



# THE MIND AS APPARATUS OF CONTROL :

PROBLEMATIZATIONS ABOUT CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

Yuri Torres Paes Tripodi

**ALL ANTICOLONIAL  
STRUGGLE  
IS  
AN ANTICAPITALIST  
STRUGGLE**

# THE MIND AS APPARATUS OF CONTROL: PROBLEMATIZATIONS ABOUT CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

Yuri Torres Paes Tripodi

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My text weaves considerations about the compulsory character of rationality, the logic of incarceration/psychiatric internment, and the complexity of the social contract that is established by the network/system of relationships that rules contemporary society regarding mental processes. Starting from my personal experience, I approach, as a manifesto, the singular [and from a part of society that can't speak] way of seeing what the narrator considers, based on the sphere of insurrection, as an arbitrary injunction. In dialogue with Agamben (2019), Deleuze (1990), and Estamira Gomes de Sousa<sup>1</sup>, the author builds an argumentation that develops the notion of the Mind as an Apparatus of Control, and also criticizes the fallacy of ‘delirious’ classifications of the psychopathology. The medicalization of existence is treated here through the process of psychiatric internment, and how its logic operates in the imprisoned body.

**Keywords:** mind as an apparatus of control; madness and mental illness; psychiatric internment; medicalization of existence.

## Introduction and Objectives

The objective of this research is to expose, denounce, and bring a critical thought about the procedure that we can understand as a public interdiction. By the moment that I establish a critical view about a process that crosses the social body and promotes deep suffering in bodies inadequate to the social contract that I call into question in this text, I propose the discussion about the right over one's own body and the right to intimacy. I also criticize the new world order and how the conjuncture created by biocontrol produces sickness in bodies inappropriate to the social system.

The text approaches my personal experience through the lens of a sociological analysis about mental processes in contemporary society, starting from the expression of a misfit body, in a place of social vulnerability and neurodissidence. Also, this article discusses how the processes of injunction/imposition of this apparatus, along with its coercive character, affect bodies that do not have the right of choice. My perspective is to problematize the contemporary social ways of dealing, creating, and judging conscious and unconscious uprising and mental dysfunction in a society in which the mind and the optical system are rules of a game that promotes exclusion, invisibilization, and precariousness.

**However, inversely,  
when classical thought wants to  
interrogate insanity for what it is, it does  
so not based on insane people, but on  
disease in general.**

Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity*

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<sup>1</sup> Estamira Gomes de Sousa was an elderly black woman (dec. 28/07/2011) who worked for years at the Jardim Gramacho landfill in Rio de Janeiro. Estamira had mental disorders, was diagnosed with Schizophrenia and Chronic Psychosis. Her speech, present in the Documentary ESTAMIRA (Marcos Prado, 2005 – winner of numerous National and International Awards), mixes Philosophy, Spirituality, Sociology, History and vehemently criticizes the capitalist order, the values and customs of the consumer society, a certain idea of God and the Government of the World and several other issues in a lucid and unique way.

some people do not have psychological structure to live in a society of compulsory rationality. The ‘outcropped’ sensitivity, different from a ‘shaped’ sensitivity, which overcomes the contours of a formatting of the sensitive, which is trained and oriented to direct its stimulus, is the most precious thing that we have, the living spirit of empathy<sup>2</sup> – an act for which we will fight against its extinction [and the empathy that I talk about here does not have a relationship with the selective commotion that cross the person who acts for something in return, for any personal interest; an agency caused by capitalist subjectivation, because, according to Félix Guattari: “It is the production of capitalist subjectivity that tends to individualize the desire” (GUATTARI; ROLNIK, 1986, p. 233)]. our bodies will be no longer subject to the interdictions and movements of exclusion that are inherent to the radicality of misfit people, those that who aren’t for sale, those that don’t shup up.

we will reveal each disguise that has a desire of raising personal funds and working on the maintenance of this structure of fictional harmony in a morbid and sick society<sup>3</sup> and destroy all of that.

if they characterized us as disturbed and disturber people, we assess as despot and psychopath the commanders and leaders that prescript the order.

### **The sensation is of feeling expropriated from one’s own body by an abusive injunction**

and we will bring up the omission and the system of representation inherent to this social condition, which produces individualism, selfishness, and competitiveness in the contradiction of the sense of village, as this time is characterized: global village.

