

Does suspension of disbelief – and of belief - explain the phenomenon of welcoming fake news?

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Abstract: *At a first thought about how to explain the reception of fake news, the concept of ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ occurred to this author. For its analysis, essential in a Brazil where fake news decided the last presidential elections, we must look into language and disqualification as domination strategies. We also examine the journalistic notion of ‘faits divers’, the Brazilian ‘mongrel complex’, creating a scapegoat, doublethinking, chaos as a method, Brazilians ‘Gerson’s law’, and finally the concept of ‘misplaced ideas’.*

KEYWORDS : fake news, willing suspension of disbelief, *faits divers*, doublethinking, misplaced ideas.

I. INTRODUCTION eternal truth and transitory truth

For Aristotle, in Book I of *Metaphysics*, philosophy is the science of truth, and knowledge of truth implies knowledge of cause. It is characteristic of speculative sciences to investigate truth for itself, as well as it is characteristic of practical activity to address directly to what matters, to action; therefore, practical men do not have eternal truth in mind, but transitory truth, that is, the momentary and the passing, the *hic et nunc* (here and now) of the things that concern them.

Such statements are impressive today more than ever. Already in Machiavelli something of this nature appears. Action is not interested in eternal truth, in truth itself. Transitory truth explains both the pitfalls of memory, as well as the misrepresentation of truth - which even uses misleading interpretations of laws.

II. How Was It Possible To Accept Fake News?

In our present, in yet republican¹ and pseudo-democratic² times, how can we understand the acceptance of fake news by citizens who have known other speeches and realities?

Christa Berger [1], intrigued, inquired:

how to explain that so many people in Brazil believed in *fake news*? How can we justify that this type of information has had such an adherence that it elected a fascist, crude, sexist, misogynist, ignorant, and uncivilized as president? If people were informed by journalism, how did the informational shift from credibility to *fake news* happen?

The present paper proposes a parallel question. However, the phenomenon goes beyond the specific *fake news* of the “fascist, crude, sexist, misogynist, ignorant and uncivilized” President of the Republic of Brazil. The phenomenon covers a previous time, previous mechanisms and resources. Let us start by reflecting on how media presents and exploits fake news.

III. A Short Review Of Speech - Language - And Enunciation Issues

Ignacio Ramonet, in *The tyranny of communication*, states “Now [2], information must have three main qualities: be easy, fast and fun.” What kind of information would it be? Social media. No commitment to truth.

1 It is not the aim of this paper to discuss this aspect of Bolsonaro’s government, but there are serious threats to the republican institutions, championed by the president himself, such as a calling to public demonstrations against the republican institutions such as the Congress and the superior court. See Dos Santos (2018) for more details.

2 As far as Bolsonaro’s election was decided by manipulation of the voters, among other mechanisms through fake news, the democracy is threatened. See Weizenmann [4] (2019) for more details.

A Roland Barthes [3] enunciation in January 1977, in an inaugural class at the College of France, helps to reflect on *fake news* and language. He began his speech by criticizing the modern “innocence” that speaks of power as if it were one, unique. Like demons, he said, power would be a legion, and to understand it, it would be necessary to discover its genesis inscribed in language and expressed in language. Barthes said: But language – the performance of a language system (la langue, comme performance de tout langage) – is neither reactionary nor progressive; it is quite simply fascist; for fascism does not prevent speech (dire), it compels speech. (Barthes, 1979, p. 33)

Barthes signaled that speech would contain something like a drive. As a compulsion, language would impel the use of words, in which the first would require the next. The understanding of statements is the result of an initial impulse, which, after its explosion, could no longer be stopped. Sometimes words actually overwhelm us. However, language itself is neither political nor philosophical nor psychic, nor is it a political regime - or an ideology. It is a potential, a resource, which calls for its development and transformation. Language can be used and abused, like the language of Nazi Germany, says Victor Klemperer. He studied the language of the Third Empire. This language contained falsehood and inventions. It is not precise to equal this to the present language used nowadays. However, there are similarities, as can be perceived in enunciations on Twitter of the Bolsonaro family, or of ministers Salles, Damares and Weintraub, filled with falsehood, lies – mistakes and errors. Parallel to this is the potential for creation, which the author of the present paper coined as “the fiction drive”. Everything fits in speech and language, according to socio-political, religious, psychic, and ideological orientations. It is also up to the unconscious, revealing unrecognized orientations that may often be denied in enunciation. Let us see.

