Updatism: Pandemic and Historicities in the Never-Ending 2020 [1]

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Abstract: In this essay we demonstrate that the present and the future are also history and must be dimensions of historiography. For that, we return to episodes from our book *Alamanac of COVID-19* and some of our readings of key moments of this year in order to reflect on what we have called updatist historicity. In some moments we use the retrospective as a tool. In others we choose to maintain the anachronistic effect of certain passages in order to highlight the contingent aspect of all representation of time. We divided the text into three main parts. The first presents the most recent shifts in the hypothesis about an updatist historicity. In the second, we gathered some episodes from 2020 as a way to elucidate what we are calling updatism in its relations with politics and history, and finally we point out preliminary paths for action with counter-updatist effects.

Keywords: updatism, COVID-19, historicity, politics, time

　　Is it possible to approach the present and the future as dimensions of history and historiography? To answer this question, we used a kind of fragmentary retrospective to approach the climates, interpretations and decisive experiences of the year 2020, based on some reflections initiated in *Almanac of COVID-19: 150 days not to be Forgotten* (*Almanaque da COVID-19: 150 dias para não esquecer*). This experimental historiographical approach—inspired by Gumbrecht's *Em 1926* and Faria (11-29) and is based on the theoretical and methodological perspectives of the analytics of historicity (Abreu, "Estátuas" 34-44) and the curatorship of history (Araujo, "O direito" 191-216)—we tried to resist the pressure of a time that leads us to think and feel within the limits of a concept of updating that refuses any transforming potential to the past and the future. Reintegrating the future and the past to the present and these to a conception of history not reduced to a dead past are operations that can contribute to making contingency and freedom visible as conditions of human action.

　　During the writing of the *Almanac*, public interventions needed to interpret the events of the day assuming their fragmentary character. However, these projections allowed the future to be incorporated into our activism as historians. At that point, the fear of this project was nurtured by the Bolsonarism of destruction of democracy, for example. Now, at the time of this essay, these unfulfilled futures can be experienced only as past futures, but at that point they were possible futures, very concretely lived. Thus, an analysis of these historicities finds its best analogy in the image of a skein of temporalizations (several ways of combining past, present and future) than in a successive and well-organized linearity.

As much as we historians may stretch a few threads to weave narratives and explanations, lived history is like a cat in its play with skeins that constantly returns the thread of events to its original tangle. In this direction, our hypothesis is that consciously incorporating the present and the future into the writing of history can help us to go beyond the updatist agitation towards a critical posture of the reality of contemporary capitalism, without being limited to reactive and nostalgic strategies.

In face of fear of COVID-19 and Bolsonarism and as part of the *Almanac of COVID-19* project, we started interventions in the public debate—mainly through the *Jornalistas Livres* portal—seeking to think about the relationship between historicities and politics. At first, the idea was to carry out reflections to avoid being devoured by updates on the tragic and fatal encounter, or thousands of Brazilians, between the SARS-CoV-2 virus and Bolsonaro. The *Almanac*, a hybrid between chronology, diary, and chronicle was also thought of as an archive of experiences that was formed at the same time as the pandemic event. In the absence of consensual elements of meaning, chronology and other writing genres with less interpretive demand allowed the existence of an instantaneous book, which was written in the monster time of a monster event.

But, unlike the *Almanac* writing experience, here we will give up linear chronology, and its useful illusion of meaning, to privilege fragments that we think are powerful in moving the updatist hypothesis. We believe that the analysis and description of historicities hidden by updatism can help us to activate or amplify other more emancipatory historicities that are always available in the whirlpool of history. After all, the updatist strategy can only work if we accept its claim to be the only way to exist in time.

1. Updatism, a Hypothesis in Motion

We call this hegemonic historicity "updatism" in which what is real is confused with the actuality experienced as an empty and self-centered present. To try to get out of the updatist "cage" we need to challenge the common understanding that history is just the past. A significant portion of the so-called history of the present time and public history seems to advance in the direction claiming the present for history. We understand that this challenge is increasingly necessary. We have been since 2016 reflecting on possible theoretical and political alternatives that contribute to understanding the emergence of the extreme right wings throughout the world, starting from the assessment that the political right has expanded with the agitation of the flow of updates. The right has benefited from misinformation, feeding and being fed by an environment that is largely favorable to the dissemination of the so-called fake news.

