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The languages of democracy*

Les langages de la démocratie

As linguagens da democracia

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Abstract

Contemporary reflection on the reinvention of democracy and compatible lifestyles is found to be fundamentally linked to the debate between "proceduralists" and "communitarians." This article aims to weaken the hegemony of this polarity, arguing for the development of the modern Western world as a result of the world's three great subjectivizing languages: the language of interest, of reason, and of affect or sentiments. Furthermore, it argues that only full understanding of the language of affects, or sentiments, can lead to real (or total) comprehension of the modern experience of Iberia-America, especially the process by which Brazilian society and its democratic potential have been constituted.

Keywords: Democracy; Languages; Iberianism; Social theory; Political culture.

Résumé

La réflexion contemporaine sur la réinvention de la démocratie et sur les façons solidaires de vie est associée, fondamentalement, au débat entre les "procédimentalistes" et les "communautairistes". Cet article propose de relativiser l'hégémonie des ces deux pôles, en défendant que la construction du monde moderne occidental est le résultat de trois grands langages de subjectivité du monde: les

langages de l'intérêt, de la raison et des affections ou des sentiments. L'auteur soutient, également, que seule la compréhension totale du langage des sentiments, oublié dans la réflexion contemporaine, peut mener à une pleine compréhension de l'expérience moderne de l'Amérique Ibérique, en particulier du processus de constitution de la société brésilienne et de ses potentialités démocratiques.
Mots-clés: Démocratie; Langages; Monde ibérique; Théorie sociale; Culture politique.

Resumo

A reflexão contemporânea sobre a reinvenção da democracia e de formas solidárias de vida encontra-se, fundamentalmente, associada ao debate entre "procedimentalistas" e "comunitaristas". Este artigo pretende relativizar a hegemonia desta polaridade, sustentando a construção do mundo moderno ocidental como o resultado de três grandes linguagens de subjetivização do mundo: as linguagens do interesse, da razão e dos afetos, ou dos sentimentos. O autor argumenta, ainda, que só a plena compreensão da linguagem dos afetos, obliterada na reflexão contemporânea, pode levar ao pleno entendimento da experiência moderna da Ibero-América, em especial o processo de constituição da sociedade brasileira e de suas potencialidades democráticas.
Palavras-chave: Democracia; Linguagens; Iberismo; Teoria social; Cultura política.

Recognising the impact of processes initiated in previous centuries, and accelerated over the most recent fifty years, social science has defined fragmentation as the central characteristic of contemporary societies. Firstly, structural fragmentation, materialised in the constitution of autopoietics sub-systems and the loss of axis of societies, and secondly cultural, due to the competitive plurality of moral conceptions or life's horizons. This new social landscape, supposedly composed of independent galaxies, is no longer submitted to the Utopian and democratic models set up throughout modern times, all involved in the expectation of a social and cultural unit woven over time. The obsolescence of ancient models having been conceded, social theory has the self-appointed task of performing a systematic reflection on forms of life based on democracy and solidarity in very new and challenging circumstances.

This effort towards democratic reinvention constitutes the cornerstone of the debate, still inconclusive, between proceduralists (or liberals) and communitarians, antipodal references in contemporary social theory. In principle, proceduralists and communitarians differ in the determining weight they confer on either shared values or

procedures of freedom in imagining democratic ways of life. Accepting the diagnosis of social fragmentation, authors like Habermas (2000, 2001) and Rawls (1981, 2000) insist on democracy as the public use of reason, guaranteed by procedures of equality and freedom. Proceduralism does not deny the presence of political cultures or broad moral perspectives, but incorporates them, however, as subsidiary elements and procedural supports, to remember Rawls's idea of "overlapping consensus" as an example. Communitarianism, on the other hand, stresses the need for moral configurations to be shared by a community for a democracy to exist. (Taylor, 1997) Without these broad moral configurations, founded on the premise of humankind's dignity, equality and liberty, democratic ways of life could not be sustained for very long. By its own nature, a communitarian perspective tends to emphasise the importance of political cultures, or moral and ethical traditions, in the democratic reorganisation of contemporary societies, without dismissing the role of procedures.

What has been said until now does not aim to do justice to the breadth and depth of this debate, but only to attempt to construct a context for an apparently odd and senseless question: does our tradition or Brazilian political culture possess the capacity to enrich the discussion locked by proceduralists and communitarians? Odd because we take the anti-democratic nature of our tradition as a given, and meaningless because this throws into a self-aware and sophisticated theoretical debate the brute presence of a tradition, something whose logic appears immediately questionable. It is possible however, to offer a positive response to the question if we uncover democratic elements in our tradition and if we recognise the key authors of the contemporary debate as interpreters and components of specific political traditions, to which we may legitimately join our own. This is the action plan for this text, divided into three movements followed by a provisional conclusion.

Three daring movements expressed in the limited space of an article, thus briefly. The first consists of the construction of a panorama regarding the moral or ethical-political fields of modernity. The second deals with the particular experience of Iberia at the beginning of modern times, finding its location in this context and at the time when Iberian America began to be built. The third refers to our possible tradition, i.e., the most general aspects of the Iberian-American and Brazilian experiences. Obviously, the conclusions will attempt to unite the central elements of these three movements, so that the question of our possible contribution may be worthy of a substantial response.

We may begin the first movement taking as a starting point the following hypothesis: post-traditional societies found, when leaving tradition as the basis for social action behind, a number of languages for new social norms.[1] What we call Western modernity, which appeared in the 16th and 17th centuries, may be understood as a

huge process of subjectivisation of life (Ferry, 1990), once theological principles, which had made sense of everything, had been eroded, together with the destruction of objectivistic and traditionalistic presuppositions of the medieval world itself. (Habermas, 2000). Modern Western society grows searching, in human subjectivity, for the normative foundations of his life and Utopian expectations, progressively ridding itself of models of the past.

The invention of subjectivity, however, does not unfold in similar or homogeneous ways in the West, producing different traditions of subjectivising life and modernising society, and diverse ways of organising the new moral or ethical fields. This inventive plurality can be captured by the notion of language and for the unveiling of the seminal languages of modernity. Taking a close look at the period of the corrosion of medieval society and the first centuries of the modern world, Padgen (2002) finds four great languages commanding this decisive process of change: political Aristotelism, classic republicanism, political economy and the language of political science. As Eisenberg (2003) observes, the last of these may be considered more of a meta-language – being present in all the others – than a distinct language, even though it does gain this status in Hamilton's reflections, in his analysis of the North American experience. The cast of languages proposed by Padgen may be polemically altered for our own ends, by transferring the distinguishing focus from the field of the history of ideas to that of social theory.

This does not imply any disregard for history nor attest to its subordinate character compared with sociology. The aim is merely to bring to a specific reflective field an alternative possibility for the differentiation of the languages of modernity, which may only be validated by the productivity of its outcomes, without devaluing Padgen's classification. Thus, the proposition of this text is that the plurality of Western modernity is anchored in three great languages of subjectivisation, namely, the language of interest, the language of reason and the language of sentiment – or affections, and in the ways of articulating and creating a hierarchy for these languages in the reconstruction of new forms of life in society. The various traditions and political cultures of the West may be understood through these languages and their articulations, which tend to assume a "transcendental"[2] or normative nature in concrete historic experiences.

We will try to understand the structure of these languages from the perspective of ideal types. This reference to Weber brings forth two objectives. Firstly, it expresses the aim of establishing more clearly a field of reflection of sociology, or of the social theory. It is, therefore, an approach structured to seek the basic elements – by means of reflective reduction – of social languages, in the Weberian manner. Secondly, this attempt does

not entirely conform to Weber's point of view, which also finds three mobile fundamentals in subjectively orientated human acts: tradition, affects (charisma) and reason.[3] Weber's wide investigation, however, aims to compare East and West, for which reason action based on tradition, attributed to the past and characteristic of the East, must be taken into consideration. In our case, dealing with post-traditional societies, or societies which are no longer determined by beliefs and immemorial customs, we are authorised to abandon a possible language of tradition, in the terms written by Weber. On the other hand, from a Weberian perspective, modern Western societies are fundamentally understood through the use of the conceptual pair of reason / charisma (affects), and by the fecund hypothesis of the association between the West and rationalisation. Actually, one of the objectives of this reflection is to weaken Weber's totalizing hypothesis, emphasising the permanency and efficiency of the languages of reason and affects – which, in some way he recognises – associating them to the language of interest, which he does not accept as a kind of a subjectively oriented action (Bendix, 1986). In doing this, we leave the field of history – taking maximum advantage of it – for the field of sociology, still inspired by Weber but without accepting his hypothesis of the rationalisation of society as the West's destiny, moving the axis of the analysis from subjectively oriented action to that of the languages.

