

The University's Roles in the Historical, Social and Cultural Context, and its Importance in the Realization of Human Rights and Brazilian Democracy

Luís Gustavo Durigon¹

Raquel Buzatti Souto²

Carla Rosane da Silva Tavares Alves³

Tiago Anderson Brutti⁴

¹ Doctoral degree in Criminal Sciences from the PUC/RS, and professor at the University of Cruz Alta – UNICRUZ, Cruz Alta-RS, Brazil;

² Master degree in Development from the UNIJUÍ, and professor at the UNICRUZ;

³ Doctoral degree in Language Studies from the UFRGS, and professor at the Postgraduate Program in Sociocultural Practices and Social Development of the UNICRUZ;

⁴ Doctoral degree in Education in Sciences from the UNIJUÍ, postdoctoral degree in Philosophy from the UNIOESTE and professor at the Postgraduate Program in Sociocultural Practices and Social Development of the UNICRUZ

Abstract

This research exposes narratives and arguments of conceptual and historical content about the conditions and purposes of the University, particularly in Brazil, seeking to describe and reflect on central aspects of this institution. It is recognized, in advance, the importance of constitutional autonomy and secularism within these institutions. This recognition is understood as fundamental in the process of actualizing human rights in public spaces for the construction of citizenship. The problem of this text is related to the question about how much the libertarian role of the University is supported in reality in the processes of construction of republican democracy. The hypothesis is that at some point the University stopped resisting prejudices, the banality of lies and the habit of bad manners in internal relations between workers and in the institution's relationship with the community. The University, in our time, has been pressured not to bend to obscurantism, surrendering to market demands and renouncing the exercise of a critical judgment. Thus understood, the University loses consciousness of itself as an autonomous space for freedom of thought and for the development of sciences, arts and morals. Notably, when one observes the return or perpetuity of characteristic traits of neofascist movements and policies, which insist on intending the young Brazilian democracy, the urgency and challenge of rebuilding the University as a privileged locus for basic research, for the construction of advanced knowledge and for the technical application of knowledge before concrete demands is expanded. The task of students is arduous in times of authoritarianism of every order concealed by the progress idea. To carry out this research, the inductive method was used, with dialectical and historical methodological contributions, focusing on the technique of bibliographic research.

Keywords: university; human rights; neofascismo; democracy

Initial thoughts

This research seeks to identify and reflect on the roles of the University, notably the Brazilian one, in the context of contemporary society, especially before the “new” totalizing globalized scenario and the presence of neofascist policies that drink at the source of classical fascism, rebuying an authoritarian woe - always present - within Brazilian democracy.

Starting from some nonlinear, incomparable historical incursions, so to speak, to a museum visit, here is a brief genealogy of the University, from its millennial emergence to the market conceptions that surround the educational sectors, often distorting the formation of knowledge.

While the objectives of this research are committed to the requirement that the Brazilian University remain autonomous, free and secular, the research problem is focused on asking how much the liberating role of this institution has been developed in the contemporary context.

The hypothesis is that at some point the University succumbed, so to speak, in the development of these roles, as the maximum tension of democracy put the University back in one of the privileged places responsible for facing this debate, notably in the field of social sciences.

Thus, bearing in mind these horizons, the article is subdivided into four sections, namely: (i) historical notes about the University; (ii) first Brazilian universities and socio-political, cultural and economic conjunctures; (iii) tensioned democracy: in addition to flirting with fascism; and (iv) the role of the University in the contemporary context.

For these theoretical articulations to be possible, the inductive method was used, starting from specific premises to reach other forms of observation, also using dialectical and historical methodological contributions. The main technique was bibliographical research.

This work discusses these issues as a way of contributing to studies and researches related to the functions and purposes of the University in the context of Brazilian democracy and its unique role in the realization of human rights.

1 Historical notes about the University

It is understood that historical incursions should not be carried out as a “museum history” or as a mere revisit to the past, because their importance lies in experiencing the remote effects in the present and projecting results for the future, making not only historical traits, but above all, social and cultural aspects, acquire significant importance in any analysis within the social sciences that is committed to human rights¹ and democratic ideals.

