

## THE NEOLIBERAL VIRUS IN BRAZIL AND THE CONTROVERSY WITH GIORGIO AGAMBEN

### Introduction

In Bertioga, a coastal city in the state of São Paulo, Brazil, the body of an Austrian man, then identified as Wolfgang Gerhard, was found with signs of drowning in 1979. But only in 1985 it was discovered that he was not an Austrian immigrant. His true identity proved to be that of Josef Mengele, also known as “The Angel of Death”.<sup>1</sup> Mengele had been a captain of the SS and one of the doctors who carried out experiments at the Auschwitz concentration camp, employing experimental surgery without the use of anesthesia. He lived in Brazil for 35 years, using numerous false names.<sup>2</sup> He had lived in another city in Brazil called New Europe and, by the end of his life, he moved to a farther place, driven by his paranoid fear of being captured by the Israeli police, just as it had happened to Adolf Eichmann, years earlier, in Argentina.

Yet again, beyond Brazil’s participation in the World War II on the Allies side, or the Nazi expeditions to the Brazilian Amazon rainforest during the 1930s (reaching my own city, Belém do Pará), Nazism had intersected once more with our recent history during that episode, in which one of the most nefarious Nazi scientists was found in Brazil, hiding from the possible consequences of his war crimes. I was reminded of those facts when I first read the article by the Brazilian Minister of the Foreign Relations, the *chancellor* Ernesto Araújo. He published it in his personal blog, entitled as *Chegou o comunavírus* (*Comunavirus has arrived*, 2020). His article refers to two important contemporary leftist philosophers, Slavoj Žižek and Giorgio Agamben. Both had spoken up about possible political implications of the current pandemic caused by COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2).

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gerald L. Posner and John Ware, *Mengele: A História completa do Anjo da Morte de Auschwitz* [Mengele: The Complete History about the Angel of Death of Auschwitz] (São Paulo: Cultrix, 2019), 66.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. André Bernardo, “Josef Mengele: os 40 anos da morte do médico nazista que viveu 17 anos em SP [Josef Mengele: the 40 Years since the Death of the Nazi Doctor Who Lived for 17 Years in SP],” *BBC News Brazil*, Fevereiro 6, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-47121871>.

Araújo used their manifests to substantiate his believes that the current health crisis could give rise to a political movement against liberal democracy, much like the of exceptional measures used by the Nazi state – which Araújo equates with the Communist state, since he is unable to distinguish those ideologies. In short, the Brazilian *chancellor* tries to argue that the emergence of the “Coronavirus [COVID-19] makes us wake up again to the nightmare of communism”<sup>3</sup>, and that this is supposedly shown by the Slovenian philosopher Žižek in his recent book on the pandemic, called *Virus* (2020), when it “reveals what Marxists have been hiding for thirty years: globalism replaces socialism as a preparatory stage to communism. (...) which surrenders without disguise the communist-globalist game of appropriation of the pandemic in order to completely subvert liberal democracy and the market economy.”<sup>4</sup>

But I intend to specifically highlight the passage in which Araújo quotes Agamben, as being “a seemingly non-Marxist left-wing philosopher, who wrote with great apprehension about the curtailment of freedoms that is taking place,” picturing the Italian philosopher as concerned with such alleged risks to individual freedoms, as opposed to Žižek, who “welcomes [it] with joy.” Thus, Araújo goes on to say that’s “[a] pretext of the pandemic, the new communism is on building a world without nations, without freedom,” and to build “[a] permanent global state of exception, transforming the world into a big concentration camp.”<sup>5</sup>

By highlighting these passages from Minister Araújo’s article, this essay aims to problematize his use of Agamben’s remarks to validate his own conspiracy theory over Žižek’s book. From this dispute, I will try to reveal Araújo’s ideological trickery, a supposed libertarian that actually acts to veil the real neo-liberal-authoritarian pretensions in the Brazilian President Jair Messias Bolsonaro’s government.