I choose the expression integrated world capitalism<sup>4</sup>, which already depicts the sense of globalization of relations.

we are gradually losing the cultural and cognitive remnants of tribal **communities** [but we will not let that happen]

If exists little flour, my *pirão*<sup>5</sup> comes first, in which it is necessary harming the other as a way of personal financing: we are the ones who starve for what we believe. we take to its ultimate consequences the idea-action of revolution without effective violence but with a symbolic one as a reaction to the authoritarian and arbitrary movement that founds a theatrical society (not as language) and addicted in reality shows that are not only broadcasted on Globo Tele-vision but also those ones that exist through the apparatus incorporated to its existence. apparatus is a terminology, as Agamben elucidate to us, that emerge from the ’70s on Foucault’s work and it refers to the concept of positivity in Hegel:

in a certain sense, positivity is considered by Hegel as an obstacle to human freedom, and as such, it is condemned [...] it is the name that, accordingly Hyppolite, the young Hegel gives to the historical element, with all its load of rules, rites, and institutions imposed on individuals by an external power [...] (AGAMBEN, 2009, p. 10)

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<sup>2</sup> Empathy is understood as a feeling (typical of its etymology – “páthos”) of sharing (of handling together) emotions of the Other in his/her/them intimacy – joy, pain, anguish, etc. besides a generic feeling, empathy is considered as a corporal act that modifies cognitive reality of who experiences it, changing his/her/them way of acting.

<sup>3</sup> Quote from the documentary ZeitGeist.

<sup>4</sup> integrated world capitalism is an expression created by Félix Guattari, used in many of his works.

<sup>5</sup> In Brazil, this word refers to a Brazilian specific dish, in which meat, chicken or fish is cooked with cassava flour, producing a thick and creamy broth. It is part of a popular saying “Farinha pouca, meu pirão primeiro”, which means that, if there is not enough amount of cassava flour for everyone, people should be concerned about getting their “pirão” first, without worrying if the others will also be able to eat. (Translator’s Note, [T. N.]



in general terms, the concept of apparatus is a technology of power. it is a compilation, like a network of relationships, of processes that engender the structures of subjectivity and its indissociable bond with institutional systems of power.

the importance of referring to the Foucaultian understanding and proposal of the term apparatus is fundamental to comprehend how it is used in this manifesto. Agamben will trace a brief historicity of its emergence and conceptual uses similar<sup>6</sup> to Foucault's definition about apparatus;

For Agamben, there is something common between apparatus and other philosophical categories that, originated from Christian theology, correspond to a disposition, a governability of the world, "a set of praxis, knowledge, measures, institutions whose objective is to administrate, rule, control, and guide behaviors, gestures, and thoughts of men in a sense supposedly useful" (AGAMBEN, 2009, p. 12). the relevance of terminology in one's work is reiterated here because the use of the concept at issue is in line with the way this has been articulated. I observe that there are attempts of neutralizing the significances of terms that call into question or present the life organization system [always remembering that this network is diffuse, the global link being the network itself].

Agamben says that apparatus is a 'universal', a kind of classification that Foucault rejects. what is interesting is to comprehend that the concept is a universal for it composes (as praxis) the structuration of the globalized world; and the criticism, not only from Foucault but also from Black feminism, is against a universal subject.

we know that power is constituted as a relation and its unfoldings do not only belong to a horizon of repression; however, the character of regulation/administration is the most adequate to characterized the notion that is proposed here of 'the mind as apparatus of control'. Foucault pointed out, in *The Microphysics of Power*: apparatuses of power sustain an organization of life/world, and, for me, the characterization of the apparatus of control is crucial for understanding the coercive character of this apparatus developed here.

**“Were they aware of the subordinate, domineering, and unbearable character of this vigilance? Or did they accept it as natural? In short, were there revolts against the gaze?”**

- question of Michelle Perrot to Michel Foucault

in 'The gaze of power' [*The Microphysics of Power*]

**“In the context of contemporary colonial domination, surveillance is both outwardly and inwardly oriented. The eye acts as a weapon.”**

Achille Mbembe, in *Necropolitics*

if I say:

the seduction for this technology currently composes the majority of bodies in a clear and e(-)vident<sup>7</sup> way, what do you see?

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<sup>6</sup> The described plurivocity of the neighborhood of a concept, once "a concept can have many neighboring concepts", as Deleuze and Guattari propose in "What is Philosophy?" (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1992, p. 119).

<sup>7</sup> In Portuguese, "evident" is "evidente". If we erase the letter "e" in the beginning, we have a different word in Portuguese: "vidente", which means "seer", a person who can see what the future holds. By using the hyphen, the author brings together the idea of evidence and clairvoyance. [T.N.]