It is with this purpose, not merely contemplative, that this research seeks to identify, firstly, the first contours of the University in its embryonic locus, which dates back to the “grove of scholars” of the

¹ The expression human rights was used as a way of emphasizing that this issue is not partisan, although there is often an interest in its appropriation inadvertently by political groupings.

philosopher and mathematician Plato (387 BC)², a sacred place on the outskirts of Athens³, surrounded by olive trees, in which the use of an expression used and disseminated in the university circles - the academic doing - will be consecrated, signifying a privileged and select place of contemplative, reflective and constructive thinking.

Although it is difficult to accurately identify the emergence of the first Universities, it is believed that the first institutions date from the 11th and 12th centuries, especially the University of Bologna in Italy, in 1088, whose Law school was created in 1150, naturally clergy-dependent, considering that it disregarded a secular State. In this sense, Strefling's words (2012, p. 16) should be stressed:

Dating the emergence of the first university becomes difficult, either for lack of documents, or for the need to define previously what university means, also because it would be necessary to make a somewhat arbitrary censorship within a process of slow evolution, in order to determine when an institution ceased to be a school to become a university. Some consider Salerno as the first, because its medical school dates from 1050. As a corporation, the first was Bologna, which had only a Law school and only in 1352 acquired a Theology school. Paris was recognized by Philip Augustus in 1200 and shortly thereafter by Innocent III. Oxford's first document dates from 1214. Padua from 1222, Naples 1224, Salamanca 1228, Montpellier 1229, Seine 1246, Coimbra 1228, Krakow 1364, Heidelberg 1385. Between 1200 and 1400, 52 universities were set up in Europe [emphasis added].

Despite this difficulty in establishing a unique milestone for the emergence of the first Universities, even referring to Bologna and Paris, it is in the political, social and cultural movements carried out in a reasonably coordinated way during the century of philosophy⁴ that the University would project the beginning of its autonomous claim.

This was of fundamental importance to question, through reason, religious dogmas. In law, also at this point, the conceptions about legal dogmatic embryonically imbricated with models of a catholic dogmatic, which only in the 19th century (Andrade, 2003, p. 22) will effectively gain another frame, but not yet liberated from the dominant⁵ dogmatic purism in the theoretical common sense of jurists (Streck, 2001, p. 40).

In this scenario, one cannot fail to mention the fall of the Bastille prison, which housed several

² In this line of ideas, Rodrigues (2006, p. 633) points out: "[...] returning to Athens, Plato founded the Academy. Good political leaders should be educated philosophically. There were classes for students and lectures offered to a large, external audience. Among the most well-known disciples of the Academy are Aristotle, Xenocrates and Espeusipo. Since its founding until Plato's death, it has been about forty years. Plato taught there using the dialectical method. Various subjects were addressed: mathematics, astronomy, harmony, politics. It is said that many students came to the Academy to find a way of life that would make them happy. However, what they actually found was many math and astronomy classes. The ultimate goal, however, would be to train political leaders."

³ Although it is not possible to affirm the formation of the University as we know it today, we can point to the olive grove as a landmark of intellectual formation.

⁴ The Enlightenment movement that influenced the French Revolution is fundamental for the University, at the end of the 18th century, to become secular.

⁵ In this sense, in the social sciences, Postgraduate Programs have significantly contributed to overcoming models based on repressive knowledge.

condemned for political actions, as the culmination of the French Revolution, a time in which the famous Declaration of Human⁶ and Citizen Rights was proclaimed, which now defines a series of individual and collective rights, thus giving birth to rights considered inalienable and sacred to humankind, as well as an ambitious project of general happiness interdependent with the happiness of individuals.

It is in this context that the University becomes secular, with autonomy of thought and as a source that constructs scientific knowledge and multiple types of knowledge, fundamental to oxygenate and feed a series of uniform postures that insist on circling the most diverse social, cultural and political spheres.

In Brazil, late, the phenomenon of universities appears in the 19th century, at the time of Colonial Brazil and, therefore, under strong European influence. The first forays of these institutions in Brazil will be presented in the next section.