In the terms developed in the book *Updatism 1.0: How the Idea of Updating Has Changed the 21st Century*, updatism is a category that seeks to understand some aspects of how we experience the urgencies of our own time. The category is based on an empirical and theoretical discovery—as the word update gained prominence from the mid-1960s—meaning the improvement of something through its adaptation to the present, that is, through a newer version.

The updatist experience is incorporated into everyday life in the strategy of the big companies of surveillance capitalism to offer constantly updated products and services. In our time, it is not only objects and programs that "need" to be updated, humans are also constantly under pressure, fear, and the desire for updating. And the subjects perceive themselves and are perceived as more or less up-to-date or obsolete, given the way they deal with the pressure of this repetition movement with novelties.

In this way, being new is not synonymous with being up-to-date. A product can be new and out of date at the same time since planned obsolescence is part of surveillance capitalism's strategies and its

updatist historicity. A fact that confirms this finding is the observation that most humans are willing to pay or accept the automatic update of products without giving much thought to this incessant process. On the other hand, when they are aware of the risks, they feel incapable of reacting other than to rely the automatism of the "I accept."

The transformations in the technical world have changed our relationship with the future, as it has gradually ceased to be the place of transformation and hope to become an updated copy of this place and, for this reason, it is, in theory, better than the present but not different from it. Thus, whereas presentist and broad present theories insist on the predominance of catastrophic expectations regarding the future, updatist historicity takes the future for granted as a linearly expanding repetition of the present. In other words, the updatist future is just the present 2.0.

Therefore, this experience of time produces an understanding that action is neither necessary nor possible. Paradoxically, technical progress creates the expectation of constant change/updating, which produces a temporal turmoil that makes diagnosis and opening to structural transformations difficult.

Temporal agitation tends to make reflexive stopping difficult, inducing obsolete and up-to-date people to simply let themselves be carried away by the energies released, for example, by the continuous flow of news on smartphones, televisions or computers connected to the internet. Basic feelings about temporal turmoil, which some political leaders manage very well, are, in particular, anxiety, brought on by energy release, on the side of the up-to-date, and nostalgia, or desire for quiet, on the side of the obsolete. And of course these two types exist in each of us to varying degrees, just as they can vary in intensity depending on the circumstances. They can even act in the same individual as complementary poles that compensate each other in search of dynamic balances.

To survive the anxiety and nostalgia of updatism as well as being able to leave the continuous flow of updatist updates from the past and the future to the present time, it is necessary to create possibilities for outdatedness and historical updates, which is more than slowing down time. To oscillate between the updated and the non-updated is to understand that we can still play a role in the future, that the present can be futurized and passed over by judgments and decisions that we can make and take. The future, in particular, does not have to be just a choice between a single homogeneous fate or catastrophe, as is underlying in the updatist temporality. We often find the word tune in the social discourse that deals with the need for updating, in the sense that it is necessary to be in tune with the present. However, updating can also be understood as transforming the present into something closer to processes and forms of life from the past or that we may wish for in the future. The present is not an immobile reality closed in on itself.

Another effect of updatist time is the belief that being up-to-date with the latest news is the same as being right. The expansion of 24-hour news channels and new digital platforms feed on this updatist drive for updating. In this environment, fake news tend to play decisive roles. Instead of checking sources, looking for their origins and consequences, all our energy is captured by the continuous flow of news and its commentators. It does not seem casual that the hybridization between advertising, commercials, religion, politics, and entertainment is a simultaneous phenomenon to the updatist time. Thus, it is not by chance that the updatist politics is dominated by info-merchants, televangelists and digital-opinionated sub-celebrities.

Therefore, one of the main sources of updating, according to current affairs, is the explosion of news in a continuous flow. This fact makes it possible for the value of truth to be confused with the value of novelty or update of the information received, creating a favorable field for the dissemination of "lies that function as truths," the so-called fake news. Since 2016, when we started to design the

updatist hypothesis, we tried to point out, in our publications, the unprecedented nature of the current wave of disinformation, highlighting its strength in producing simulated parallel universes in which it is possible to live with a relative degree of success.

The strategy used by Trump and his allies, even before the result of the 2020 elections, to produce an integrated conspiratorial environment to accommodate their voters and customers is perhaps the best example of the success of manufacturing simulated realities with a high degree of projectivity and integration (Giuliani web).

