

## New protests, old paradigms.

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### Abstract

The 2013 June/July protests in Brazil have evoked analyses from social sciences experts, from perplexity to the description of specific factors that explain the great social manifestation on the streets. This article picks some of the diagnoses published by the press at large and connects them to a crisis in paradigms that has been dealt with, in an interdisciplinary fashion, in seminars and essays published in the “Novo Pacto da Ciência” series, created by the author in 1991 at the Escola de Comunicações e Artes.

**Keywords:** social movements; paradigm crises; reflections and journalistic coverage; social sciences and communication; epistemology of current discourses.

On July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013, two articles published by the São Paulo press have gone back to analyzing the protests that started at full force on June 6<sup>th</sup> in Brazilian cities. One day earlier, on Sunday the 14<sup>th</sup>, I collected the third text that I mention in this article. “Extremamente alto e incrivelmente perto – Manifestações são grandes e intuitivas demais para uma apreensão racional” (“Extremely high and incredibly close – protests are too big and intuitive for rational apprehension”), article written by Carlos Ayres Brito, published on the *Ilustríssima* section of the *Folha de S. Paulo*, contrasts in its own title with the two others from the following day: “O marciano, o Brasil e Aristóteles” (“The Martian, Brazil and Aristotle”), by Denis Lerrer Rosenfeld, on *O Estado de S. Paulo* and “Armadilhas para Dilma” (“Traps for Dilma”), by Maria Sylvia Carvalho Franco on *Folha*. Philosopher, sociologist and jurist read the contemporary happening from distinct viewpoints, which could be welcomed as polyphonic and polysemic plurality were it not for the contrast between paradigms that conceptually

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schematize the social-cultural reality and restless notions that interrogate the human happening.

The philosopher from the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, a frequent writer of the *Estado*, employs a metaphor – the Martian visiting classic Greece and, in an imaginary time jump, also visits current Brazilian streets – but soon abandons the alien scare to seek refuge in Aristotelian logic to defend a closed diagnosis. Rosenfeld analyses thus the movement that intended to mobilize the country for a general strike (Thursday, July 11<sup>th</sup>) and facing the reduction of protests led by left-wing parties and unions, drops the playful view of the Martian and closes on the conceptual framing of *autonomy* of crowds of protestors before the general strike and heteronomy of movements “controlled by partisan and bureaucratic apparatuses commonly used by the left-wing”, according to this reflection, with the goal of annihilating independent protests from society at large. The author follows with this critical outlook until, in the last phrase, he returns to the metaphorical tone of assertive morality: “Our Martian friend, confused, decided to return to his planet. At least there ruled coherence and rationality.”

Rationality, sure, which is also exposed by the philosopher/sociologist Maria Sylvia Carvalho Franco. Coherence, not so much, since the writer seeks not the path of a Martian, but thought in several tracks of contemporary political factual. At times it turns to historical roots (despite its area of expertise is sociology) and runs after the origins of liberal practical capitalism that legitimize slavery; it at times slips for Portuguese absolutism and its inheritance “in the arbitrary control and spoliatory economy”; at time it speaks to the president, gender companion, to remind her that, “forgetful” of these facts, “has fallen in traps, some built into her own ideology”. After enumerating said traps, it includes among them the protestors, which, according to Maria Sylvia, represent “cloudy apolitics”. Or in a way that is safer for the analytical reasoning of the author, “a warmed up version of secular liberal ideology”, the strengthening of the individual generated on the Internet. From there it’s hard to follow the diagnosis/prognostic from the article, because the argument loses its path and is undecided on whether, after all, the commentator is for or against the protesting

individuals and contemporary technology, since its conclusion goes for an incoherent reading over the rationality of affirmed concepts: “As all techniques, it is a medium for actions of whose the meaning is defined by its actors and its ends”.

Recognizing the rational challenge of these two intellectuals, I’d rather go for the intuitive transparency of Carlos Ayres Brito. And this is not a recent occurrence, since when he was a member and president of the Supreme Court I had already noted him in historical pronouncements like during the vote of the scientific use of stem cells, which I even quote in the book *Ciência e Jornalismo, da herança positivista ao diálogo dos afetos* (2008, p.40-46). At the time and on other striking situations in which he acted before retiring, the vote mirrored rational informative rigor, allied to creative intuition and ethical conscience. A poet-jurist or some other solidary sensibility connected to the abstraction of ideas. But let’s go back to street protests, those that to Ayres Brito are “too big and intuitive for rational apprehension”. For starters, he projects himself, alongside analysts, in a field of difficulty by “handling the unknowable, namely, with objects, facts, events, phenomena that are part of a third state of reality: the mystery”. To recognize the knowable side of reality and the unknowable is, to the jurist, a substantial step for a contemporary epistemology that transcends rational and irrational, the former as the non-functioning of the latter. But it has to identify, with scientific humility, the *non-rationality*, which Ayres Brito christens as *mystery*.