2 First Brazilian universities and socio-political, cultural and economic conjunctures

The construction of the Brazilian University dates back to Colonial Brazil, taking into account the interests of the ruling elites and, of course, European culture, but already partly removed from ecclesiastical dogmas. Practically seven centuries “backward” in relation to Europe, the Medical and Law schools appear in Brazil as exponents of these embryonic structures, alongside Mathematics, Chemistry, History and War Engineering (Souza, 1996, p. 48).

If, on the one hand, medical courses gradually multiplied throughout Brazil, to the point of lacking doctors in peripheral states, on the other hand, Law schools expanded geometrically, to the point of exceeding the current mark of 1,000 law schools (Durigon, 2017, p. 792).

In any case, emphasizing initially the historical character, the first Federal Universities appeared in Rio de Janeiro (1920), São Paulo and Porto Alegre (1934), still considered centers of excellence in teaching, research and extension. This model originated in 1951, when the National Research Council (CNPq) and the Coordination for Higher Education Personnel Improvement (CAPES) were installed, which were fundamental for structuring Brazilian postgraduate studies.

The cutting of funds, especially for research, as will be verified throughout this investigation, is part of the new “pseudo democratic” ideals that seem to seek the elimination of critical and scientific thinking indispensable for the emancipation of subjects, the construction of citizenship and respect for human rights and its universal libertarian character.

In the first half of the 20th century, when the first federal universities aforementioned emerged, the idea was that they should be shaped by the German Humboldtian model, which aimed to unite extensionist actions with teaching and research⁷.

The path of consolidation of university autonomy has never been completely unimpeded. The military

⁶ Even though the mother document of the French Revolution represents a milestone for the Constitution of Human Rights, it nevertheless remained unscathed in the eyes of Olympe de Gouges (female writer, activist and abolitionist) the macho and authoritarian character of the movement. The author wrote in 1791 (two years after that document) the Declaration of the Rights of Women and Citizens. She was considered a traitor and executed in 1793. Gouges' document constitutes one of the bases for the realization of universal rights.

⁷ In this sense, article 207 of the Federal Constitution should be highlighted, referring to: “Universities enjoy didactic-scientific, administrative and financial and patrimonial management autonomy, and will obey the principle of inseparability between teaching, research and extension.” (BRAZIL, 1988).

coup of 1964⁸ triggered a wave of repression of student movements, keeping a vigil on Public Universities, which were seen as a focus of subversion - in fact, as has been reshaped by the remixed version of Brazilian authoritarianism.

From the 1970s, and advancing to the present day, when there is a certain destabilization of Public Universities⁹, the private sector began to be interested in higher education, obtaining authorization for the establishment of for-profit educational Universities, and making room for foreign institutions and publicly held educational groups.

It is in this scenario that the Kroton group emerged, today the largest higher education company in the world by capitalization, and which earns huge profits. Recently, the group did not achieve the purchase of the Estácio de Sá company only because it was barred by the Administrative Council of Economic Defense (CADE) in order to avoid the formation of a monopoly in the education sector.

At least concerning the private sector, the market became the “God” of the formation of knowledge, causing the process of secularization to be replaced by economic and for-profit interests. Although in some cases these Private Universities can guarantee a good level of quality, these institutions are not always linked to the constitutional objectives of the Brazilian University, whose guidelines and responsibility aims to train ethical, critical and socially conscious citizens.

In this sense, considering that the Brazilian University has a constitutional framework – as already highlighted – there is no room for doubt regarding its engagement in the constancy of the democratic process and the Rule of Law, especially with the need to propagate and maintain the young Brazilian democracy, naturally in relation to its responsibility, especially in the moments of tension and advancement of authoritarian drives, always perennial, as will be pointed out in the next sections.

3 Tensioned democracy: in addition to flirting with fascism

Brazilian democracy, even at a young age, has suffered serious attacks on its pillars, not only by the presence of the capitalist mode of production as its privileged host, which brings a new connotation in relation to its initial ideals, but also by the presence of movements not always partisan that carry, intentionally or not, ideals of a visibly fascist nature, at least in the eyes of a more attentive observer.