An extreme case of what we are describing can be seen on Rudolph Giuliani's YouTube channel called *Common Sense*. It is a kind of podcast that is also broadcast in video on platforms like YouTube. The channel has almost half a million subscribers, having been created in January, 2020. On November 27th, 2020, one of its episodes recovered false evidence and arguments that would prove the existence of a broad articulated scheme of fraud in the elections. In addition, the former mayor of New York and Donald Trump's lead attorney, appears—to our amazement—as a poster boy in two commercial breaks in the nearly 14-minute broadcast. In one of them he was selling subscriptions to insurance against property fraud and, in another, advertising a luxury tobacconist. In the end it is evident that the audience, attracted by the narrative of electoral fraud, is also a financier-consumer of the most diverse services, all packaged as a mixture of entertainment and (mis)information.

It was by witnessing these and many other similar events in Brazil and abroad and, in particular, over the period of the pandemic in 2020, that we found that in certain dimensions of the updatist temporality the "truth" is often the one presented in the form of news, in particular in a continuous flow. And the most recent and up-to-date news tends to be taken as the truest, especially if it was produced and shared by members of our bubble or our enclave. Thus, understanding part of the history of the pandemic and the pandemonium that was 2020 in Brazil necessarily involves entering some parallel universes in order to analyze the production and forms of manipulation of news, whether true and/or fake, that is, simulated.

2. Anachronic Fragments of Reflection

In this part of this essay, we want to bring back to reflection (repetition can be a historical form of updating) some themes that emerged from the confrontation between updatism and the pandemic. We emphasize that unlike the organization of *Almanac of COVID-19,* in which chronology served to give some sense that would resist the pressure for dispersion, here we intend to condense some themes without the pretense of representing these phenomena as copies of real processes. They are, therefore, fragments of anachronistic experience and thought, as we do not expect their meaning to arise from their own position in linear time. Somehow, putting these reflections back on a timeline would disfigure the fact that, for the authors, they already inhabit a plane of simultaneities that could only very violently be broken.

Defeat of Trumpist-Updatist Agitation?

At this point we can already say that the "Trump Show" was canceled but, on the other hand, Trumpism is much more structured than some analysts supposed. The social, cultural, and political division and polarization remain and, perhaps, are even stronger. In the US election the logic of small majorities won once again. The pandemic and its criminal management by the Trump government were decisive for its narrow defeat, but the discourse of normalization and unity articulated by Biden was unable to convert itself into a victory proportional to the size of the ambitions. Earlier in the year, when

we were still excited about Sanders' performance in the Democratic Party primaries, it was unimaginable that the real stab, that is, the contingency of this election, would be called SARS-CoV-2. In addition to this defeat, we also witnessed the relative defeats of Bolsonaro (and not of Bolsonarism) and of part of the left (in particular, in the election for the executive) in municipal elections. Elections in which misinformation returned to play a destabilizing role in some cities, especially in the second round.

Guilherme Boulos appears as a renewed hope, building bridges between the old and new left, between updated and obsolete. However, a significant part of the left still has difficulty in creating projects for the future, with the exception of the more up-to-date left, whose regional strategy is not always easily recognized in its potential to create broad solidarities and new majorities. But it was precisely this updated left—the one that created bridges between updated and obsolete in the progressive camp—that emerged victorious in the 2020 elections, even if symbolically in some cases. And it is it who points out a path to the future and renewal to be learned, in particular, by the obsolete sectors of this field.

This fact is corroborated by the statement by Jacques Wagner, from PT, who, two days after the end of the second round, stated that his party should make "a change in content, that is, to update its content, and a generational change, bringing in younger people" (Metrópole web). And that he would have nothing against his old colleagues but that it was necessary to bring in "another generation to occupy space" (web). Is this a good example of a historical update? The former governor simply avoids attributing the potential of updating to the younger generation as he very clearly separates content updating and generational renewal, in addition to reinforcing the place of his own generation in this fusion movement. In this same interview he emphasizes the importance of the presence of the senior Erundina on the young Boulos side in São Paulo.

In spite of that, the picture we described in "Vozes sobre Bolsonaro" remains stable in our analysis, especially in the greater effectiveness of the strategic articulation between updated and obsolete right. Remember that after Moro's fall Bolsonaro embraced the center and that this is partly due to the pandemic. The center ended up being the great victor of the 2020 municipal elections. We also had the success of military and evangelical candidacies as a phenomenon to be considered. As an example, let us not forget that for every ten security professionals who applied, one was elected in the first round (Lima web).