Based on this problem, I formulate the following hypotheses:

- a) Agamben’s opinion on how social isolation measures can generate a permanent state of exception does not work properly with Brazil’s singular experience in the current pandemic;
- b) Besides, as it is revealed in Araújo’s quotations above, this essay defends that Agamben’s position was instrumentalized by the Minister to justify the statements and the negligence of the current Brazilian federal government. Like Bolsonaro’s many statements considering the current pandemic as “a minor event”, “just a flu outbreak”, whose rhetoric augmentation only intends to lead the Brazilian domestic economy to depression, causing unemployment and closing private business.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ernesto Araújo, “Chegou o Comonavírus [The Comonavirus Has Arrived],” *Metapolitics* 17, Abril 22, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Despite the measures for imposing social isolation put in place by some state governors in Brazil, as occurs in the Brazilian state of Pará, Amazonas and São Paulo, Bolsonaro has dealt with the epidemics with negligence and omission. For this, the Brazilian President has been considered worldwide the “worst leader” in the world during the pandemics. Cf. “Leaders Risk Lives by Minimizing the Coronavirus.

And to develop these hypotheses, this essay launches three tasks:

1) Better explore the categories of Agamben's Theory that bases his critical position on government measures of exception;

2) Unveil the true authoritarianism and the functioning of the "political machine of death" hidden by the liberal discourse in the aforementioned article by Minister Ernesto Araújo – who is against rigorously maintaining social isolation, recommended by the medical-scientific orientation of PAHO and WHO (Pan American Health Organization and World Health Organization);<sup>7</sup>

3) Finally, show how Agamben's criticism differs from Bolsonaro and his Minister discourses; and (3.1) how Agamben's articles do not apply in the Brazilian context, governed by ideology that mixes Neoliberalism and apology for military authoritarianism.

### I. The Agamben Controversy about the Pandemic

From February of this year until the moment this essay was being written, in the electronic site that he has on the site *quodlibet.it*, in the session *Una voce di Giorgio Agamben*, Agamben published a total of eleven articles and one interview regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. In his first text, called *The invention of a pandemic* (February 20th, 2020), Agamben was cause of controversy by calling the Italian government's measures during the beginning of contamination at that time as being "frenetic, irrational, and completely unjustified emergency measures."<sup>8</sup> By that, Agamben questioned why media and authorities were "working to spread a disposition of panic, causing a real state of exception, with serious limitations of movement and the suspension of normal functioning of living and working conditions in entire regions?"<sup>9</sup>

Based on the position of the CNR (*Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche*) – the Italian National Research Council – Agamben saw a disproportionality in the treatment of the flu that, until then, seemed a "normal flu." For the philosopher, "it seems that, having exhausted terrorism as the cause of exceptional measures, the invention of an epidemic may offer the ideal pretext to extend them beyond all limits."<sup>10</sup> On account of this text, the Italian philosopher was attacked by several philosophers, such as Jean-Luc Nancy, Roberto

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Bolsonaro is the Worst," *Washington Post*, April 14, 2020, [www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/jair-bolsonaro-risks-lives-by-minimizing-the-coronavirus-pandemic/2020/04/13/6356a9be-7da6-11ea-9040-68981f488eed\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/jair-bolsonaro-risks-lives-by-minimizing-the-coronavirus-pandemic/2020/04/13/6356a9be-7da6-11ea-9040-68981f488eed_story.html).

<sup>7</sup> "Tempo para desacelerar propagação da COVID-19 está diminuindo nas Américas; países devem agir agora [Time to Slow Down the Spread of COVID-19 is Diminishing in the Americas; Countries Must Act Now]," *Paho-Brazil*, [https://www.paho.org/bra/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=6128:tempo-para-desacelerar-propagacao-da-covid-19-esta-diminuindo-nas-americas-paises-devem-agir-agora&Itemid=812](https://www.paho.org/bra/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6128:tempo-para-desacelerar-propagacao-da-covid-19-esta-diminuindo-nas-americas-paises-devem-agir-agora&Itemid=812).

<sup>8</sup> Giorgio Agamben, "L'invenzione di un'epidemia [The Invention of an Epidemic]," *Quodlibet*, Febbraio 22, 2020, <https://www.quodlibet.it/giorgio-agamben-l-invenzione-di-un-epidemia>.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

Esposito etc. Since then, he has published other texts and given interviews, sometimes trying to justify his position in his first text published in February, sometimes confirming his warning about the exception measures that could arise, which would work to prevent a return to normality. In his second last pronouncement on this subject, on April 22<sup>th</sup>, 2020, he participated in an interview, called *On Truth and on False* (2020), where he was asked if “[we are] living, with this forced reclusion, a new totalitarianism?” to which Agamben said, “[on] many sides we are now formulating the hypothesis that we really are living the end of the world, of the bourgeois democracies based on rights, of the parliaments and division of powers, which is giving rise to a new despotism.”<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, continuing the objectives of this essay, it remains only to problematize Agamben’s position by showing how his texts on the pandemic are, on one hand, very coherent with his ontological-political categories and capable of understanding the present. But on the other hand, regarding the Brazilian situation, it is important go beyond the theory to show how the measures for social isolation are correct, despite what the far-right Brazilian President and his Minister of Foreign Affairs declares.

