalism is duly tropicalized, with lots of "cachaça" and *cannabis*. We are not serious in everyday life; we make fun of almost everything. So why should we dress up in European common sense to reproduce the philosophy of the mother country? What kind of bad conscience is that? We are Brazilians, fans of easy laughter and good humor, an eloquent sign of refined intelligence, according to Freud. Believers of the religiosity of soccer, the intertwining of the sacred and the profane, but subjected to the violence that burns books, ideas and people in public squares and in the dungeons of dictatorships, official or otherwise. Firmly convinced of structural racism, reiterated in the hideous fact of slavery. We love laziness, which is the rhythm of nature in us, the "divine laziness"

<sup>8</sup> For a distanced critique of Cruz Costa's position, see "*Uma história dos paulistas no seu desejo de ter uma Filosofia*" (ARANTES, 1993, pp. 319-347). See also "*Instinto de nacionalidade: Cruz Costa e herdeiros nos idos de 60*" (ARANTES (1984), 1994, pp. 102-126).

spoken of by Mário de Andrade, the field of expression of free and unruly sensuality, inherited from the times of colonial Brazil. We are poor by birth. Brazil had entered the framework of the old Portuguese mercantilism head-on,<sup>9</sup> as an alienated supplier of raw materials: sugar, tobacco, gold, diamonds, and coffee. Darcy Ribeiro wrote that from the beginning we were transformed into foreign labor for the colonizing Portuguese. And in a way, on a large scale, we still are, through agribusiness and extractivism. Seeing that national industry, which grew at a gallop from the 1930s onwards, began to decline from 1977 onwards, according to Bresser Pereira. Could there be a parallel between mercantilism and the entry of philosophy into Brazil? Do we, by any chance, find ourselves transfigured into a philosophical workforce, endorsing European and North American creations? Understanding them to exhaustion, without producing our own? Without reaching the heights of their original productions? Incidentally, Gomes pondered:

"Immersed in a Greco-Roman scuba – although neither Greek nor Roman – Brazilians are running away from their identity. It has been in philosophy that the human spirit has sought this self-revelation. However, Brazilians, self-complacent and conformists, serious subjects, have not yet produced their own philosophy. It is therefore necessary to warn that Brazilian thought has never been where it has been sought: university theses, undergraduate and postgraduate courses, specialized journals." [...] For, "In the mold of our 'official thinking' there is no sign of an attitude that assumes Brazil and intends to think of it in our terms. Apart from the overly technical and sterile verbiage, the general ideas, the theses that we know in advance how they will conclude, the well-thought-out ideas, we find nothing that points to the presence of a Brazilian thought among our 'official philosophers', victims of a discourse that does not think, it raves (GOMES, 1977, pp. 11-12). " To which he adds: "It is not a question of 'inventing' a Tupiniquim Reason, but of proposing a project, a certain type of pretension, certainly quixotic, and obviously absurd: to think *what* one is, *how* one is (GOMES, 1977, p. 12)."<sup>10</sup>

Freud said that everything he looked for in the hope of finding something new, art had achieved before. If art often anticipated what philosophy would come to understand later, what should we do at a time when art, great art, supposedly does not seem to express the present time? The vicissitudes of today. However, it seems to rehash what were recent artistic and aesthetic inventions, but with an air of the past. Philosophy also faces the same dilemma, that of igniting past production, in a generalized way, from positivist, Marxian, Nietzschean, neo-Kantian, logical-mathematical, phenomenological, existentialist, analytical, structuralist, and post-structuralist matrices, entering the biological, paired with Darwin's theory of evolution, as well as the psychoanalytical, and, to the limit, quantum mechanics. Thus, the time is ripe for philosophy scholars in Brazil to pay attention to the Brazilian reality, the History of Brazil, our way of being, the joy and tragedy of being Brazilian. Without fear or shame, distancing ourselves from the moldy standards of European and North American philosophies. Beyond the "extreme attachment to the thinking of others for judging that only others can give us any key to knowledge". (GOMES, 1977, p. 22)." As if they were precise keys to understanding the Brazilian being, sometimes without considering the present time.

However, there is a lot of accrued wisdom in Brazilian popular songs. For example, Noel Rosa parodying positivism, the country's most popular philosophy: "*Love has its principle, order its basis /*

<sup>9</sup> See NOVAIS, F. "O Brasil nos quadros do antigo sistema colonial". (MOTA, 1977, pp. 47-63).