Many analysts have singled out Trump's fatigue from the turmoil and instability of the new normal as one of the causes of his defeat. But that same agitation proved effective in securing him the largest vote for a president running for a second term in U.S. history. The electoral fraud narrative demonstrates how the structures of disinformation remain effective and even with great potential for radicalization, as the rapid emergence of Newsmax TV as a challenge to Fox News' supposedly more moderate position in defense of the Trump demonstrate (Grynbaum and Koblin web).

Joe Biden promises a return to traditional politics, but it remains to be seen whether the updated left and right will allow it, or whether the old politics will be able to meet the huge expectations of voters in a world that seems to be crumbling. In this way, would we then be at the crossroads between two possibilities? On the one hand an update, in a modern style, and on the other an update in an updatist key, which feeds both on some structures of modernity (focus on the subject, democratization and sectorization of values, politicization, instrumental rationality) and on the destruction of others (autonomy of institutions, regulation of the boundaries between politics, religion, art, science, information and propaganda, minority rights)?

On the Updatist Politics and Anti-politics

The pandemic is a call to rethink the human relationship with animals, with the environment, with the natural world, and it is more current and urgent than ever. Among so many reasons is the fact that

pandemics originating from zoonoses are directly linked to the articulation between human life and other forms of life as they are also ecological crises and, therefore, related to anthropocene times, with the periods of history, capitalism and the current climate crisis.

In terms of life and practical wisdom, the experience of this existential catastrophe, that is, the COVID-19 pandemic, and its daily evidence, lead us to review the certainties of what was said and done the day before. This means that what seems right to be done now may be out of date tomorrow: "both people's conceptions and assessments of experts made today can be outdated tomorrow." (Jordheim et al.)

It is in this context that, very quickly, journalists, scientists and intellectuals began to publish texts about the virus, in particular, based on European realities. We observe that many of them are still elaborated under certain colonial logics of the geopolitics of consumption and intellectual/scientific production, which often means taking a priori the "center" as the place of elaboration of theories and the "periphery" as the place of data collection and application of results (Pereira 863-902).

From our point of view, it is interesting to think about whether the COVID-19 irruption suspends, transforms, problematizes, but can also radicalize the various dimensions of updatism. One of the consequences of the pandemic has been the deepening of the relationship between modernist historicity and contemporary capitalism in its continuous mutations.

Changing capitalism absorbs and reproduces this catastrophic event through the multiplication and deepening of the digital control of society and the ruination of certain dimensions of life and political institutions in the modern sense, as several analyzes of contemporary capital and labor have shown, as noted in the reflections of Shoshana Zuboff, Thomas Piketty, Paulo Arantes, and Ricardo Antunes, among others. Therefore, the updatist agitation can be interpreted in terms of both an anti-politics and a new (and frightening) form of politics emerging from capitalist societies in the "digital age."

Specifically in relation to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, we tend to believe that between January and February there was, in the "West," a great misinterpretation about the virus, when thinking that it would be a repetition or a similar phenomenon with SARS-CoV-1. But as COVID-19 advanced and posed a far greater danger than previously thought, most countries followed the World Health Organization's instructions. However, in Brazil the president was in conflict with his own ministers of health, denying the seriousness of the pandemic and encouraging irresponsible attitudes, which could contribute to increasing the contamination.

Could the denial and crimes of this civil-military government be the result of the conviction of impunity, symbolized and authorized in the 1979 Amnesty Law? An update of this story took place in 2020, through the authorization, by the STF, of the celebration of the 1964 coup, posted on the Ministry of Defense's website. In the same way that Bolsonarism denies the memory of the violence of the times of the Dictatorship (civil-military?), it also denies science, when it suits it. However, the president does not admit to being anti-science, but, on the contrary, defends a "true" science, one that is consistent with his beliefs. After all, the Bolsonarist negationism grew from 2014, when a reaction to the work of the National Truth Commission brought to light a community of memory that denied the Brazilian authoritarian past and its violence (cf., among others, Pereira 863-902; Castro Rocha).

Apparently, with the passage of time and the pandemic in Brazil, the conviction of impunity began to work together with fear. Fear of a negative social reaction to the president's pronouncements and attitudes and its greatest emblem is perhaps Bolsonaro's speech during the April 22nd ministerial meeting, about the possibility of his ministers and him being arrested in the event of a leftist government takeover in 2022.