Having established this, it is still necessary to emphasise a preliminary and historical ingredient regarding the typical – ideal sketch of these three languages. All of them were born from a common perception in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries: of human desire – the *cupiditas* – as the basic, founding potency of subjectivity, as a force which acts creatively and constructively in the world (Ansaldi, 2001). By losing its position as the main giver of sense to life, transcendence makes way for the progressive perception of human immanence. In the confrontation with this immanence, in the scrutiny of man's inner life, human desire acquires an unknown protagonism in previous forms of life and consciousness. It becomes the radical element, original and propeller of the subjectivity, and all the languages develop aiming to offer some sense to the immanent potency of desire, now the lord of an endless ontological fruitfulness. It is desire which makes the world and man, better still, the world of man – desired and appropriated – and it is this force which provides the impulse for the flowering of the variety of languages, all aiming to anchor and orient the strength of desire in order to re-create new forms of life. This recognition of the autonomy and productiveness of human desire marks the beginning of modernity, in the Renaissance of Machiavelli, the Reformation of Luther, Shakespeare's Baroque background, Quevedo, Gracian, Cervantes, Hobbes, Descartes, Spinoza, in the myth of Don Juan, in Locke's astute reflection and in the inflated production of catalogues of passions and ways in which to

dominate them. Faced with the restless infinity of desire, languages for subjectivizing the world rehearse and affirm their differences and possibilities in an attempt to dominate or preserve it. Modern man (Chauí, 1990), or more precisely, the various types and manners of human subjectivity were born from this very confrontation with the desire.

As in the case of the language of interest, it is constructed according to the idea of individual as the fundamental agency of society. The notion of an individual is a specific form of appropriating human subjectivity and of anthropological foundation for a particular type of society (Arendt, 1972). This notion emerges when, beyond the consideration of each man being a unique example of the species, every man is now considered a moral being, autonomous and independent of others (Dumont, 1985). Within the "individual" there would co-exist an "inside" – that makes him autonomous – and an "outside", i.e., other individuals and the society, germinated from the external relations among everyone, a point found also in Elias (1994). This man/individual is transcendental and formally defined by the possession of negative rights, guaranteeing him equality in relation to others and the highest possible degree of freedom to pursue his own interests, his private objectives. These rights protect the "inside" from the invasion of society and of others, thus transforming the individual in society's original element.

This vision is already found in Hobbes (1974), with his special way of characterising the "inside" which makes man an individual. For him, man's first internal element is desire, *cupiditas*, which preserves both his movement and his life. The desire to appropriate the world and all that exists in it – power, wealth, knowledge and honour – materialised in the form of interest. The potency of each individual corresponds to his capacity to realise his desires throughout his lifetime, and continued success in obtaining what men desire constitutes human happiness. However, if the perpetual restlessness of the spirit provoked by desire can bring us happiness, it can also threaten life, individual or social, by creating a state of war where everyone is pitted against everybody else. In these circumstances, a man's life becomes solitary, poor, sordid, brutal and short, to use Hobbes own words. The risk of social disintegration and misery can, however, be eliminated by a rationally constructed contract, which institutes an external agent of control for the orbit of individuals and the movement of their desires. Fear – a form of feeling – is the driving force behind the rational contract which creates and sustains the Leviathan. It is this state which, by the power of the sword, guarantees the very existence of society, of what is just or unjust, of what is good or bad for the preservation of mankind, and obliges everyone to respect established contracts and pacts. There is, in this step, a decisive, theoretical inflection that cannot be lost in

Hobbes: the transformation of moral philosophy into the science of what is good and bad, and no longer of good and evil. Consequently, he leaves aside the demand for perfection, in the perspective of a traditional moral model, demanding only that each man respects good and bad for the preservation of all mankind. Preservation that, on the other hand, implies the safeguarding of the *cupiditas* movement of the masses and of each individual, implicit in the statement "what is not forbidden is allowed". The Leviathan does not cancel our desire nor the sensual, competitive individual (Macpherson, 1979). On the contrary, desire is what man is made of. Hobbes' objective is to avoid the catastrophic consequences of uncontrolled desire, without championing any other value for life in common except the maximum realisation of the interest of each one and of all. Hobbes is, nevertheless, for our purposes, the presentation of the weapons of the language of interest, which becomes more complex owing to the collaboration of the Protestant perspective and of Locke.

In complaining of a need for external control, desire disguised as interest is still incapable of organizing a complete language for the purposes of subjetivising life. This step can only be taken when interest transforms itself into an autonomous source of morality which controls desire and associates it with a model of a good life. In other words, when external control becomes internally established *habitus*, creating the possibility of an interior *áskesis* which is tied to the notion of the acquiring individual. This operation is carried out by Locke, according to Taylor (1997). The Lockean perspective adds to the competitive individual, the irrational bearer of desire, the Protestant rationale for self-improvement and self-control, laying the groundwork for a particular economy of body and feeling, in order to construct the individual as a "moral being", going back to Dumont. Centuries later, Weber would emphasise the fruits of this secularization process of Puritanism, based on the idea of exercising a vocation in the world (Weber, 1974). Protestant self-discipline becomes instilled in subjectivity itself, a movement which is characteristic of this immanent world waiting to be explored, and, progressively moving away from its religious origins, authorises the definition of the individual as both the site of desire and of the capacity to tame and control it. Interest establishes itself as the constituent element of both the individual and a society of individuals, now able to control itself and to co-exist with other interests. Hirschman (2002) points out that the idea of interest substituted the old, medieval, Christian antipode between the passions and reason, always demanding a heroic notion of virtue for the domination of passions, offering to the ordinary man the possibility of taming rather than eliminating them, in a peaceful social context. Even though Hirschman's statement is not entirely correct[4], it does recognize the nature of

interest as a normative, moral source of life, informed by a modal concept quite distant from the old battle between good and evil.

Furthermore, in Locke we may find the *medium* of the language of interests, or rather, the mediation that allows interest to shape and morally justify the social world and individual destiny: labour. The theme of labour is crucial in Locke, just as in Protestantism. It is the vehicle through which the desire to appropriate the world and all its possibilities is justified. In this way, interest materialises itself as legitimate property, and humanity increases its means of earning a living and achieving material progress (Macpherson, 1979). The puritan exercising of a vocation in the world, as Weber emphasises, gives rise to a labour ethic, understood as a regular, systematic activity and a legitimate means by which individuals obtain what interests them (Weber, 1974). The traditional forms of accumulating wealth – looting, war, speculation, slave-labour, founded on the use of violence – give way to calculated, permanent activity, based on the individuals' internal and corporal discipline. The language of interest begins to acquire substance in associating interest, the individual and a demanding, moral subjectivity based on labour.

For Locke, appetitive and competitive individuals endowed with internal discipline are capable of establishing the base of both social and market order through the invention of money (Locke, 1978). More than this, money, or currency, expands the productive capacity of work, and represents it in increasingly generalised trading processes. Locke does not make use of the Hobbesian state of war as the basic hypothesis of pre-political life. That would contain, in itself and independently, the conditions of a society of free individuals. The contract that institutes the State does not simultaneously create the society, as in Hobbes, inventing only special means to guarantee ownership and life. That is, the state is not an original pact, but an agreement of a second order which was put together for the protection of something pre-existent to it: the individual, his interests, his assets and a society of individuals.

Host to both desire and self-discipline, this individual no longer requires external controls, but seeks only instruments that foster the fulfillment of his desires redefined as interests. Consequently, the State and Law assume only a formal, instrumental nature, their evolution in a material direction having been sealed. The theme of justice migrates from the realm of the State – of the old crowns – to the territory of the market, or rather, to the web resulting from the simultaneous actions of individuals taking care of their own interests. It is no happenstance that Locke views civil society as resulting from a pact with a disempowered legal community, in accepting a power capable of orientating men, substantially and materially. The legal world is merely an external, positive way of expressing the rights and controls that individuals in permanent

movement possess. Undoubtedly, law and institutions conceived of in these terms, thus play an extremely efficient pedagogical role, consolidating and reproducing the conception of the individual and the society as the fruit of individual relationships.

The view of the market as a distributor of justice, already present in Locke, will give rise to one of the pre-supposed principles of the theory of political economy, or rather, market morality, which should be totally protected from any other moral source. According to Mandeville (Goldsmith, 2002) and Bentham, the old idea of justice, or the common good, would dispense with any form of state regulation or intervention in the market, being born of the actions of each individual taking care of his own interests. In other words, the common good would be a convergent good produced by interests in movement, yet incapable of providing the basis for or the legitimacy of society, which always rests on the materiality of individual interest and on the formal, legal instruments for the social control of human appetites. This hypothesis regarding the unintentional consequences of human acts which are founded on interest, requires no link between a materially defined common good and the state, which becomes reduced to the condition of an apparatus, external to society yet destined to guarantee freedom of movement for individuals' interests, which is a presupposition maintained even in the version of liberal democracy, as noted by Habermas (1995). In this sense, the utopia of the language of interests foresees the perfection of a society, hinged on this society's recognition of the power of desire, in the form of interest, which both preserves its freedom and stimulates the exercising of it, the basis of justice and material progression, impacting everyone.