In the wisdom suffered of those who saw themselves compelled to judge the whole life, it signals with his words towards the acceptance of the limits of rationality: “In a phrase, no matter how large the number of empirical occurrences, things said to be unknowable do not lend themselves to theoretical generalizations or anticipated methodical classification. Inconceptuable in block or a priori indescribable”. Poet, he loves paradoxes: “(...) the generically record is what opens itself to all and any form in concrete”. He appeal, as in other opportunities, to Fernando Pessoa: “Nations are mysteries. Each one is a whole world separately.” To Ayres Brito, connected to the questioning of old paradigms, it is important not to let yourself be imprisoned in the cubicle of previously elaborated concepts. He then turns back to the vitality of the Brazilian streets which, again poetically, expose with the brightness of the high sun of

the Northeast region the illnesses like corruption, as well as others that do not fit in the rancidity of corporate agenda. What is sought? Intuitively we guess: the nonexistent is sought. Or as the jurist rescues from Jung that “in dialogue so medicinally therapeutic as spiritually propaedeutic” he says to his interlocutor: “Dad, if your tiny one tells you *I saw you tomorrow*, you can believe it, because he indeed has seen”.

Despite many and varied opinions regarding the facts unleashed on June 6<sup>th</sup>, Carlos Ayres Brito occupies the printed page of the Sunday edition of a major paper not to enact an explanation but to attempt comprehension, “a commentary of who gropes things submerged in fog and only understood by glimpses. Imagination. Rudimentary insights, at best.” He then goes on to say that he learned with the crickets, not men, that it’s worth it to gnaw all the peel of the night to reach the white insides of the day.

The three writers offer the opportunity to remember the first inter and transdisciplinary seminar that I organized at the Escola de Comunicações e Artes (ECA) of the Universidade de São Paulo in 1990 and resulted in a series names *Novo Pacto da Ciência* (New Pact of Science), which comes from the title of the book that collects debates and essays of scientists from several fields, a set of reflections regarding “the fragmentalist discourse of science and the crisis of paradigms” (1991). Immediately after that, the integrated research project was accredit with CNPq during the last decade of the previous century and now the collection has eleven editions, each one with the pluralist characters in its exchange of human, biological and exact sciences, as well as the meeting of science and art. For the integrated groups in this discussion, be it in universities of São Paulo or other states, be it in Brazil or other countries (Argentina; Portugal, where seminars were made with this nature), the changes in world view, cultural behavior and scientific work methodology constitute a familiar theme, also present in master’s and doctorate research of the group called *Projeto Plural e a Crise de Paradigmas* (Plural Project and the Crisis of Paradigms, ECA and Prolam/USP).

In any case, it’s worth it to remember the inaugural moment and the main teachings that have, since then, surfaced not only in the sphere of communication Science, but in the inter and transdisciplinary sharing. Only some notions that serve the analysis of the three writers before the contemporary reality of the street protests in

Brazil. The Denis Lerrer Rosenfield axis is raised around the logic of coherence, based on Aristotelian philosophy. Well, in the 1990 seminar, a mathematician proposed, internationally, the *paraconsistent logic*. Logician, epistemologist and historian of science, Newton da Costa, a math professor from USP, started talking about this notion in the 1950s, but it was only during the 1970s that in which *metalogic*, *metamathematics* or *paraconsistent logic* became established in the area. For the scientist, the consistent logic would stay beside the paraconsistent one. During the seminary, in a long conversation with Newton da Costa, he mentioned other important kinship that include contradictions in the worldview or the comprehension of facts. In Freud and the psychoanalysis process, plenty of reflection regarding contraction was collected; likewise in Marx and in dialectics. The polish logician Stanislaw Jaskowski, in 1948, and Newton da Costa, in 1953, unbeknown to each other, walked alongside each other. The Brazilian mathematician, however, even then thought that even in Aristotle one can glimpse the possibility of paraconsistent.