Another example that corroborates this idea of the fear of a negative social reaction occurred

on March 29th, when Twitter decided to delete from its networks two posts by the president, which contravened World Health Organization's guidelines in relation to COVID-19. Nicolazzi well summarizes our dramas experienced at the beginning and throughout the pandemic: "in crisis situations, when many people demonstrate their greatness, as seen in the performance of healthcare workers, scientists, and researchers who pursue the time to find a cure for COVID-19, many other people, no matter how wealthy they are, reveal their misery."

Pandemic, Acceleration and Fake News

Apparently, our experience of this existential catastrophe is not limited to a supposed acceleration of historical time, whether synchronous or not. As Ramalho argues, moments of crisis are also moments of accelerated change. Crises can be related to acceleration but they are not limited or reduced to it. Thus, the theme ends up greatly limiting the analysis of the crisis experience. Furthermore, various strata of the acceleration of modern time are also largely asynchronous. Thus crediting a good part of the current transformations to a supposed change in the regime of acceleration of modernity can make us incur in several mistakes, in particular, the one of "inflating" the theme and the perception of the phenomenon, that is, of reducing the crisis just one of its layers and dimensions.

Our argument is confirmed by the fact that for certain people, social networks end up imposing some kind of updatist work rhythm. Thus, the person wakes up thinking they are going to do something they had planned, but the flow of the networks takes them in other directions, causing dispersion rather than agitation. So they can't decide, they can just surf or not on the wave that takes them, as well as the current epidemic wave, in another direction or even nowhere. Not only the virus epidemic affects us but also the infodemia, which already existed before and seems to have been intensified by the emergence of the new coronavirus.

It is also possible to notice a tendency to believe that the most current information is always truer, which often means that a news item is not verified for its veracity before being mass shared. What is experienced is agitation or even illness. Maybe that is why the idea of acceleration—synchronized or not—seems to be insufficient to think about this event. In other words, we are within a viral/epidemiological temporality and, consequently, of epidemic diseases and their multiple times of contagion, mortality, and emergencies, which gains specificity in view, for example, of the various forms of contemporary mobility, changes of current capitalism and the technological/digital revolution.

In addition to the large number of deaths and people infected, the experience of this existential catastrophe affects a greater number of people due to the agitation and transformation that the experience of isolation implies, as it creates changes in ordinary life (the so-called "normality"), in our habits, daily lives and experiences. In this regard, we highlight that, between mid-March and April 2020, more than 1/3 of humanity was subjected to some type of isolation.

If on the one hand certain aspects of modernist historicity seem to resemble a radicalization of modern trends, fitting into the perspective of hyper-acceleration, on the other hand the questioning, deregulation, and loss of autonomy of subsystems such as religion, politics, and the media reveal a side of updatism that seems to dissolve fundamental structures of modernity, leaving in its place a vacuum continuously activated by agitation more than just different accelerations.

The Updatist Dimension of the Virus

On February 9th, the day after the delivery of the second hospital to treat patients infected with the virus, built in record time by the Chinese government, the possibility of COVID-19 being less lethal, even with a statistically lower mortality rate than the previous coronavirus, was beginning to fall apart. The death toll in China reached 811, surpassing the global total for the 2002-2003 SARS epidemic. Past

experience did not seem to be enough to deal with the contingency and novelty of the event.

The relativization of the new update continued throughout February. On the 21st of the same month, for example, Italy announced the beginning of the quarantine of 50,000 people. For many Italians it was alarmism and unnecessary exaggeration. In Brazil, several people took the opportunity to say that we had to pay more attention, for example, to the return of measles, which is much more contagious than COVID-19 (Rossi and Buono web). Much was also said about dengue, which killed more people and was more worrisome. As of February 20, 87% of newly infected cases were in China. In fifteen days, the situation changed drastically, which led the World Health Organization to declare the pandemic on March 11th.

On February 26th, we asked: "Is Corona an updatist virus?" Our question arose from a report with the epidemiologist Wanderson Oliveira, responsible for combating the coronavirus in Brazil, representing the Ministry of Health. Oliveira claimed that we were experiencing an "infodemia," that is, an epidemic of information, much of it false (BBC News web). The Brazilian epidemiologist stated to the State representatives that the information was perishable, because "there is no time for the system to adapt to the new evidence, as new ones soon emerge." It seems that from the point of view of the news and of the pandemic's own dynamics, the updatist logics seem to deepen. Oliveira himself stated that the data is slipping through the fingers as we are experiencing an epidemic in real time (Tribuna Online web).