The ‘fiction drive’ concept was coined in 1998 (Sperber, 2009 [5]). It corresponds to an impulse, through resources that could involve language, speech, body, dance, theatrical action, images, movement, sounds and rhythms, for the exteriorization of something that was experienced by the person who expresses itself. Fiction drive explains the phenomenon of enunciation, i.e., creation and reception. This phenomenon also allows us to understand what Samuel Taylor Coleridge called “willing suspension of disbelief” -, a concept he created when he observed that it was enough to instill human interest and similarity to truth (that is, verisimilitude) to a narrative, so that readers accept it, even if it is implausible. Coleridge coined the concept in 1817. Nevertheless, long before the truly fantastic narratives, humanity had welcomed fairy tales, myths, legends, and even rituals formulated with implausibilities. Therefore, suspension of disbelief could perhaps explain credulity and lack of criteria for accepting fake news. Let us not forget that suspension of disbelief has existed since man began to tell stories, be it his own story, be it another one, a provisional truth, or fiction. Being the foundation of life in society, gregariousness implies welcoming the other and what the other tells. If suspension of disbelief exists, how could there have been - throughout history and now - suspension of belief? The film *Intolerance*, by D.W. Griffith, shows us such conflicts: tolerance and intolerance in conflict. The conflict, in this movie, is between - no longer truth and lie - but between life and death, between respect and disrespect; between life drive and death drive, and between respect and disrespect for human rights.

Anyway, how to explain an impulse and desire to believe in a number of statements, and to reject the contrary considerations, when the first ones have so many harmful implications? How to understand a kind of deafness for the world and events, and accept lies, falsehood, invention - which lead to the destruction of so many values - and beings ?! The present paper intends to reflect on the phenomenon of acceptance of fake news, which became more notorious during the stage of advertising and publicity before the 2018th elections, in Brazil. They turned into a more radical format and reached a level that compromises coexistence and life itself.

IV. Disqualifying As A Domination Strategy

The process that led to the massive reception of the most recent *fake news* in Brazil started long before. Let us remember that the objective was to disqualify Lula and PT, the Workers Party, to suspend belief in Lula and in PT. Even before the first elections for which Lula ran, in 1989, he was already being disqualified, by the powerful bourgeoisie. Not only in the pre-election period, but also during the terms of the elected presidents (Collor and Fernando Henrique Cardoso), the same perverse process went on. Due to two mistakes in the use of popular language, media and journalists imputed a disqualified use and lack of knowledge of language by Lula. In 2009, Caetano Veloso considered that the candidate for whom he declared his vote “is not illiterate like Lula, who does not know how to speak, is tacky, rude. She (the candidate Marina Silva) speaks well.” (*apud* Julião,

2017, p. 382 [6]). Language problems? No. These were issues of intolerance. (This type of intolerance can change over time. So now the same Caetano Veloso [7] is pro Lula). Would Lula not know how to speak? Professor Pedrinho A. Guareschi [8], philosopher, sociologist, Doctor in social psychology, characterized rhetoric for its three dimensions (ethics, emotion and reason). He considered that President Lula, over time, acquired the image of a coherent, serious, committed person and that, unlike other candidates, he maintained coherence between ethos, pathos and logos in his speech and actions.

All his [for Lula] gestures are rhetorical. Nevertheless, you notice that he is unsophisticated. He treats persons informally, [...] that comes from within him, who is convinced of these things [what he says]. That is why he acts in one way or another: gestures, speeches are something coherent with his life, with his ethics, with his virtue, to speak like Plato [...] (GUARESCHI, 2003 *apud* ASSUMÇÃO, 2003 [9])

Later, in December 2010, an article in *Revista Piauí* registers about Lula:

[...], (Lula) already on the podium of the plenary, giving his impromptu speech. He had no notes at hand; he quoted the data from his head dossier. [...] He left the gallery under a standing ovation. (HARAZIM, 2010 [10])

Politicians, journalists, the powerful elite, disqualified Lula because he was a worker and had no academic degrees. Scholars who studied colonizing procedures (Albert Memmi [11], Frantz Fanon [12]) explain that one of the strategies for the best and most lasting colonization is the disqualification of the other. The colonized must feel himself inferior. That is why colonized are treated as inferior. The disqualification strategies were used in different ways and medias, by journalists, as by politicians, disregarding falsehood. Thus, the proper conditions for hearing and accepting disqualifying statements independent of their truth-value were consolidated. Over time, the disqualification of Lula and the PT became naturalized, which made it comfortable to believe in *fake news*, however absurd, however false they were.