At first, it was thought that some ideological movements would only be excesses of a certain political stance, but gradually it turns out that some clearly fascist structural matrices are being cleverly launched within Brazilian society, in order to erode the desire for good democratic and republican governments. Paradoxically, these authoritarian ideals are wrapped in flags of freedom, as a way to conceal nefarious objectives related to the ultra-concentration of powers, a mark of policies aimed at overcoming the constitutional frameworks established in the Democratic Rule of Law.

Although not new in Democratic States, authoritarian and undemocratic tensions and drives have taken on disproportionate dimensions. It is not new that the Brazilian State has been receiving the visit of the host of capitalism, relegating the State to social terms as minimal as possible, as the theses of economic

⁸ Although today some policies intend to deny it as a strategy for expanding power, memory does not forget the presence of the coup.

⁹ Government programs like Prouni and Fies do not meet the demands of higher education.

neoliberalism claim, but at the same time transforming the Penal state¹⁰ into a maximal power (Martins, 2013, p. 12).

The Rule of Law, since the French Revolution, has suffered strong influence and distortions. Surely the contemporary Rule of Law is different, characterized by the strong influence of the economic system in the political system and, consequently, in the constitutional system.

Nowadays, it is clear that capitalism is coupled with fascist characteristics - even in the form of algorithms in social networks - with the clothing of “new and libertarian” movements. Fascism and capitalism unite, seeking to eliminate much of the criticism of contemporary socioeconomic and legal systems. At this point, Martins’ words should be underlined (2013, p. 24):

Underestimating the frequency with which expressions such as “societatis fascisms”, “punitive fascisms”, “fascitization of the justice system”, “media fascisms” or “light fascisms” are uttered, moreover in contexts of principle-logical and axiological frankness of democonstitutional systems, **is to refuse fascism the condition of aggregator category of scattered elements and diverse functionalities**, which, by themselves, singularly considered and regardless of the aggregating reference, are claimed and activated to the taste of concrete objectives, **not to mention that the societies in motion themselves produce fascist forms** [emphasis added].

One came to think at some point in the author’s argumentative exaggeration. However, as occurred in Mussolini’s¹¹ Italy, it is not too much to point out that in Brazil this approach has actually occurred, especially from a mythological idea and the structuring of very clear contributions, some of which will be worked on in this research, starting with the discourse of Benito Mussolini, in 1922, transcribed by Stanley (2019, p.19):

We create our myth. Myth is a faith, a passion. It does not have to be a reality... **Our myth is the nation, our myth is the greatness of the nation!** And to this myth, this greatness, which we want to turn into a total reality, we subordinate everything! [emphasis added].

It is notorious that many discourses of the past are intentionally mythical, as a way of eliminating any negative aspect that is related to the reactionary actions practiced by States¹² and to pave the way for authoritarianism, the concentration of power and purist and pseudo libertarian ideals.

In this “new” politics, the importance of the family is added, but not in relation to its various forms of

¹⁰ This is not new. It is enough to check the data from the Brazilian prison system to observe the geometric progression of the number of prisoners, especially the jump that occurred since the 1990s, without decreasing the rates of violence. On the contrary, these indexes increased. Of course, punishment is a necessary means. However, it alone, with no public policy of “no access to violence”, is insufficient to minimize the numerous problems arising from crime.

¹¹ As for Mussolini’s mythological rise, it is worth underlining: “Mussolini did his part to sanctify the myth. At the last train stop before Rome that day, he considered the possibility of disembarking and entering the city on horseback, surrounded by his guards. Although the plan was abandoned, he later did everything he could to strengthen the legend of his rise to power as, in his own words, a “revolution” and an “insurrectional act” that launched a new fascist era” (ZIBLATT; LEVITSKY, 2019, p. 24).

¹² Currently, in Brazil, there is a denying trend in relation to the barbarities carried out by the Military Dictatorship.

construction and manifestation in contemporary society, resulting from the advancement and evolution of family law in the recognition of gender and equality issues, as already recognized by the Supreme Court. That is to say, non-recognition is not only due to a prejudiced issue, but also, above all, to a structural issue.