Time, Epidemiology and Denial

Why did most of the world health authorities expect, at first, a repetition of SARS-COVID 1? We believe that, in large part, epidemiological analyzes are prisoners of a restricted, perhaps even historicist, conception of historical time. Gil Sevalho, a Brazilian epidemiologist, has, since the end of the last century, criticized the limits of this conception. For him, this epidemiological perception operates a cut in time based on statistical analysis, amputating the historicity and temporal multiplicity of social and historical aspects involved in the complexity of collective human illness. Considering these dimensions would open epidemiological thinking to a better or even another understanding of emerging infections and the human-nature relationship, which means taking into account processes of non-linear determination, and also dynamic systems that change at each moment, for example.

However, these challenges do not deprive the hegemonic epidemiological reason, to the point of disqualifying its effectiveness. The very crisis we are experiencing bears witness to both its value and its limits. In the Brazilian case, for example, at least until mid-March, the experience with other epidemics indicated that we were more prepared for COVID than, for example, for H1N1. At that time one of the virologists responsible for the discovery of the Zica Virus relativized the impact of the pandemic in Brazil and highlighted that SARS-COVID 2.0 would not be able to survive in the heat (Correio 24 Horas web). That also was a rash statement.

The accumulation of experience also came (and, in a way, is still ongoing) with the time and pace of diffusion of the epidemiological tsunami. This is a statement that serves us Brazilians, but also many other people. This sensation was very well summarized in the headline of a Portuguese newspaper, shown at the end of March: "COVID-19 in Portugal. On the way to the unknown and trying to delay the pace" (Nunes web). A headline, a synthesis, an observation: that we live in a moment when delaying the pace may be more prudent than the quick arrival to an uncertain future.

As devastating experiences we have the cases related to the moment lived by Italy and Spain, whose present may represent a future that no one would like to have, but which, in addition to being imaginable, is possible and can be reproduced, as the American experience points out. But this reproduction is not automatic, as it depends, above all, on political and timely decisions.

Bolsonarism seems to be able to update their discourse for any of the possible final scenarios regarding the pandemic: if social isolation works, they will say that COVID-19 was really just a "little flu"; if the pandemic has devastating effects for Brazil, they could falsely blame the Chinese for the virus, say that the quarantine did not work and blame the defenders of social isolation— such as mayors and governors—for the economic downturn. Or, they can benefit from the impact of the corona voucher. Bolsonaro is also up-to-date as he reinforces the ideas that elected him and strives to appear in the demonstrations in his favor, maintaining a constant campaigning atmosphere, even though he has held the position of president for over a year. (In November, Bolsonaro denied calling COVID-19 a flu, even though he did it twice publicly in March).

Thus, throughout March and April, several countries, including Brazil (Schuquel web), in part, inspired by the Chinese and South Korean models, established and expanded their strategies to fight the pandemic based on people's surveillance practices, for example, in relation to mobility, control of body temperature, movements, heartbeat, and also phone calls and virtual accesses, among other actions (On the Chinese "model" see, for example, Rossi web). However, this is not about thinking about the efficiency of pandemic control based on the dichotomy between Dictatorships and Democracies (Fukuyama).

At the end of March, Imperial College London estimated that containment measures adopted in eleven European countries had managed to prevent 59,000 deaths (Flaxman et al. web). At that point, it was already possible to glimpse the local dimensions of this global tragedy, even because the virus itself was already reaching powerful people.

Wars of Cultural Updates and the Crisis of Statues

Like Trump and Johnson, some people fear that the toppling of statues could mean an erasure of history. But the truth is that many statues were already "extinguished" in everyday life and only returned to being part of the collective memory at the time of their overthrow. Furthermore, these acts are photographed, filmed and widely shared on the internet; thus, it can be said that, although the statue is no longer present in the city, it can remain present in the memory through these media, as well as the debate and the moment of its overthrow can be used as opportunities for historical education and reflection on social values. The accusation of erasure, made by those who consider the removal of statues an act of vandalism, disregards that history, lived and thought, is made up of revisions (Abreu web).

Discerning revisionism from negationism seems important to us: we assume that negationism conceals a legitimate project of revision and, in this sense, it is clearly related to the type of lie we associate with disinformation, in particular with the fake news neologism, which we can translate as simulated news rather than just fake news. Sometimes those are truths that work. Revisionism that distorts and conceals is a negationist strategy as it operates not only false facts, but also distorted interpretations, arguments and values to defend a certain political position (Pereira 863-902; Pereira, Bianchi, et al 279-315; Castro Rocha).

