

Interview with José Crisóstomo de Souza: An Inter-American Philosophical Conversation with Linda Alcoff and Goyo Pappas

BIO: José Crisóstomo de Souza has recently retired from the Philosophy Department of Federal University of Bahia, Northeast of Brazil, and from its Graduate Program in Contemporary Philosophy. He received his PhD in Political Philosophy from the University of Campinas (UNICAMP, São Paulo) in 1990, and held post-doctoral appointments at UC-Berkeley, New School-NY, and Humboldt University-Berlin, under the respective sponsorships of Hubert Dreyfus, Richard Bernstein and Rahel Jaeggi. Before conceiving his own philosophical position—a poietic-pragmatic, materialist standpoint, he developed his academic career as teacher and researcher publishing mostly on Political Philosophy, Left Hegelianism and Marx, and later, always around contemporary philosophical issues, neo-pragmatist discussions (e.g. Habermas, Rorty) and classical American pragmatism. Before that, for political activities, he studied Brazilian historical, anti-colonialist authors (e.g. Guerreiro Ramos) and theories of dependence and (under)development.

Throughout his academic career, Crisóstomo kept a sustained critique of the dominant ways of doing philosophical work in the fast-growing Brazilian philosophical community; which for him was—despite relevant exceptions—basically scholastic and colonized, and mostly focused on the structuralist reading of metropolitan, historical philosophers, along the methodological prescriptions of Victor Goldschmidt and Martial Guérout. In contrast to this *magistri dixerunt* approach, Crisóstomo offered his own path for ‘philosophy as something civil,’ which did not exclude careful reading, discussion, appropriation, and use of relevant philosophical references—including Brazilian ones—around contemporary issues, in tune with the public sphere and cultural life, in an autonomous, decolonized manner.

Before doing graduate studies and starting an academic career, however, under the Brazilian military dictatorship, Crisóstomo dedicated many years of his life to a popular-democratic political struggle to set the country back on the road to a more inclusive, material democracy. With that purpose, he did a lot of popular organizing, grassroots work throughout urban and rural Brazil, as well as more conventional political and publicist activities. He worked with the Center for Social Studies and Action (CEAS) as a popular educator, researcher, and editor for *Cadernos do Ceas*, and was branch-head for the political weekly *Movimento*. As a result of those and related activities, he faced political persecution, threats, lawsuits, and got expelled from his first attempt at initiating an academic career.

Aside from books and articles in Portuguese, as far as the development of his own philosophical position is concerned, his works translated to English include: “Marx and Feuerbachian Essence”, in *The New Hegelians*, ed. D. Moggach (Cambridge UP, 2006), *Philosophy as a Civil & Worldly Thing, from a Brazilian Critical-Historical Perspective* (Amazon, 2019), “Towards a Practical-Poietic, Materialist Point of View” (*Transcience*,

2019), Spanish version: “Pragmatismo Brasileño”, in *The Reception of Peirce and Pragmatism in Latin-America: A Trilingual Collection*, Paniel Reyes (Ed. Torres Asociados, 2020), “A World of Our Own: a Pragmatic-Poietic Transformative Perspective” (*Transcience*, 2020), and “Dialectics and Drama: Nietzsche as Young Hegelian and Maître-à-Penser” (*European Legacy*, 2022). Still worth mentioning, his “Marx’s quasi-Pragmatism vs. good Practical-Poietic Materialism” will be published in *Transcience*, June, 2022. In Portuguese versions, some of those texts have been published together with or followed by critiques from peers and his own responses to them, fostering a debating practice still unusual in the Brazilian philosophical community. Some of his videos and audios can be found in Portuguese on the Internet with such discussions; see also his academic page (to be updated): www.jcrisostomodesouza.ufba.br/. Poética Pragmática, the research group of which he is a member, has just published, in Portuguese, *Filosofia, Ação, Criação: Poética Pragmática em Movimento*, a philosophical ‘jam session’, a collection of texts in conversation, with 17 different authors, from 11 different institutions and 5 different countries.

INTERVIEW:

QUESTION 1: *In your work you take a strong stand against the ‘Linguistic Turn’ even in the form it takes within late 20th century German critical theory. The motivation behind the turn to language was to avoid metaphysical formulations of rights, subjectivity, truth, so as to avoid having to ground normative philosophy on metaphysical claims about ‘the’ human. What, in your view, is the problem with the ‘Linguistic Turn’?*

ANSWER: I have something to say about the normative ‘human’ all right (not so much about rights). But let me start by admitting that, yes, I take ‘*linguocentrismo*’ to be an impairment to most of contemporary Western philosophy, critical as well as mainstream, with some bad philosophical and political consequences; particularly for critical theory and the humanities, more so in subaltern, intellectually colonized contexts and amidst present problematic world circumstances of crises, political threats and wars. As I understand it, the desirable results that you have mentioned for the linguistic turn, and still others, are more consistently articulated and accomplished by placing practice where language now prevails, where the so-called metaphysical subject prevailed before. By practice I mean not just or dominantly linguistic, discursive practice, but *material* social practice in the first place: our basic meaning-endowing, world-revealing, subjectivity-constituting, transformative practice. I mean practice as *poiesis*: the social activity of taking, making, changing things (in the broadest sense), entailing a basic creative, historical, purpose-oriented entanglement with the world, with pervasively material as well as spiritual dimensions. We think of all that as a suggestion for a new practical turn in philosophy, with good, renewed epistemological, ontological and

especially normative, material-democratic, consequences (Please see, in English, my articles in *Transcience*, Humboldt U., of 2020 & 2021)

The list of problematic consequences of the linguistic turn certainly does not apply the same way, in extension or degree, to all variants of prevailing, contemporary *linguocentrismos* and their possible overlappings, which in terms of 'ideal types' include a) first of all, semi-anarchist, sort of '*hay gobierno soy contra*' post-structuralism and deconstruction, that is, negative, crypto-normative French theory; b) normative, discursive, inter-subjectivist interactionism, also ultimately 'worldless' (in its disregard for production and materiality, and general aversion to 'instrumental reason'), that is, late German, mildly democratic, critical theory. And finally, c) (post)analytic, linguistic Anglo-Saxon philosophy, beyond dogmatic empiricism, politically ingenuous or liberal-solidarist. Such variants are sometimes marked by a limited pragmatist or hermeneutic twist, as they become anti- or post-positivist, supposedly non-mentalist, non-foundational, in practical terms anti-authoritarian if not radically critical of all sorts of 'un-human' dominations.

QUESTION 2: *Can you elaborate some more about those problems - epistemological, ontological, political – related to what you call linguocentrismo, as well as attitudes or practices associated with it, not just in terms of academic matters but also for activism and social movements?*

ANSWER: Let me further suggest (suggestions I have buttressed elsewhere) what such problems may amount to—and please forgive my overuse of labels and '-isms' that might need some explanation, with the purpose of situating myself in relation to more aspects of the linguistic paradigm and the desirable alternatives to them. Under the mentioned linguocentric sway, praxis is now basically discursive practice, and context and interaction are centrally discursive too, even when vague allusions to circumstances, institutions and bodies are included. The main problem here can be named *idealism*, not necessarily in a metaphysical sense, but still in association with a general perspective about reality and with practical-political consequences that the term traditionally resonates. I am talking about an idealist, immaterialist bias even as compared to hyper-idealist, nonetheless thicker interactionist Hegel, e.g. in his influential dialectics of lordship and bondage, where subjectivation and emancipation are involved in practical-productive relations with world and things as much as with people. As I see it, *linguocentrismo* tends to be anti-realist and incommensurabilist, relativistic and science-unfriendly, and inattentive to or depreciative of facts, artefacts and material circumstances. *Linguocentrismo* is also politically negative, sometimes nihilist, going from traditional Marxian-Hegelian 'determinate negation' to a more radical, abstract, 'indeterminate' one.

The linguistic turn may further entail, especially in the case of its French avatar, logocentrism and intellectualism, combined with an impoverished understanding of social change and politics, showing a disregard for the relevance of institutional,

economic, material developments, also quite aligned in this respect with old German/Adornian ideology critique and negative critical theory (for me a bad move in praxis philosophy, to which more recent half-pragmatized critical theory still pays tribute), where we can say it all started. Always pretending to be anti-dogmatic, anti-authoritarian, allegedly radical, the new theory reveals itself to be speculative, non-self-correcting, besides normatively sectarian. And that while imagining to be political, even revolutionary through and through, despite its basically immaterialist enclosedness within the world of discourse and academia. I also spot in *linguocentrismo*, contrary to appearances, a disguised trace of disembodiment and moral asceticism which I will not have time to explain here. Regardless, I take it to be bad for popular democratic politics and for what I would call practical, poetic, material, institutional constructionism and citizenship.

Concerning all that, I sense critical restrictions like mine to such critical perspectives, even if not exactly in the same terms, in the following authors. Goyo Pappas's defense of experience against language-centered neo-pragmatism. Linda Alcoff's suggestions for a new, non-skeptic, non-nihilist, emancipatory paradigm. Nancy Fraser's concern with the economy and her exhortations for a feminism of the 90%. Ofelia Schutte's allusions (in her IPJ interview) to Manicheanism, rigid dichotomies and generalized stereotypes, in certain expressions of that critical theorizing. We might end up finding that Global-South circumstances offer a context where the bad consequences of the abstractly normative, negative leanings of most linguocentric radical philosophy are more acutely felt and can therefore be more incisively counteracted. We might also find that we in academia must go back to general philosophy, not just to new critical perspectives by themselves, in order to move ahead and play a more positive, effective, even if more modest, democratic role in social and political critique and change.

QUESTION 3: *In opposition to linguocentrismo and its consequences, you argue for a new form of Pragmatism, or perhaps a new emphasis within Pragmatism, that highlights materialism. Why does pragmatism need this? What is wrong with pragmatism in its main, classical traditions?*

ANSWER: A new form of pragmatism or a new materialist and historical emphasis within pragmatism comes close to what I would suggest for a possible inter-American philosophical dialogue. There is nothing very wrong with pragmatism, actually I think it can be a beneficial, corrective influence on most philosophies of our times, as German critical theory and American analytical philosophy have finally conceded. Let me then start by stating what I find right and good, that is, useable and developable, in pragmatism; American pragmatism, from its original platform. First of all, British Alexander Bain's sentence, to which the whole of pragmatism, says Peirce, is just a corollary, and which I see as promisingly 'materialist' (practical-social, behavioral, non-mentalistic, non-representational): the claim that a belief is an envisaged course of action plus the disposition to take it, not something separate from enactment, purely within mind or language. Better yet (and more Darwinianly so), from my point of view, against

both traditional representationalism and idealist, anti-naturalist humanism (like in French Theory), beliefs amount to something that to a certain extent is not just human, but animal in general: every intelligent adopted course of action is already something of a belief.