Neither affects nor reason are dispensed with in this language, but are subordinated to interest. The language of reason is evoked in three forms. Firstly, all justification of a world founded on interest should occur rationally, without any need to resort to any transcendent foundation, sustained by an immanent vision of mankind. This rational justification of interest involves a contradiction which, later on, Kant would see clearly, trying to resolve it: if interest justifies itself rationally, then reason must be the fundamental element of the new norm. Secondly, reason is evoked to manifest itself in formal and legal reason, that of institutions. And finally, it is reduced to utilitarian reason, the territory of individual calculation which instrumentally submits the world and feelings to interests. The transference of reason out of Galilean territory, clearly inspired by Hobbes, is due to its fragmentation and instrumentalization, an operation which does not seem capable of the complete legitimacy or consolidation of the language of interest. In other words, the association of interest/reason does not prove sufficient to legitimise and maintain society.

Having been insinuated in Hobbes, the necessity for conscious and instrumental mobilisation of affects is clearly expressed in Locke, when dealing with religion. At the beginnings of modernity, this identification of sentiments – and its efficiency – with religion will be quite common, and from a Lockean perspective achieves special visibility when pinpointing the need for a Christianity with some simple articles of faith, adapted to the capacity of the common man. According to Macpherson, "Locke's point of view is that, without super-natural sanctions, the working class is incapable of following a rationalist ethic" (1979, p. 237). The language of interests admits the fracturing of society, between those who are rewarded by the market and the losers, and religion is evoked for the internal control of the latter. On the other hand, the whole operation of incorporating Protestant self-discipline is aimed at controlling affects and sentiments, or passions, to use the negative terminology of that time. Mandeville reveals, in his famous, polemic *Fable of the Bees*, the contradiction between this program of self-control and the taming of desire and feelings. It is our vices and unbridled passions – avarice, envy, lust, greed, depravity etc. – that makes society rich and strong, a special version of the unintentional consequences of human acts. Control, self-discipline and honesty, he says, inevitably provoke poverty, unemployment and common evil. Market morality appears to dispense with, in Mandeville, the moral component of the notion of individual, a possibility which upsets Adam Smith. Recent re-readings of Smith have found more complex articulation of the language of affects with the defence of interests and the recognition of the unintentional results of human acts (Cerqueira, 2006). Abandoning Smith's canonical form of the interpretation of thought, fundamentally identified with *The Wealth of Nations*, various authors have insisted on a link between his most famous work and the book *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, committed to the development of the ethics of sentiment, founded on empathy.[5] If correct, these re-readings verify the point being made: even for someone who is considered a renowned thinker in the field of political economy, the explanation of the market society could not fail to take into account its justification and correction in ethical or moral terms, based on sentiment, in a different key to Mandeville's cynical selfishness.

In its most developed and generous form, what orients this language is the idea of well-understood interest, capable of guaranteeing individuals' freedom of movement and the possibility of co-operation among them. This is what Tocqueville expects to find in the United States, or rather, the correction of the predominance of pure interest by the presence of social co-operation, even though the idea of the public good does not acquire any particular substance. Moreover, and still from Tocqueville comes the astute observation that the legitimacy of this society of interest, when well-understood, is

deeply rooted in a “civil religion”, or rather, in the dimension of sentiments. He manages to surprise and reveal the mythical self-representation of the United States, which sees itself as a society in perfect accordance with God’s will, and the permanent willingness of the American people to mobilise the biblical paradigm as the inspiration for their celebrations, liturgies and representations, aiming to stimulate the development of a republican virtue which is capable of correcting the purely competitive character of interest (Bellah et al, 1985; Catroga, 2005). Thus, it is no longer a feeling of fear, as in Hobbes, which can sediment society, but the affective sharing of values and outcomes that lend meaning to social interaction. It is this power of the language of sentiment – not foreseen by Locke – which compensates for the language of interest’s own deficit, whose dynamic, contradictorily, tends to corrode and make light of that on which it is based. The movement of interest simultaneously requires and repels the integrative power of the languages of sentiment and reason, always putting forms of social solidarity at risk.

The language of reason alters this hierarchy founded on interest, even becoming the dominant language in relation to the language of feelings. However, the mere alteration in the hierarchy does not explain how reason could take over the role of a fundamental of life. In comparison with its position in the field articulated by interest, it should assume the position of totalising and normative reason, creating its own principles and procedures and refusing any fragmentation. We are able to follow the birth of this modern reason in Foucault (1967), by catching in the act, in detail, the separation between words and things and the invention of an autonomous territory of words, and in Koyré (2005, 1991), who shows the growing destruction of the cosmos and the transformation of space as an object of geometry, base of a new “science” postulated – not always coherently (Feyrabend, 1989) – by Galileo. The destruction of the cosmos does not mean denying the existence of an order in the universe, but the assertion of an order that could be deductively known by our mathematical reasoning. Mathematical realism substitutes the old, hilemorphic physics, linked to the perception of a finite universe composed of hierarchically disposed places, and launches the foundations for a new conception of reason and science.

Hobbes had already incorporated Galileo’s contribution, but it was Descartes who decisively widened the field of this new reason beyond the limits of science. By means of methodical doubt, the thinking “I” becomes the irreducible nucleus of human subjectivity. Or rather, human subjectivity is redefined as an “I” who thinks (Descartes, 2005[a]) and which, through thought can arrive at clear and distinct ideas, deductively and truly reconstructing the order of the world. This power of reason does not only apply to the physical and external world, but to subjectivity itself and the body, feeding

a rational morality aimed at our perfection and at controlling our passions and our body. The exercising of methodical doubt in search of something which is absolutely certain affects not only the "truths" of philosophy, but also de-authorises bodily sensations and desires as sources of truth and liberty. Taylor (1997) is right when pointing out that, in Descartes, it is as if reason were broken away from us, and placed above us, to completely command our lives, our passions and our bodies.[6] Even though in a strangely incoherent book (2005b), Descartes does not hesitate to submit our passions and sentiments to our reason, presenting it as a universal norm, a moral source based on "right", to the detriment of "good", finalistically conceived. A Cartesian doubt waives the descriptive and realistic character of the Hobbesian perspective, founded on the recognition of desire, making the thinking "I" responsible for the rational reconstitution of the world and reality. Reason becomes the foundation of the subjective reinvention of life, already endowed with the power to control the interests and passions of the body, from where our mistakes originate. On the other hand, although this moral conception is as demanding as the puritan one is, it is not directly associated with interest, whose movement should also be subjected to the dictates of moral reason. The Cartesian operation evades desire and frames it in what is alternatively put forward as the nature of our subjectivity: reason, domineering and imperialistic. The confronting of desire does not follow the strategy of interest, but organises itself according to the postulate of an "other", of reason as the nucleus of our subjectivity, displacing and concealing desire.

Reason becomes progressively omni-comprehensive (Cassirer, 1992), guaranteeing our individual identity and the correction of our actions, developing increasingly demanding outlines in Port Royal – Pascal – in Illuminism, in Rousseau, in various thinkers of the French Revolution and above all, in Kant.[7] Abandoning any intention of tracing a "history" of reason and of modern sciences, it is possible to recuperate Padgen's hypothesis about the language of science, with some observations. Due to its universalist ambition, the language of reason will always be picking the fruit of the two other languages, re-organising them in order to re-affirm its own universality. It does not want to be a meta-language, but a well-understood language par excellence, whose strength would be capable of re-ordering the premises and expectations of the other two languages forming a superior synthesis.

For our purposes, we will take Rousseau and Kant as exemplary references of reason's totalising ambition, while preserving the differences between them. In an inverse movement to that carried out by Hobbes and by liberal contractualists, in the Lockean style, Rousseau does not see in the individual the site of sociability or the alpha and omega of living in society. The idea of an individual whose nature manifests

itself in negative rights, in propriety or in interests, for him, is completely strange, as Starobinsky (1991) has shown. In fact, Rousseau does not appear to associate human nature to any specific trait or characteristic, other than its plasticity. The natural man, as he appears in the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality Among Men*, is neither acquisitive nor gregarious, displaying a unique and original virtue or passion: pity. Similarly, in Spinoza view, this natural man is pure strength and his virtues and faculties arose only "due to the fortunate meeting of various causes of which he knew nothing, which may have never arisen and without which he would remain eternally in his primitive condition [...]" (Rousseau, 1989, p. 82), However Rousseau does not see in human history a trajectory of moral progress. Quite the contrary, he sees precisely this man affected, over centuries, by events he has no control over, by norms born of interest or of passions that transform him from a free being into a prisoner of these conventions and coincidences frozen in civilisation. History as a reverse theophany. In these circumstances of degeneration, social contract acquires all its revolutionary luminosity. It is conceived of as the interruption of this movement of decadence or permanent chaos. It is a rational act, a new beginning of our history, ridding it of the condition of a mere succession of disasters – a perception shared by Voltaire – to rise up as the result of our rational, autonomous and free deliberations. Social contract not only redeems history, but transforms this shackled man in a free being, or rather, a free and rational citizen. The act of founding a republic de-naturalises man (Catroga, 2005), re-creating him as a truly, social man, or rather, as a man marked by true sociability invented by reason.[8] The citizen who simultaneously produces and is produced by social contract, is completely dissimilar to the Hobbesian or liberal individual, and finds no redemption in sentiments. Nothing that is seen to have existed prior to the contract – in both the historic and moral sense – can subsist with the power to determine the dynamics of a society informed by rational consensus.