Long before Agamben, during the class of January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1975, that was organized in the book *The Freaks* (1975), Michel Foucault was already proposing how the plague, during the Middle Ages, was the moment when “( ... ) individualities fall apart, when the law is forgotten,”<sup>12</sup> and also the moment when there was “( ... ) a political dream of the plague, where this is, contrary [of the orgiastic dream with its suspension of the rules], the wonderful moment when political power is fully exercised.”<sup>13</sup> According to Foucault, “the moment of the plague is the moment of an exhaustive policing over the population by a political power, whose capillary ramifications continually reach the very grain of individuals, their time, their habitat, their location, their body.”<sup>14</sup> As shows, Agamben follows Foucault by reading the current pandemic as a moment of exhaustive exercise of political power, at the same time as a suspension of the law.

But to better understand this, it is necessary to bring some of Agamben’s ethic-political philosophical categories. Before the posthumous publications of Foucault’s seminars at the *College de France*, in the 70’s, Agamben became famous for his project to rethink political action with his collection of works gathered under the name of *Homo Sacer*. Here I will focus on the first two volumes of the *Homo Sacer* project, which I consider the most important of Agamben’s texts to understanding the categories such as ‘state of exception’ and ‘camp’. They are the *Homo Sacer: The Sovereign Power and Bare Life vol. I* (1995) and *State of exception vol. II,1* (2003).

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<sup>11</sup> Giorgio Agamben, “Sul vero e sul falso [On Truth and on False],” *Quodlibet*, Aprile 28, 2020, <https://www.quodlibet.it/giorgio-agamben-sul-vero-e-sul-falso>.

<sup>12</sup> Michel Foucault, *Os Anormais* [The Freaks] (São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2010), 41.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

The first volume, written during the Kosovo War, and the second volume, made after the terrorist attack of September 11<sup>th</sup> and during the Iraq War, seek to unveil the connection between biopolitics, state of exception and the camp. Commenting on the European experience with Nazi Germany's concentration camps, Agamben says that "insofar as its inhabitants have been stripped of all political status and reduced to their bare lives, the camp is also the most absolute biopolitical space that has ever been accomplished, in which the power has before itself nothing but bare life without any mediation."<sup>15</sup>

In other words, the normal political space, with its guarantees of rights, has become the field where and when the space in which the subject of rights is reduced to its bare life; in which his inscription in the *nomos*, the legal order, is suspended by a relationship of exception, that abandons life at the same time that captures it by its own exceptionality. According to Agamben, "the camp is the very paradigm of political space to the point where politics becomes biopolitical and *homo sacer* is virtually confused with the citizen."<sup>16</sup> Specifically in regard to the state of exception, Agamben argues that, since modern totalitarianism, "it can be defined, in this sense, as the founding, through the state of exception, of a legal civil war,"<sup>17</sup> in which opponents and entire categories of citizens are physically eliminated because they are unable to be included in the political system, "since the voluntary creation of a permanent state of emergency (even if, eventually, not declared in the technical sense) has become one of the essential practices of contemporary states, including the so-called democratic ones."<sup>18</sup>

As it can be seen from those quotations, since the 90's Agamben has diagnosed the 'permanent state of exception' in which we live in. And he articulates this category with the inscription of the 'bare life' in the political-legal order (Biopolitics) by means of the Law, through the sovereign power. And this sovereign power is exercised in a 'relation of exception' which "the rule (...), suspending itself, gives way to the exception and only in this way constitutes itself as the rule."<sup>19</sup> Thus, says Agamben, "we name *relation of exception* this extreme form of relation that includes something solely through its exclusion."<sup>20</sup> In this way, it is possible to better understand the previous warning by the Italian philosopher over the risks of a state of permanent exception, that is being substantiated by the Coronavirus pandemic crisis.