The loss of the valuation of truth is associated with the loss - yes - of the valuation of experience - observed by Walter Benjamin - and its replacement by the mere use of words ('What do you read, my lord?' 'Words, words, words' - says Hamlet) – as they appear in social networks, including an earlier phenomenon, which allowed this type of communication to be embraced. The *faits divers*.

V. The “*faits divers*”

Roland Barthes studied the form of *faits divers* [13]. He says that *faits divers* corresponds to the classification of the unclassifiable. It would be the disorganized refusal of unformed news; its essence would be private, it would only begin to exist where the naming of the world ceases, submitted to a known catalog (politics, economics, wars, shows, sciences, etc.). *Faits divers* would be a spectacular piece of information, analogous to all exceptional or insignificant facts, namely, nameless ones, generally classified under the rubric of *Varia*. MSN, NBC's "The Pulse of Events" and so on, bring *faits divers* as if they were news. There is a strong tendency to report insignificances about actors, players, influencers, communicators. Twitter lends itself to this. Quick posting repels any deepening, any search for information control. They are no longer information: they are shots of words, most of the time prejudiced, lying, and arbitrary. They intend to amaze. They are banal stories transformed into the “never seen”. The banal arguments of the issues dealt with are not so different from what Hannah Arendt studied... As far as the result does not turn out to be the “final solution”, namely, the killing of hundreds of thousands of people, each of the banal and trivialized texts are seen as allowed, acceptable, innocuous. This ensures an absence of control and acceptance by the public.

Narrating deviously, *faits divers* puts its finger on social prohibitions, reinforcing the system of values prescribed and proscribed by the society in which it subscribes. (*apud* DION, 2007, pp. 123-131 [14])

Suspension of disbelief (willing suspension of disbelief), a notion presented by Samuel Taylor Coleridge to explain the reader's acceptance of fantastic narratives, is a universal fact and of all times, as is the fiction drive (*pulsão de ficção*). They are interconnected.

Faits divers surely exists both in the western and in the eastern world media. Fake news are universal. The name was created in the USA and *fake news* flooded the media. They have also spread to Mexico, Turkey, the United Kingdom, Austria, Australia, Canada, South Korea, Spain, Japan, France, Germany - and Brazil.

VI. Loss of civility and the "mongrel complex"

A certain national, Brazilian characteristic would explain a bias observed since 2018 and strongly in 2019. It is the acceptance by the public of what is uncouth, rude, abject, scrotum, to use the Brazilian expression. Strong words. It is not just bad taste. It corresponds to the loss of civility, as when Bolsonaro endorsed the comment of an internet user, offending the French First Lady, Brigitte Macron.

Several newspapers in Europe called Bolsonaro a sexist. There were those in Brazil who were proud of a Brazilian offending a Frenchman (a Frenchwoman). It would be a sign of superiority - and authenticity ... Meanwhile, no attitudes of total subservience by the same Bolsonaro before Trump and the United States were rejected by the media, nor by politicians. People were not ashamed of Bolsonaro... Would Bolsonaro's shameful subservience and the delivery of national wealth to the USA be considered authentic too?

The enchanted reception of lack of civility of this ruler, and the pride for the incivility, for the indecorous, began, paradoxically, in the social history of Brazilian minds, to be observed and described by Nelson Rodrigues (in 1950). He observed a football phenomenon, but extended it to the collectivity and under different circumstances. The pride in the ignoble would come from what Nelson Rodrigues coined as "mongrel complex".

For Humberto Mariotti [15], who takes over the complex more than 50 years later, overcoming this inferiority complex, reinforced by successive corruption scandals in which the Brazilian government has been involved in recent decades, can only be satisfactorily resolved through education. (MARIOTTI, 2009).