Estamira Gomes de Sousa (who had part of her life and reflections recorded in the documentary *Estamira* – Marcos Prado, 2005) was a Black woman who lived for several years in Jardim Gramacho's landfill site, in the city of Rio de Janeiro. she was diagnosed with schizophrenia and chronic psychosis, and would refer to this seduction as a spell. she repeats sometimes that humanity has been bewitched, and phrases like “they blinded the brain, the blood recorder of yours” and “have you seen the recorder of thought?”. when the spell is synonymous with fascination, inebriation, and numbness, this term makes a lot of sense, as well as many of her speeches, which demonstrate a comprehensive philosophical attitude and a remarkable feature of a critique about the consumer society's modes of existence and the current social structure. it is important to stress that Estamira is not present in this text as an example of contestation of the current order but as a compositive function for the creation of the notion the mind as apparatus of control.

Foucault points out that in disciplinary society, prison, family, and school were notorious apparatuses in the compositive functions of this society. he suggests a transition from a disciplinary society to a society of control. If it not like those disciplinary apparatuses do not exist nowadays, but, as Deleuze tells us,

[...] Foucault agrees with Burroughs when the latter announces that our future will be more a controlled future than a disciplinary one. What is at issue it is not knowing if it is better or worse. Because we also appeal to productions of subjectivity capable of resisting this new domination, quite different from the ones that were exercised against the disciplines. A new light, new utterances, new potency, new forms of subjectivation? (Deleuze, 1990, p. 159)

Therefore, updating these ideas, I point out that thought and its faculties - as imagination, for example, which we can call “mind” -, were turned into an apparatus of control. I make some problematization about what this engineering of power involves.

**we would be in rebellion and towards our present, against the current constitutions of organization of the social conjuncture in which we live, thus contributing to the transformation of what we understand as an authoritarian and domineering process over our bodies.**

**COURAGE IS LOOSE TONGUE  
AND SOLUTION  
Elza Soares**

this social structure promotes “judges” of one's life; actors who play social roles based on their interests and of whom “sponsors” them. the representation in/of life ends up “spinning around the or

bit” of those who assume the denial as the potency of life and creation. we are tired of the condition of being Truman in the show of our lives because it is known that we would not play any other role since we fully refuse the intrinsic sadism to this production of reality. and this makes us sick and then marks thousands of diagnoses on our bodies – remnants of somatic and psychosocial disorders.

what can characterize the experience (and advantage) of the maladjusted people as an ethical of existence is an **expression** that produces a break in the interdict, which goes beyond imposed limits to that expression. the characteristic of unyieldedness and insubordination mainly appears in the public presentation and denunciation of the established order of its time. **insurrectionary** enunciation: the madness that we understand and claim here subverts the imperative, promotes movements that expose violations of our **rights**<sup>8</sup> and the oppressor character of the apparatus and denaturalize it

I have much bad thought  
But it is not me that makes bad thought  
I don't know who is  
But it is not me that makes bad thought  
Stella do Patrocínio

our life becomes exposed by our condition...

and we refuse surveillance, control, politics of production of fear, and silencing.

[many of us] were subjected to processes of psychological **induction and interference** [“sometimes it is good to strongly shake the imagination of an alienated and imprint on him/her/them a feeling of terror” (FOUCAULT, 1972, p. 88)] which provoke disorganization and nonconformity among our thoughts and actions. The thought became unbalanced and nonlinear in logical terms (maybe an unconscious protest against the established order<sup>10</sup>) – consequence of traumas and their sequelae, adding social markers of difference that compose our structure of vulnerability to this disorder.

we are far from making a dissociation between body and mind; on the contrary, we recognize the anguish produced, in real-time, by these unbalanced thoughts produced by INTERFERENCE, INDUCTION, MANIPULATION AND TRANSFERENCE. we are tired of feeling guilty about that. our guilt is caused by being aware that other people are in correspondence with our unbalanced thought produced by INTERFERENCE, INDUCTION, MANIPULATION AND TRANSFERENCE.

particularly, this unbalanced process has been established in my experience since my discovery of apparatus and its mode of action. we are exhausted of the common social malaise that command and surveillance

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<sup>8</sup> Basis rights as the “right to one’s own body” and “right to intimacy”, included among other rights of the citizen in the Brazilian Civil Code and the Federal Constitution.