The purely patriarchal family becomes one of the central elements of the “nation”, although - fatefully - many of these ultraconservatives can “go to a mass in the morning and to the brothel at night”, but in no way can they recognize, for example, the equality of homoaffective unions. In this perspective, Stanley (2019, p. 22) is surgical in diagnosing these structures of fascist movements from their embryonic conceptions:

In a fascist society, the leader of the nation is analogous to the traditional patriarchal family father. The leader is the father of the nation, and his strength and power are the source of his legal authority, just as the strength and power of the father of the family in patriarchy is supposed to be the source of his supreme moral authority over his children and wives. **The leader provides the nation, just as in the traditional family the father is the provider.** The authority of the patriarchal father derives from his strength, and strength is the main authoritarian value. By presenting the nation’s past as a past with a patriarchal family structure, **fascist politics connects nostalgia to a central organizing hierarchical authoritarian structure**, which finds its purest representation in these norms [emphasis added].

The patriarchal family, as a central element of fascist politics in its maximal power, creates extremisms whose historical events cannot fail to be recorded so that they no longer be repeated, as Mate (2005, p. 168) points out that “[...] the past embraces the present of luck that a politics with memory has to be a mourning politics.”

Some say that all citizens should visit the concentration camp museums to feel the desperate energy of the thousands of holocaust victims as a way of eliminating the possibility of repetition. Under the motto “progress and fascism” the bodies are being sweetened, at least those of those who allow themselves to be drunk by the symbols of a “better” world, directly affecting the way of doing politics. As Mate states (2005, p. 101):

From this perspective, we said that **fascism and progress are united**. Things, on the contrary, do not remain there, because this logic ends up affecting our way of doing politics. Hannah Arendt defines totalitarianism as the tragic combination of two principles, thus far not experienced: that anything is possible and that everything is necessary. If everything is possible, everything can be experienced, even more, everything that falls within the power of man must be activated, acted [...] Totalitarianism destroys political life because it is an attack, first of all, against plurality, that is, against the fact that the species will be unique, but individuals are diverse [...] **Finally, totalitarianism denies freedom** [emphasis added].

Paradoxically, fascist politics advocates that it is necessary to potentiate libertarian ideals, when in

reality this is just a pseudo discourse that aims to advance, take, monopolize and concentrate power, whether Foucault's microphysical powers, or the macro powers of governance.

Added to this authoritarian broth is the return of a strong presence of religion, constitutionally assured, but which should not aim at the return of a wave of a non-secular State.

Not only that, the bulwarks of morality that are housed in the Brazilian State abuse the anti-corruption flag, admitting that this is done even outside the rules of the democratic game. In other words: under the icon of combat - war tactics - against corruption, even the process logic is reversed - in this case the criminal - which ceases to be an instrument of containment of state tyranny to become an instrument at the disposal of the State.

Within the ultraconservative movements, there are those who come to support the need for the return of AI-5 and the closure of recognized democratic institutions that are part of the structure of the Brazilian constitutional system.

In this context, as a way to better equip these desires, propaganda works focusing on undermining and distorting democratic institutions. With media and mythological propaganda, the real objectives are hidden and fully accepted concreteness is disseminated through an easily accessible language code, as Stanley points out (2019, p. 65):

A central principle of fascist **politics is that the purpose of oratory should not be to convince the intellect, but to influence the will.** The anonymous author of an article in an Italian fascist magazine from 1925 writes: "The mysticism of fascism is proof of its triumph. **Reasoning does not attract, emotion does.**" In *Mein Kampf*, in a chapter entitled "The struggle of the early days: the role of the speaker", **Hitler writes that it is a great misunderstanding to consider simple language as stupid** [emphasis added].

The intention of fascism, whether in its embryonic version or in its new version systemically connected to capitalism and large economic groups, as a perverse way of governing and denying otherness, is to escape the intellect and reach in an orchestrated way all the hearts that believe in purist ideals.