However, we cannot consider that all revisionism is a negationist strategy or even that the only strategy of negationism is to dress up as revisionism. The reinterpretations of history are part of its production process, being necessary and often welcome. Historiography, here understood as the writing of professional history, generally moves from revisions of inherited knowledge, whether motivated by internal movements to the discipline or by transformations in the historical process itself.

In Brazil, the current negationist wave, which brought to light the nostalgia related to the dictatorship and the loss of authority of historians, professors, and scientists in general, collaborated in the election of Bolsonaro in 2018. In general, negationist politicians have a strategy consisting of the fight against false enemies, the dissemination of conspiracy theories and regressive fantasies in which the country needs to

go back to being a fictitious "before" in the name of the possibility of an undemocratic future project.

As these fantasies do not solve the real problems these politicians must continue to fantasize incessantly. Very different from this historical, scientific and ethical negationism is revision, that is, honest historical revisionism, which seeks to bring out the complexity of the past, showing that no historical period is homogeneous or free from criticism. History is always reformulated just like other sciences that develop from the discussion and discovery of new sources, problems and theories.

Threatened "Majorities" and Predatory Identities

In August, Piauí magazine revealed that on May 22nd Bolsonaro seriously considered sending troops to the Supreme Court. Its coup and authoritarianism—well analyzed by Bauer (183-204) and Pinha (195-231)—are a structure of the movement that it embodies. Even so, as shown by—among others—Aarão Reis (web), we cannot explain Bolsonarism only in terms of Brazilian authoritarian traditions, even if this is an important element.

From our point of view, Bolsonarism and Trumpism can be understood as updates to the long history of authoritarian reactionarism. But in the current context they represent movements of dissimulation of predatory majorities into supposed minorities, mediated by disinformation, cultural wars, and corporately controlled social networks.

Bolsonaro and Trump play, all the time, this game of representing a threatened and supposedly oppressed "majority." This type of strategy has proven effective and will be a lasting phenomenon. In the terms of the Indian anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, it is an anguish of incompleteness that seems to be in the DNA of national states. This fact implies the construction of predatory identities, which means majority identities that represent themselves as threatened in their narcissistic fantasies of living in a society without differences, where everyone would be an image of themselves. In this year's municipal elections we realized that the core of the speeches of most evangelical and military candidates is based on these codes. Therefore, Bolsonaro does not need to interfere directly in the elections, as the agenda, language, and energy of his movement are already placed in the elections, crossing a wide party spectrum.

As long as the progressive field is not able to understand the ongoing changes, for example, in the worlds of religion, capital, (de)industrialization, and work, Bolsonarism, understood as a local, circumstantial, and unique historical update of the conservative tradition/reactionary-authoritarian, will continue to build a strong social base and not just on the outskirts of large cities, as seems to have been the case with the 2018 election (Benites web).

Without abandoning its specificities and guidelines, one of the challenges of the progressive field is to build concrete speeches and public policies also for the "anxious majority," which can become, as we said, predatory, but which can also take on solidary forms. Otherwise, fear will continue to be the dominant effect of our political and social life. Bolsonarism has always been with us and will continue to be present for a long time, it is up to us to work to deactivate it, updating other stories.

Defeating Trump is not the same as defeating neoliberalism, surveillance capitalism, and their parasitic relations with updatist historicity. Another black man is murdered in Brazil: João Alberto Freitas is beaten to death by security guards at a Carrefour supermarket. More than 60 million people throughout the world are infected by the new coronavirus. There are already almost one and a half million people dead. Brazil accounts for more than 10% of cases and more than 170 thousand lives are lost. Europe and the US face the "second wave" of the virus. As our colleague Ramalho suggests—after reading one of the versions of this text—the very idea of pandemic waves is related to the temporalities of updating. The suffocating feeling remains and 2020 feels like another year that refuses to end.

3. Counter-Updatist Gaps

In her 1972 essay *Lying in Politics*, Hannah Arendt analyzes the so-called Pentagon Papers, a collection of reports produced by US agencies detailing the backstage of political decisions for Vietnam. These secret reports were leaked in a 1971 *New York Times* report, causing widespread and negative repercussions. For Arendt, the reports showed how the organized and systematic manipulation of lies could corrupt democracy based on practices of "defactualizing" reality, replacing judgment by calculating probabilities and seeking psychological manipulation instead of concrete results in public services policies.