The terms of the social contract, for Rousseau, are rational, although they may appear paradoxical. Compared with Hobbes and Locke, the social contract in Rousseau demands the total handing-over of the power of each individual to the community, thereby acquiring his own life and general will, or rather, the need for self-preservation as a community. Without it, man could not subsist in freedom. And this rationally self-aware community bestows on each man the status of citizen, enabling him to participate in public and social life by means of positive rights. Analogous to the Christian dogma of the resurrection, the citizen is the natural man, resurrected to a higher level of perfection, and as he only exists for and in the politically instituted community, his fundamental rights belong to the public sphere, not the private one. Only by means of positive rights can the citizen, this new model of man, achieve

fulfilment and perfection, making his forms of sociability increasingly transparent and rational. In other words, it is only by means of public rights that the community itself may remain and evolve as the permanent work of rational consensus among its components.

Habermas (1995) points out the fundamental *medium* of this language of reason: the communication among the autonomous citizens of a political community. Constant communication, rationally unfolded, would bestow life on the community and the republic. Around this *medium* a set of virtues, which are necessary to political life, should bloom, in a more heroic sense to that predicted in the language of interest, which would be the object of criticism by Benjamin Constant. The discipline demanded by this language does not coincide with an *áskesis* which is purely individual and necessary for the realisation of interests, but unfolds as total self-giving to the community and its perfection. In this sense, the social contract is not something which happened in the past or seen as fiction, but the object of permanent reiteration through the participation of citizens, who achieve fulfilment in this permanent reinvention of the republic.

Coherently, law loses its purely instrumental nature to become the rational exercise of the self-imposition of norms and laws, understood as the result of the free exercising of human reason, by the citizens, and a way of permanently refounding society. Law is, in its production and validity, the guarantee of this new sociability and of a new world. More incisively, the production of rational laws by free and rational citizens, destined to preserve, reproduce and perfect the political community, updates and expresses a new civic sociability and maintains the community itself. Hegel had already perceived the novelty of this reinvention of citizenship, identifying in it the supplantation of religion as a form of self-manifestation of the spirit in his historic novel (Hegel, 1985). Men discover that they can formulate their own law, and the transcendent and religious norm forgets itself as a figure of the odyssey of the spirit. The nature of law, at the same time pedagogical and communicative, replicates itself in the state itself, to the extent that it is the state's task to enforce laws that preserve society and the general will. The relevance attributed to law permits reevaluation of Habermas's statement regarding the effective *medium* of the language of reason. In the same way that labour demands prior conception of a product – and of the work process itself – to establish itself as the *medium* of the language of interest, law cannot fail to consider the discussion underpinning its formulation, but in fact it is law that sustains, produces and reproduces this new world of the republic. The language of reason does not deplete itself in the discussion – in the public use of reason, as Habermas wants for our present -, but completes itself, in the circumstances of the modern language of reason,

in a material law capable of regulating everything. Reason's ambition is not the discussion, but the norm that molds the world, in the name of a community which is understood as a subject.[9]

The inseparability between free citizen and free community has repercussions on the position of interest. Undoubtedly, it is not dispensed with or eliminated, but neither can it present itself as the axis of liberties of solipsistic subjects or agents. For the full language of reason, it acquires only the nature of an instrument for the realization of community goals, inverting its origin in the language of interests. The general interest – general will, common interest – regulates individual interest and even prescribes the conditions and legitimacy of property. Negative rights, if they exist, remain implicit in positive rights, directly linked to this new human nature created by reason, a hierarchy established by an ethically self-aware community, aware of the risks of interest. The labour ethic acquires a different content in Rousseau, unwilling to accept conflict – individual and social – of the emergent bourgeois society and its inherent discipline. Merquior (1980) stresses Rousseau's modern love of liberty and his contempt for anything close to market economy, the reason for his agrarian utopia of the citizen who works with his own hands and his program of return to nature and to its élan, as Taylor (1997) points out. The citizen does not cancel or eliminate self-interest, but this cannot acquire the virulence of the individual of the language of interests. Similarly, the citizen does not eliminate the individual, or rather, the singular man from the republic. The assumption is that each man enjoys autonomy in relation to others and the State, or otherwise, the republic is not self-maintaining and virtues do not bloom.

In the version of Rousseau and the French Revolution, however, the language of reason does not seem to be self-sufficient. The question may be posed thus: why continually enter into a social contract and why obey the law and its purposes? Undoubtedly, the immediate response of the language of reason would be that the contract and obedience are rational – because we would be obeying ourselves – it is a condition of our common liberty. But this seems insufficient. Rousseau as well as the French Revolution – the revolution of reason, the solar revolution – do not seem willing to give up the language of sentiments, resorting to the idea of a "civil religion" similar to that of The United States, to sanctify the terms of the social contract. As well as being rational, it should also be a sentimental contract, as only our passions and feelings could consolidate true republican virtue (Catroga, 2006). The language of sentiment, in the form of a civil religion, would be necessary to socialise and internalise republican discipline, for the creation of patriotism, and even to justify the death of a citizen for the political community.

This new civil religion should be different from all other existing ones, and so consciously created for this political objective. It would not have the truth as a goal, but exist due to its socialising efficiency. By the new religious calendar, the republic would be the stage – not of the theatre, a *medium* suited to monarchies – of a succession of celebrations and festivities designed to probe "sentimentally" the nature of the republican democracy. The citizen would also be the responsibility of this artificial religion, and of the school, imagined by Rousseau and French thinkers linked to the revolution, as a means of permanent creation of this new type of man, the republican citizen. It is observed that this education, either by the school or civil religion, aims not to set free the unruly game of our passions, but to teach the self-containment and self-control of our passions, in the direction that Norbert Elias points out in *The Civilising Process* (Elias, 1994).

To the sub-language of reason, strongly republican, another is joined, formulated by Kant in reaction to the French Revolution itself. A confessed reader of Rousseau, Kant attempts to solve some of his paradoxes – and various other challenges inherited from the past – by the explicit development of "a well-understood reason". Kant takes up Descartes, refuting his mathematical realism and the equivalence between the "thinking I" and the nature of man, by promoting a "Copernican revolution" in the field of reason and science. The old concept of science, as an adequacy of my reason and things just as they are, is inverted: things should submit to my reason, deriving from this revolution the need to investigate what our subjectivity can legitimately affirm about things. *The Critic of Pure Reason* (Kant, 1989) is this monumental effort to determine our subjective, transcendental structure – constituted by sensibility, by understanding and by pure reason -, which precedes and determines our experience with the world. Kant does not merely leave behind traditional metaphysics – always in search of the *noúmenon* of things -, but also mathematical realism, expressing science as a collection of statements produced by the rigorous exercise of our internal, subjective faculties, whose validity depends entirely on the possibilities and very limits of our subjective, transcendental structure. Precisely because this subjective structure would be common among humans, or rather, the base of our anthropological unit, science redefines itself as this complex of rigorous and shared statements, having forgotten the ancient ambition of homology between our reason and the world, that inhabits Descartes' thinking and leads him to find in God the guarantee of this unity between reason and the world. For Kant, the soul, the world and God are merely regulatory and unifying ideas of knowledge, produced by our sensibility and understanding, without us being able to affirm their objective existence.

The conclusion of *The Critic of Practical Reason* is begun by one of the most beautiful and well-known phrases of philosophy: “Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and the more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above and the moral law within” (2002, pg. 2005). The starry sky, the world outside my being, is the plastic receptacle for exercising my transcendental reason. However, besides this external world, there exists man’s inner world, and it is this which shelters the possibility of liberty and moral law, material to be examined after pure reason. Moreover, our subjectivity would still be informed by a pure will, or rather, by the capacity for self-determination of our actions. Unlike the world outside of me, of which I am not a subject for not having created it, my inner world is the territory of my autonomous actions and of my perfection as a moral subject. For this, however, the autonomous production of my actions may only be determined by a principle which is uncontaminated by any contingency, by a universal principle, which is rational and adapted to the maximum autonomy and spontaneity of my pure will. This principle is Kant’s celebrated, incisive imperative: “Act according to a maxim which can at the same time hold good as a universal law” (idem, pg. 51), followed by the practical imperative, which demands our respect for the humanity which resides in ourselves and others. These imperatives materialise the link between theoretical reason and moral reason, in such a way that this link becomes self-aware of its exclusive connection to itself, making pure will become its own universal norm, as Cassirer (1992) observes. The individual now redefines himself according to his moral and rational autonomy, and not by his desires and interests.

It is in these rational and moral imperatives that a deductive chain, which is capable of establishing the principles of life in society and individual life, is begun. The free subject is what makes this universal norm an absolute reference, designed to preside over the eternal apprenticeship of the individual – endowed in *The Critic of Practical Reason* with an immortal soul and, therefore, capable of learning infinitely – and of humanity. On the other hand, it is the categorical imperative which determines the Principle of Law, or rather, our external relations with others. By this principle we are compelled to enter a social contract and draw up a constitution which, structurally, should only contain universal norms deduced from categorical imperative and the principle of law. At this point the following observation is inevitable: for Kant, Rousseau’s enigmatic general will, should be seen as the fruit of this permanent exercise of the imperative and the principle of law, both anchored in the transcendental and universal subjectivity of men. In other terms, Kant’s general will coincides with the updating of the categorical imperative and the principle of law, rationally determined. The constitution should not express a consensus among men – of the few who can take part in the drawing up, by

Kantian restrictions – but express a deductive and rational sequence based on the imperatives and the principle of law. The transcendental nature of our subjectivity, be it on a theoretical level or moral dimension, would be the foundation of general (common) will, necessarily rational and universal.