In this context, anti-corruption campaigns gain prominence, as if its repudiation were exclusive to ultraconservatives. Paradoxically, this symbolism can hide other forms of corruption, based on the aspiration for the seizure of more power¹³, because fascism arising in the democratic bosom does not want to give chance for the survival of diverse thought.

That is why the political scandals of fascist regimes are minimized, while they would be enhanced within democratic policies by the very openness and dissemination of data. In a single sentence, as Stanley (2019, p. 39) points out, "[...] corruption, for the fascist politician, consists of the corruption of purity, not of the law." This is why myths gain support and feed back into political pandemics (2019, p. 41):

¹³ As Bobbio (1986, p. 95) says, "[...] where the supreme power is hidden, the counter-power tends to be hidden as well. Invisible power and counter-invisible power are the two sides of the same medal. The history of any autocratic regime and the history of the situation are two parallel stories that refer to each other. Where secret power exists, there is also, almost like its natural product, anti-power equally secret or in the form of conspiracies, plots, coups d'état, plotted in the corridors of the imperial palace, or in the form of seditions, revolts or rebellions prepared in impassable and inaccessible places, far from the eyes of the palace inhabitants, just as the prince acts as far as possible from the eyes of the common."

Masking corruption under the guise of anti-corruption is a striking strategy of fascist propaganda [...] The undemocratic intent behind fascist propaganda is fundamental. **Fascist states focus on dismantling the Rule of law**, with the aim of replacing it with individual government dictates or party leaders. It is standard in fascist politics that **harsh criticism of an independent judiciary** occurs in the form of accusations of bias, a type of corruption, **criticisms that are then used to replace independent judges with those who will cynically employ the law as a means of protecting the interests of the ruling party** [emphasis added].

Of course, no citizen politics, attitude or behavior should be in agreement with corruption. Nor is its “combat” the privilege of some groups, not least because it has already been identified that this discourse often serves to conceal other forms of corruption, just like illegitimate means of seizing power. The point is that the “fight against corruption” done outside the rules of the game is as corrupt as corruption itself, because it creates rules of punishment outside the democratic system.

It is not too much to recall that punishment is a legitimate and necessary act, but that it requires an ethical minimum when the justice system is called into question, especially the criminal system, which has been marked throughout its history with harmful punitive means, as Foucault demonstrates in “Watch and Punish”.

This orchestration of acts and attitudes of fascist politics - in what interests this research¹⁴ - would not be complete without the establishment of a climate of *anti-intellectualism*. It is precisely at this point that the University, not only the Brazilian one, is also tensioned in a destructive way, which is why it must give its answer, otherwise the democratic ideals succumb.

The non-partisan ideological confrontation¹⁵, understanding the concept of ideology as the study of ideas, often occurs in an unequal and disproportionate way. This is because fascist politics does not intend to reach the intellect, but only emotion, thus acting in the plane of irrationality.

There is a kind of self-destruction of democracy, because, within its democraticity, democracy itself allows for these diverse spaces of thought, actions and manifestations. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that freedom of expression must have limits in the midst of a tensioned democracy. In this line of ideas, Stanley's thought is stressed once again (2019, p. 48):

Fascist politics seeks to undermine public discourse, attacking and devaluing education, specialization and language. It is impossible to have an intelligent debate without an education that gives access to different perspectives, without respect for specialization when knowledge itself runs out and without a language rich enough to accurately describe reality. When education, specialization and linguistic distinctions are undermined, **only tribal power and identity remain**

¹⁴ Several other points could be analyzed in the wake of Stanley's thinking. But this should be the subject of another reflection. In order to meet the thematic delimitations that we propose in this investigation, we advance to the themes of simplification of thought and distance from the intellect.

¹⁵ As Figueiredo (2006, p. 455) states: “It would be naive to consider that Law is a mere product of ideology or an element constituted by society, in a linear relationship of cause and effect. In fact, Law is a phenomenon that constitutes these same relationships. Law, ideology, social relations and power relations are inseparable elements.”