For Mariotti, the complex would not come from a Brazilian dazzle before foreign culture (French culture until the first decades of the twentieth century, and American culture from then on). For Mariotti, the low national self-esteem would provoke a contrary reaction, of overvaluation of the national culture, which would encapsulate itself, and would reject what comes from outside:

in Brazil, and not only here, cultural nationalism includes an aversion to reading, and above all to what many consider the most execrable of all activities: thinking, reflecting and discussing ideas with others also willing to do so. (MARIOTTI, 2009, p. 6)

This statement corresponds to the delighted approval of Bolsonaro's lack of education, considered a sign of personal - and national - authenticity.

Jessé Souza [16] – sociologist - teaches us that allegations of corruption served to disqualify and criminalize some people, regardless of whether the accusers were the really corrupt. Jessé Souza underlined Brazil's disease: class hatred, class racism.

Lula was carefully, persistently, constantly, obsessively disqualified since the first election in which he participated. Immediately after the election of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Lula continued to be criticized. It was an effort to disqualify the ex-worker and ex-unionist. Was it envy? The strategy was to define Lula as "another", an enemy, and he was increasingly used as a scapegoat. Sacrifice, especially of Lula and PT would be a solution to the created crises. This perverse strategy took advantage of the mongrel complex. The bourgeoisie, especially medium and higher, consciously or not, was delighted with Lula's and PT's disqualification. Habituated with the mongrel complex, bourgeoisie was delighted with the disqualification. It even explains why people who benefited from moving to a higher social level were able to accept unacceptable disqualifications.

VII. How to Create a Scapegoat

In the beginning, it was not clear that the disqualifying statements intended to present Lula as a scapegoat. The aim was to disqualify him as a capable president. Then it became clear that a certain bourgeoisie, and bankers, and tradespeople, and big landowners, saw Lula as an enemy – who should be sacrificed. The PT, the party Lula founded and which houses him, became a scapegoat too.

It is curious that the eagerness to disqualify him has been repeated for so long (and Lula has resisted for so long), that he became, for the opponents of the situation, a myth. Ancient myths create scapegoats...

A brief review of René Girard's theory about the scapegoat and mimetic desire [17] allows us to understand why even educated citizens accepted fake news: because before they had accepted the criticisms and lies expressed about Lula and PT. This shows how much they envied Lula. A metallurgist, unionist, smarter than

them? How to admit it? This provoked jealousy and the desire to disqualify him, so much that those people wanted his destruction, for revenge. Thus raised the reception of lies.

René Girard explains how moments of crises mirror crises of mimetic rivalry, in historical narratives as well as in myths.

Girard argues that violent rivalry is contagious. It spreads like a plague. When the tension reaches paroxysm, the undifferentiation moves from individuals and groups toward the social hierarchy and institutions. The social response to the collapse of differences tends toward the attribution of cause. The community, previously totally disintegrated, now becomes deeply unanimous. At the most intense moment of conflict a violent resolution emerges. As Girard argues, such mimetic impulse is then directed against the victim, “the scapegoat”. The collective violence of all against all, which threatens with the social collapse, is spontaneously transformed into the violence of all against one. Thus the collective unity is rebuilt. (Strączek, 2014, p. 51) [18]

Let us take into account that Lula was considered a populist. Some time ago, in an interview to Brazilian journalists, Steve Bannon, ideologue of the nascent “right-wing populist international” and articulator of Donald Trump's candidacy in the United States, declared “populism is the future of politics”. Beware: this is another type of populism. Bannon created a new kind of populism. The new populism disqualifies concern, adherence and a policy for those on the lowest scale of society. One of the strategies of the new populism - whose goal is fascism - is firehosing, which consists of flooding social networks - in a continuous and repetitive way - with pseudo news without compromise either with reality or with the consistency of their content. Therefore, the reception occurs through home invasion, invasion in the skull itself, of messages that pretend to be information. In a scenario in which people think they are informed, they are increasingly invaded by “information” of social networks, especially through their cellphones. For those to whom the traditional political class and the mainstream media have lost credibility, political discourse has been made by communication that pretends to be direct, by social networks (Twitter, above all, or Instagram, sometimes by Facebook, here in Brazil especially WhatsApp), without the mediations required by democracy between representatives and the represented. This form of communication gives the illusion of immediacy, from hand to hand, and therefore gives a sense of truth, even when it comes to baits, lies. In addition to being deceitful, the great falsehood is that such “direct” communication gives the impression, at least initially, of being highly democratic. However, it is not, because it obliterates the instances of democracy. The replication of phrases (but not information), gives the impression of having a high volume of content, but in fact corresponds to the same few words replicated several times. Once the scandalizing content is enunciated, a short time afterwards the communication is “corrected”, either with an apology or with a simple information of “correction”, which is “corrected” afterwards, in turn, leading to increasing misinformation. This is the hybrid war, able to control the population because it creates chaos in information, in communication.