Along with that, we have the so-called pragmatist maxim itself, originally formulated by Peirce: a good notion of anything is that of its *sensible*—so Peirce starts saying, although people do not take notice—practical effects. That is, its behavior, therefore ours too, as displayed in our interaction with it, evoked in practical expressions like ‘dealing with’ and ‘coping with’—and ‘getting things right.’ I take this maxim not just in a methodological or logical-normative sense, but also in an ‘ontological,’ material-interactionist one, entailing the assumption of a whole material context or life-form as an interconnected, dynamic association of people, practices and things. Together with Peirce’s maxim, I welcome his anti-Cartesian essays and find his ‘community of inquiry’ to be another good, correlate idea for a better understanding of the nature of rationality, also to be further ‘ontologically’ developed along the lines I have just mentioned. Third, still about pragmatism’s virtues, I would enroll William James’s general demand against Leibniz-like, candid, metaphysical rationalism, in favor of a worldly, solidarist turn (to the streets, James says) for philosophy. Finally, from Dewey, I take his point of view of the agent, his enriched notions of experience and ‘the qualitative’ (*cf.* Goyo Pappas), and his ideal of democratic human flourishing, to which I would like to add the notions of progressive, institutional constructionism and material-productive agency/citizenship.

QUESTION 4: What about Pragmatism’s deficits then, if not mistakes, from the point of view you have been developing?

ANSWER: I owe a lot to classical pragmatism, to the Peirce-James-Dewey development, despite being a bit reductionist in its naturalism, where I would keep more of a Hegelian historicist, wholistic perspective, together with ideas like objectivation and appropriation, now freed from a metaphysical, abstract representation of subject or Spirit. I also appreciate, despite its linguocentric (but not negative) leanings, the reasonably convergent neo-pragmatist Sellars-Quine-Davidson-(Wittgenstein-)Rorty development, as a limited attempt at improving upon original, ‘scientific’ pragmatism, let alone analytic philosophy itself. I am not a pragmatist scholar and would not want to be unfair to pragmatism or Dewey by criticizing them in such general terms, but I think both end up conceding too much centrality to natural science as a model for political practice and knowledge. This is something that could impair their understanding of creation and creativity, even of action itself, brought close to a notion of adaptation to environment, within a binomial frame ‘Man (organism)-Nature (environment)’. That is something that can limit their rich idea of experience too, in relation to which I am inclined to emphasize the precedence and productivity of action in our involvement with world and people: ‘In the beginning was the act, and then the artefact’ would be our own Faustian pragmatic-poietic philosophical motto, which wants to combine materiality, creativity, imagination and human transcendence—in action.

Finally, I must add that I often take pragmatism in a broader sense, as part of a more general practical-creative, modernist turn in Western philosophy, which, by the way, may have affinities and resonances with non-Western expressions of thought too. In Europe, that covers historical French philosophy of action and creation, as it developed from Maine de Biran to Bergson, with which, not by coincidence, American pragmatism held a transatlantic conversation in its origins. It also includes Left Hegelianism, praxis philosophies in general and Marx in particular, then Nietzsche (e.g. 'Truth and Lie...'), German-British Ferdinand Schiller's 'humanism', and of course something from Wittgenstein and Heidegger. From Brazil, as part of such large, plural constellation, I would add modernist, anti-colonialist, anti-racist contributions, from thinkers as diverse as Gilberto Freyre, Oswald de Andrade, Guerreiro Ramos, Álvaro Vieira Pinto and Mangabeira Unger, some of which were members of ISEB (Brazilian Institute for Advanced Studies), a sort of anti-colonialist Institute for Social Research—and social, national change—that flourished before the 1964 Military Coup and was cancelled by it. Finally, I know there are similar practical-historical thinkers from other Latin-American countries to be added here, besides those with a different profile, such as Chilean philosopher-biologists Maturana and Varela, with whom I later found our own practical-poietic position has relevant convergences at the 'epistemological-ontological' level. Here I am talking about their enactivism, an idea of knowledge as materially embodied, embedded and enacted. I mean, as I have been quoted by comrade Ralph Bannell: "the idea of objectivation of human beings, their attributes and capacities externalized, extended, we ourselves extended onto the world, in artifacts and things". Also, "the idea of material culture and the enactivist notion of mind, that underscores human motor-sensory interaction, active and material interaction involved in knowledge and in the very construction of our human, material-spiritual world".

QUESTION 5: You have once started a Dewey Center in Brazil; can you elaborate on what that Center and your associated 'pragmatic-poietic' research group have done? What particular ideas from Dewey are of your interest and to Brazilians? What aspects of Dewey's philosophy you find more in tune with your own emphasis on embodiment, community and praxis, away from the linguistic turn?

ANSWER: I am glad you give me a chance to say a bit more about Dewey, a true Modernist, New-World, Whitmanesque philosopher; an inspiration for contemporary, honest, socially sensitive, detranscendentalized philosophizing. If I were to name a handful of thinkers to provide inspiration and grounds for a productive Interamerican conversation, for a particular 'post-European' philosophical development or better yet constellation of national developments, Dewey and Deweyanism would be among my first suggestions, along with related progressive, Brazilian and Latin-American currents of thought I have mentioned. We see the good influence that pragmatism and Dewey have had on both analytic philosophy and recent critical theory like Honneth's and Jaeggi's, and on contemporary philosophers like Habermas, Rorty, Dick Bernstein,

Cornel West, Roberto Mangabeira Unger – also Anísio Teixeira and Paulo Freire in education, sometime before, in Brazil.

When we decided to start a Dewey Center in Brazil, we thought to make it part of a horizontal, global network for non-traditional, future-oriented philosophy, a sort of philosophical G20. In that spirit we tried to mobilize peers in Brazil, as well as to connect with Dewey Centers abroad, in every continent, but that did not turn out as we expected. Deweyan peers in Brazil were relatively few and mostly in education, not philosophy, and Dewey Centers around the world did not seem to be so active. However, as you have mentioned, we already had something else going, the research group *Poética Pragmática* (Pragmatic Poetics or Poietics), that became a sort of philosophical experiment and movement. It started with the simple idea of ‘philosophy as a civil, worldly thing’ (the name of a text I first published in 2000), oriented towards a more autonomous, productive philosophical discussion in Brazil. This concerted circle showed to be more apt to promote our goals of broad, plural networking and dialogue, in which Dewey still played a relevant part, in our formative readings and discussions, together with other pragmatists, with Hegelianism, Brazilian historical essayists etc.

QUESTION 6: *What then have you been doing with this Poetic Pragmatic guild or philosophical experiment, that could have some Inter-American interest?*

ANSWER: In 2013, we had our first Poetic-Pragmatic international meeting, with colleagues from other parts of Brazil, Argentina, U.S., Canada and France, within the XVII Interamerican Congress of Philosophy, in Salvador, Bahia, when our attempted Dewey Center was formally inaugurated. Now, several years later, we have published a celebratory volume entitled *Philosophy, Action, Creation: Pragmatic Poetics in Movement*, in the spirit of a philosophical ‘jam session’, with 17 authors ‘talking’ to our poetic-pragmatic position as well as among themselves. Those are participants from five different countries and eleven different universities, both *poético-pragmáticos* and fellow travelers. In between, we had a series of events, e.g., a large seminar on ‘philosophy and democracy’ (2016), and developed our cooperation with great colleagues from São Paulo, Argentina, Mexico and more. We also produced a series of related theses and dissertations in the Graduate Program in Philosophy at our UFBA (Federal University of Bahia), and published a few books, many chapters and articles, videos, debates and interviews, almost all in Portuguese though. That has been part of the development of our own philosophical perspective, which, as I have mentioned, may be understood as situated amongst Pragmatism, Hegelianism, Marx and more. We could say we have recovered Sidney Hook’s (Dewey’s favorite student and Rorty’s family friend) project of combining pragmatism and praxis philosophy (something Hook did not actually do), in fact pushed further towards our mentioned practical-poietic standpoint. We can also say, on the other hand, that, in the sequence of Brazilian ISEB, and USP’s (University of São Paulo) seminars on Marx’s *Capital*, we take our position to be an apt alternative to present abstract ‘anti-capitalism’ and ‘anti-modern’ would-be ‘decolonialism’ in the Brazilian context.

QUESTION 7: *Still, what other ideas you have found most interesting in Dewey for your work? Which ones are capable of positively resonating more in Brazil in your opinion?*

ANSWER: I have already mentioned a few that are particularly close to our own ideas, and also relevant for what we would like to see developing among more of our peers in the Americas and elsewhere. Dewey is the kind of philosopher that offers a whole new (though precedented) practical, non-dualist paradigm for philosophy, in some contrast with what most of Western philosophy has been from its origins. And he does it very unaffectedly, in comparison with the self-enthroning, epochal gestures of Nietzsche or Heidegger, also their French epigones, Foucault, and even, before those, of people like Marx and Adorno. As I said, I am not a Deweyan scholar, I would have to be helped here by Goyo Pappas and Cristina Di Gregori, but I would still mention, among Dewey's most valuable ideas, his democratic reconstruction of philosophy, the worldliness of his civil, detranscendentalized position, his naturalized Hegelianism, together with his systematic avoidance of rigid modern dualisms. Also, his commitment to 'problem solving' (for us, in a broader, historical, political sense) and to an idea of effective, practical intelligence, as improvements upon traditional understandings of rationality, then his idea of democracy as a way-of-life and his notion of experience as inextricably aesthetical. Dewey is not a linguocentric philosopher, but at the same time he does not incur in many of the typical vices that the French linguistic turn allegedly wanted to overcome, especially the vices of the Marxian-Hegelian critical tradition. When it comes to language, Dewey's basic ideas are—as we would like and Quine rightly notices—that meaning is primarily a property of behavior, that soliloquy is the product of conversation with others, that language presupposes an organized group from which language-users acquire their habits of speech along with, we would add, the rest of their practical and operative social ways, which the former match and are part of.