Arendt denounced that one of the goals of the Nixon administration was to discredit the press before the 1972 elections. In the philosopher's description, the scandal of the use of lies as systematic public policy was only possible due to the self-deception produced by the bubble effect in the conjunction between public agencies and mutually reinforcing *think tanks* who tried to convince society of the validity of their own fantasies. These fantasies met a well-informed public opinion by a credible press with its operative limit. Finally, and still of interest to our investigation, Arendt writes that while reading the reports she had the impression that computers and not "decision makers" had been released in Southeast Asia (168). This automated character represented the belief in a conception of history in which contingency could be fully eliminated.

Perhaps what we have called updatism has an obvious relationship with this emerging ethos identified by Arendt and its epidemic spread made possible by the weakening precisely of institutions such as the press and specialists. Perhaps, in 2020 the ambiguities and contradictions of this process gained unprecedented visibility. A fact that also contributed to the possibility of the emergence of counter-updatist gaps that were dispersed or latent.

Thus, in view of the reflections of the aforementioned anachronistic fragments and, based on our investigations, throughout 2020, we came to the conclusion that what we call updatism was reinforced, not without ambivalence, by certain aspects of the experience of the pandemic in Brazil, such as: a) isolation/loneliness, driven by quarantine and working at home; b) greater dependence on digital and surveillance capitalism structures; c) anxiety for updates, fueled by infodemic and political crisis; d) dissemination of cultural wars and their logic based on (mis)information; e) normalization of distraction, agitation, confusion and noise as strategies of (anti)political debate. This does not mean that, in parallel, individuals and institutions are not reacting to this deepening, as it is visible in the alliance with the old policy that Bolsonarism ended up embracing after being threatened on several fronts, as well as in the partial brakes on the destructive and authoritarian Bolsonarism project by the legislature, judiciary, and the press in its traditional and digital forms.

If we are right, we still have the challenge of dealing with one more question: how to reflect on the counter-updatist gaps in the current situation? We believe that we historians need to be aware of other emerging, unconventional and undisciplined historicities. There are, therefore, counter-updatist gaps in the situation described in a fragmented way above, namely: a) demand for action in the crisis and its kairological potential (Ramalho, "Historical time" 1-16); b) the disclosure of environments and structures of surveillance capitalism with its entry into the political agenda via, for example, regulatory projects; c) the insertion, even if unwillingly, of "obsolete left-wing" sectors in the digital universe, even though it is too early to think about their legacy, as there are ambivalences in this immersion; d) emergence of new forms of political organization (collective) that can present a counter-updatist potential and take us beyond historicism.

Thus, one of our main tasks is to reactivate stories in the homogeneous fabric of updatist historicity; not only to produce more stories because somehow there is an excess of updatist stories and pseudo-stories. Updatism is not lacking in history as it is still a human phenomenon. What we need is to open space and reactivate other layers and forms of non-updatist historicity that can help us live better.

As incoherent as it may seem, the parallel universe of Trumpism manages to make sense of this agitation in an environment in which other systems seem to exist only to translate it. Perhaps, here again the word simulation is the key, as even the aforementioned *News Max* cannot fail to look like a real news network, although it has none of what in modernity guaranteed journalism its place among the institutions of democracy. Ultimately, this notion of simulation helps us to understand how the history produced by the new right, even when it does not use denial, only simulates the procedures of an academic historiography. Without this simulation it would lose effectiveness, which does not mean that we can confuse this production with what produces the historical discipline—as it was constituted—as one of the structures of modern national states.

A counter-updatist path claims the present as an unavoidable part of the historian's work (rescuing, for example, the Annales legacy of a history from the present), but with a renewed emphasis on understanding the past and the future as gifts or assets which are not only available to the present, but which form a part of our existential environment. Thus, it is not just treating the present as a space for a specialized historiography, although this is also relevant, but as a transversal dimension in any historicization effort. Firmly resist the trend which was already present in certain derivations of historicism, that history is the science of the past, an idea that is anchored in everyday experience that naturalizes the identification of history with a dead past.

Perhaps we should return to the idea of process, as long as it is not applied to a totalizing and global understanding of reality. Human history is also formed by regional, sectorial processes, which can offer an important understanding of non-updatist duration, of highlighting the effects of past and future in the present, without reintroducing the image of history's train and its astonished avenging angel as an involuntary passenger.

Note

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