<sup>10</sup> If the expression "tupiniquim reason" revealed a certain pre-judgment about the wisdom of Brazil's native peoples, today, on the contrary, there is a growing interest in this wisdom, especially regarding the man-nature metabolism portrayed in the autobiographical testimony of the Yanomami shaman, Davi Kopenawa. (KOPENAWA; ALBERT, 2015).



progress must come after / you forgot this law of Auguste Comte / and went to be happy away from me."<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, by Monsueto Menezes' rhyme appealing to "it's philosophy / why rhyme love and sorrow?..."<sup>12</sup> foreseen in Oswald de Andrade's verse: "Amor / humor" (love/mood). As well as all the social criticism contained in the songs of Chico Buarque, Milton Nascimento, and Aldir Blanc. And Caetano Veloso's, in line with the mockery of common sense: "It's been proven that it's only possible to philosophize in German..."<sup>13</sup> Above all, in the Tropicália aesthetic intervention, not only in music, but also in theater, cinema and the plastic arts, perhaps the last appraisal of Brazilian culture stirring up latent or explicit residual traumas. Unveiled by Favaretto in *Tropicália: alegoria, alegria* (allegory, glee) (1979), using Benjaminian philosophy and notions of psychoanalysis in a decolonized way. Taking both as tools for critical thinking.

Brazil's excellent poetry can provide the basis for the creation of a homeland philosophy, not necessarily steeped in conservative, authoritarian patriotism. From the universal bard of Minas Gerais, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, to the lyricism of Manuel Bandeira, the refined poetics of Murilo Mendes and the sober, cerebral poetry of João Cabral de Melo Neto. Alongside the acidic and demolishing poetry of Oswald de Andrade, who shook the skeletons of the moralism of customs in the transition from rural to urban Brazil, and Mário de Andrade, who set aesthetic standards at the time of an ecstatic Orpheus in the mighty city of *Zan Baolo*. As well as the unique lyricism of the most expressive poet of the 1960s generation, Mário Faustino (1930-1962), devoted to ethos and existential tragedy, identifiable in the poem "Balada (In memory of a suicidal poet)": "He couldn't sign the noble pact / Between the bloody cosmos and the pure soul / But he didn't bend to the fact / That chaos was victorious over the noble / Will to order the creature / At least: light to the south of the storm. / A dead but intact gladiator (So much violence, but so much tenderness) / Thrown into a sea of suffering (FAUSTINO, 1985, p. 115)."<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the few immense national novelists, at the forefront, Machado de Assis, ironizing the slave-owning nation with no apparent historical destination; Graciliano Ramos, demythologizing the tragedy of the Northeast in *Vidas Secas*, and the intolerable absence of freedom under the Vargas dictatorship, in *Memórias do Cárcere*; Guimarães Rosa, in *Grande Sertão: Veredas*, in which the backwoods became the stage for covert, intestinal wars; the saga of the pampas, in Érico Veríssimo; Raduan Nassar dealing with the neurotic family novel in *Lavoura Arcaica*, and Clarice Lispector shuffling the obtuseness and vulgarity of the suffocating malaise of everyday life. In particular, Lima Barreto, a poor Afro-Brazilian, asylum inmate, was certainly the most significant living metaphor of Brazil at the beginning of the 20th century. For a long time, literature had the function of reflecting on Brazil.

From the universe of the Brazilian cinema, especially the Cinema Novo (New Cinema) (BERNARDET, 2007), there are various possibilities for understanding Brazil, given the critical exposure of many social themes, potential substrates to provide elements for the creation of a proper Brazilian philosophy. Thus, Glauber Rocha, in an interview with *Positif – revue de cinema*, given to E. T. Greville, entitled "Glauber speaks to Europe", exposed the relevance of cinema by including extremely Brazilian

<sup>11</sup> Access link to the samba "Positivismo", by Noel Rosa. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDNXg\\_KdTM0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDNXg_KdTM0). Accessed on: 12/12/2022.

<sup>12</sup> Link to the samba "Mora na filosofia", by Monsueto Menezes. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ssfwerdOqVk>. Accessed on: 12/12/2022.

<sup>13</sup> Link to the song "Língua", by Caetano Veloso. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsqoCBfueYo>. Accessed on 12/12/2022.

<sup>14</sup> The character Paulo Martins, played by Jardel Filho, journalist and poet, in Glauber Rocha's *Terra em Transe*, 1967, recites parts of Mário Faustino's poems in the movie.

themes relating to mysticism, messianism, authoritarianism, agrarian reform, candomblé, politics, revolution, populism, urban guerrilla warfare and industrialism in low relief. Exemplarily, those oriented to the production of accessories for the newly created automobile industry, shown in Luiz Person's film *São Paulo S.A.*, 1965. Glauber recognized cultural colonialism and the aesthetic and political struggle against it (GREVILLE, January 1968).