We should notice that Dewey's normativity is much less pretentious, speculative or dogmatic, even less ambitiously meta-narrative, much more open, empirical and democratic, as compared to competing paradigms. Despite all that, though, I must say that Dewey is not so popular among philosophers in Brazil, and that our Brazilian critical peers are still dominantly very 'Continental', although that has started to change to some extent under the influences of well-known Dewey-friendly philosophers like Richard Rorty, Richard Bernstein and Mangabeira Unger, also of the new pragmatized, deweyanized Frankfurtian critical theory, and even of new positions like enactivism and more. Besides, Dewey has a very important, historical partner in Brazil: Anísio Teixeira (1900-1971); a well-known educator, philosopher and political figure—in my opinion a better inspiration for Brazilian education and politics than Paulo Freire alone. Anísio, who studied with Dewey, was a leading figure in a very influential educational movement in Brazil named Escola Nova, and was badly persecuted by the Brazilian military regime. He held a teaching position at Columbia University, and after his return to Brazil died in a suspicious accident. Finally, the fact that Dewey is North American and a pragmatist still raises some prejudice against his work in Latin America This,

despite the fact that Brazilian Ivo Ibrí is a leading figure in international Peircean studies and pragmatist events. Progressive, left, academic thought in Brazil, like in the rest of Latin America, is still under the dominant spell not of pragmatism or phenomenology, but of Marxism and its more recent post-structuralist, linguocentric French derivations (*sic*).

QUESTION 8: *Can you now elaborate on your relationship to Marx and Marxism? You suggest that your differences with Marxism are not the usual other philosophers make, e.g. the critique of determinism and positivist tendencies in later Marx. Rather, your concerns focus on Marx's normative, speculative essentialism and substantialism. Where are your differences with Marx and Marxism?*

ANSWER: I have published a lot on that, but little in English, so I should extend myself a bit here to try to satisfactorily answer your question. My dispositions towards Marx are critical-reconstructionist, though going the opposite way as Habermas'. I think that a *reconstructed* Hegelian-Marxian contribution to a practical, transformative point-of-view could really add a lot to both pragmatism and critical theory. However, if we are to start by Marx's *philosophical* problems (problems for some of us, at least), I think they are: 1) normatively speaking: a historical-transcendental essentialism, 2) epistemologically speaking: mentalism, 'reflexism' (mirroring correspondentism), and 3) ontologically speaking: dualism and substantialism (in Hegelian terms, Spinozism vs Self-consciousness). Those are regrettable flaws particularly for an otherwise practical-materialist philosopher, and, yes, such problems do include determinism and teleology but in no way stop there. If I had to single out one such problem as the most important, or concentrate them all in one name, I would say essentialized/ transcendentalized human(e), strong social *normativity* is the main problem with Marx (the man is a *communist* philosopher), and that extends to Marxian later critical developments and to his post-structuralist, self-styled anti-modern heirs/competitors.

I would nonetheless recommend Marx's philosophy as food for good critical Interamerican discussions, for he is still very influential in Latin-America, both in academic and political life. Like in many other places, Marxism turns out to be our *lingua franca* for radical social criticism and left-politics, practically synonymous with Critique - of 'Capitalism' and of the status-quo as 'Capitalism'. And that includes Marxian-like Latin-American liberation philosophy, by its followers often taken to be 'the' Latin-American philosophy (more so in Spanish America), whereby Marx could then be said to be 'the' Latin-American philosopher, which is an obvious, unwelcomed exaggeration and a bad monopolist idea. Still, those are good reasons for New-World philosophers, North and South, social and political or not, to critically come to grips with Marx's ideas in a properly *philosophical* manner, something we unfortunately do not see much of around us nor elsewhere, for that matter.

Since we do not have yet much of an effective, living philosophical culture in Brazil at this point, a good, informed discussion of Marx's philosophical presuppositions could be

a providential stepping-stone for real, autonomous, philosophical developments among us; especially for exploring new alternatives in the area of social critique aimed at social change—something definitely necessary for the Americas. On the other hand, Marx can further be an interesting philosopher to explore because he is still much better than the moralizing, pseudo-humanist sort of vulgate that is nowadays *unduly* presented as Marxian or Marxian-like social critique and anti-capitalism, unduly even if up to a certain point rooted in his own ideas. By the way, *capeta* is a popular name for the devil in Portuguese and I have jokingly named *anti-capetalism* what I understand to be a vulgar, moral, ‘theological’ sort of ‘poorist’ anti-capitalism among us; according to which the whole World is *essentially* warped, inverted. Something to piously mourn for, with a single, universal, big Evil and root-Cause of all our evils.

Anyhow, Marx is certainly not a linguocentric philosopher, even if he is neither a fully practical, detranscendentalized, experimentalist one. But he is partially a pretty good practical-materialist philosopher in the shape that his entrenched classical German philosophical background and the influence of narrow XVIII century French materialism allow him to be. As to language, Marx says—and that seems the best he can do—that language is our practical consciousness, the one that matters for it exists for others and arises from social intercourse among humans. To which he adds that, being language necessarily a series of sounds or scribbles (he seems to forget bodily gestures and behavior), it is inevitably material and cannot but ‘reflect’ its material environment as some sort of emanation of it. Marx also suggests, *en passant*, like an ordinary-language philosopher, that a good test for what philosophers obscurely say is to try to translate it in the language of common folks. A plausible demand coming from a common-ist philosopher, which he, however, and even more his epigones—Adorno specially—did not quite live up to, nor later did most *soi-disant* anti-capitalist, linguocentric, neo/post-Marxians, e.g. Foucault, Derrida or Deleuze.

QUESTION 9: *According to your point of view, where is Marx’s good, practical materialism? Does it coincide with your own practical materialist position?*

ANSWER: The best part of Marx’s general philosophy is no doubt his practical materialism, *per se* neither negative nor essentialist, neither determinist nor dualist. And ‘practical materialism’ is indeed what he himself calls his basic perspective, the way it is presented in his Theses *ad Feuerbach*. Before these, in dialogue with Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, Marx had claimed that we are essentially beings that ‘posit’ objects (objectivations in general, I gather), as much as are ‘posited’ by them in the first place. After that, what I find most relevant in Marx’s practical-materialist standpoint is the suggestion that the human world should not be apprehended *only* as object or sensible/sensory intuition, not as mind or language either, but as *sensible*, material *practice/activity*, as much as we ourselves should too—two ideas full of interesting consequences, some of which Marx did not draw himself. I think such notions are more relevant for a good practical historical materialism than the famous founding formula he

offers in his critique of political economy, and amount to a better materialist (in)version of Hegel than the schematic dualism infrastructure vs. superstructure that goes with it.

It is true that Marx always attributed tacit, far-reaching, normative implications to his materialist assumptions, e.g. when he conflates naturalism, humanism and communism, or, soon after, practical materialism and communism. We can go from here to what I take to be his declared two founding—supposed materialist—principles, one more ontological, the other more explicitly normative, and to the philosophical problems they entail. But before we do it, let me just *en-passant* speculate that, in epistemology, had Marx known the linguistic turn, he might have escaped his paradoxically solipsist mentalism, towards a better, more fitting—for a communist—socialized notion of reason and knowledge, since that is something the linguistic turn could, nonetheless, up to a certain point, help him with. That being said, let us take a look at what Marx calls his materialist grounding principle (*Leitfaden*), wherefrom I believe one should start any effective reconstruction of his historical materialism. From scratch, that is, instead of just mitigating its bad side by simply ‘discounting’ determinism, teleology, and dogmatism from it, as German Critical Theory does, while at the same time keeping intact all its *critical-normative*, communist-humanist apparatus, his particular enchanting, widespread notions (metaphors?) of emancipation, reification, fetishism, living labor, etc.

In introducing his mature critique of political economy and the historical-materialist standpoint behind it, Marx presents his basic ‘ontological’ guideline, which at first does not seem so different from our own idea of a basic material, productive entanglement between ourselves and world, involving objects and relations, that I have already briefly mentioned above. Marx even starts from human beings’ particular *bodily constitution*, as we also do, although his body is mostly a laboring, non-pulsive, non-creative body, apparently without any real, bodily—not to say mental—intentionality. Then, he goes on to his famous formula: in their material activity of producing goods to assure their living, human beings enter into material relations among themselves and with nature, that are conditioned by the kind of instruments and skills they have for that. Together, those relations (involving division of labor and property), and the mentioned instrumental forces, constitute the determinant basis or infrastructure for any social formation. That is the basis that supposedly conditions society’s political and intellectual life, the so-called superstructure, which comprises our supposedly unproductive, immaterial practices. And all that seems for Marx to develop independently from choices, beliefs, intentions or fancy, but as materially, structurally determined instead.

QUESTION 10: *Where does Marx humanist/communist normativity come in, then, together with the essentialist problems you understand can be bad for a more effective, political, transformative critical theory?*

ANSWER: Right after Marx presents his supposed materialist guiding principle, all of the sudden there comes the implication of a powerful teleological normativity or ideality. We learn from him that, precisely in his/our times, by a happy coincidence, thanks to the

introduction of large-scale means of production, the hitherto historical succession of social formations finally necessarily leads to nothing less than a non-antagonistic 'social stage', something that actually corresponds to the end of human 'pre-history.' We are now ready to enter a superior social formation, what Marx had earlier called Social humanity or Human(e) society, a step that can be understood as full human emancipation and full realization of our supposed social nature. Here we are back to 'the' normative human of your first question, more exactly the human in the communist shape of man's 'generic essence' (*Gattungswesen*), even when not necessarily named so.

That is not, however, the whole story about Marx's (crypto)normative, founding 'materialist' strategy yet, for, along with that foundation in terms of a philosophy/ theory of history, Marx has a second one, inextricable from the first, the philosophical presupposition behind his capital ideas of alienation, emancipation etc., and therein, in his own words, his revolutionary 'categorical imperative'. That is precisely the foundation for Marx's communist humanism, which turned out to become everything for the Frankfurian Critical Theory. The fact is that Marx deduces this normative presupposition for his anti-capitalist Critique from Christianity itself, by assuming Feuerbach's 'anthropological', communitarian understanding of this religion as a fantastic hypostatization of what human beings truly are or can be: their 'infinite' all-powerful, social-communal essence. It is a Critique that simply translates back the infinite personal God or Man-God of Christianity (with all His infinite attributes) into 'Man' as the new, true Supreme Being. But Man, here, does not correspond to individual, actually existing humans, but to our 'ideal' species-essence, a communitarian, humane Man—Humankind, Society. From that Critique there follows the above mentioned 'categorical imperative'—the obligation to 'revolutionize' the material, worldly basis of religious alienation, where man is not a realized *communitarian* being yet, but on the contrary he is a lost, debased, impotent being, as well as at the same time a subjective, arrogant, selfish one.