This new version of the general will draws Kant away from Rousseau. If in the republican version the language of reason becomes closely associated with the language of sentiment, in Kant reason more quickly draws closer to the language of interest. In the fourth principle of his *Idea of a Universal History in a Cosmopolitan Sense* (1985), Kant recognises antagonism as nature's chosen strategy for the development of all our natural strengths and dispositions. Contrary to Rousseau, human "unsocial sociability" would be responsible for the material progress of humanity, without which we would be immersed in a poor, Arcadian lifestyle. Consequently, humanity's most difficult task would be the constitution of a civil society which could articulate and harmonise the antagonism, autonomy and life in common among men, by means of law, or rather, reason materialised in law. In this step, Kant profiles the most generous tradition of liberalism, taking it to its philosophical plenitude, seeking to relate the language of reason to that of interests.

This civil society, however, should have a cosmopolitan character, a statement that is coherent with the value Kant attributes to feelings, i.e., none. Kant's version is disinterested in guaranteeing a local, political community, organised for private or historic reasons, and which would always involve the mobilisation of its component feelings for its reproduction. It is concerned with the development of genre, unified by the sharing of a rational and transcendental subjectivity, which should progressively eliminate from life the private effects of our feelings. Morality and Kantian politics find themselves determined, as in Descartes, by the notion of "right", burying the value of good and goodness according to Taylor (1997). But a "right" at the same time removed from history – thrown into man's transcendental subjectivity – and then thrown back to history, as a subject of infinite apprenticeship. The also famous *sapere aude* of Kant throws some light on the *medium* of this version of the language of reason: it is reason itself split into internal moral law and positive law, derived from and determined by the former, for our external relations. Material progress, provoked by interest, finds itself subordinated to a Kantian moral and rational program, justifying itself only as a component of human freedom. Reason is its own practical mediation.

Whether it be in a Rousseau or Kant-like construction, reason assumes normative precedence over the other languages, of interest and sentiment, while creating distinct rational sub-languages. Sentiments and interests are always understood to be incapable of producing a demanding model of good life. Reason is what redeems them

from its limitations and from accidentalness, involving them in the ambition of universality and of liberty. Redemption which comes about fundamentally through norms – interior or exterior -, which translate this dominance of reason and the affirmation of its universality.

The language of sentiments does not merge with the emotionalism, denounced by MacIntyre (2001). Its first characteristic is a clear Aristotelian presupposition, and updated to the new circumstances: the social nature of men (Aristotle, 2002, 1973). A presupposition that refuses the anthropological images of the other two languages, redefining man as a desire-being which exists only in his social relations and mediations (Chauí, 1990), and radicalised in modern times by civil humanism, by Machiavelli, by Neothomism and by the Iberian Baroque, by Spinoza and, later on, by Marx, among others, While in the language of interests the anthropological model sees man as an individual **before** considering social relations and in the language of reason he exists as a citizen only **after** the social contract, in the language of affects, man is seen as a person **in** social relations. Each man is *cupiditas* in action, is pure strength and the desiring knot in a complex and changing network of relations with other men and nature. Desire is put forward as our strength, which refuses and bends the efficiency of models of pure discipline and repression, and which can only be exercised in our social relations. It is a force which overthrows the world, and introduces mutation as the mark of human history, as in Machiavelli and Spinoza (Negri, 2002) or in Quevedo and in the Baroque (Ansaldi, 2001). Anthropology and ontology marked by the recognition of the world's dynamism, seen as a labyrinth, as the territory of fortune and the exercise of *virtu*, residing in passions and sentiment.

Nevertheless, the presupposition of natural and human sociability is not the starting point of a chain of reasoning about how man is or should be. Man is pure desire, and his truth finds itself in pilgrimage, in action on the world and others.[10] He acts to preserve his life and increase his strength, according to Spinoza (2006, *Traité de l'autorité politique*, p. 924). In other words, to be free. Hence the main question arises: what conditions are necessary for the perfect expression of this potency? In response, a new area of common ground among Aristotle, Machiavelli, Spinoza and Marx: in none of them can we find the defence of a set of norms aspiring to a universal morality, as in the other languages. For all of them, wide-spread, universal moral doctrines, justified by specific definitions of human nature, would always correspond to forms of violence on man and would diminish his potency. As, by the way, all power does, when foreign to the free flow of human potency.

In his *Discorsi* (1979), Machiavelli celebrates the power of the multitude which, by means of revolution, from time to time shakes everything up, renewing its potency and

openness to life. This is what is important to him, not moral abstractions. Strength against power, says Negri, referring to both Machiavelli and Spinoza (Negri, 1993). The possibility of universal moral horizons, derived from a particular conception of human nature, is refuted by Spinoza with the argument that we do not know our body or our conscience perfectly, not only because there exists an “unconscious” in body and soul, but also because there always exists so much beyond our knowledge (Deleuze, 2002). If we share transcendental subjectivity, it will not reside in the structure of pure reason, as in Kant, but in the infinity of our desire, and if we can bow to the knowledge of the second and third genres, this does not mean that the practical level of life is not commanded by the imagination and passions, a Spinozian formula for the language of sentiments and fundamental in comprehending his democratic project (Aurélio, 1998). In Marx (1974, 1985, 1987), iridescent prose is invested against both the fiction of the individual and the citizen, and against all moral doctrines spawned from them, denouncing them as forms of sacralisation or petrification of the relations of power and exploitation. The well-understood language of sentiments, in radically assuming human immanence, refutes and explodes the “right” and those moral doctrines aspiring to transcendence, as in Kant and traditional, religious morality, or the result of a totally static anthropology, as in the case of the language of interest and its notion of the appetitive individual.

This does not mean to say that the language of sentiments has nothing to say regarding the meaning of our actions. The assumption of man as potency implies a certainty of his perfectibility, a movement which consists not of the realisation of a particular moral model of man, but in the preservation of his ontological productivity, in the permanent openness of his strength. In this sense, morality dissolves into ethics, guided by what is “good” or “bad” as in Hobbes, refuting the “right” of the language of reason and the individualism or the utilitarianism of the moral horizon of interest. But “good” and “bad” in relation to what? In relation to the possibilities of updating our human potency. As Deleuze says of Spinoza, “good” has a double meaning: what is adequate or convenient for our nature, and the modal, subjective meaning which makes a man “good”, or rather, “he who makes an effort to organise his networking, combining with what is convenient for his nature, composing his relationships with like relations, and thus, increase his potency” (Deleuze, 2002, p. 29). Spinoza’s *Ethic* is, from this perspective, a typology of immanent modes of existence, founded on good or bad, which replaces a traditional conception of morality, and dissolves the Cartesian “geometry” derived from reason. As in Machiavelli, more interested in ways of organising the city and the exercise of power, than in the link between political life and a moral and transcendental horizon. In Marx, at least the young Marx, criticism of

Hegel’s thoughts concerns the same point: if law and the Hegelian state make universal reason concrete, in Marx the increasingly free subject of history should free himself of the yoke of institutions and moral and legal prescriptions (Moore, 1980), continually updating his strength. The succession of methods of production, in historical Marxist materialism, dissolves goodness, badness and right in favour of “good” and “bad”, deepening the Spinozian meaning and adding to it empirical and historical elements.

There is more, however. If human strength is only realised through inter-human relations, seen as "good" or "bad", this means that the full realisation of human potential is only possible through free association among them. Because this association increases the potency, and therefore the freedom, of all men. The *vivere civile* acquires a special significance here, and radically democratic, in civic humanism, in Machiavelli, Spinoza and Marx. This association among men, the community, cannot be used to obtain private ends as in the language of interest. It is necessary for the realisation of the strength of all men, and it can only take the form of democracy.

Nevertheless, democracy is no longer a rational “form” of government, capable of resisting time and acquiring stability, permanent, reflective temptation inspired by Platonism. Pocock (1975) and Negri (2022) clearly see the corrosive, Machiavellian analysis of Polybius’s pessimistic theory of cycles, which always expects a good form of government to become decadent and bad. Political philosophy, even when humanistic, will become entangled in an attempt to imagine or materialise a democracy outside this cycle and time, as in the Utopias at the beginning of the modern world. Machiavelli debunks this cyclical perception of political time, with its evasive political project, conceiving democracy as a process of growing assertion of the potency of the masses. Time is the occasion for the realisation of this potency, fighting against the crystallisations of power. Democracy is the mutation, a narrative of liberty which refuses any kind of petrification and lives on its own movement. It is not a victory over time and change, but permanent change derived from the exercising of human desire, the desire of the masses.