Because of that, it is also possible to see correlations between the Brazilian Minister's article and Agamben's view about the pandemic – when Araújo criticized Žižek and his supposed enthusiasm for the possible political consequences that the pandemic could

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<sup>15</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo sacer: O poder soberano e a vida nua* [Homo sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life] (Belo Horizonte: UFMG), 167.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Estado de exceção* [State of Exception] (São Paulo: Boitempo, 2010), 13.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

cause. Araújo and Agamben seem to agree on the potential state of exception, exercised by the emergency measures of the nation states to fight the fast proliferation of COVID-19. And the President of Brazil also seems to condone the opinions of his Minister when he claims in favor of the reopening of internal trade and when he criticizes social isolation that some Brazilian state governments are promoting. That's case in the state of Pará and the state of Amazonas (both located in the Brazilian Amazon rainforest), as well as in the state of São Paulo (the country's financial capital). In is necessary, however, to be aware of the Brazilian situation, since it may reveal a patent contradiction between what the Minister Araújo says in his article, and what his boss, President Bolsonaro, actually do and puts in practice, as I will explain below.

## II. The Singularity of the Brazilian State of Exception in the Pandemic

The central hypothesis in this essay can be summarized as follows: the apparent concern of the Bolsonaro government regarding the pandemic crisis, expressed by his Minister's text, cannot be easily understood as a political-ideological position contrary to the state of exception and authoritarianism, as they intend to show. In addition, it is not really possible to associate Bolsonaro government with Agamben's view on the pandemic. To expose that, it is required to go deeper into the Brazilian political and historical singularity.

I'll start the argument proposing that, contrary to what President Bolsonaro and its Minister Ernesto Araújo declares, his government does not fear any possible risks that the social isolation could cause on individual freedoms, and there is no fear of a real communist threat, which would, according to their discourses, implement a dictatorship in Brazil. In truth, they fear the unfeasibility of the Neoliberal version of capitalism; more specifically, the Neoliberal model of government that President Bolsonaro tries to exercise. Regarding social isolation in Brazil, the highest fear is for a serious regression of the economy, which would undo the government's aim to reduce the fiscal deficit.<sup>21</sup> In other words, the priority of Brazil's current federal government is centered in economic concerns at the expense of social rights, of life, the ordinary and the good life.

This, apparently, could be a legitimate concern, since a serious economic crisis would certainly generate terrible social impacts against the lives of Brazilians. However, it must be stressed here that social impact is not the greatest concern of the current Brazilian federal government. What the government wants is to protect the private sector during and after the pandemic. In fact, as of today, during the very elaboration of this essay, without taking into account the huge underreporting, the number of officially reported deaths has already surpassed Chinese numbers, where the pandemic began. Up to this date, Brazil has in

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<sup>21</sup> Because of the *lockdown*, the International Monetary Fund predict the worst economic regression since the Big Depression. Cf. Laís Alegrethi, "PIB do Brasil vai cair cinco vezes mais que média dos emergentes em 2020, prevê FMI," *BBC. News Brasil em Londres*, <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/internacional-52282293>.

total more than 31 thousand deaths, according the official Brazilian Press.<sup>22</sup> And those are the numbers while Brazil did not yet reach the peak of the contamination curve. I bring these data to show that, for President Bolsonaro's priorities, the social isolation could be much worse to the Brazilian economy than the high death toll caused by Coronavirus.

The government's defense for relaxation of measures regarding social isolation is not meant to address the Brazilian population's safety and does not have as its main objective the restoration of individuals' rights to freedom. Bolsonaro's government aims only not to have more damage to the country's financial speculation, industry and commerce. In this regard, the class of February 7<sup>th</sup>, 1979, recorded in the *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Foucault offered a concept for this type of Liberalism. He taught that an inversion had happened to the original purpose of classical and Keynesian Liberalism, since now what we have instead is the need to "affirm market freedom as an organizing and regulating principle of the State (...)" so "(...) [a] State [is] under the market's surveillance and not a market under the State surveillance."<sup>23</sup>

This definition of Neoliberalism given by Foucault help us to understand the real political plan of action the Bolsonaro's government have for human lives in the Brazilian territory: it is not the science discoveries nor the WHO that should propose guidelines for the pandemic crisis which we are living in now in Brazil, but instead the cries of the market and this new governmental reason, as Neoliberal reason with Austrian and American origins,<sup>24</sup> focused in maintaining the free activity of a *homo oeconomicus*. All that in adding to the fact that Neoliberalism produces a "state of permanent economic exception,"<sup>25</sup> reducing public services, practicing fiscal austerity that also causes a decrease in infrastructure investments, in addition to the flexibilization of labor and social security laws.