That might not seem to be a very practical-materialist move, but provides Marx with the communist *measure* to diagnose or construe our fetichized/alienate condition in Capitalism, then to assess as 'ideological' all the ways of thought that he opposes, such as, besides traditional 'abstract' religion (Christianism), liberalism, Proudhon, Arnold Ruge, Bentham, not to say Feuerbach himself, in his case for not dialectically splitting essence from existence so much as Marx's communist normativity requires. You see, the true 'essence of Christianity' is man's *social-communal* essence, lost, distorted, unrealized in religion, whose problem then is its plain idealism, spiritualism, which matches the modern, subjectivist, individualist, abstract-universalist auto-representation of the human self. Marx is here talking about the *idealism* that 'supports' modern (human) rights, 'spiritual' democracy, 'spiritual' representations of autonomy and citizenship, also Bentham's utilitarianism, etc. - as he explains in *Das Kapital*. According to Marx's account, those ideas amount to an impotent, delusional, vain subjectivism/ individualism, for which Feuerbachian-Marxian social materialism would then be the antidote and correction. No wonder our obvious altruist Feuerbach boiled all that down

to the shibboleth “materialism is love”, something that suggests we should take notice of what was really going on in the Hegelian Left in Marx’s time, especially now that Frankfurtian Critical Theory has assumed, for itself all through its historical development, the general label of Left-Hegelianism.

QUESTION 11: So, you see basically the same Feuerbachian-like, humanist, fully communal normativity in Marx’s mature, allegedly scientific critique of political economy in *Capital* too?

ANSWER: First let me say that humanism is not necessarily such a bad idea, one that by itself will always involve bad essentializations, abstract universalism, claims to strong foundationalism, and sharp distinctions between humans and non-humans (like indeed there are in post-structuralism, precisely in its *linguocentrism*). Humanism can be conceived in a relatively open, undetermined, historicist manner, in the spirit of notions like ‘a better world’, ‘a fairer political association’, ‘a more solidary form of life’ or ‘a generalized human flourishing’. Also, there is no reason to completely exclude the use of Marx’s humanist vocabulary, once deflated, now part of intellectual culture, taken as a set of suggestive metaphors (such as reification or fetichism). On the other hand, a considerate, detranscendentalizing approach to religion as a shared (even if ‘distorted’) form of human self-consciousness, an acknowledgement of it as an expression of human beings’ individual or collective dreams and yearnings for infinitude, solidarity etc., does not have to be a bad idea either. Nothing wrong with seeing something humanly interesting and meaningful, or divine too for that matter, expressed in Christianity, as much as with imagining that a consideration for materiality in humanism entails a better understanding of our connection—or else misencounter—with the world and others. What Marx ultimately does with his essentialized, substantialist *Gattungswesen* humanism, however, may not seem so interesting. For he understands, for instance, that death is not, as it would seem, a harsh victory of species (humankind) over the individual that dies, a victory that would seem to contradict the full unity and harmony between the two, and that because the individual well understood is simply a determinate species-being, and mortal only as such. Marx essentialist humanism also ‘materialistically’ criticizes the idealism of philosophers for not plainly telling us (as they should, according to him) that we are not humans yet (!), but only lack a human consciousness.

Let us not forget that Marx’s Feuerbachianly modeled critique of Christianity is assumedly the model and presupposition for his critiques of society, of state and of capitalist economy, etc., as basically so many other hypostatizations, all of them ultimately brought about by the division of labor, that is by private property, that is by our general non-cooperative, self-ish mode of production, therefore by warped, unfree association among human beings, which also entails their generalized unknowing and blindness about their real *social* existence and *social* economic process. We may now check a bit more closely whether that is what is found in *Capital*, the supposed purely objective, economic grounding for Communism as a telos inscribed in the material

contradictions and necessary becoming of Capitalism itself. For, I understand that in *Capital* one can see a scientific Karl Marx, if one wants, but, to Althusserians' embarrassment and despair, we can also see basically the same humanist Marx, too. For, in *Capital*, political economy and capitalism are criticized from a *communist* point of view, supposedly that of the proletariat, *i.e.* of labor as essentially, unescapably social, as our good-old species-activity and being-for-one-another of Marx's youth. And that means, to put it in less romantic/philosophical terms, that political economy is basically criticized from the point of view of a market-less alternative, centralized economic planning. Not by chance the book is called 'Bible of the Proletariat', where providentially—I would say theologically—what is morally prescribed is shown to be also materially prescribed.

In *Capital*, Christianity is again, Marx says in his considerations on commodity—fetishism there, the cult of abstract man, the religion of a society of independent producers and traders of commodities, that will disappear once the process of production passes to the centralized, planned control of freely associated human beings. That is, when their material conditions of life will become again fully transparent to themselves, a situation for Marx comparable to that of *one* single human-being producing for herself, or of one peasant family, a tribe, a primitive community or even feudalism. The critique of a generalized production of commodities or exchange-value, *i.e.* the critique of independent labor producing for the market, that entails what Marx names commodity-fetichism, must be understood against such measure and supposition, of a possible, restored, transparent, *fuller unity* among all human beings. We can also see here how post/neo-Marxian anti-capitalist Critique of our days can easily slide back to the romantic eulogy we see now for anything non-modern, pre-modern, traditional, tribal, non-Western, communitarian, as compared to fetishized, individualized Modernity.

Then, the problem in Capitalism for Marx is that capitalist circumstances and mode of production do not entail direct, personal, cooperative relations among men in labor, just the opposite. And that, in independent labor and production for the market, human-beings fail to perceive or realize the essentially social nature of labor as a single social force, which once recovered and realized would restore species-being or society as a true social body, after long dark ages of its—by division of labor—split in antagonistic sub-species and dispersed, atomized, competing individual specimens. Marx goes through great pains in *Capital* to describe exchange-value as an absolute mysterious, theological enigma—because it supposedly obnubilates what for him is the essentially social character of human labor and therefore of men as such. He goes on working along the same lines when he radically opposes the level of *social* essence-production-science and that of *subjective* appearance-surface-circulation-ideology. At the end of the day, Christian, abstract religion and mystifying exchange-value are both symptoms indicative of the frustration of an accomplished, transparent, fully socialized production, and here historical materialism, supposedly a Science, shows itself to be *coextensive* with Christianity, being its full, adequate replacement/realization....

QUESTION 12: *After that, what sort of different normativity can your own practical-poietic perspective provide? Do you uphold some positive, non-essentialist idea of social emancipation? How does that stand before Marxian and deconstructionist, post-structuralist, linguocentric normativities? You seem to imply that the former can still make more sense than the latter...*

ANSWER: I have already quickly mentioned here our approach to meaning and normativity, also to the constitution of our own subjectivities, as being rooted in material practice and in our entanglement and dealings with the sensible world, objects included, and with our fellow humans, just the opposite of both Cartesianism mentalist and linguocentric-relativist approaches understand. I have also mentioned institutional constructionism (an idea I share with Carlos Sávio, Tiago Medeiros & Pedro Lino) as a natural consequence, at the social, political level, of our poietic, object-positing perspective, and vice-versa, the latter as motivated by the former. Let me now start by emphasizing that the practical-poietic standpoint is a realist (but non-representationalist) one, concerned with facts and with 'getting things right'; it is about forming and checking one's beliefs in our practical involvement with world and people. It supports a non-mentalist, non-specular, socially, historically situated realism, and conceives of finite empirical subjects capable of knowledge, socially-historically, materially constituted as well as constituting, and assumes inter-subjectivity, interactionism, contingency, agency. Poética Pragmática is about fallibilism, experimentalism, not skepticism or relativism, not about logocentric, dogmatic notions either that imply general 'structural ignorance' for common people, or their idealization for or against. Since we are here among college people, another consequence of such practical-positing standpoint is to contribute to overcome present-day distance, opposition, even animosity, between normatively concerned humanities and instrumental, technical-scientific, disciplines and practices. Another envisaged consequence is to shorten the distance between intellectual critical perspectives and common folks' aspirations outside academia, the 99% to whom we risk appearing as foreign a 1% as we fancy only the top wealthy coterie does.

The practical-poietic standpoint about our material entanglement with the world and among ourselves would like to foster a wholistic, material perspective on human forms of life and their processes of change, encompassing their practices of production, objectivation and appropriation and cultural life in general. Our material perspective here is sort of in between Marx's modes of production (for Marx himself, also modes of living) and, for instance, Rahel Jaeggi's forms of life. By the way, in terms of general philosophy, there has recently been some talk about 'speculative materialism', 'object-oriented philosophy', etc. in metropolitan academic circles, but I have not seen much use or proximity there. For the purpose of our own contrast with *linguocentrismo* and Marx, now, let us briefly focus on one distinctive aspect of our standpoint, one with plenty of normative implications: the emphasis on objects/ objectivizations (artefacts/ institutions) of all kinds, and, along with it, on their production, use, entailed practices

and relations. When it comes to agency, meaning and knowledge, as well as emancipation and empowerment, how could we not take into consideration such artefacts, their development, production, access and use, along with varied relations, asymmetries and subjectivities they also contribute to engender, multiply or support? At the most parochial or most global level too, what social divisions, what domestic or world orders, as well as what forms of agency, are thereby involved?

As to Marx's materialism, what he sees as two distinct spheres of the political body, one material-objectual, the other spiritual-ideal, we see as one and many. We see society as an ensemble of multiple spheres, practices, institutions, purposes, where we are always involved with positing activities, practical relations, objects, and tacit, practical norms and signs/signalizations of all kinds. We thereby pass from dualisms like infrastructure-superstructure, critical-theoretical versus 'fetichized' practices, we pass to multiplicity and relative unity, or better yet congruence, with a renewed attention to the place and role of materialities and material means within forms of life; that is, to our relations with objects, and then, in an interconnected way, among ourselves. Those are central points for our materialism, and distinguish it from traditional historical materialism, not to say to linguocentric philosophy whose favored artefacts are mostly words and sentences, considered as something autonomous and separate. Those are elements that entail a rich idea of material culture (indistinctly material, spiritual, symbolic), and of the social body.

