

READER

PROBLEMÁTICAS DO MUNDO CONTEMPORÂNEO

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Unidade Curricular

da Pós-graduação CURADORIA, CULTURA URBANA E PRÁTICAS ESPACIAIS

A propagação continua da actual epidemia de coronavírus activou modelos de “controlo social” e um estado de emergencia que amplificou formas de deteção e “vigilância” já vigentes; desencadeou pressões ideológica para estabelecer fronteiras mais claras entre países e populações - de modo a controlar e prevenir contactos-; mas também a urgência de confrontar e resolver tensões relacionadas com problemas que nos dividem.

Neste contexto, formas de ocupação e usurpação territorial, de exclusão e seclusão e/ou polarização social, regras e relações de poder dominantes, de transparência, privacidade e legitimidade, consumo de massa e obsolescência planeada, inscritas e investidas por muitas das nossas praticas, sistemas de gestão e organização, redes sócio-técnicas, modelos e mecanismos de governança e pelo sistema capitalista global, e seu impacto em formas de vida (humana, natural e planetaria) despertam atitudes de resistencia - conservadoras e/ou progressistas - e, a necessidade de estabelecer objectivos mais claros pela resiliência e sustentabilidade, de populações e habitats.

A unidade curricular PROBLEMÁTICAS DO MUNDO CONTEMPORÂNEO, foca a manipulação e renovação destes problemas e(m) debates; na comunicação de um conjunto de sintomas (re)produzidos na organização social de paisagens.

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INDICE

0. Introdução

Foucault, Michel, 1984. Polemics, Politics and Problematizations

Agamben, Giorgio, 2009. What is the Contemporary?

1. *The nomos of the Earth*

Schmitt, Carl 1950. The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of Jus Publicum

2. *The States (of Nature) between War and Peace*

Latour, Bruno 2017. Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime

3. *Decolonial Thinking and Practice and Planetary Entanglements*

Mbembe, Achille 2010. Out of the Dark Night

4. *Independence of Cyberspace*

Barrow, John P. 1996. A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace

5. *The nomos of the Cloud*

Bratton, Benjamin 2015. The Stack: On Software and Sovereignty

6. *Climate Models and Infrastructural Support*

Edwards, Paul N. 2010. A Vast Machine: Computer Models, Climate Data and the Politics of Global Warming

7. *Geophysics of Technology*

Parikka, Jussi 2015. A Geology of Media

8. *Only One Earth*

Scott, Felicity D. Outlaw Territories: Environments of Insecurity/Architectures of Counterinsurgency

9. *Earth as Planet*

The Earth Charter

Polemics, Politics and Problematizations: An interview conducted by Paul Rabinow in May 1984

— Foucault, Michel. “Polemics, Politics and Problematizations.” Interview by P. Rabinow, May 1984, In *Essential Works of Michel Foucault*, The New Press, 1998.

Paul Rabinow: Why is it that you don't engage in polemics ?

Michel Foucault: I like discussions, and when I am asked questions, I try to answer them. It's true that I don't like to get involved in polemics. If I open a book where the author is accusing an adversary of “infantile leftism” I shut it again right away. It's not my way of doing things; I don't belong to the world of people who do that. I insist on this difference as something essential: a whole morality is at stake. It's a morality that concerns the search for truth and the relation to the other.

In the serious play of questions and answers, in the work of reciprocal elucidation, the rights of each person are in some sense immanent in the discussion. They depend on the dialogue situation. The person asking the questions is merely exercising a right that has been given him: to remain unconvinced, to perceive a contradiction, to demand more information, to emphasize different postulates, to point out faulty reasoning, and so on. As for the person answering the questions, he too exercises a right that is beyond the discussion itself; by the logic of his own discourse, he is tied to what he has said earlier, and by the acceptance of dialogue he is tied to the questioning. Questions and answers depend on a game — a game that is at once playful and serious — in which each of the two partners takes pains to use only the rights given to him and by the accepted form of dialogue.

The polemicist, on the other hand, proceeds encased in privileges that he does not want to advance and will never agree to question. On principle, he possesses rights that give him to wage war and making that struggle a just undertaking; the person he is not a partner in search for the truth but an adversary, an enemy who is wrong and harmful, and whose very existence constitutes a threat. For him, then the game is not of recognizing this person as a subject having the right to speak but of silencing him as interlocutor, from any possible dialogue; and his final objective will be not to get as close as possible to a difficult truth but to bring about the triumph of the justice that has been manifestly upholding from the beginning. The polemicist relies on the fact that his adversary is by definition denied.

Perhaps, someday, a long history will have to be written of polemics, polemical parasitic figure on discussion and an obstacle to the search for the truth. Visually, it seems to me that today we can recognize the presence in polemics three models: the religious model, the judiciary model, and the political model. In heresiology, polemics sets itself the task of determining the intangible point of the fundamental and necessary principle that the adversary has neglected or transgressed; and it denounces this negligence as a moral failing; at the root of it finds passion, desire, interest, a whole series of weaknesses and inadmissible attachments that establish it as culpable. As in judiciary practice, polemics lacks the possibility of an equal discussion: it examines a case; it isn't dealing with a suspect; it is processing a suspect; it collects the proofs of his guilt, designates the iniquity he has committed, and pronounces the verdict and sentences him. In any case, what we have here is not on the order of a shared investigation; the polemicist tells the form of his judgment and by virtue of the authority he has conferred on it is the political model that is the most powerful today. Polemics defines a party; it recruits partisans, unites interests or opinions, represents a party; it establishes an enemy, an upholder of opposed interests against which one must fight. At the moment this enemy is defeated and either surrenders or disappears.

Of course, the reactivation, in polemics, of these political, judiciary, or religious models is nothing more than theater. One gesticulates: anathemas, excommunications, condemnations, battles, victories, and defeats are no more than ways of speaking. And yet, in the order of discourse, they are also ways of acting which have a consequence. There are the sterilizing effects. Has anyone ever seen a new polemic? And how could it be otherwise, given that here the interlocutor is not to advance, not to take more and more risks in what they say, but to fall continually on the rights that they claim, on their legitimacy, which they maintain and on the affirmation of their innocence? There is something even more serious in this comedy, one mimics war, battles, annihilations, or unconditional surrender forward as much of one's killer instinct as possible. But it is really dangerous for anyone to believe that he can gain access to the truth by such paths and thus even if in a merely symbolic form, the real political practices that could be replaced by it. Let us imagine, for a moment, that a magic wand is waved and one of the adversaries in a polemic is given the ability to exercise all the power he likes over the other. One doesn't even have to imagine it: one has only to look at what happened in the debate in the USSR over linguistics or genetics not long ago. Were these