Desire, as a project, accentuates Negri, the same as Spinoza and Marx. In Spinoza, it is not only a form of government left unfinished by *The Political Treatise*, but the very heart of *Ethics* (2006), of his ontology. Once again, it is the potency of the masses, of beings who, in association, outstrip the power and right of each man in isolation, and make the world the product of this force. Democracy is the happy *conatus* of the multitude with the world, now no longer purely natural and objective, but marked and produced by and for it. As second nature which transforms into the open book of human nature and its force, according to Marx in the Manuscripts (1974). After

becoming disenchanted with political revolutions, the State and Hegel, Marx discovers democracy as a permanent movement of total *demos*, in the words of Abensour (1998), in search of itself and its realisation. A previous intuition of the permanent revolution which is not satisfied with the idea of the citizen, finding in the concrete experience of the 1848 revolts a democratic form of mass action, already understood in the optics of the proletariat (Marx, 1977).

But wouldn't the focus of this movement of the masses, defending a collective subject, a totality, sacrifice each man's autonomy and individuality? If the theme of man considered in isolation is not emphasised in Machiavelli, it is clearly proposed in Spinoza: the multitude in democracy is not a uniform mass, but a group of men who can develop in freedom and in agreement with their potency, making use of reason in this process – by constant will – the reasonable legislation of the community. (Spinoza, 2006) – *Political Treatise*). But in the *Treatise* itself there appears to exist a difficulty in reconciling the two points: that of individual autonomy and the strength of the masses. Even though it has already done away with the *topos* of the social contract for the foundation of society, it appears to insist on the community – on the nation, in the 17th century sense – as a "moral personality", similar to Suárez (1861), against which the possibility of individual independence would not exist. The expression appears anti-individualistic, and curious for insisting on the term "moral", which should also have been swept from his reflection. But the following explosive paragraph takes care to establish a more precise unfolding of the argument, in considering the hypothesis of revolt or the opposition of a large number of citizens to an act of general legislation. In this case, he says, the law of the nation cannot overcome the general potency of the multitude. There is no general will which detaches from the masses and enigmatically becomes autonomous, at the cost of the weakening of the community's own strength, its disappearance, or substitution. In this sense the "moral personality" is the multitude, or rather, the group of men in their mutual relations and differences (Aurélio, 1998), which is the equivalent of sliding the old concept of morality to the world of modes.

There is anticipated, sociological progress in Spinoza, taken up and expanded by Marx. The multitude's growing potency cannot be guaranteed as the unintentional result of the movements of individuals, in the same way that their productivity cannot be bound to the territory of a mysterious general will. In other words, the modal reflection of democracy no longer admits a structured conceptual field based on the moral conflict between individual and community, constructed by the other two languages. If Spinoza left behind the traces of the Baroque and discovered Dutch capitalism as a means of productive appropriation of the world, Marx progressively recognises the Faust–like spirit of industrial capitalism and a new openness in human

potency provoked by him in comparison with the past. The materialistic perspective, rehearsed by Machiavelli and Spinoza, gains full force in Marx: the reflection on modes should begin to reveal the relations established among men in the production of life and the world. Critical, corrosive appropriation of how capitalism constructs its fetishism and produces its protagonists, should precede the liberation of the multitude's effective action, repossessing its potency. And the world's. Before this, there is no way to speak of the individual or the community. Or rather, the capitalist means of production impedes both the real universalisation of the individual and the democratic constitution of the community. Fracturing and exploitation are inherent in this means of production, as are its productivity and efficiency.

From the sociological perspective of Spinoza and Marx – as in Tocqueville, although in another key (Werneck Vianna, 1997) – this continued advance of democracy can no longer be captured from a traditional point of view, or rather, of the individual and the community as moral realities. It can only be understood and impulsed by thinking that visualises our trajectory through a succession of "modes" of social organisation which expand the possibilities of good, and reduce the existence of what is bad. Modes which no longer correspond to Hegelian "objective totalities", set in a self-revelation of the Spirit, but in historic forms of relations among men and thus can receive the impact of our consciousness, the potency of the multitude itself. Due to its internal dynamics, the well-understood language of sentiments enjoys a great ability to capture the operations of crystallisation and empowerment of the historical modalities of life in common, such as the ideas of the individual, the community, the constitution and the judicial community. At the same time, it is able to recognise the history of these modes and the historical superiority of some over others. The critical key here does not remain stuck to past models, nor to pre-determined Utopian horizons. The secret of its strength, of the language of feelings, is this commitment to a permanent openness of the potency of all men in association with one another.

For this very reason the progress of history desired by the language of sentiments does not mean cancelling out the single man and his desires. Sociologically, it does not grapple with considerations of a nature that guarantee each man a reality prior to his relationships, but unfolds through an analysis of these relations. They are what can enrich or impoverish the potency of each man, understood as part of an objective network of links and relations with others and the world. Consequently, man's real nature, that which he constructs for himself throughout history, always remains an unfinished job, and the most that can be hoped for is that, at some moment, each man can fully develop his personality, freely and beyond the reach of any disciplinary concepts. Marx's well-known phrase, of man who is simultaneously

a hunter, a fisherman and art critic, hardly expresses this *desiderato* of the free personality of each man, without the need to submit to a fixed, frozen model. In a certain way, if the individual resumes the anthropological perspective of the language of interests, if the citizen or the self-determined individual explains the models of human perfection in the language of reason, then the terms of the language of sentiments must be different. The multitude, with its potency and energy, and the "people" – as modes of this strength of the crowd – constitute the central characters in the narrative of human liberty.

Just like the others, the language of sentiments does not exclude interest or reason from its field. Human desire, far from being repressed, is put forward as the essential element, able to be cultivated, as in Aristotle (MacIntyre, 2001). The wish to appropriate the world is the key to the language of sentiments, interested in freeing everyone to exercise this potency which produces and materially appropriates the world. The multitude has its material, concrete interest. In the same vein, it does not forget reason, understanding it as an ally of desire more than repressing or directing, and for this redefined as criticism of the modes of organisation of life and as part of human potency. If it is suspicious of the great epiphanies of reason, its medium is human action, political action, capable of synthesising both the virtues of science and technique, for the production of the world, as those who incorporate art, making the world a desirable world.

These "well-understood" languages do not constitute incommensurable fields. Quite the contrary. There are wide intersecting zones, and various attempts at synthesis, in the style of Hegel. In Hegel, the full self-awareness of the Spirit, unfolds with the hierarchical formation and articulation of feeling – which supports the family, through love –, of interest, which commands civil society, and of reason, materialised in the State and organises society as an ethical whole - and not moral -, the closure of a circle which, once again, reinstates sentiments (Hegel, 1985). Honneth understands this Hegelian synthesis as the articulation of the various forms of recognition which are necessary for the existence of modern, free societies (Honneth, 2007). It is impossible in the restricted space of an article to go into detail and widen even more this panorama, which has left aside thinkers such as Montaigne, Harrigton, Hume, Montesquieu, and Saint-Simon, to name a few, and the polemical, corrosive figure of Nietzche. Similarly, there is no way to bring this analysis up to the present day, even though it is opportune to remember that Habermasian imagination, in some manner, contemplates these three languages, placing sentiment in the world of life, interest in the system impoverished by the language of money and reason also pauperised in the

system of power. For the purposes of this article, however, it is possible to pass onto the two final movements.

The initial element of this second movement is an instigating hypothesis of Tocqueville's, when analysing the origin of The United States in *Democracy in America* (1998). For him, all the great European traditions transplanted to America contained the seeds of democracy, whose development would depend on the future. This hypothesis, in a certain way surprises those who work with the old idea of the exceptionalism of The United States. It also creates an opportunity for enquiry into the democratic elements of the Iberian tradition, transported to the New World, to be responded to in a less prejudiced manner than usual.

Sixteenth and seventeenth century Iberia belongs to the jurisdiction of the language of sentiments. During the long process of *Reconquista* it affirmed its singularity in relation to the rest of Europe: territorialism – a growing capacity to control wider and wider spaces -; a simple religiousness within frontiers, making its territorial movement a crusade against the infidels ; the rigidity of its social structure, preserved by its capacity to drain internal conflicts into the zones of expansion, conquering them for the repetition of the same social morphology; the political centrality of the Crown, responsible for the adventure of the Reconquest and for the internal stability of a corporative and jurisdictionalist social order (Barboza Filho, 2000). As the main protagonist in the expansion of Europe and of *orbis terrarum* in stumbling across America, Africa and the Orient, Iberia is particularly challenged by the magnitude of its own movement and by all the processes which condemned the old social structure of the medieval world. Arrighi (1996) sees the Iberian participation in the first great cycle of accumulation of Western capitalism as a warrior aristocracy, in league with Genoese bankers who were wholly devoted to profitable commercial operations. What he does not see is that, during these two centuries – The Golden Centuries -, Iberia became the main European power, just as much for presenting itself as a powerful war machine as for being the owner of a project of confronting social mutation of alarming proportions.