Marx seems to consider only two kinds of objects: instruments of production and consumer goods, of relatively few kinds and few forms of use, known during his particular lifetime; also, he seems to know only two property relations with those, that is, private and public ownership. On the other hand, it is true that, for us too, more or less like for his historical materialism, although in a much wider and varied sense, the introduction of new objects and consequent new practices is what makes us historical, as well as what brings pervasive consequences for all our activities, relations and values, moral ones included. Here we are not talking only about classical means of production, but also about relevant, transformative things/artefacts like automobiles, contraceptives, smartphones, computers, the press, books, pencils. Like, before those, the caravel, the wheel, fire, machetes, bows, swords, horses, fortresses, cities, also institutional arrangements, forms of association, 'spiritual' creations, etc. We can see a dialectics here, between objects, practices, relations and forms of subjectivity, for the permanent development and introduction of new objects collapse old relations (that correspond to older objects/ means/ circumstances) and give rise and support to new relations, forms of life and, yes, subjectivities. But such dialectics does not seem to interest Marxian nor post-structuralist transcendental, uniform, normativities.

QUESTION 13: *What is really implied by that in more explicitly normative or ideal, social and political terms?*

ANSWER: As we have suggested, new objects, objetivations and practices entail new relations, and those desired or desirable social relations and arrangements become new values and ideals—if they are feasible and felt as liberating. Habituated, established relations and objects, on the other hand, may correspond to positive ideals and values for those who are conservatively satisfied with them (relations and arrangements). The focus here is empirical, material relations and means, not dominantly verbal, discursive, as structuring elements, and at stake are things like a more democratic, material (e.g. economic) inclusiveness, material autonomy, appropriation, empowerment, authorship, citizenship, that may invite changes in property relations and institutions in general. Here our non-foundationalist guideline suggests an idea of emancipation that involves both material agency and material means, one that is not imposed by any rigid historical diagnostic or anticipation of what should change and how, no any rigid, binary, structural philosophy of history or understanding of social forms and their shaping.

Society will not have to be organized by one principle alone, be that of cooperation or competition, identity or difference, individualism or commonality. Not only should emancipation be the work of the people involved, as classically advocated by Marx, but also its content should be defined by their own decisions and felt aspirations, as well as their varied relations and circumstances. Different institutions, forms of property, communal and private, in all sorts of combinations, may be involved here, and meliorism, material enhancement and flourishing may be envisioned, in favor of social, political, cultural inclusions, and of overall forms of agency, creation, and economic worth—and empowerment. Not just post-festum distribution, as in social-democracy, nor ‘soviet’ state-capitalism, nor liberal-atomist individualism, but nonetheless always about objects and our relations with them. Would not emancipation of American enslaved African-Americans have been more real if it had been supported by means and competences as in the promised, unrealized arrangement of ‘40 acres and a mule’? Here we may also find echoes of Proudhon, Santi-Simon, Dewey, actually a much wider, plural, progressive, social-reformist tradition than just Marx, and may also find Nietzschean or Isebian motives, and, from Paulo Freire, an often-disregarded concern with the usuary artifactuality with which the oppressed are inseparably involved. As I have already suggested, Marx’s ideals may be here variedly recovered in non-essentialized versions, concerning labor, appropriation, association, authorship, realization, expression, emancipation.

Such project is not necessarily reformist or minimalist as it might seem for a conservative leftist mind, it is just the opposite; meager reformism and widespread conformism have prevailed under old radical, socialist rhetoric, promises and traditional ways of conceiving radical social change, then, alas, ‘realistically’ forever postponed or reduced to meagerest distributionism. From our practical-poietic standpoint, traditional social-democracy and simple compensatory distribution can be duly criticized, together with bourgeois property, also atomist liberalism and formal, abstract-universalist, liberal democracy, without the necessary presupposition of a communist human nature or a historically imposed arrangement, nor any other dogmatic idea of ‘social labor’ and

economic central planning. Besides, recognition, cultural diversity and wherever differences and felt asymmetries amongst people will now be more effectively considered, as much as other differences, for it is all about forms of life, and in our case must not exclude material means and empowerments, nor include essentialized, fixed identities, politically disabling. Amidst all that, by the way, universities will be expected to celebrate a new creative, transformative, more demanding pact between humanities, technical disciplines and practices, also the arts—under simple, good references of better, effective problem solving, social change and wider human flourishing.

Going back to old Marx and *Capital*, despite so much attachment to *Gattungswesen*, that is, collective-communal being, still in *Capital* (about ‘colonization’ in the New World), an “entrepreneurial’ Marx effusively celebrates working for one’s own advantage, wealth, autonomy and realization, based on *personal* private property of material means of production. He presents the beneficial social, political and economic consequences of it as diametrically opposed to wage-labor and capitalism, as two antithetic kinds of private property, even two different modes of production and appropriation, in struggle with each other. Of course, communist Marx is happy to show how capitalist private property works against personal private property as a basis for social and economic independence and democracy, because he counts on the latter being suppressed by an inexorable historical, material, capitalist development, that would make the nationalization of means of production and then communism the only way out of all social, human affliction. For the same reason he does not consider other possible combinations between independent, free labor, and creative, potentializing instances of cooperation. But it is nonetheless interesting to see that Marx’s commitment to ‘social man’ and his humanist denunciation of commodity-fetichism can go together with a firm disposition to evaluate things in material, not moralizing terms, based on whatever prevailing property relations and social-material circumstances are there or could be created, at a certain point in time, at a certain place, under certain circumstances. A commitment that can also go together with a definite interest in material affirmation and exuberance, not simple negation, resentment, simply reactive resistance, romanticized primitivism, shared poverty, ascetism, renunciation.

QUESTION 14: *The emphasis on materiality and corporeality that you want to promote is also a strong focus in feminist philosophy both in North and South America. Recently, for example, there is a link made by a number of thinkers between body and territory, linking the question of territoriality in indigenous movements with the instrumentalization of female bodies and sex (Gago, etc.). Have you engaged with this kind of feminist work?*

ANSWER: Since the question involves social class, gender, race, traditional ethnicities and colonialism, I will take the opportunity to say something about ‘identity politics’ in general and the linguistic, post-structuralist turn in relation to that; and also about a related, decolonizing renewal of philosophy in the particular Brazilian, academic circumstances. I cannot say I have engaged with the kind of feminist work you

mentioned and must thank you for bringing it to my attention. It looks like an example of what I would call material, popular-democratic feminism, and I find relevant commonalities of perspective with it, expressed in its concern for corporeality but also its concrete consideration for materiality, circumstances and related normativity. I mean its focus on poor neighborhoods, where by the way I come from, and then on informal economy, on the city as an artefact or several, deprived of one single order, on neoliberalism top down and from below, on political challenges like a popular turn to the right, and finally about the relevance of poor women as agents who are not simply passive, alienated victims but “have desires of their own and operate complex, productive activities”.

In Brazil, I see poor neighborhoods and favelas as a mix of very diverse productive activities, relations and aspirations, of *pardo* (mestizo, brown), black, white, poor women and men; I see absolutely urban, resourceful, creative arrangements, social and economic, in many ways more modern than the conditions and mentalities of large parts of our regular middle class. I see an environment where, to act politically or simply figure things out, one would definitely have to add to, post-structuralist ‘a-prioris’, ingredients of democratically reconstructed Maozedong-like references, such as ‘mass-line’ and ‘contradictions among the people,’ along with a dash of Paulo Freire’s interest in how people themselves experience their practical, material circumstances. If I had to name one large, multiple, socially and racially diversified ‘Subject’ to ideally correspond to what I suggest in terms of a practical-transformative philosophy, one that among other things I could identify myself with, the masses of Brazilian poor neighborhoods and favelas would be it, the ‘*perifa*’ (an affectionate abbreviation for “peripheries”), the largest part of Brazilian population, bravely, creatively struggling for expression, association and material citizenship.

In relation to poor-masses’ feminism with material perspectives, your mention to Verónica Gago’s work reminds me of Silvia Federici’s perspective, perhaps in the case of Verónica a more open one, although I cannot say I am sufficiently familiar with either. Anyhow, as I see it, the list of what can be focused on in such a perspective includes things like wages giving more power to men, and feminine labor often belonging in the devalued, reproductive, even non-paid side. On the other hand, those poor, popular, racially mixed women, even if particularly oppressed in specific, violent ways, still have a lot more to do with poor men than with white middle class women who belong to the 5% most privileged part of the population. About the first, although *Poética Pragmática* has not explored sufficiently the topic, we support a consideration for notions like universal, material citizenship and democracy, for the body politic as a whole, for people and nation, even the world order, that would not be contemplated by a simple juxtaposition of the alluded identitarian issues and respective minority, fixed categories.

Along with that, I see the question of the association of such perspectives with anti-capitalism; Silvia Federici seems to see ‘the system’ trying to domesticate feminism by offering low work, low wages to women, just to perpetuate itself. She also sees the body of women as the ‘last frontier’ for capitalism, and seems to consider patriarchy as

more capitalist than 'feudal' or than any other remaining traditional, social relations, and to see all that encompassed by the classical, critical normative opposition communalism (again, the old 'human') vs. capitalism (the 'non-human' again), something which Gago apparently does not see. I do not know for sure whether gender discrimination in Brazil is capitalist/modern, or in any measure traditional/feudal, I suspect it might be both. But I think that it has also strong historical roots in slavery, and, on the other side, especially in present day generalized poverty, unemployment and sub-employment, *i.e.* generalized lack of money, in the pocket or in the purse. Be it capitalist or not, I see that as the most disempowering factor for any social group or 'category', even if together with symbolic, cultural, discursive additions and overpinnings to it. But it is still possibly a situation quite different from country to country, at least more so than that of our internationalized quite white, Brazilian middle class, in relation to middle class circles anywhere in the Global North.

Anyway, it seems to me that we cannot say anything relevant about such topics without considering different social, cultural, historical, national circumstances—is not that what post-metaphysical, non-universalist, non-transcendentalist philosophy should recommend? That is one of the reasons why I have a problem (as I have already mentioned) with so much 'anti-capitalism', or 'anti-*capetalism*' as I name it, in post linguistic-turn, post-structuralist critical theory, and its corresponding politics. That is probably a difficulty related to my personal experience with radical politics as something very tough under 'third-world' circumstances, specially under a military dictatorship. 'Anti-capitalism' became nowadays an article of faith and a watchword; I do not think we need that ostensive, practically a-priori, easy diagnosis for everything everywhere; I suspect it is just a matter of wanting to be 'structural', due to theoretical-epistemic, foundational, not to say fundamentalist, privileges there entailed. Not even Marx, Ulyanov or Mandela, Mujica, Evo Morales or Mano Brown were/are so anti-capitalist, and I certainly do not mean to be myself any less than whoever-else. In the most anti-capitalist proclamation ever, the *Manifesto*, a very affirmative, marshallbermanian Marx, while offering the most radical anti-capitalist program ever, took pains to insert a whole session *against* five or six other 'anti-capitalisms'—as moral, idealistic, uninterested in limited institutional reforms, disconnected from effective material/social premises; therefore, for Marx, politically ineffective, harmful, conservative, even reactionary. It is my point that it would be better, and probably more adequate for a plural academic environment, to try first to be consistently plural, democratic, popular, empirical and practically oriented, and see where or what that will in the long run lead us to.