In fact, the Neoliberalism could be a strong ally for military authoritarianism and its exceptional measures that restricts social rights. An illustrative example of that is a famous case of Latin America's experience: the so-called 'Chicago Boys', the Neoliberal economists who assisted in the economic plan of Chilean dictator General Augusto Pinochet. On that, it is important to remember an interview given by the famous North American Neoliberal economist Milton Friedman to the Chilean newspaper *El Mercurio* (1981). When he was asked about his own view on dictatorships, he answer:

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<sup>22</sup> "Brasil registra mais de 31 mortes por covid-19 [Brazil Registers More than 31 Deaths for Covid-19]," *Agencia Brasil*, June 6, 2020, <https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/saude/noticia/2020-06/brasil-registra-mais-de-31-mil-mortes-por-covid-19>.

<sup>23</sup> Michel Foucault, *O Nascimento da Biopolítica* [The Birth of Biopolitics] (Lisbon: Editions 70, 2018), 154–55.

<sup>24</sup> The reference here are: the Austrian School, represented by economists Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich August von Hayek, and the American version, represented by Milton Friedman.

<sup>25</sup> Gilberto Bercovici, "The Expansion of the State of Exception: From the Protection of the Constitution to the Protection of Capitalism," *Boletim de Ciências Econômicas*, vol. LVII, t. 1 (2014), 784, [https://doi.org/10.14195/0870-4260\\_57-1\\_18](https://doi.org/10.14195/0870-4260_57-1_18).

Well, I would say that, as long-term institutions, I am totally against dictatorships. But a dictatorship may be a necessary system for a transitional period. At times it is necessary for a country to have, for a time, some form or other of dictatorial power. As you will understand, it is possible for a dictator to govern in a liberal way. And it is also possible for a democracy to govern with a total lack of liberalism. Personally, I prefer a liberal dictator to democratic government lacking liberalism. My personal impression – and this is valid for South America – is that in Chile, for example, we will witness a transition from a dictatorial government to a liberal government. And during this transition it may be necessary to maintain certain dictatorial powers, not as something permanent, but as a temporary arrangement.<sup>26</sup>

Similarly, the most representative thinker of the Austrian Neoliberalism and contemporary of Friedrich Hayek, Ludwig von Mises said a polemic line about the apparent paradox between his view on what Liberalism and Authoritarianism are, while he explained about Fascism in his book called *Liberalism: In the Classical Tradition* (1927):

It cannot be denied that Fascism and similar movements aiming at the establishment of dictatorships are full of the best intentions and that their intervention has, for the moment, saved European civilization. The merit that Fascism has thereby won for itself will live on eternally in history. But though its policy has brought salvation for the moment, it is not of the kind which could promise continued success. Fascism was an emergency makeshift. To view it as something more would be a fatal error.<sup>27</sup>

It is clear that Hayek and Mises were economists that saw the Liberalism as an ideology that could be compatible with dictatorships. For them, the governments in state of exception could be deemed as 'good' in the name of the 'Liberal reason'. Also, when regarding what Araújo and President Bolsonaro defend, there is no contradiction between an economic Liberalism and the state of exception. In truth, it possible to maintain, at the same time, this exceptional state of government and a Neoliberal economic politics.

Given what has been discussed so far here, it must be said that Agamben is not wrong. There is an imminent risk that, with this pandemic crisis, the democratically elected governments will be prone to take exceptional measures, abusing their emergency powers and, worst of all, not returning to the previous state at the end of the pandemic. But what Agamben may not know is that, concerning us in Brazil and our Republican experiences, the risks looming over our democratic experiences are not extraordinary – to be fair, Agamben himself knows that the state of exception has become the rule for many nations at least since the First World War.<sup>28</sup>

We are well aware of this risk, for we remember how the Republic of Brazil was founded by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, driven by a military, liberal and positivist revolution against

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<sup>26</sup> Friedrich von Hayek, "Lider y maestro del liberalismo económico [Leader and Master of the Economical Liberalism]," *El Mercurio*, April 12, 1981, D8–D9.