Balance sheets or data, presented in the form of images (which have a stronger degree of assertiveness, pretending to correspond to the truth) or photos, are decontextualized images, from other spaces and times, lying, falsifying reality. Sometimes they are setting-ups, even more mendacious. There are many examples. One, blunt for having penetrated people despite being the most absurd, sloppy, abstruse thing in the world, was the power point presented by Deltan Dallagnol in 2016. As people were in a hurry, and prepared to disqualify, they suspended their disbelief in images, invested in the belief of veracity of what *Lava Jato* conveyed. That is why people – those who wanted to kill the image of Lula - did not do any fact checking. A still more absurd and awkward example is the “cock baby bottle”, a piece of fake news that told that PT’s candidate for presidency, Fernando Haddad, had distributed baby bottles with a simulated penis as sucker, so as to stimulate babies to become homosexual (Cruz 2019 [19]).

Informational chaos breaks out, is fed, maintained, and this is the method of hybrid warfare (Hoffman 2009) [20]. The author who first explained this strategy was George Orwell, in his novel *1984* [21]. He explains doublespeak, or doublethinking, with its dissociating effect.

The power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them... To tell deliberate lies while genuinely believing in them, to forget any fact that has become inconvenient, and then, when it becomes necessary again, to draw it back from oblivion for just as long as it is needed, to deny the existence of objective reality and all the while to take account of the reality which one denies - all this is indispensably necessary. Even in using the word doublethink it is necessary to exercise doublethink. For by using the word one admits that one is tampering with reality; by a fresh act of doublethink one erases this knowledge; and so on indefinitely, with the lie always one leap ahead of the truth. (ORWELL, s/d, p. 220)

It need hardly be said that the subtlest practitioners of DOUBLETHINK are those who invented DOUBLETHINK and know that it is a vast system of mental cheating. In our society, those who have the best knowledge of what is happening are also those who are furthest from seeing the world as it is. In general, the greater the understanding, the greater the delusion; the more intelligent, the less sane. One clear illustration of this is the fact that war hysteria increases in intensity as one rises in the social scale. Those whose attitude towards the war is most nearly rational are the subject peoples of the disputed territories. To these people the war is simply a continuous calamity, which sweeps to and fro over their bodies like a tidal wave. Which side is winning is a matter of complete indifference to them. They are aware that a change of overlordship means simply that they will be doing the same work as before for new masters who treat them in the same manner as the old ones. (ORWELL, s/d, p. 271-2)

All the resources for fake news and hybrid war have names in English, even in Brazil: firehosing, doublespeak, absence of fact checking, *fake news*, decentralized diplomacy, external electoral intervention, lawfare - a form of war in which law is used as weapon, namely the *Lava Jato*, but not only. Hybrid war is the military strategy that mixes political, conventional, irregular, and cyberwar tactics. By combining field operations with subversive efforts (and this type of subversion comes from the extreme right!...), the aggressor intends to avoid accountability or retaliation. Hybrid warfare demands a highly adaptable and resilient response.

VIII. Chaos as a method

The method of communication, information, political action as explained becomes chaos. It is chaos as method. How to explain that chaos was absorbed and is now a part of everyday life? The path was retraced up here, relying on available studies: the notion of transitory truth; fiction drive; willing suspension of disbelief - which carries its opposite, due to stratagems created by a fundamentally authoritarian policy, which does not assume its authoritarianism and goes slowly but progressively and surely penetrating minds – all well as in *1984*, George Orwell's novel. Including the strategy of diminishing people's confidence, as a colonization strategy. Arthur Miller [22] says in *Incident at Vichy*

Leduc, angering now: Every government does not have laws condemning people because of their race. Monceau: I beg your pardon. The Russians condemn the middle class, the English have condemned the Indians, Africans and everybody else they could lay their hands on, the French, the Italians ... every nation has condemned somebody because of his race, including the Americans and what they do to Negroes.