Remembering that Greek philosophy was the invention of an autodidact, an original creator, with no previous baggage other than the epic poems and the reality of the radical, accelerated socio-political changes taking place in Greece from the 7th century BC until the passage from oral tradition to the establishment of writing. Yet, why do we lack so much philosophical baggage if we can't create our own philosophical way of thinking? Is there, in fact, a real desire for such a creation? Perhaps the excess of knowledge of philosophy and the history of philosophy in our universities, which are so bureaucratized and bureaucratizing, continues to hinder the emergence of our own national thinking, based on our own problems. Gomes reflects:

"[...] philosophy is a reason that expresses itself – a formula in which the word reason appears filled with historicity. And a Brazilian philosophy would need to be the stripping of this reason that we have become. Whether it is due to an excess of modesty or fear, the fact is that, to this day, we have not stripped. Perhaps for fear of finding nothing underneath our European clothes... (GOMES, 1977, p. 25)."

Following the publication of *Critique of Tupiniquim Reason*, Gerd Bornheim published the essay "Philosophy and national reality" (BORNHEIM, 1980).<sup>15</sup> Gomes and Bornheim agreed that philosophy in Brazil needs to take care of the singularity of Brazilian problems, in order to abandon the aspects of neutrality and universality. But having to pay attention to Brazil's cultural plurality at all levels, in order to create the conditions to get closer to true thinking: that of the streets, that of the people, with their wisdom still to be heightened to broader conceptual categories. Thus, referring to the problem of decolonization. Pointing to the invention of a popular philosophy. Of course, with the exception of the conservative political turnarounds it might contain. Operating as a steppingstone towards the construction of a Brazilian philosophy.

### ***Lack of a theme in Brazilian philosophy***

*Paulo Arantes*. In this regard, Paulo Arantes, the best-known Brazilian public intellectual of our time, said:

*"In Brazil, the lack of a theme in philosophy is almost a fatality. All the more reason to turn it into a problem. It is not a question of talent, but of training. It is not even a question of personal training, although one does not come without the other. Nowadays, the latter is available to everyone in the country's good universities. In fact, there is no other way, since contemporary philosophical culture is essentially university-based, one specialty among many. It turns out that this ideal of harmonious*

<sup>15</sup> "The problem with a specifically national philosophy, which finds its criterion (I would say validity) in its autochthonous character, has been repeatedly raised in Latin America. Of course, this is part of a much wider complex of issues: it is a process that aims to overcome a situation of cultural inferiority through the assertion of a national 'language'. And national means, among other things, but above all, establishing the status of a non-dependent culture based on the claim for national autonomy, even if it is not exclusive. Thus, what would be at issue would be the very being of these peoples, listening to their deepest nature, the only guarantee of being able to build a truly national profile. And it would be up to the commitment of philosophical concepts to translate the richness of the reality of the various countries into unmistakable rational categories. [...] (However), the whole problem of the relationship between philosophy and national reality necessarily ends up revolving around the concept of difference. And it is only then that the problem can begin to be solved (BORNHEIM, 1980, pp. 93 e 103, respectively)."

intellectual formation becomes a golden fiction as soon as we return it to the raw ground of the set of singularities shaped over time by the unequal expansion of capitalism. An uncompensated world system that stubbornly leaves our philosophers literally stumped (ARANTES, 1993, p. 23)."

Yet, he finishes his reasoning by debunking the philosophical pretensions in *Terrae Brasilis*. Arantes turns to the bard Mário de Andrade: "our national development is not natural, it is not spontaneous, is not, so to speak, logical (ARANTES, 1993, p. 24)." Because

"Naturalness, spontaneity and logic are obviously on the other side of the ocean. Faced with the 'mess', the 'filth of contrasts' that we are, there is no doubt that the ideal of harmony and wholeness can only be the relatively consistent link that in the European tradition associates the life of the spirit with the whole of social life (ARANTES, 1993, p. 24)."