QUESTION 15: *How do you see feminist philosophy in relation to colonial academy in Brazil? You seem to have something to say about that, since you have insistently mentioned intellectual colonialism in part of your published work, in relation to ways of doing philosophy in Brazil.*

ANSWER: Coming back to our white middle-class world, I do not mean a 'feminism for the 90%' should exclude the consideration of things like gender professional

discrimination in our own philosophical community, even if here racial and class selectivity speaks so much louder, where our numerous second, third, fourth rate citizenry of whatever gender and darker color hardly sets foot. Anyway, as to feminist philosophy in Brazil, that is, philosophy critically and practically concerned with gender relations and conditions, I will take the opportunity to consider a particular Brazilian problem, sort of washing some of our white linen in the public arena. For I had hopes — still do—that an interest for philosophical issues from a feminist perspective, as much as from anti-racist and anti-colonialist ones, would help move our academic philosophical community and critical thinking a step forward, in terms of more autonomous and thematic developments. I mean a step forward in relation to the still dominant—exceptions discounted—*magistri dixerunt* commentary of canonical (or not so much) metropolitan philosophers, a step then towards a more questioning and contextualized way of doing philosophy. It is a problem I imagine you do not have to the same degree in North American academia, and I think it is most aggravated here in Brazil, where even Marx and Foucault, even mainly them, are often read that way. Young Linda Alcoff's first philosophical article, criticizing Hanna Arendt, definitely would not have been written here (an article which, besides, poietic-pragmatically claims that all kinds of work, domestic included, are mental). I am here referring to our national, both male and feminine, heavy intellectual inhibition, which comes natural to our philosophical community still to a large extent sort of a European-criollo de-territorialized people lost in the Tropics, even when it comes to their critical social, decolonial philosophical engagements.

Of course, just academic emancipation, a real decolonized development in our universities, might not have to be the main point for philosophical feminism, anti-racism or decolonial theory, but instead to contribute to explore, criticize and fight particular kinds of violence, abuse and discrimination, to therefore overcome, among other things, our deplorable, old-catholic, slavery-remnant, now also fascist-like Latin-American patriarchalism and male-chauvinism, in favor of more democratic, civilized, equal gender, racial etc. arrangements. A situation certainly aggravated (for the lower social strata, of course), as I have mentioned, by the general poverty and disempowerment of the majority of our population, women as well as men, even if not in the same way, especially in favelas and poor neighborhoods. A situation to which a popular, democratic, even if academic, feminism, starting from the point of view and actual conditions of poor, popular women, that is, from how gender discrimination and violence take shape there, could be an answer. But, back to academia, why not also take the opportunity to concomitantly try changed ways and shapes for our philosophizing, content and practice-wise alike? Should not both things necessarily go together, to be really effective and change something? Well, perhaps we would even be freer to experiment such things in a peripheric country like Brazil, where the weight of academic traditions might be not so heavy on the brains of the living, to try new things in that respect. It would not be the first time that, coming from behind, you can actually go further forward.

Such a change has not quite happened yet, however, as the first feminist philosophical moves here seemed to just add more North Atlantic philosophers, only now female, to the list of those to be uncritically and out-of-context repeated, and seemed to just reiterate the most traditional historical narrative starting with Greece. The new moves seemed, along similar lines, to include contemporary metropolitan star female philosophers in our courses, but the same way uncritically embraced. Symptomatically, it had to be Angela Davis, in a visit to Brazil, to remind the audience that we have Lelia Gonzalez, as relevant a feminist-antiracist philosopher as herself. Also, it had to be Goyo Pappas to present the first philosophical lecture I ever heard on Paulo Freire in Brazil, and it was Linda Alcoff who invited a Brazilian peer to give an interview for an American audience. More paradoxically still, recent metropolitan ‘decolonial’ thinking, here in Brazil—that is, in a real, historically semi-colonial national situation—has been uncritically bought and repeated, in detriment of a Brazilian, indeed more political, historical, philosophical, anti-colonialist tradition of thought, e.g., in our modernist movement, cultural essayism and Isebian authors such as Guerreiro Ramos.

All that may have started to change some recently, but not so easily, since there are many mechanisms to make the international division of intellectual labor pretty much repeat the other, economic-material, neo-colonial one, in some cases with the unconscious connivance of metropolitan anti-colonial, critical-emancipatory peers. One cannot expect it to be otherwise when the non-metropolitan people here themselves are the first to renounce playing a different role and are instead in this case responsible for the perpetuation of the colonial mechanism in the first place. We know such changes in mental, academic habits take time, and follow certain steps, but actually there are now new hopes for that, since we are getting instigations from worldly, material realities themselves. For the coronavirus pandemic, plus our particular national fascist-like, alt-right menace here, plus real neocolonialist interventionism, hybrid war and the like right upon us, also national, economic, material involution and social disgrace, have started to force some change in our national philosophical community. Not only in the field of critique and theory, but also now involving more general, philosophical reflection concerning democracy, truth, science, technology etc. For, suddenly, philosophy has been made into a more for-real, serious matter, where Agamben and such clever notions like biopolitics might not seem so interesting now—to be uncritically absorbed—as they used to...

QUESTION 16: *Can you elaborate some more on how you see ‘anti-capitalistic’, ‘anti-modern’, ‘anti-West’, ‘anti male-White’ post-structuralist normativity, in its relation to the linguistic/discursive turn, in comparison to the normativity of precedent, traditional critique and your own?*

ANSWER: Marx’s normativity shows itself to be highly social-communal, universal-essentialist, structural-determinist, in his critical approach to political economy, as well as teleological, speculative, determinist too, in his supposedly materialist philosophy of history. As part of the same theoretical construction, Marx also displays a central

commitment to Critique as anti-ideological demystification of alleged—actually, constructed—structural, (un)human, generalized illusion, which are then deciphered/exposed by a superior, theoretical, again human-communal, deeper, transcendental understanding of things. What comes after that is an uncritically Marxian-humanist (MEF-inspired), that is, Frankfurtian critical theory, additionally marked by an all-negative antithetical dialectics. In comparison to Marx's original, it is a theory without a corresponding particular-universal class for its social basis, and, because of that, more freely radical-critical against practically the whole of Modernity, reason, science, technology, bureaucracy, the State, etc.

Post-Marxian or neo-Marxian French Theory, as part of the —supposedly antidogmatic, anti-authoritarian—structuralist linguistic-turn, could have offered a decisive improvement upon all that, reconciled with contingency in history, freed from the metaphysical subject, suspicious of a too strong, transcendental, dialectical-logic in society and history, also of a possible hidden metropolitan ethnocentrism, etc. It could have brought with it a new deflationary, fallibilist point of view, more empirical and experimental, in a manner that could mean a non-nihilist, non-relativist secularization and democratization of Critical Theory and Marx. But, instead, and I may be talking about a *vulgate* here, the new Critique turned out to be something paradoxically more intellectualist, turned against reason, objectivity, etc. It turned out to be a Critique supported by another, more abstract humanism, and by another, actually more impoverished, philosophy of history, framed by a simplified, undialectical, unmediated, indeed ahistorical binary polarity oppressor-oppressed.

What we have here seems to be a new historical, totalizing Meta-Narrative, according to which Modernity and Capitalism appear conflated as essentially worse than anything else before. That is, as just the permanent, rationalizing renewal of discriminatory, marginalizing discourses, and corresponding practices of power and domination, representing the new unhuman, to be counteracted or resisted by the inversive normativity of a supposed, even if fragmentary, true human. What is that true human? Precisely whatever is represented/constructed, in the supposedly typically, dominant modern discourse, as the less human or the less-than-human. In this new French Critical Theory, we now have the paradox of a critical-dogmatic relativism, sometimes on the verge of nihilism, in the shape of a potentially full, undialectical Negation of everything around us—as modern. Which, as I mentioned before, I guess roughly involves what my conversational partners here diagnose as a combination of skepticism, nihilism, Manicheanism, rigid dichotomies, and generalized stereotypes.

QUESTION 17: *Now we can go back to where we started. How do you more conceptually relate such normative problems, and perhaps still others, to the post-modern, linguistic turn in the area of philosophy and humanities in general?*

ANSWER: What we have here, in this case, are not just the consequences of any general linguistic turn, but of a very particular one, started by Saussurean formalist,

linguistic structuralism, culminating thereafter in a new, structuralist/poststructuralist kind of critical theory, still basically conditioned by its Saussurean origins. Marx himself already shows a structuralist way of constructing the social body and its critique, a way that made possible Althusser's influential structuralist reading of *Capital*, that then allows us to conceive of a particular genealogical sequence here: Saussure-Lévi-Strauss-Althusser-Foucault, as a sort of internal, dialectically continuous development. That is, a development where Saussurean, world-less, binary linguistic structuralism opens the way to Lévi-Strauss' structuralist cultural anthropology, and this to Althusser's anti-subject, 'anti-humanist' Marxism, after which Foucault appears as the anti-subject, relativist, social-constructivist theorist of structurally discriminated minorities and subjected identities, also the decipherer of the pitfalls of truth-knowledge discursive practices as entirely about power. Derrida will add 'free play' to the idea of structure, to try to attenuate its disguised metaphysical ambition and centeredness, involved in references like Man, Being, why not also History, Modernity, Power. But Foucault, our 'new Marx with tenure', is the final, maximum epitome and outcome of that most prolific lineage of radicalized structuralism, that has reached, like Marxism before, world-wide, now academically based, cultural and political influence.