The disquiet before the paradigmatic classic models by Newton da Costa manifests in five questions registered in the first edition of *Novo Pacto da Ciência* (1991, p. 40):

- 1) Rationality and logic do, in some way, coincide?
- 2) If there are several logics, could the same be said about types of reason?
- 3) Are heterodox logics, indeed, rivals of the classic ones?
- 4) What are the existing relations between logic, language and empirical sciences?
- 5) Does logic, in its current stage of development, compromise itself with philosophical propositions, in particular with definite ontological structures?

Questions such as these feed by themselves constant work not only in the field of mathematics, but in all areas of knowledge. Interpretative reading of street protests seem to go alongside such epistemological speculations, but they don't. I dare to infer that street crowds, be those spontaneous or articulated on the Internet or summoned by organized social groups, they by no means fit in any way into a logic without contradictions. Likewise, the production of News – as I registered in the 1970s book *Notícia, um produto à venda* – reflects the symbolic reality in a process of conflict and contradictions. Only the determinists, in general from economic determinism, frame the journalistic information in this ideological pre-mold and do not notice and do not notice the interplay of contradictory forces in which is inscribed (in the broad sense, independently of technological support) the narrative of contemporaneity. And thus the current coverage of street protests, even more so than the commentary, if not filled with adjudicative arrogance, is open to interrogation and to the *contradictory truths* of the interpretation of facts.

I take this moment to return to the transdisciplinary seminar and to make a homage to one of the collaborators who passed away, the chemist Atilio Vanin (1944-2001) who vocalized, through the paradigmatic crisis in his area, the growing complexity of it. Even though the researcher may count with increasingly more advanced equipment in his lab, the observation cannot rely on pre-established models, in what Vanin welcomed the permanent return to the freedom of thinking. Maybe it was exactly because of this that he was so sensitive towards Art. In a later meeting that brought together scientists and artists, Atilio Vanin took the opportunity to confess his respect and fruition towards *indiscipline* and *indetermination* of poetic creation. But a bigger surprise regarding the unruly imaginary comes from behind the wall of the psychiatric hospital. And it is from this madness – the other truth – that also appears the testimony of the psychologist João Frayze-Pereira (USP), who since the Bienal de São Paulo of 1981 organized the epiphanic meeting between International Art and Uncommon Art of subjects and former subjects of psychiatry. For those who seek the only truth or the cohesive interpretation of the world, Frayze-Pereira indicates the opposite way of the *other truth* within a mental hospital. This behind-the-wall

knowledge, he said in such seminary in 1990, alongside the recognized culture of the city, rescues in a certain way the non-culture. How are we prepared, today, to read the street if we know so little of its underground, the other side of the flipside?

Sociologists like José Carlos Bruni, another USP partner, have brought to the seminar above mentioned, a rare humble epistemology in these discussions that ended with unrest regarding social movements. For him, the classic paradigms were in crisis by the mere experience of the street. If chemists, physicists, mathematicians rebelled against the watertight scientific concepts or ideological dogmas, why should a social scientist be chained to the exclusive category of social class? Bruni, facing the theoretical shake-up of Marxism and functionalism, also proposed in the *Novo Pacto da Ciência* the open creation of categories to understand social movements, reinterpreting social agents, rediscovering society as totality, re-studying the power and political dimension. To him it's not about explaining the world under the light of a new paradigm, but, in a deeper vision, to open reflection on criticism and freedom over the ways of insertion in human life. Another participant, sociologist Milton Greco, but also with a degree in biology (dental surgeon), defended the emergence of new paradigms that weren't closed into themselves, which would add permanent uncertainty to the scientific experience. Greco, like other representatives of distinct areas of knowledge, have accepted with due respect, in layman terms, the classic frontiers and offered themselves to build the inter and transdisciplinary dichotomy, a bet of my effort from social communication.

I spent four months talking with each guest to rehearse the one-day seminary (morning and afternoon) at ECA in 1990. Maybe the biggest difficulty was noticed in the meeting of two physicists, Sílvio Salinas, from the field of Mechanics, and Newton Bernardes (1931-2007), from Quantum Physics. Even with all this preparation, in the first timeslot for their debate, both of them – from the same general area of knowledge – seemed to defend incompatible paradigms. However, throughout the seminary, especially after the lunch in which palates and affections conjugated cerebral hemispheres, we witnessed the complementation of consistent logics and paraconsistent logics, of the freedom of thinking the regularities of the world and the indetermination

of chaos. The space race and information technology invigorated the rebirth of classic mechanics, in which laws are an absolute necessity; but, on the other hand, Sílvio Salinas carefully enjoyed the disquieting interpretation of the other physicist, Newton Bernardes, who associated human knowledge to the eternal dilemmas between science, art and magic. Or, in an authorial reading of the essay that was registered in the first book of the *Novo Pacto da Ciência* series, the conflict between Apollo and Dionysius. To him, the deep crisis of scientific paradigms comes from the apollonian heritage.