Much as philosophy is part of the dominant ideology, there is a causal link between the philosophy produced and the European historical ground. Here, philosophy resembled an exotic flower, sprouted in another garden, other than the thought cultivated by the autochthones, the original peoples of Pindorama, the authentic Amerindian thought, disqualified and, consequently, devalued with the invasion of the colonizers. The same happened with the African thought mirrored in the ancestral wisdom of the enslaved people brought from Africa, who had no opportunity to express themselves during the entire period of colonial Brazil. However, without a direct link to that wisdom, during the Empire only the writers of African descent Luis Gama and Machado de Assis expressed themselves. In the First Republic, Lima Barreto and Maria Firmina dos Reis. From the 1950s onwards, Carolina de Jesus, Carlos Marighella, Abdias do Nascimento, Milton Santos, Joel Rufino dos Santos, and Conceição Evaristo. Contrary to what happened in music, where many Afro-descendants appeared on the artistic scene in a unique way. Which makes one wonder how much effort it took Machado de Assis, who was self-taught, to keep up with European philosophical speculation, transposed into the very fine material of his literature and theater.

Still according to Arantes,

"Compared to literature, philosophy occupies a subordinate place in the national cultural panorama. [...] the ideological cornerstone represented by literature, which has been here 'the central phenomenon of the life of the spirit': a literary inflation at the service of national consciousness, of exposing and revealing Brazil to Brazilians. [...] this was not even remotely the case with philosophy, which did not add experiences." As he illustrates, "Anyone who has perused João Cruz Costa's historiography in shirtsleeves will find, somewhat suffocated and unjustly tempted to attribute to its author the lack of perspective that came from the second-hand material he was dealing with, that strictly speaking nothing is going on in it, nothing is connected, except for the nonsensical quilt of rhetorical artifacts designed to dazzle his confreres (ARANTES, 1993, p. 24)." Cruz Costa regretted the afternoons in which he analyzed Farias Brito's philosophy, to him "philosophical fumes". (ARANTES, 1993, p. 30)."

However, there is something new on the horizon of Brazilian academic philosophical research. It refers to four theses with innovative themes: the first, defended by Luis Thiago Freire Dantas at UFPR, entitled *Filosofia desde África: perspectivas descoloniais (Philosophy from Africa: decolonial perspectives)*, honorable mention from ANPOF, 2018; the second, by Felipe Beltran Katz, *Contra a cordialidade: análise do conceito de homem cordial na obra de Sergio Buarque de Holanda (Against cordiality: an analysis of the concept of the cordial man in the work of Sergio Buarque de Holanda)* by the PPG in Philosophy at PUC-SP, same year; the third, by Ubiratane de Moraes Rodrigues, *A estética da*

*pré-aparência (Vor-Schein) como antecipação transgressiva em Ernst Bloch (The aesthetics of pre-appearance (Vor-Schein) as transgressive anticipation in Ernst Bloch)*, assembled with the analysis of the transgressive aesthetics of Vidas Secas, by Graciliano Ramos, defended in 2020, by the PPG in Philosophy at USP; and the fourth, defended at PUC-SP, in 2021, authored by Rafael Ávila Matede, under the title *Caderno de axé: notas sobre filosofia de terreiro (Axé notebook: notes on terreiro philosophy)*. The latter addresses the entry of philosophy into the candomblé “terreiro,” a practice that has been anticipated by cultural anthropology for decades.

However, here are some probable problem-issues that cannot be postponed that destabilize the state of the art of philosophy in Brazil: *preservation of nature, biophilia; social justice; ontonegativity of politics; cordiality, violence and counter-violence; crisis of the human sciences; straitjacket of technoscience; social self-management, autonomy of work; concrete utopia; humor; soccer, – profane religiosity; horizon of a libidinal civilization; racial and gender prejudices in the field of social inequality; carnival, – “the religious event of the race” –; plastic arts; Brazilian popular music; Tropicália; national cinema and dramaturgy; popular culture; ancestry of native peoples; territoriality; laziness, – “the wise solar laziness” –; phenomenology of the Brazilian;<sup>16</sup> Brazilian philosophical anthropology;<sup>17</sup> candomblé etc. Themes arranged in such a way as to turn philosophy studies toward an understanding of Brazil. In detail, forged from the construction of a language specific to Brazilian philosophy. Philosophy ebbed from the symptoms and signs in the works of Mário Ferreira dos Santos, Álvaro Vieira Pinto, Lima Vaz, Leandro Konder, José Chasin, Paulo Freire, and, off the domain of philosophy, Muniz Sodré. Also limited to revisiting the Latin American philosophy of liberation project and, in particular, literature, especially Brazilian poetry.<sup>18</sup>*