Such critical variants in succession, within the structuralist/post-structuralist paradigm, are marked by the Saussurean ideas that, meaning and normative-wise, there is nothing outside language, nothing beyond text or discourse, where then we just move indefinitely, without reference, from signifier to signifier. They are marked by ideas of the impossibility of ever reaching any sort of objectivity/exteriority as to meaning, ideas of every sign being negatively defined in opposition to everything else that it is not, of a determinant structural, semiotic/ discursive sphere 'before' object and subject, of no real agency, subjectivity or intentionality for human beings there, etc. They are then marked by a binary Normativity by means of a new very ambitious Meta-Narrative—ultimately anti-Modern, anti-Western, anti-Capitalist, actually still close to the precedent Hegelian-Marxian-Adornian one, in an impoverished version. Now we have a critical-theoretical paradigm apparently marked by a 'human' even more negative, framed in a binary, abstract, reductionist narrative: the human oppressed in structural opposition to the un-human oppressor, about whatever social issue can be fitted into such binarism of discourse (and power), be it authority, gender, race, class, classroom, ethnicity, coloniality, looks. Real political, social, material issues are thus 'discoursefied', 'epistemologized', 'foucaultianized', 'binarized', by this new critical paradigm, by means of the replacement of the real, material, stuff, of social, political inequalities or asymmetries, by discourse and epistemology. Not by coincidence, as to philosophy and humanities, in an age of globalization and neoliberalism, that critical perspective replaced original Hegelian-Marxism, and shaped the dominant, academic culture in universities, especially in the United States, wherefrom it is exported to the rest of the world.

The different social *categories* involved in such issues, that correspond to particular discourses within the Master one, are now conceived as a list of distinct, little proletariats, with their unique radical, 'leninist' perspectives (class-politics can be

similarly identitarian), as discriminated and oppressed by Modernity's universalist norms, to the benefit of their domineering counterparts, both sides of each polarity turned into essentialized identities. And that is done with the consequent fixation of segmented, separate 'minority' movements as the privileged new 'subjects' and '*loci*' for radical political action for change. To remedy that segmentation of the social and political body, and face the corresponding relativism/dogmatism of different, incommensurable little perspectives, we may now have strategies of so-called transversality and intersectionality. Which, however, seem to constitute, together, a certain new universality, actually more problematic than the older one, now based on the abstract quality of being ultimately oppressed/ discriminated by the same and one Evil. Also, having in common a superior moral-theoretical, 'anti-power' stand, for true equality and justice—against Capitalism, Modernity, the West. With a strong foundational, totalizing narrative and diagnostic in the background, the inverting game of deconstruction will be played, everything being a binary social, discursive construction, to be then binarily counteracted and inverted. Having started that fragmented way, however, it will be difficult to reach any inclusive, political, non-essentialized 'We'—like the one that Linda Alcoff demands in her 'An Epistemology for the New Revolution'. Society itself, at least politically, is nothing more than an aggregate of discursive practices of oppression and corresponding minority categories.

For what we have here is a sort of ill-disposition against whatever is beyond multiple, indefinitely multiplying separate parts, against whatever implies other, less clear-cut, identities or unities, an ill-disposition that leaves us with parts to be brought together only in the form of a summatory or aggregation. The political body cannot thus be challenged as a whole, not even in its partial, constitutive, institutional elements, nor are there possible legitimate, large, common concerns, in fact not universal but in a way very concrete and particular, national for instance, to be then politically considered, with priority. Now, we cannot think of things like another, more effective citizenship, a better democracy, better institutions for improved, real communities, for better forms of life, nations, states, regimes, world. We cannot aptly criticize wide, materially/institutionally based asymmetries either, particularly warped national economies, general economic policies - and *real*, concrete capitalism. We cannot even envisage a better, empowering educational system, at least in the Global South necessarily concerned with much more than identitarian emancipation. In the international front, we will not be able to confront, from the point of view of Global-South nations, privileged metropolitan positions in finance, commerce, technology. The world may rest in peace, neo-fascism and alt-right are now free to take care of whatever implies such concrete syntheses or broader relations and broader identities like people, community, nation. Well, I do not mean that this is all there is to contemporary post-Marxian, post-structuralist Critical Theory, and Goyo, Linda, Ofelia and more people can certainly help a lot in such discussion. But, anyway, we must move on, past the structural-discursive linguocentric turn, as much as past its critique by traditional Marxism and liberal, individualist universalism, not to say fundamentalist conservatism.

QUESTION 18: *You seem to consider Foucault or his vulgate to be at the roots of many of such critical perspectives, of their respective social activism and their supposed problems. Can you elaborate a little more on the conceptual contours you see for that sort of Foucaultian normative foundations?*

ANSWER: I do not mean those movements in general, but certain structuralist-discursive perspectives, political or anti-political, that they assume. About the structuralist linguistic turn, in fact potentially normative from the start because of the basic asymmetric, polarized binarism associated with it, I would like to underscore that, despite his sly elusiveness, Foucault appears as the heavily normative structuralist of discourse from the start, too. I take his post-structuralism to be a sort of Kuhnian/Canguilhemian, epistem(é)ized structuralist development, as a basically internal development of structuralism, not something else. As such, his position is marked by the above mentioned usual, now radicalized, structuralist claims that there are no subject as well as no objectivity. And then, in its Foucaultian development, that the man/human of humanism and Enlightenment has died, that there is no real truth, that discourse/knowledge is about domination, that so is reason, etc. All that accompanied by an explicit, universal enough, epochal metanarrative about Modernity and its supposed dominant discourse as being entirely in the business of rationalization, then exclusion and domination. Here, I would call attention to basically two aspects of his theoretical position: the determinant structural, 'infrastructural', position of discourse, and the seemingly transcendental-historical nature of his inquiry, of his supposed findings, of the normativity it discloses, and consequently of his own, reactive, 'counter-normativity'.

I think we should attend more closely to the fact that Foucault represents a heavily normative structuralist point of view, crypto or just potentially normative in some of his predecessors but in fact fully developed as such in Foucaultianism, in a paradoxical combination of abstract, moral dogmatism, with an always impending, total relativism/nihilism. People will be impressed by the supposedly productive, heuristic potency of Foucault's thematization of power, by its new, ubiquitous capillarity, everydayness, locality etc. Then they will question him about where his normativity finds support, after all a decisive requirement for any true critical theory, for it to legitimately bear its practical-critical, political fruits. But it seems to me that the foundation and focus for his normativity is right there all the time and from the start: Foucault simply dramatizes structuralism's constitutive, somewhat asymmetric, hierarchic binarism, in moral evaluative terms of normalization-abnormalization, authorization-deauthorization, domination-subjection—and power. All that as articulated in different binary discourses of similar grammar and consequences, found everywhere, for discourses are everywhere indeed. Foucault simply decides to politicize and extend to the whole social formation, but then in a necessarily segmenting, pluri-perspectivist, identitarian way, Kuhn's ideas about scientific paradigms, together with Canguilhem's social perspective in the history of medical science and its practices as obviated in his title *The Normal and the Pathological*. At the end of the day, Foucaultian normativity simply seems to say: "If there are hierarchies/government, norms, institutions, 'technologies', I am against, and will react through resistance, transgression, counter-epistemology, counter-discourse, in

the name of freedom and justice, also of the indocility of perverse-polymorphous, critical-oppressed bodies” – his Reichian, Marcusean-like youthful side.

Foucault’s foundational post-structuralist guidelines are about meaning and normativity; both are accounted for in discursive structures; it is about discourse-knowledge-power, related practices, and unspoken oppressive consequences. Discourse and norms are everywhere, so then are power and domination, always in the shape of occult patterns to be exposed and framed in terms of his Theory. In connection to that, we will find allusions to non-discursive practices/realities, but as determined by discourses and discursive practices all the same, and in the service of power and domination all the same. Even if discursive formations, with their corresponding practices, their shapes and related ‘technologies’ (of power), assembled together, may evoke entire forms of life, it is always language/discourse that out of itself creates and structures reality, social realities at least, perhaps even supposed natural ones. For, when it comes to discursive realities vs non-discursive realities, primacy belongs to discursive practices over all other practices, the first being autonomous and unsubordinated in relation to the second. Primacy and independence are given to the sphere of discourse over the social, material sphere, this latter being irrelevant for the definition of meaning and normativity. Discursive structures preside over the production of statements, of knowledge and power asymmetries; single statements are determined by meaning determining, structuring discourses, by the rules and relations that govern them and therefore govern the discursive formation and accompanying social-political realities. One may here imagine mutual relations and interinfluences between the two spheres, discursive and the non-discursive, but as in Marx’s infrastructure vs. superstructure intricacies, despite Foucault’s elusiveness in this respect too, the first will turn out to be the determinant element, so that, relativism notwithstanding, reversible *meaning* and then reversible *normativity* will be kept safe and unquestionable—just like with Marx’s infrastructure.

That being said, we meet what seems to be the Kantian-like transcendental nature of Foucault’s inquiry and normativity, in practical terms implying a God’s eye’s point of view, his own, for structuralism is said to be the search for the determining underlying patterns of thought in all forms of human activity. The critical-theoretical move here is the search, reconstruction and revelation of the supposed hidden—bad, because asymmetrical in their results—structuring patterns of an ordering activity, in discourse. Foucault talks about transcendental ‘conditions of possibility’—patterns in discourse—for experiencing, meaning, knowing, but mostly, in his case, valuating and discriminating. In opposition and reversion to that, we are here talking about a transcendental, ‘humane’ counter-normativity, transplanted from the former ideal of a human universal nature to now multiple particularistic ‘natures’, nonetheless under the same ultimately binary, human (vs. unhuman) framing. That has been Foucault’s constant, ultimately transcendental inquiry and disposition, a search for transcendental discursive schemes or patterns, linguistified and historicized (in discontinued terms), for historical, determining aprioris, perhaps no less absolutized than the original, Kantian,

a-historical one, only a lot farther reaching because of its simultaneously determinate, empirical political content.

We here are talking about a 'historicized' a-priori, present in discourse, behind people's backs, implicit in discursive practices, but by no means in the dialogical, weakly transcendental, intersubjective ways of post subject-centered, Habermasian-like Kantianism, of a socialized epistemic/ethical authority, with anti-dogmatic, justificationalist consequences. Instead, in Foucault we have schemes presiding over, above, behind, everybody-else's ingenuous heads, provided by his (and his associates') inquiry after structures that preside over the production of meanings and statements, despite trivial, non-theoretical, empirical subjectivities. Foucault is perhaps more transcendental than the usual transcendental, representing a restoration, in times of post-metaphysical philosophy, of a so-called point of view of God, instead of a step towards a contextualism and justificationalism, towards moderate 'empiricism' or a sobering materiality. He may, therefore, represent something like a relapse into old philosophy's dogmatic foundationalism, actually stronger in post-structuralism than in structuralism (e.g. Lévi-Strauss), now in an identitarian, logocentric, linguocentric epistemological shape, bad for effective popular, democratic politics and real change, bad for poetic-material institutional constructionism, also bad for perspectives of free, personal, self-creation.