<sup>27</sup> Ludwig von Mises, *Liberalism: In the Classical Tradition* (San Francisco: Cobden Press, 1985), 51.

<sup>28</sup> Agamben, *Estado de exceção*, 19, 25, 33.



the Brazilian Empire, and which has, since its beginning up until today, a long history of governments carried out by means of decree-laws or even military coups,<sup>29</sup> coincidentally justified by the fear of a communist revolution, such as in 1937, the coup committed by the Getúlio Vargas's government, and in 1964, a coup carried by a coalition of civil and military movement, in the context of the Cold War.

For that, is possible to see how Agamben may not realize the uniqueness of the Brazilian case and how the current Brazilian government deals with the pandemic crisis. The authoritarian speeches and the 'letting die' policies of the Bolsonaro's government disguise themselves as Neoliberal ideology, which is only apparently and outwardly interested in defending the individual rights of Brazilian citizens during this Coronavirus crisis. The categories of the *Homo Sacer* project were used by Minister Araújo as just a resource to give prestige to what President Bolsonaro actually practices, as much as for his statements in support of the Brazilian Civil-military Dictatorship (1964-1985), or for his exercise of sovereignty that nurtures the 'politics of death'. Under this guise, President Bolsonaro prefers to relax social isolation policy, opting for the strategy of 'group immunity' and letting occur the 'total contamination' of Brazilian people regardless of the death toll.<sup>30</sup>

His objective is to grow mass immunity, even if it can cause thousands of deaths. While he and his government adhere to a discourse in favor of freedom and against the social restrictions put forward by the Brazilian states and municipalities. President Bolsonaro is indifferent with the death of Brazilian people. After all, to let the people die means abandoning to death old people, people with comorbidities, and an entire population without access to medical care or even without access to drinking water and basic sanitation.<sup>31</sup>

### Final Considerations

This essay reaffirms that the Brazilian situation is quite different from what Agamben's recent texts defends. In Brazil, capitalism and (medical) science do not walk together. In Brazil, the 'medical religion' and the 'capitalist religion' tend to resist each other, and actually medical science is the 'religion'<sup>32</sup> that currently has hindered and put off the thanatopolitical machine of Latin American authoritarian Neoliberalism. Agamben distrusts the data on Italy's deaths, as well as he distrusts science when it meddles in ethical and

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<sup>29</sup> Ana Suelen Tossige Gomes and Andityas Matos, "O estado de exceção na República do Brasil [The State of Exception in Republican Brazil]," *Revista Direito e Práxis*, Rio de Janeiro, vol. 08, no. 3 (2017): 1760–87.

<sup>30</sup> Guilherme Amado, "Bolsonaro Forced Embrace with Caiado: 'Citizen Has to be Total Contamination,'" *Época*, April 13, 2020, <https://epoca.globo.com/guilherme-amado/bolsonaro-forcou-abraco-com-caiado-caiado-tem-que-ser-contaminacao-total-24367552>.

<sup>31</sup> According to data from IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), only 53.4% of the city of Belém has adequate sanitation. IBGE. Municipal social indicators, <https://cidades.ibge.gov.br/brasil/pa/belem/pesquisa/23/25124>.

<sup>32</sup> Giorgio Agamben, "La medicina come religione [Medicine as Religion]," *Quodlibet*, May 2, 2020, <https://www.quodlibet.it/giorgio-agamben-la-medicina-come-religione>.

political matters, maybe because of the trauma of the European experience with the *Shoah*. The erudite Italian philosopher seems to fear science much more than the COVID-19 pandemic. Maybe because science always brings the risk of being thanatopolitical, as was the science of 'The Angel of Death' (Mengele). We Brazilians, perhaps because of our ex-colony condition, in an experience of barbarity, seem to fear more the 'gale of progress', which drags the 'Angel of History'.<sup>33</sup>

Finally, located in the periphery of capitalism and modern civilization, among the ruins that the Neoliberal progress leaves behind, there are bodies piled up in the city of Manaus in the Amazon rainforest, as there are dead bodies being left in hospitals and in houses of Belém. Victims of the Coronavirus pandemic that are, perhaps, buried on top of the indigenous and black people's bodies. These bodies victims of colonization, slavery, and the perverse military dictatorship agenda. And today we live in times of Neoliberalism, which also has been increasingly contaminating the indigenous lands and the lands of the traditional descendants of black slaves in Brazil.