In Brazil the indiscriminate and intensified acceptance of *faits divers* (as well as in Orwell), added to the mongrel complex and the consequent incorporation that being ignorant, boorish, ignoble is OK. For this reason, perhaps, Bolsonaro as well as his Ministers, make a big effort to hinder the access to knowledge and to consistent information for the population. *Faits divers* may have played a relevant role in something that has been happening in other parts of the world, with some slightly different characteristics. All due to hurry up information, offering information pills as *Ersatz* to democracy.

People say that lies told by idolized leaders lead us to accept "*fake news*". Attention. This does not come from their leadership, but from taking advantage of the media, of resources such as the creation of authoritarian instances that deviate from laws and norms, from laws of Justice and the Constitution, to pretend that they work for justice, or for Law, as was and still is the case of *Lava Jato* in Brazil. It was undoubtedly an astute and violent strategy to use lawfare, which had all the support of the media and, therefore, had popular penetration to support the strategy of lying and the strategy of hybrid war. In order to create an idol, the first step is to present a face: as the Big Brother's face. Or that of Donald Trump, or Viktor Orban, or Vladimir Putin or Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Or Bolsonaro ... In each case there may be little variations. It is the face of men who worship themselves, and want to be worshiped. It is the cult of personalities. Instead of developing democracies. Faces are the oldest brand of leadership. By seeing only a face, it is difficult to think about politics or measures; on the contrary, regimes, new laws and rules announced by this mouth will be probably accepted. It turns out that in representative democracy, people elect representatives to deliberate and decide on legislature. There is more than a single voice to legislate – and to execute. A single mythicized person does not correspond to democracy.

The novelty in Brazil, beyond what is clumsy, beyond the reversion of the mongrel complex, is that a group praised not only the pseudo authentic, but also monarchy ... With the purpose of disqualifying the

Legislative Power, nevertheless the economic blessings of this Legislative Power. A way to consolidate authoritarianism.

IX. Literature records, predicts and warns about dystopia

What is the relationship between the above considerations and literature? Literary theory offers us concepts, notions, stated above. They confirm the *fake news* mechanism, something about its use in Brazil in the Bolsonaro era - which includes its introduction - how the roots of *fake news* were present earlier and began as strategies of colonization of all times and that this explains the welcoming of this method and their reception. Orwell's *1984* presents the strategy that is also an essential part of the planned and executed domination structure. It is the two minutes hate

Before the Hate had proceeded for thirty seconds, uncontrollable exclamations of rage were breaking out from half the people in the room. (ORWELL, s/d, p. 6)

But what was strange was that although Goldstein was hated and despised by everybody, although every day and a thousand times a day, on platforms, on the telescreen, in newspapers, in books, his theories were refuted, smashed, ridiculed, held up to the general gaze for the pitiful rubbish that they were — in spite of all this, his influence never seemed to grow less. Always there were fresh dupes waiting to be seduced by him. (ORWELL, s/d, p.6)

Within thirty seconds any pretense was always unnecessary. A hideous ecstasy of fear and vindictiveness, a desire to kill, to torture, to smash faces in with a sledge-hammer, seemed to flow through the whole group of people like an electric current, turning one even against one's will into a grimacing, screaming lunatic. And yet the rage that one felt was an abstract, undirected emotion which could be switched from one object to another like the flame of a blowlamp. Thus, at one moment Winston's hatred was not turned against Goldstein at all, but, on the contrary, against Big Brother, the Party, and the Thought Police; and at such moments his heart went out to the lonely, derided heretic on the screen, sole guardian of truth and sanity in a world of lies. And yet the very next instant he was at one with the people about him, and all that was said of Goldstein seemed to him to be true. At those moments his secret loathing of Big Brother changed into adoration, and Big Brother seemed to tower up, an invincible, fearless protector, standing like a rock against the hordes of Asia, and Goldstein, in spite of his isolation, his helplessness, and the doubt that hung about his very existence, seemed like some sinister enchanter, capable by the mere power of his voice of wrecking the structure of civilization. (ORWELL, s/d, p. 19)

Bolsonaro's era, since the pre-election propaganda, introduced the discourse of hatred, of weapons, of annihilation not only allowed, but also recommended. In addition, this is what makes *fake news* so destructive of ethics, moral, legislation, democracy, the rule of law. Lawfare started long before the present era, perhaps inspired by Orwell's novel. Bannon seems to have been inspired on *1984* to better lead the political path towards fascism, spreading the system and the ideas of the system not only in Brazil, where they were welcomed by the current government summit, but also in other parts of the world. The system has not reached perfection and therefore optimists are hopeful. The absence of a more massive stance is not worthy even though it exists; media does not publicize coherent movements, or utopia.