According to psychoanalyst Walter Trinca, present at the meeting, art understands reality in its invisible emanation: “Imateriality is always the encounter with the sacred that resides in the depths of the world.” An author and professor at USP, from a psychoanalyst life, sows the meaning of our crisis and by losing ourselves from the invisible depth. The divorce happens, according to diagnosis, because the mind is full of memories and desires from a sensoriality of concreteness. A kind of internal pollution, I would say. Walter Tirica thus deduces that immateriality *only speaks* in the uninterested *non-sensorial silence*.

Close to the mystery, confessed by Ayres Brito in his contemplation of the June/July protests, these researchers did not hide in the academic armor and exposed paradigm fractures for the discussion in an auditorium of post-grads from ECA. I have yet to remember one invitee, though, neurologist and professor at Faculdade de Ciências Médicas da Santa Casa de São Paulo. Wilson Luiz Sanvito intervenes daily in the brain that generates knowledge, action ad feelings. Of all, what surprises flagrant of the human head, open at the surgery table. Attention: Dr. Sanvito is scared of the mystery of the brain and rejects the models that frame it. First, the phrenologic model; second, the embryologic model; third, the dioptric model; fourth, technological-mechanist; fifth, cybernetic; nowadays, the holographic. And the neurologist did not spare words: “I think it’s all poppycock. The brain cannot be thought of from the viewpoint of modules or models.” Despite not disregarding the methodology of models in investigation, ultimately he wants to affirm that the living world transcends mental grates to which we reduce it.

As provocateur of this mediation 23 years ago, I also expressed myself as essayist



in the sphere of social communication, then collecting transdisciplinary subsidies that oriented the personal and collective agenda of Dialogic research and the formulation of the Narratives of Contemporaneity. The role of the journalist, in practice and in theory, is viscerally connected to the experience at the street. As soon as the Brazilian protests started, Sinval Medina and I went to the street, read and debated the journalistic coverage, the initial commentators and the following analyses. It was also possible, in a meeting with other PhDs, under my tutelage, in June, to collect the testimonies of eight researchers that have been working on the *Novo Pacto da Ciência* for a long time. Thus, none of us, through empirical observation and conceptual analysis, adopted an assertive discourse, throwing paradigmatic framings over the reality I can define, according to the epistemology of complexity, as *swarming*. As not reviving what was then applied as much in the narrative of contemporaneity as in the theoretical reflection that is succeeded for at least the last four decades. The liberation of straightjackets of thought that neurologist Sanvito defended with emphasis were not words released to the wind on the spring of 1990. The reading of what is real as brain surgery is not done through mental modelling that conducts the act of operating by the doctor or the symbolical act of interpretation by the reporter, of the opinion of the commentator, of the discourse of the politician.

At most we rehearsed the possible comprehension of facts. I wrote in the book that came from the seminary (1991) that for physicists as well as journalists, the crisis of the paradigm that rules subject-object is unable to deal with the dialogism that, on the street or other environments, can only be consummated in the subject-subject relation; that mental vice that leads the world reader to find cause and effect of happenings, must be eradicated in favor of the complex and netted intercausality; of the thinking that the universe is solid, we slide to the notion of the porous, whirlwind or swarming universe; from the conception of destructible or indestructible mass, the mass in transformation can be comprehended; from the concept of right and wrong, one can notice that the data of reality are not hierarchically ranked, but within the notion of coherence, of fitting and sustaining the whole. Summing up, facing the world and its movements not in a reductionist way, but in a complex way it constitutes the worldview that crosses the

contemporary epistemology, be it in Edgar Morin's work, be it in national authors with whom I live closer to, with Milton Greco or Waldemar de Gregori.