This project is offered by Neothomism, which itself becomes hegemonic in Iberia against Franciscan scatology and the relatively poor humanistic reflection in Spain and Portugal (Barboza Filho, 2000; Skinner, 1993; Padgen, 2002; Domingues, 1996). Neothomism is more than the pure preservation of the perspective of Aristotle, baptised by Saint Thomas Aquinas. It is a systematic updating of thomistics presuppositions with which to confront a weighty set of challenges: the expansion of *orbis*; the infinity of the universe and a science that disconnects from technology; a rupture within Christianity with the appearance of Protestantism; America *recenter inventis*, with a population marked by total ignorance of the truths of the Christian faith;

social and political transformations faced by Europe, including the question of the Jews, the menacing presence of the Muslim East and the role Iberia itself is to play in the world. Updating that goes beyond *imitatio* seeking *renovatio*, as in the cases of Vitória and Suárez, the main representatives of this attempt to sustain an objective, harmonic and integrated vision of the universe and of life, against the current tendencies towards fragmentation in European society. The reactivation of natural law – of the hierarchy of the laws of the *kosmos* – allows Neothomism the assertion of an objective rationality of the universe, which unfolds above the world of men itself.

Universality and the necessity for natural law guarantee the *kósmos* as a living, systemic organism, created by God as a coherent, architectural, objective whole (Vitória, *De Potestate Ecclesia,* 1934). This conception is the foundation for the refusal of Galileo's new mathematical science, softened by the admission of probabilism (Morse, 1988). It is still natural law, understood as a seal printed inside each man by God, which revives the anthropological and metaphysical optimism of the Neothomists, in opposition to the premises of human indignity and of a political society as an institution derived from our sins and imperfections, characteristic of Protestantism. Men would not merely be passive receptacles of divine grace – as Augustin already wanted in the 4th century, and as the Protestants repeated -, but as co-participates in the divine work, and for which reason can save themselves through their own works. Victória anticipates and denies one of the perceptions present in the following century: *Non enim homini lupus est, ut ait Ovidius, sed homo* (Victória, *De Indis recenter inventis,* 1934). Political societies constitute "perfect communities", because they are self-sufficient in the achievement of their own ends, or rather, the updating of the old Aristotelian premise regarding the social nature of men and the common development of their virtues and perfections. These optimistic assumptions re-orient Iberian politics in America, feed the debate against the Protestants, legitimise the political society and civil laws, admitting a cautious "subjectivisation" of law in Suárez (1861), and recreate international law, the *ius gentium*, appropriate for a Europe increasingly divided into medium-sized political units. Even while affirming the autonomy of the political communities, care is taken to preserve the sacredness of the Church as the mediator between the city of men and the city of God.

Internally, Neothomism orients the Iberian movement for the constitution of an orthodoxy that seeks to become immune to what is different, or rather, the Protestant "heresies", to Judaism and Crypto-judaism, and to everything which could threaten its identity and stability, as Braudel (1984) notes. This initial optimism of Neothomism, later reduced in Suárez, does not resist, however, the wind-storm brought on by all the current changes and crises in Europe. If it is a clear project of 16th century Iberia, the

following century follows the sign of the Baroque. A European phenomenon (Wolfflin, 2000; Hatzfeld, 1988), the Baroque has a particular meaning in Iberia, the object of investigation of Maravall (1986).

In other papers, I have sustained the notion of the Baroque as a form of modernisation, of subjectivising life, characteristic of the Iberian-American tradition (Barboza Filho, 2000, 2003). It is the last great attempt on Iberia's part to preserve the spacial, architectural and hierarchical order that had oriented it since the beginning of the Reconquest. The crowns are the great artifices of this effort, developed by Gnosis and no longer by Scholastic and Neothomist exegeses. The cost of this fidelity to a certain conception of social order as a hierarchical and corporate community is the artificialisation of tradition, the uprooting of hierarchy from its natural soil and the transplantation of its foundations to a political order sustained by the absolute will of the sovereign, with its capacity to invent and direct subjectivities. An operation which makes Iberia a truly modern experiment, even though distinct from those developed in other parts of Europe.

It is this tortured and tragic movement in Iberia that is magnificently recorded by Cervantes in Don Quixote, the perfect representation of this Iberia giving in to a sublime madness: the voluntary resurrection of the past as an expressive form of life, redeeming the present. The character of Quixote creates an opportunity to explore the way that Iberia mobilised, for its entry into modernity, the languages available for the organisation of society and to give meaning to life, constructing both its specificity and its profundity. It launches itself into the modern world by using the languages of affection and sentiment, refusing decisively the other two languages, already studied. It renews its tradition, mobilising affection – sentiment – as a means of revitalising its past in the present. The result of this complex operation is the importance of the medium which allows sentiment to create its own profundity: religion, and especially, art. In fact, art is the grand materialisation of the language of sentiments of the modern adventure in Iberia. It is its power of emotion and communication, its capacity to produce and deepen sentiments, to create feelings as ways of sharing sentiment, which is given a special role in Iberia. It is the morphology of art and its possibilities – and not only art as such – which lead to the birth of a modern experience, foreign to the codes of the languages of interest and of reason, which appear subordinate in the Iberian Baroque.

The artificialisation of tradition by the language of sentiment, or rather, the form of modernisation followed by Iberia in the 16th and 17th centuries, involve a price. It will be permanently bisected by what Unamuno (1992) called the tragic sentiment of life i.e., the terrible impossibility of resolving the conflict between antithetical values,

impossibility transformed into assimilation and life's overwhelming energy. What is important, however, is to note the weight that the language of sentiment is forced to bear in the Iberian experience: of making the old – tradition – fit into the new, of making this "new" dress itself in the morphology of tradition. For this very reason, its Baroque consists of a great operation of association between opposites – of the old and the new, of the apparent and the real, of the eternal and the ephemeral – which accentuates the perception of life as *engaño y desengaño,* an indecipherable game of chess. This Baroquism admits man as *cupiditas*, the universe as an endless weave constituted by a game of potencies, change as a condition of life and the world as theatre, as an artifice that cancels the naturalness of life and demands the acting out of that which one wants to live.

However, the *télos* of the Iberian Baroque – the preservation of the traditional morphology of Iberia – materialises in the closure of democratic possibilities of the language of sentiments. The tragic sentiment of life, in the Baroque, is born of the cloistering of movement that the well-understood languages of modernity sought to enforce: the liberation of the power of desire as the desire of production and appropriation of the world. It is no coincidence that Stoicism becomes a fundamental reference. The modernising operation carried out by Iberia consisted of a violent movement of the subjectivisation of the beliefs that informed the Thomistic and Stoic conceptions of the world, shutting itself off from the possible developments of the language of sentiments. Spinoza accurately perceives the limits of the Iberian Baroque experience, and despite being nurtured by the Spanish classics of the Centuries of Gold, is willing to make this leap into the future that Iberia cannot make (Ansaldi, 2001).

It is this Baroque, a special version of the language of sentiment, which crosses the ocean to America, becoming the dominant, cultural element, the *arché* of the new society, to the extent that Octávio Paz could say that we have lived for three centuries of Baroque without any threat of Enlightenment. Transplanted to America, the Baroque acquires, however, its own content, and cannot be seen as mere continuity in relation to the Iberian or European form, as Claudio Véliz (1994) appears to understand. In fact, this is a key point. Neither tradition nor the religion typical of Iberia could be re-edited with the same configurative force in America. Far away from hegemonic forces, they acquired the nature of plastic horizons for looting, negotiation, the drawing up of agreements, unexpected by the original matrixes. Against this nebulous past, not even a future commanded by a demanding, Utopian imagination could be established as a meaningful horizon for social life. No modern Utopia would steal the heart of the Iberian-Americans, as in the cases of egalitarianism and individualism which are typical of the North American experience. Add to this the brutality and violence which were

part of our initial centuries: the looting of men, through slavery and servitude, the looting of nature and the draining of its riches to the European world. In this scenario, labour does not establish itself as the means of appropriating the world, in the same way law did, in the language of reason. From this “structural” floor, marked by violence and subordination, are only spawned obstacles to the social organisation of America, the limits for the constitution of a minimally ordered and cohesive society.

Despite this and everything else, Iberian America carried on inventing itself. Not according to tradition, religion, Utopia or economics. But constructed itself, and this is its mystery, its peculiarity. If we cannot pinpoint a founding moment, capable of shining and persisting like a sun and a spring of meaning and order, we certainly have an origin, a Baroque devoid of metaphysics, a mixture of ethical indetermination, real fragmentation and hunger for meaning. What we inherited from the Iberian Baroque were not the peninsular lifestyles and beliefs, but the language of sentiment, with its aesthetic nature, with its capacity to integrate antagonisms and differences, with its theatrical vehemence and voluntarism. Or rather, our *arché* is the language of sentiments and the true medium of art, without a tragic perception of life which is characteristic of the peninsular spirit. We were born free of this unsolvable confrontation of values, neither seeing ourselves as medieval nor modern, obliged by life and necessity to build a society. For this reason the force of the tropical Baroque is nourished by a powerful constructivist pathos, associated with the integrating power of the language of sentiment. The Gnostic and creative capacity of the Baroque decidedly re-orients itself in order to imagine and certify the possibilities of the construction of a new and specific society in relation to the original ones. And due to this, it grinds and chops the previous identities of everyone here, from Africa and Europe and the indigenous inhabitants of this part of the American continent.