### **Setting in motion**

Without any exhortatory tone, concluding with what is plausible and on the margins of what is necessary, the motto of this essay is to think about Brazil from the point of view of philosophy. So, let us get to grips with Brazilian reality, – an anachronistic expression – Brazilian history. To this end, read all of Brazil's renegade interpreters (PERICÁS; SECCO, 2014). In this way, we pay attention to everyday life, to the proletarianization of social classes, to the Brazilian macunaima-like being, with a keen eye for the nuances of Brazilian culture, to the literati – poets, novelists, and playwrights – popular and erudite musicians – with Villa-Lobos at the helm. In tune with the films of the so-called Cinema Novo, marked by the aesthetics of hunger, in tandem with the Tropicália aesthetic-political intervention. Thus, the chronic lack of a theme in philosophy in Brazil could – it is to be believed – draw raw material from this cultural ballast for the creation of a Brazilian philosophy, from the locus Brazil! Preferably methodically inspired by Oswaldian anthropophagy. After all, at a time when philosophy is most in need of a theoretical basis for understanding and critical weapons to combat neo-fascism underway in the country, philosophy seems to lack such an arsenal. Because the foreign philosophical-political thought matrices *do not seem* to be able to grasp the particularity of the phenomenon in order to

<sup>16</sup> Suggested theme replicated from the title of the book *Fenomenologia do Brasileiro* (FLUSSER, 1988).

<sup>17</sup> Initially, consider “Brava gente brasileira: pequeno ensaio sobre sociedade e Estado por ocasião do V Centenário” (SANTOS, 1999, pp. 977-994).

<sup>18</sup> By Gregório de Matos Guerra, Castro Alves, Mário de Andrade, Oswald de Andrade, Murilo Mendes João Cabral, Mário Faustino, João Cabral, Paulo Leminski, the Campos brothers. – Carlos Drummond de Andrade, on starboard.

sustain a strong enough political philosophy in the face of the authoritarian scenario. - Except for Ernst Bloch's little-read book, *Heritage of Our Times*, 1934.

However, Hegel recorded that "To conceptualize *what is*, is the task of philosophy, for *what is*, is reason. As far as the individual is concerned, each is in every way a *child of their time*; so, philosophy is also its time *apprehended in thoughts* (HEGEL, 2022, p. 142)." Lima Vaz, following in Hegel's footsteps, but with a different register, said:

"...at a given historical moment, philosophy is the response that a society brings to the double demand of critically reflecting and theoretically explaining the values and representations that make intelligible, or at least acceptable, for the individuals who live in it, a way of being, that is, a way of living and dying, of imagining and knowing, of loving and working, [...] etc., which constitutes a legacy of tradition, and which individuals must assume and, in fact, have already assumed even before being able to answer for it, or justify it in the face of reason itself. (VAZ, 1978, p. 7)."

Perhaps the time has come to think about what Brazil is, in an idle way, but symmetrical to the urgencies of the present time. Because only the particular can become universal. However, without abandoning the accrual of philosophical knowledge, or the current themes of global society, to be redefined beyond a colonial-biased agenda. Without abandoning philosophy! – Since, philosophically, to think is to transgress, preferably using the anthropophagic formula: "The joy of ignorance that discovers". Without schematizing, philosophy in Brazil could promote its "philosophical turn", along the lines of the one created during the Modern Art Week of 1922 and its extensions, which, roughly speaking, it devoured by disowning the literary schools and plastic arts consolidated in Europe, while critically incorporating the novelties of the European modernist manifestos of the early 20th century. Determining the invention and originality of Brazilian art, by trying to expose the Brazilian way of being, under the arch of culture beyond foreign arrivals, filtered from hordes of the national-popular universe.<sup>19</sup>

After all, Oswald de Andrade, under the aesthetic-political, anthropophagic umbrella, had noted:

"We were never catechized. What we did was Carnival. The Indian dressed up as a Senator of the Empire. [...] We already had communism. We already had the surrealist language. [...] because we never had grammars or collections of old vegetables. [...] But we never admitted the birth of logic among us. [...] We had no speculation. [...] We had divination. We had Politics, which is the science of distribution. And a social-planetary system. [...] The millionaire contribution of all mistakes. How we speak. How we are (ANDRADE, 1924 e 1928, 1972, pp. 204, 227-230)."

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<sup>19</sup> However, it should be noted that the modernist project had been traveling through time since the end of the 19th century, basically through Eduardo Prado's dialogue with Eça de Queiroz, among others. Eduardo Prado, whose family controlled coffee production and foreign trade for decades. To Hardman, subsidized by São Paulo's agro-commercial oligarchy, and expressed by the regional intellectual elite, what was intended by the Modern Art Week, beyond the intentions of an aesthetic turnaround, was the political consolidation of a country project, under the hegemony of the paulistas. (HARDMAN, 2022).

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