QUESTION 19: Getting more personal now, as a young man you had to face a military dictatorship in Brazil. How did such experience influence your political and philosophical views? What in your personal life and experience led you to philosophy? How was your philosophical formation, and how did your philosophical studies progress towards the particular philosophical position you have come to develop?

ANSWER: I come from a very low social extraction, poor neighborhoods, irregular life, destitution not the worst part. I guess that is why I have always felt sort of an outsider, in middle-class, in academia, too. But poverty is a wonderful school, and I owe a lot to my Portuguese-looking mom's physical labor and invention, and to her sewing machine, what I guess explains my sympathies for artefacts and embodied activities, my own, too. Also, when I went to work for revolution, I always thought I was doing it for myself and people more or less like me, that I have in a way left behind but also brought forever with me, not for any mythical, remote, theoretically conceived or idealized "Other". Nor, from experience, did I ever think there was nothing to be done against adversity at the personal level, too.

Gradually moving to middle-class environments took a lot of effort and a very long time. Public schools were bad, but my Euro-African-Indian self-taught father had a few books, like Durant's *Story of Philosophy*, Russell's *Unpopular Essays*, Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, and others by a couple of Brazilian social essayists, too. I soon took my education in my own hands, eventually found the way to public libraries, reading (there was not much else to do with free time) whatever gave me 'a sense of everything' and/or of "personal

construction,' be it natural science (I even tried experiments), history or the *Upanishads*, also by myself acquiring instrumental competences like languages. However, I found that people, life, work from early age, moving from place to place by necessity, and, quite later, travelling, gave me more 'ruler and compass'. When I finally reached a middle-class public school, I heard about and gained an AFS scholarship to spend a high-school year in the U.S, I still do not know how. Directly from destitution to New York, and then, brown and left, to Dixieland, would you believe. By the way, I did voluntary work in the U.S., for black 'underprivileged' kids, in Brevard County, and have a certificate for that.

From teenagerhood I was socially progressive, wanted to see Brazil change, but only got political with the tightening of the military dictatorship after 1968, as it became too much for me and more young people. Even so, I still had my own 'motorcycle diaries' journey (without motorcycle) throughout South America as a backpacker. My philosophy graduation in Bahia was very basic, and still mostly self-taught: I skipped most classes with the generous complicity of teachers, to work for my living, but kept on studying on my own, and only showed up in classes to try to discuss. Then, I wanted to write a book like Robert Barrett's *Irrational Man*, a copy of which a pen-pal had sent me from abroad. Then, I read Fromm's *Marx's Concept of Man*, which had a strong impact on me, then went for revolution full-time, developing that particular political culture that you do not learn in school. I did a lot of political work, popular organizing and popular education throughout Brazil, city-country, north-south, east-west, also published and lectured on Brazilian problems as a small public intellectual, but always involved with a social reality quite different from theoretical books. Political activities, both underground and institutional, public (including CEAS and *Movimento*, mentioned in my bio), brought me persecution, legal charges, detentions, threats, and got me expelled from my first attempt at becoming a college teacher.

When we finally got rid of the dictatorship, most surviving comrades went further on to institutional politics, I went back – or forward - to philosophy, then for a regular job in the academy and finally for graduate studies. It was my first serious, tough, formal philosophical studies (with due government financial support), the best available in Brazil, political philosophy, very demanding, lots of disciplines, lots of reading, in São Paulo, between Unicamp and USP. The name of the game was structuralist reading of canonical philosophers, and standard theses and dissertations were dominantly 'The concept C in philosopher P', a marriage for life. To escape that, I managed to write my dissertation on the Young Hegelians and Marx, their philosophical debate, despite being told to leave 'holly' Marx alone. Thereafter, I saw our incipient philosophical community grow and spread all over Brazil, and take its present shape, mostly along the above-mentioned historical 'internal reading' methodological lines.

Back in Bahia and UFBA from São Paulo, there followed the formulation of my alternative conception of philosophy 'as something civil', just a natural consequence for someone who had always studied with life/worldly intentions. From Young Hegelianism and Marx, I managed to gradually move to contemporary philosophy as I always

intended, to try to find here a living position. First, through post-doctoral studies on modernity and the subject, at UC-Berkeley, trying to make sense of post-modernism. Then, by taking Habermas critically as a travel companion, a dialogical philosopher with a background like mine, who was dealing with Marx and Hegelianism, and then different strands of contemporary philosophy. I moved on to Rorty vs Habermas's discussions, then classical pragmatism, and finally connected back to 'Brazilian theory', Brazilian authors that I had studied and used for politics and revolution. Many years later, I finally developed my own poetic-pragmatic position, just a suggestion and program to be explored—'interamericanly' if you would like. Anyway, there has always been so much to go after, beauty included, but never enough time to do it all, which will always be the case—too many promises to keep and miles to go before I sleep.

QUESTION 20: Many readers of the Inter-American Journal of Philosophy are interested in exploring the potential of philosophical bridges between our national philosophical traditions. A new generation of scholars are provoking us to think of Latin American and North American philosophies as chapters in a larger geo-political and world-historical school of philosophy from this hemisphere. To what extent you have been doing Inter-American philosophy?

ANSWER: I think we might have a chance to collectively contribute to a renewal of philosophy in this Continent, together with developing a better, transformative, critical, social thinking, with the contribution, among other things, of a wider, continental dialogue. Considering the suggestions that I have made and references I have resorted to throughout the interview, yes, not only, but also; my work could be considered part of an Interamerican philosophical conversation, and to further develop something in that spirit might be an interesting idea, if both—actually several—parts want to listen to one another. I would like to think I am doing philosophy in the first place, and then Brazilian philosophy, also trying to help make that happen. For, nowadays, philosophy has become something admittedly more contextual, no longer so universal or transcendental, perhaps not so technicist either, also less individual, monadic. By the way, classical historians of ideas and philosophy in Brazil, like Silvio Romero and Cruz Costa, have come to the conclusion that the country is perhaps historically more inclined to practical and detranscendentalized, even pragmatic philosophizing, than to metaphysics and abstract speculation.

For me, philosophy is necessarily an intellectual enterprise within a certain cultural context, in answer to the circumstances, demands and instigations from it. That is sort of inevitable and should go without saying, it just has to be assumed if you want to do philosophy in any sort of authentic, live manner. But of course, any national development is also part, even if sometimes a necessarily contentious one, of other, larger contexts, such as the New World (I like that expression), South-America, the Western World, the Global South, etc. It is typical of the present world circumstances the constitution of supra-national, integrated spaces and broader identities, and then the development of corresponding common, dialogically approximated perspectives.

Despite huge asymmetries, even antagonisms, and, on the other hand, interesting differences, world-historically, culturally and geopolitically, North and South philosophical Americas, also Brazil's and the U.S.'s philosophical communities, may dialogically explore their complementarities, proximities, even communalities, again also differences, in philosophy, humanities, culture.

We are nations that resulted from basically one European overseas expansion, and 'third-world' Brazil and 'developed-hegemonic' US have, nonetheless, a lot of social, racial, economic diversity and inequality in common, Spanish America too; we also have very significant African and Indian presences and notable contributions to be acknowledged, recovered, developed. We have a lot of thinking, innovative, philosophical, academic people willing to horizontally cooperate, debate, create. It is a new, mixed World on this side of the Atlantic, a modernist, experimentalist, more plastic perhaps one, where the traditions of the dead do not, should not weigh so much on the brain of the living, not in an inertial sense. Willy-nilly, we in the South are in many ways, also culturally, quite 'American', at least in Brazil, while North America has also become quite Latin, besides Black, both sides in a potentially open, cosmopolitan way. That does not mean that we are not also historically quite European-influenced in the two Americas, we could actually say three or more: Anglo-Saxon America, Spanish America, Portuguese American (language-wise), Canada, together with very African and very Indigenous Americas. Those can be significant grounds for an Interamerican, productive philosophical conversation and exchange.

QUESTION 21: What Brazilian and North American philosophers do you think are worthwhile reading or "rubbing" together (e.g. Paulo Freire and John Dewey), to deal with particularly philosophical and concrete social problems?

ANSWER: Well, it sounds like a promising idea, I have made some suggestions along those lines (like Isebian & Pragmatists), and here I want to emphasize as number one Alberto Guerreiro Ramos (1915-82), black, father of critical social theory in Brazil and much more. But we could perhaps first think of some "rubbing" among peers themselves, between our present philosophic communities, based on our present perspectives, concerted, plural voices, with productive purposes. I think we are doing it this very moment with these interviews, developing a conversation, and I can not think of better partners for that than people like Goyo Pappas, Linda Alcoff, Ofelia Schutte and more kindred spirits, perhaps inviting in people like Dick Bernstein, from the Anglo-American side, Dussel and Mendieta from the Spanish-American, Mangabeira Unger from the Brazilian, to mention a few names, if they would give us the honor. In my answers in this interview, I believe we may find a lot for a New World philosophical agenda. For instance, rubbing our pragmatist and critical-social contributions, rubbing our general philosophy and social theories committed to facing varied, contextualized, social problems, colonial problems, social-material change—with particular New World colors.

Something comparable is happening in Europe, around those two general positions, pragmatism and critique, now complemented by an anti-colonial awareness at least in intention, facing philosophical challenges concerning world problems and asymmetries. Even if in Europe perhaps with a little more historical inertia, and without so much internal cultural, national diversity and contradictions as here. Perhaps here also with less intellectualism and pessimism, and with the possibility of a more daring, renewing, diversified disposition, by straightforwardly facing the colonialist question inside our own continental territory, the Global South and the Global North both acutely represented in one and same Continent. If I may suggest, let us try to proceed with the conversation in the shape of an enchainé dialogue among interviews, adding more partners to it, in English all right. My own ideas here are only provisory, questionable, just abridged considerations and opinions, with provocative, conversational intentions. Our practical-poietic materialist position, or philosophy of praxis as poiesis, along with our institutional constructionism, is just a conversation piece to be combined with possible others, inspired by contingent, contextual demands of our time, not by any foundationalist perspective. Thank you for the opportunity to present my opinions and suggestions.