The Iberian-American Baroque was obliged to take to extremes the capacity to create the world through theatrics, characteristic the peninsular Baroque from whence it came: social and political life exist and reproduce only through the voluntaristic and exaggerated gestural quality of theatrical ceremonies, which periodically unite and question men. It is in this theatralisation that the Iberian-Americans gather up the ruined, communitarian presuppositions of the old traditions – the indigenous, the African and the European -, reinventing already disfigured institutions and making the precarious foundations of social order appear, going beyond the “structural” limits of its organisation. Society acquires reality by means of this theatrical movement of subjectivities, dispensing with the systematic work of *logos* in favour of the oscillating and binding force of *eros*, of sentiment and its languages. This explains the importance, among us, of the extensive and intense calendar of religious, political and

civil liturgies, substituting the body of the king and destined to certify something that does not exist naturally or spontaneously – the society itself -, an artifice which demanded this constant wilful reiteration. Theatralisation and "aesthetisation" that do not serve to reaffirm the past, but the opening of distinct galaxies and traditions, the construction and exercise of emphatic signs – churches, palaces, jails, convents, processions, celebrations, cities – of a runaway order and a new hierarchy.

Theatralisation, however, which does not affirm a pre-existent truth, but which produces its own truth, as in Spinoza's reflection. It is a constant and wilful movement which creates and maintains society, in a special manner: it is the movement itself, touched by the language of art and of sentiment, which creates its own efficiency and depth. The Baroque opens for everyone these possibilities, overriding social and economic differences, offering itself to all the groups and races for the exercise of identity and negotiation, especially in Brazil: at war against the Dutch, in the brotherhoods of Bahia and Minas Gerais, in folklore, in celebrations and the various liturgies of social certification. It is the language of sentiments, with its anthropological premises, with its constructive powers, with the potency of art, which overcomes cruelty and violence to forge the foundations of a society in formation.

In *Words and Things*, Foucault pursues the separation between things and words, non-existent in the *epistéme* of the 16th century. At this time, words correspond to the murmuring of things, and knowledge consists of making the world speak, in trying to get the world to reveal its secrets, present in the marks which inhabit it. Another *epistéme* succeeds this, one which relatively separates things and words – the origin of the rational and ordering systems of the 17th century -, but which still hangs onto the possibility that words could be the equivalent to the world's murmuring, through art. Above all, the art of allegory. Don Quixote, for Foucault, would be the character in this world where things do not find their equivalents in words, where the signs are already dissimilar to beings, leaving it up to the *hidalgo* the necessity to find the proof of this link, the duty of conferring reality on signs without narrative content. What he wants to find in his essentially Baroque and Iberian character, is the past, things that escape words, exposing the contradiction of the peninsular Baroque. In America, Baroque wants something else: to find the marks of a reality that only unfolds by movement, by voluntary certification. The "aesthetisation" of life is the secret of its constitution in America.

The desire to produce and take ownership of the world, sterilized by slavery and servitude, by plantations, by political inferiority compared with Iberia and Europe, escapes to the world of art and makes it a world appropriated by the multitude, in spite of everything . The potency of the multitude dribbles structural barriers and establishes

itself as art that abandons the pure *mimesis* for the invention of a special territory, where everyone can interact. In the same way that the social and economic backwardness make Germany escape from itself into pure theory, carrying out a bourgeois revolution in thought, according to Marx, in America society first organised itself through the medium of art, which creates its space as the space of a potency persistently exercised. It is in the language of sentiments that architecture, sculpture, painting, music, celebration, rites and religious cults acquire the capacity to fabricate a society. For this very reason aesthetisation did not mean the pure evasion or the gilding of misery and violence. It is an act of social construction, the material plan which announces the multitude's whole project, characteristic of the language of sentiments: the appropriation of the world which it is denied by power and exploration. And which orients and presides, more than a mere process of colonisation, a real process of self-colonisation, in the case of Brazil, as Eduardo Lourenço (2001) sharply observes. It is not by chance, when scrutinised through the lenses of the languages of interest and reason, that the people – the multitude – do not appear in our history, be it in the colony, the empire or the republic, inaugurated before the eyes of a populace which appears only to show itself "dumbstruck". When, however, our history is observed through the lenses of language of sentiments, what emerges with increasing sharpness is the shape of this multitude, which made and makes of the improbable the mark of its presence and the project of its potency. Far from enshrining the preservation of a tradition, circling around clear values and common objectives, our Baroque is pure language in movement, the endless search for meaning, an eternal present seeking significance, the creative pursuit of a *télos* which only reveals itself in the making, to paraphrase the words of Guimarães Rosa. Iberian-America self-construct through movement, but without a clear idea of the future and without an origin which allows it any repetition, owning only the languages of voluntarism and sentiment. Thus, it is the permanent desire and deep yearning for order and meaning, motives which are found at the basis of movements towards political autonomy in the 19th century and maintained in the 20th.

The objective here is not to paint an idyllic panorama of our Iberian-American or Brazilian trajectory, but to highlight the language that presided over its creation. And, one way or another, remains as its predominant language, for which reason Sérgio Buarque emphasised our cordiality, or rather, the theatrical language of affects, as one of our social characteristics (Holanda, 1988). More specifically in Brazil's case, it is this language which preserves itself through romanticism, positivism and modernism, whose marks continue to make the language of sentiments the basis of a political culture and of the filtering in receiving reflective and practical benefits from the other

languages (Barboza Filho, 2003). The aesthetisation of life, in the broad sense, is always a dribbling strategy in the "structure" and reiteration of the project for the appropriation of the world by the multitude. The importance of popular culture, in all its various forms of expression in our Brazilian life, does not only register the "creativity" of the people: it is the privileged medium for the reproduction and reinvention of the language of sentiments, with its ambition of re-opening the world to the potency of the multitude.

There remains one point to be developed: Iberian America was born socially fragmented and has remained so, since the beginning. It was never commanded by a language whose principles could be organised with immediate clarity, transparency and efficiency. Neither the language of reason, nor of interests, unified it, reproducing homogeneous forms of individuals and social relations. But perhaps this is the way to materialise the language of sentiments, without any fixed grammar, without any special metaphysics: keeping it as a language that makes a free exercise of mutation and history, creative and growing from the potency of the multitude. Among ourselves, it was always this: the fuel for a process of democratisation, even though in a passive tone (Werneck Vianna, 1997), which tends to accelerate.

Undoubtedly, this tradition founded on the language of sentiments finds itself threatened, either by its authoritarian exacerbation, or by the efficiency of the impoverished languages of money and power. Our challenge is to rediscover and revitalise the most democratic presuppositions in this tradition, its capacity to incorporate, its tolerance and way of dealing with differences, its urge for production and the material appropriation of the world, so that it can participate more effectively – weakening the simple dichotomy between proceduralism and communitarianism – of the fundamental, contemporary debate: that of the reconstruction of democratic ways of life and of social solidarity.

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1. I use here, freely, the concept of political language formulated by Pocock (2002), deliberately enlarging its field of application.

2. "Transcendental" in the sense of Wittgenstein, when referring to the language, as observes Taylor (1997). The discussion on the statute of language is obviously complex, but I understand the language here as simultaneously "transcendental" and modified by its public use, as in *Tratactus*, of Wittgenstein.

3. For our proposes, it is not necessary to recuperate the Weberian distinction between rational orientation to a system of discrete individual ends (zweckrational) and rational orientation to an absolute value (wertrational), at least, for the moment.

4. The rigidity of the opposition between passions and reason depends on the specific tendency of thought in the Christian and medieval world. The Augustinian perspective, in that sense, is very different from that of Thomism, to give an example.

On the other hand, it was not only interest that redefined the idea of virtue, as we will see.

5. As a curiosity, Adam Smith (1999) also finds three important moral families at his time: one supported by interest, an other based on reason and the last built on sentiments. His own theory tries to synthesise those families, attributing pre-eminence to the family founded on sentiments.

6. In several passages of *The Metaphysical Meditations*, Kant affirms our capacity to look at ourselves from above, to become certain our nature: “because, on the one hand, I have a clear and distinct idea of myself as something who thinks and is not extended (...) (p.118).

7. With respect to the evolution of modern science, however, it is necessary to observe the substitution of the Galilean and Cartesian approach, founded on deductions, for empiricism, based on experiences, and the emergence of the Newtonian system, rapidily transformed in reference for philosophical and moral thought.

8. This reinvention does not dismiss the valorisation of mankind’s original moment, as pointed out by Starobinsky, nor implies contempt for nature, as registered by Taylor, who sees Rousseau as one of the inspirations for the romantic notion of nature.

9. Actually, Habermas’s main objective is to overcome that subjective and mono-logical reason of modernity for the idea of an inter-subjective reason, which always requires the public use of reason. For this very reason, “right” seems more capable of performing the role of *medium* of the modern language of reason.

10. Centuries later, the Baroque Guimarães Rosa will say from the mouth of Riobaldo: “I say: what is real is neither in leaving and arriving, but what presents itself in the middle of the journey” (2001, p. 80).

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