[emphasis added]

This machinery of discursive attack places dissenting thought in a kind of Marxist package, distorting Marx's own ideas, often without knowing them, and minimizing or radicalizing left-wing discourse, favoring a process of bipolarization. The idea that guides this article is that, however, there is no debate outside the antithesis and when the complexity of social and legal phenomena is ignored.

In this universe of tensions and authoritarian impulses of the most diverse orders, it is not too much to warn the State of Exception as a microcosm of the Rule of Law and as a paradigm of government, as Agamben denounces (2003, p. 9-51), challenging the University, in what concerns it, so that it also gives an answer to the decay of the civilizing level that at hard costs was built by contemporary society.

4 The role of the University in the contemporary context

The University plays a crucial role in societies: far from producing only workforce, it strives to build new knowledge, seeking the student's autonomy as a subject of law, able to understand the dynamic relations of the contemporary world. It is a complex task that also embraces, within its limits and potentialities, democratic ideals.

The careless¹⁶ with the matrices of constitutional, ethical and political order allowed for the rise of authoritarian movements within society. Although it is essential to maintain these functions, one can no longer, naively, reduce the role of the University to its sustenance, because, it is never too much to recall, fascist policies usually arise from the democratic environment and threaten the autonomy of educational institutions.

It is necessary to go further and build coalitions in defense of democracy, without necessarily renouncing the wishes originating in the University. This does not mean joining friends (Ziblatt; Levitsky, 2019), but opponents maintaining an indispensable ethical minimum.

There is no doubt that the complexity of these roles consists of educating and maintaining memory as a paradigm for the future, respecting differences as a way to enable social, ethnic and racial inclusion, fundamental for democracy to be not always at the mercy of anti-democratic movements.

The human condition of language beings also plays a fundamental role in this process of education for citizenship as a liberating dimension potentially constructing a culture of equality, which can stimulate the training of critical and ethical citizens, building a collectivity not blindly subordinated to political parties. As Ziblatt and Levitsky (2019, p. 217) state: "No political leader alone can end democracy; no leader alone can rescue a democracy, either. Democracy is a shared enterprise. Its fate depends on all of us", including the University, which interests us so much in this research.

Language, for Gadamer (2010), should not be equated with an instrument or a tool, because, in all the knowledge of the world and ourselves, our own language, which has always surpassed us, has always

¹⁶ Care is understood here in its ethical sense and as a relational paradigm, as referred by Junges (2006, p. 180-181): "This paradigm assumes the relational dimension of the human being as a starting point and sees Law as a system objective of defending the human person's unwavering expectations in their subject-in-relationship reality [...] The relational paradigm assumes the perspective of care, because its starting point is the responsibility and symmetry of interrelations in the construction of justice. The individualistic-libertarian paradigm is centered on the autonomy and individual rights of each one, disregarding otherness and interrelations."

taken us. A vestige of our finitude can be found, according to the philosopher, in the fact that in all our thoughts and knowledge we have always been preceded by the interpretation of the world made in language. Hence, the consciousness of the individual does not constitute a parameter to measure the language being, which is characterized by the absence of an I, by belonging to the “we” sphere, in a way that those who speak a language understood by no one else simply do not speak, precisely because speaking means speaking to someone and being understood.

What constitutes the common world, for Gadamer (2010), is what is spoken in the language, in which we live and where the great current of tradition that reaches us through literature is inserted. Language, in this sense, is what we enter when we hear it: the spoken, whose truth does not reside in it alone, but which refers widely to the unspoken. Gadamer evaluates that every utterance is motivated, that is, for everything said we could still ask: “Why do you say that?” That is why an utterance is only understandable when the unspoken is understood in the spoken. In other words, a question whose motivation is unknown cannot be answered, because only the story of the motivation of the question opens the scope from which one can search and give an answer. Thus, in both asking and answering, there is an infinite dialogue, in whose space, word and answer lie, and everything that is said is found in this space. For the philosopher, language is the center of the human being when considered in the context of human coexistence, understanding, consensus, as indispensable to human life as the air we breathe.