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### **Рікардо Евандро С. Мартінс. Неоліберальний вірус у Бразилії та дискусія з Джорджо Агамбеном**

**Анотація.** Роздуми, викладені у цьому есе, спровоковано останньою статтею діючого міністра закордонних справ Бразилії, канцлера Ернесто Араужо, призначеного чинним президентом Бразилії Жаїром Мессіасом Болсонаро. У ній бразильський міністр висловлює занепокоєння тим, що нинішня пандемія, викликана коронавірусом (COVID-19), може стати підставою для запровадження виняткових заходів, спрямованих проти бразильської демократії, які можуть привести країну до «комуністичного перевороту» або до уряду, що керується «нацистськими методами». Говорячи про небезпеку пандемії для бразильської демократії, Араужо цитує відомих сучасних філософів Славоя Жижека та Джорджо Агамбена, щоб обґрунтувати своє занепокоєння.

У свою чергу, у цьому есе показано, що Араужо використовує ключові категорії Агамбена некоректно і внаслідок цього перекручує його основну ідею. Зокрема, йдеться про те, що, зрозуміле належним чином, центральне для італійського філософа поняття надзвичайного стану в дійсності сприяє не апології неолібералізму, а проясненню факту, що його бразильський

міністр намагається приховати: насправді за неолиберальною риторикою Болсонаро стоять танатополітичні («політика смерті») та авторитарні наміри.

На прикладі Бразилії з її політичною та історичною специфікою продемонстровано, як в умовах пандемії неолибералізм (що його визначальною рисою, за Мішелем Фуко, є підпорядкування держави ринку, а наслідком – продукування біополітики) створює перманентний економічний надзвичайний стан, а капіталізм протистоїть медицині. Остання ж прагне стримати «танатополітичну машину латиноамериканського авторитарного неолибералізму».

**Ключові слова:** Джорджо Агамбен; коронавірус; пандемія; надзвичайний стан; Ернесто Араужо; біополітика.

### **Рикардо Евандро С. Мартинс. Неолиберальный вирус в Бразилии и дискуссия с Джорджо Агамбеном**

**Аннотация.** В этом эссе анализируется последняя статья, написанная канцлером Эрнесто Араужо, действующим министром иностранных дел, назначенным президентом Бразилии Жаиром Мессиасом Болсонаро, в которой он высказывает опасения относительно того, как пандемия коронавируса (COVID-19) якобы может быть использована в качестве основания для исключительных мер против бразильской демократии в форме «коммунистического переворота» или правительства, руководствующегося «нацистскими методами». Рассматривая опасности пандемии для бразильской демократии, Араужо цитирует Славоя Жижека и Джорджо Агамбена, чтобы оправдать свои опасения. В свою очередь в этом эссе рассматривается некорректное использование Араужо категорий Агамбена. В частности, речь идет о том, как понятие «чрезвычайного положения» может действительно прояснить гипотезу, которую бразильский министр хочет скрыть: на самом деле за неолиберализмом Болсонаро скрываются танатополитика и авторитарные намерения.

**Ключевые слова:** Джорджо Агамбен; коронавирус; пандемия; чрезвычайное положение; Эрнесто Араужо; биополитика.

### **Ricardo Evandro S. Martins. The Neoliberal Virus in Brazil and the Controversy with Giorgio Agamben**

**Abstract.** This essay presents the latest article written by *chancellor* Ernesto Araújo, current Minister of Foreign Affairs appointed by Jair Messias Bolsonaro, President of Brazil, in which he alerts how the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic could allegedly be used as basis for exceptional measures against the Brazilian democracy, in the form of a 'Communist coup' or a government driven by 'Nazis acts'. When approaching the dangers of the pandemic for Brazilian democracy, Araújo quotes Slavoj Žižek and Giorgio Agamben to justify his warning. In response, this essay addresses the misuse of Agamben's categories made by Araújo. Namely, how the concept of 'state of exception' can actually invoke the hypothesis that the Brazilian Minister in reality wishes to hide: in fact, behind Bolsonaro's Neoliberal lies Thanatopolitics and authoritarian intentions.

**Keywords:** Giorgio Agamben; Coronavirus; pandemic; state of exception; Ernesto Araújo; biopolitics.

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