One of the essential paradigmatic ruptures in social communication is exactly the subject-subject relationship in place of the subject-object relationship. But if the live contact ME-YOU, YOU-ME, it is made necessary in the dialogism of Journalism, it is not different from the doctor-patient (patient?) relationship in medicine or the subject-researcher and protagonists in the field of research, according to the traditional scientific paradigm, named as object of research. The multi and intercausality of social-cultural happenings is also a substantial change in the reading of reality. Late at the analysis, probably in the rhythm of a historian and not of reporting-essay-writing of the journalist, Jaime Pinsky wrote on the *Folha de S. Paulo* on July 26<sup>th</sup> his commentary regarding the recent protests. He did not raise in his argument the multi and intercausality, rather attributing the current context to a legacy of unique historic causality: "All the protests derive from the unquestionable and unacceptable distancing between nation and state that exists in Brazil." The diagnosis reports to 1822 and to what it names as *the original sin* (the article's title). Pinsky divorces State from Nation, as if there was a bipolarity in the political process. It is understood in its critical purpose that, by pointing to a Nation-State of more or less democratic consistency, but not an unquestionable and unacceptable determinist sin, or a nation that, in the process of its identity (Brazilian, of course) faces the continuous and recurring conflict of the formation of the National State. It would be, thus, able of framing, under the light of contemporary vision, right States and Nations and wrong States and Nations?

A question raised in the *Novo Pacto da Ciência* and is elongated in the meetings over the last 23 years of a sophisticated network of notions that are behind the mental operation by practicing the cultural Reading or production of meaning regarding the Real. The inter and transdisciplinary dialogue offers to the communicator, as well as to other professionals of human, exact and biologic sciences, several subsidies to change the mind (a constant proposal in Edgar Morin's work) in what it produces in interpretation of happenings. But I would like to go back to the old obsession of reporter in contemporary times: the dialogic space by excellence that I always defended – the

street. And now I expose myself: having experimented many protests from the 1960s onwards, I was enchanted by the fact that the populace, mostly young, but not only, was interconnected by current information highways, but, on the other hand, leaves physical solitude in front of the machine and goes to the street, reencounter the collective tie, the *sign of creative social interaction*.

A few days after the June 6<sup>th</sup> protest, I wrote the first perceptions, when all asked themselves in salutary perplexity, I e-mailed my grandson, Gabriel Medina Ximenes, that at the time was finishing a course in gastronomy in the Basque country and asked myself what was going on in his land. I reproduce here my inaugural reflection: *My dearest biggest grandson, Gabo of my heart: we have a state in permanent contact with the feats of the European turning hero, representing what is best about the Brazilian seivrol in the lands of the Night Hemisphere. A constant pride to your family (in several latitudes) and your on-site friends, because the virtual ones are not always vigorous like the information highways promise. For that, dear Gabo, we are going to the street in Brazil. You know your reporter-grandma always had the street and the hot interactive contact like the Other as proposal for action and theory. In this way I was enthused, like Sinval, with the explosion of social demands that cross Brazilian cities. We have yet to know what will come of that, but one thing is certain – several stereotypes are falling. For instance: that post-modern youth is individualistic and only seeks its own satisfaction and expression on the Internet, on the contrary, takes to street seeking collectivism, intergroup solidarity, intertribally tuned with the causes of contemporary society such as urban mobility, quality of living, education and health, dissatisfaction with the general state of institutions in unfinished democracy; that the Brazilian is not that goofy person that swallows what marketers want to push down their throats, on the contrary, pushed back against the flags that cover political incompetence (of government and parties, executive, legislative and judiciary) and don't act with forwardness against corruption; that the national tone, despite excited about soccer and carnival, can distinguish the limits of electoral propaganda that appropriates itself of these mythical values and transforms them into dogmatic manipulation to the point of prioritizing unbelievable expenditure with stadiums and FIFA demands, leaving for*

*chaos the social surroundings of infrastructure, transportation, health, education, housing etc. So, my dear, all the fighters as us that are there in public street protests even before your mother was born, in the late 1950s, wish that when you get back to your country, you find some changes in a long lasting social process. We know, however, that certainly you, in your 24 years, are a citizen conscious of all that. A big kiss.*

I don't know if when Gabriel will come back to Brazil (probably by the end of the year) he will find the country transformed under the light of the complaints spread at the streets and information highways. Advances and recurrences are living signs of the process, especially for those who do not face social facts with the perspective of genesisism or principlism. Once more I was reminded of the travels of the Project Plural, when, in 1991, I attended a conference and talked for a long while with Ilya Prigogine in Buenos Aires in the interdisciplinary international meeting *Novos Paradigmas, Cultura e Subjetividade*. There is still much to sow in the work of this Nobel Prize, but one of my understandings of chaos has lasted in all situations, be those extraordinary or quotidian. Prigogine (1917-2003) started from the chemistry and physics lab to transpose the theory of dynamic chaos to human history and society. Of the apparently unescapable situations, emerge emancipatory acts that redirect chaos. Who knows if in the clamoring of the Brazilian streets we will astonish the dynamics of chaos?

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