The fact that intellectuality is being attacked - in fact, as has already occurred in the Military Dictatorship - does not neutralize the role of the University, but rather intensifies its “mission”, unless it also succumbs to an authoritarian engineering. In Stanley’s words (2019, p. 48):

It does not mean that there is no role for universities in the fascist politics. In fascist ideology, there is only one legitimate point of view: that of the dominant nation. Schools introduce students to the dominant culture and its mythical past. **Education, therefore, poses a serious threat to fascism or becomes a pillar of support for the mythical nation.** It is not surprising, then, that cultural protests and clashes at university campuses represent a real political battleground and receive national attention. There is a lot at stake [emphasis added].

Diagnosing neofascist policies, encouraging an ethical and debate-friendly stance, with historical loyalty, denouncing simplification and demonstrating the multiple variations of scientific knowledge, especially in the social sciences, are also tasks to be performed by the University.

After all, in the universe of educational institutions of a country of continental dimensions, there should be no room for a single thought that does not recognize minorities and cultural diversity. In this sense, the curriculum in higher education acquires fundamental importance, including its internationalization, as reported by Marcelino, Souza and Lauxen (2019, p. 171-172):

The internationalization of the curriculum has taken on an increasingly prominent role for contributing to the **training of the subject towards the world reality, understanding his surroundings and acting as a transforming agent of society.** This concept of a transformative curriculum does not seem the simplest, but the current reality impels us towards it. In order to train a citizen with these

characteristics, it is urgent that education, especially **universities, resume their role of training critically and culturally emancipated citizens, making them professionals politically engaged in their work and in contemporary reality, with a developed sense of their own self, their culture and prepared to interpret social reality with the intention to transform it** [emphasis added].

A strengthened curriculum allows for recognizing multiplicity, verticalizing human rights in all their dimensions and enhancing otherness as a way to maintain democratic perpetuities within the University, projecting them to the social environment. This done, the unique thought will naturally be repelled, putting it in its proper place, which is in memory and in the past.

Final thoughts

This article, within the defined excerpts, sought to rescue some historical reflections about the origin of the University, emphasizing the actions of these institutions from the Brazilian University since the public sphere to its openness to the private sector, as well as the crisis of values that plagues the various social sectors.

In this horizon, it was identified that neofascist incursions do not represent sporadic flirtations or simple excesses of language and harmless actions. From the analysis of some contributions of fascism, which seems to have taken over a fraction of the discourses enunciated in Brazil, such as the appropriation of national symbols, false moralism, the obsession with power and the attack against the gender issue as a way to maintain and strengthen the “nationalist” patriarch, elevating it to the condition of untouchable myth, it can be seen that democratic tensions really seem to have reached a limit and that authoritarian objectives have no longer been concealed, although they remain without significant blockades.

In democratic societies, freedom of the press and the free expression of thought must be ensured, but it is also of fundamental importance to respect an ethical minimum, rejecting undemocratic acts. It is notorious that, in this context, the University and opinion-forming discourses, linked to the purpose of training critical and ethical citizens committed to the ideals of freedom, have a fundamental role in contemporary society, and it is up to the University not only to defend the constitutional framework, which has proved insufficient.

In Brazilian democracy, the scourges of their constitutional bases acquire maximal power, causing democratic institutions - including the University - to create a multiple pact for democracy, otherwise they will succumb to the mythological advances that seem to have found in the degeneration of character an instrument to potentiate hatred to the detriment of respect, tolerance and difference.

In these strange times, the plurality of ideas arising from complex thinking and the dynamics of social and political relations are being challenged by single thought, precisely the point of convergence between neofascism and consumerist and totalitarian globalization.

It is necessary to build an indispensable ethical minimum that is capable of being immune to any polarized victory, enabling human beings to enjoy a peaceful and quiet social living, maintaining and enhancing their affections.

It is not necessary to say that the theoretical inflections articulated in this research are inserted in the epistemology of uncertainty, and do not have the totalitarian claim of incontestableness, being certain that they will be the object of criticism, especially for the militants of the movements of “law and order”. Nevertheless, it is understood that this article could foster a qualified debate that respects divergences and does not promote worldly attacks as if we were in times of war, devoid of memory and values, especially democratic ones, which we consider non-negotiable.

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