The reception of horror, violence, anomie, the apathy of a large part of the Brazilian population - which mirror scenes from *1984* - more exacerbated in the novel - scream at least, initially, for better knowledge of literature - in contrast to the list of books proposed to be incinerated, as it happened in Rondonia, a state in Brazil, located in the northern part of the country.

Orwell helps us to understand the situation we live nowadays in Brazil. "In our society, those who have the best knowledge of what is happening are also those who are furthest from seeing the world as it is". So, Bolsonaro's guru, Olavo de Carvalho, as well as almost the complete political staff of Bolsonaro's ex party (he is trying to create a new one) propose a polarization between extreme right and left, - but for them, Nazism is extreme left! - as considered Bolsonaro's foreign minister, Ernesto Araujo, welcomed by Bolsonaro himself. To understand the ideological mechanisms and lies, it is important to read and understand George Orwell's *1984*. It reveals us that the way of governing authoritatively requires polarization. Only in this way is the other configured as an enemy, and not as simply other. At the extreme limit, the ultra-fascist world does not accept, does not admit, and does not allow differences. Only one look, a set of rules - favors a power, a group, which

has no scruples to annihilate anyone who dares any utopia, since the rule is dystopian. Here in Brazil, the gaze, the value, the ambition ... is the economic market; in fiction, in *1984*, instead of “the market”, there is only power itself. The two minutes hatred - hatred of the different - lead to hatred of democracy. They lead to Big Brother's demand to be loved equally and only him by all subjects. Hate will be collective, plural, from all to all. Only a single love is conceived, obligatory, unrequited and annihilating. It is, moreover, a unidirectional love, which implies giving up loving yourself, considers Winston:

O cruel, needless misunderstanding! O stubborn, self-willed exile from the loving breast! Two ginscented tears trickled down the sides of his nose. But it was all right, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother. (ORWELL, s/d, p. 376)
And dies...

X. To the victor, the potatoes!

In a dystopian world, dystopia does not exist for everyone! For a group of winners, there is euphoria (not utopia, because this, for them, does not exist), unbridled enrichment - potatoes³! (Citing *Quincas Borba*, by Machado de Assis [23]) - And there is “waterproofing”, the protection wall of the support group, most of the times corrupt. These not only welcome, but also promote fake news.

Another socio-politico-cultural substrate that allows one to understand coexistence with fake news comes from the fundamental analysis of the novels by Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis by Roberto Schwarz (2020) [24].

He portrayed the socio-politico-cultural phenomenon that underlies Machado de Assis' narratives. It is a consequence of capitalism, which prioritizes profit over freedom. (True then and today). It characterized the end of the 19th century. The same priority is common to the current neoliberal times. The maintenance of the system and the possibility of access to profit today, in Brazil, continues to be more a result of agency and favor than of work. Social justice is inconvenient because it disrupts the benefits of arbitrariness and favor. Think about *Lava Jato*, its allegations with the “naïve” and mistaken idea propagated that proposed that corrupt people and persecutors of favors fight against corruption. The excerpts of Schwarz's analysis reveal the difficulty of having a social conscience, capable of defending the citizen against the absorption of fake news. This social conscience results from what Schwarz named ‘misplaced ideas’, true in the 19th and also in the 20th and 21st century. After commenting there were three social classes in the 19th century in Brazil - the landowner, the slave and the free man, Schwarz characterizes free men, and explains what ideas were misplaced, and how:

Slavery, then, gave the lie to liberal ideas, and, more insidiously, 'favour', equally as incompatible with liberal ideas, absorbed and reconfigured them, giving rise to a very specific ideological pattern. The element of arbitrariness, the fluid interaction of worth and self-worth to which 'favour' submitted material interest, cannot be fully rationalised. In Europe, the combat against such practices saw them as aspects of feudal privilege. In the process of its historical affirmation, bourgeois culture postulated instead the autonomy of the individual, the universality of the law, culture for its own sake, objectively calculated compensation, work ethic, and so forth against prerogatives associated to the ancient regime. Point for point, 'favour' practices the dependence of the individual, the exception to the rule, culture at the service of privilege, the personalization of services and their remuneration. We were, however, not to Europe as feudalism was to capitalism; to the contrary, in addition to never having been 'feudal', we were a function of European capitalism on every front - colonisation is, after all, a commercial-capital undertaking. Given the ascendant position occupied by Europe and our position relative to it, no one in Brazil was likely to have had the idea, not to mention the force of personality, to be let's say the Kant of favour, in order to do battle with his opposite number. So the clash between the two antagonistic principles was an unequal one: in the area of reasoning they prevailed easily - or rather we readily adopted the arguments fashioned by the European bourgeoisie against arbitrariness and slavery. In practice all along, however, even on the part of the debaters themselves, favour supported by the sway exercised by the presence of the large-holding, reaffirmed again and again the feelings and ideas that came along with it. The same thing happened at the institutional level; for example, bureaucracy and justice, although ruled by clientelism, would proclaim the forms and theories of the modern bourgeois state. Beyond the inevitable debates, this antagonism produced, therefore, a stable coexistence that is interesting to study. Its novelty is as follows: after European

³ There is no such thing as death. There is life, because the suppression of one is the condition for the survival of the other, and destruction doesn't touch the universal and common principle. Therefore, we have the preserving and beneficial character of war. Imagine a field of potatoes and two starving tribes. One of the tribes will exterminate the other and collect the spoils. There are only enough potatoes to feed one of the tribes, who in that way will get the strength to cross the mountain and reach the other slope, where there are potatoes in abundance. [...] To the conquered, hate or compassion; to the victor, the potatoes. (ASSIS, 2017, chap VI, p. 16)

ideas and arguments were adopted, they could - and often did - serve as nominally 'objective' justifications for instances of what was ultimately arbitrary in the practice of favour. (SCHWARZ, 2020, p. 5).

Fake news beckons and favors clientelism. For clientelism exists until now, in the 21st century. Specially now, with the intensification of neoliberalism and globalization. Economic interests are so wide spread in the whole global world, that they hide the new mutual colonization. Speech, theories at one hand, and at the other hand, hidden favors – new agreements, a new type of clientelism, a global clientelism – and force and violence (wars if it is convenient) to control the unhappy, or movements that question the new colonization. Fake news hide the action of welcoming the worst, in the hope or pseudo hope of some little favor that benefits the powerful and their interests and the involved individuals - not the citizen. The path was paved with the loss of citizen consciousness. An *Ersatz* to consciousness is charity, because it is a substitute for citizen socio-economic-political consciousness – for consciousness of social justice. The reception of fake news makes up the picture of those who hope to gain advantages. Millions of Bolsonaro's voters, added to their hatred against Lula and PT, were hoping for advantages, following to "Gerson's law"⁴.

XI. Conclusion

Fake news demanded "naivety and chatter", namely, space and conditions for reception and dissemination. Masked under claimed theories of neoliberalism, we observe hidden, not admitted, interests, besides hatred and rejection of the other. The present paper suggests that the true underpinnings of fake news are clientelism and selfishness, i.e., absence of citizenship. The truth of fake news corresponds to a not admitted, hidden, buried corrupt abuse, while speech preaches elegant and contemporary economic theories. The reception of fake news was and still is possible because of suspension of disbelief in face of absurd statements that disqualify those who the willingly credulous have disqualified already for a long time. The credit to fake news is given because the enunciators - press agencies and politicians - present themselves as defenders of neoliberalism, which bears a stamp of anti-communism – which people do not know exactly what it is... The product of this strategy hides the real interests of the producers of fake news and even of their receivers. Suspension of disbelief is profoundly inserted in everyday life, reinforced in Brazil especially by the historically incorporated misplaced ideas that enabled the coexistence of a liberal speech, together with former slavery and present prejudice and inequality.

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⁴ 'Gerson's Law' corresponds to taking advantage of everything and everyone and having no concern for ethics. The term derived from a cigarette advertising, were the football player Gerson de Oliveira Nunes says "I like to take advantage of everything, OK? Take advantage of you too, buying ..."

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