<sup>9</sup> Stella do Patrocínio was a Brazilian black woman who was caught on the street and taken by force to a Psychiatric Center in Rio de Janeiro. Her speech (her creation is entirely oral), as she usually calls her work, and her power of enunciation, was recorded in audio by Carla Guagliardi and later published in a book formatted as poetry by the philosopher Viviane Mosé. Stella tells forcefully how she had no ‘psychic illness’ and was systematically ill. Her recordings deal with their issues through metaphors and uses of language in a very peculiar way and very rich and powerful poetic quality. This perception of Stella present in these sentences are lucid examples produced by EXAMPLES OF INTERFERENCE, INDUCTION, MANIPULATION AND TRANSFERENCE.

<sup>10</sup> It is a reference to Deleuze’s phrase in Dialogues: “We do not address those who think that psychoanalysis is doing well and has a fair vision of the unconscious [...] We address to the unconscious that protests. We seek allies. We need allies.”

provoke in our bodies, and we shout out loud a “FUCK IT!”: the thought is our private sphere, and if we don’t have the choice of our mind as means of communication, if imposition is visible, we don’t agree with that and that’s it. our aggressiveness is directed at institutions that police and castrate our bodies’ freedom and experimentation. we suffer punishment for our actions and transgressive existence, but what would become of society if everyone was limited to homogeneous and totalitarian obedience and resignation, especially in the face of the social composition of inequality of rights and reproduction of domineering heritages in a softer way – but softer for who?

the history of those who have an experience similar to ours and fight for our common is silenced, made invisible, and bloodstained; bodies on the sidelines, thrown into the void of peremptory ships, poverty, prison (for the crime of deviating from reason), physical violence, loneliness, depression, anxiety, suicide, electric shocks, lobotomy, insane asylums, psychiatric hospitals.

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forgotten tears, bodies without memory:

I have seen them naked, covered by rags, having only a bit of straw to shelter themselves from the cold humidity of the floor where they laid. I have seen them badly fed, without air to breathe, without water to quench their thirst, and without the things more necessary in life. I have seen them handed over to true jailers and abandoned to brutal surveillance. I have seen them in narrow, dirty, and infected spaces, without air, light, imprisoned in places in which one’s would hesitate to lock up ferocious animals, and that the government’s luxury maintains at a great capital expense. (FOUCAULT, 1972, p. 49)

the description above was made by Jean-Étienne Esquirol

it is from **1839**

I ask you to stop what you are doing now

and watch the documentary **IN THE NAME OF REASON**

(available on youtube)

a documentary from **1979**, directed by Helvécio Ratton

about **Brazilian** Psychiatric Hospital of Barbacena (known as “**Colônia**”)

[**compare the images, reflect on the times**]

to write about the medicalization of existence, I write from the place of a person medicalized, psychiatrized, diagnosed by psychopathology with bipolar disorder and acute psychosis.

my focus here is on the excessive medicalization that occurs during psychiatric internment, precisely in my experience, and its subjective logics of domestication and docilization of the body, like the feeling of being immersed in the effects of strong medicines that cause a kind of anesthetization of the body and modify perception, creating a process of medication slowness. alongside confinement, medicalization operates toward the withdrawal of the power of action, as well as the vitality of sick people by drastically changing their state and incarcerating life in a physical and subjective sphere.



## **The spaces of psychiatric internment are, above all, prisons. And I have been there three times.**

I cried before writing about that, I cry writing... If I could wet the computer screen with that saltwater that flows like a river without shame in this text... and tears that run down my face were the movement that accompanied me during my moments of psychiatric internment and loneliness. **the logic of internment acts on feeling.** it does not have an objective sense for it is has an objective of punishment; it is the restraint of unconscious rebellion, of inadequacy to a reality that instills fear as a penalty to revolt, of social maladjustment. it is the castration of any mode of expression.

the psychiatric internment extremely inhibits the potency of life, and in my view, aims to make the body docile, obedient, subservient to external and internal power relations. I remember, at the end of my stay, that I would beg my family and doctors in tears to not to be there anymore; and the gesture of the body is accepting, accepting everything to no longer be in that situation. being obedient...

a docilized body still under the effects of medicines that contribute to the feeling of impotence, domestication. It is like the body wanted to act, but the effect of medical drugs, in addition to the force of confinement, takes away its vitality.

Foucault describes the spaces of internment as houses of correction. and what would be destined to be corrected? the behavior. the deviation from normative conduct, the transgression, the rebellion, the non-conformity, the questioning and revolutionary potential: the free & libertarian spirit. it's up to the family or to the closest circle of friends to lead the subject to the internment. at the mercy of criteria and motivations of others, our bodies are thrown into isolation against our desire. due to a change of the "normal" state of a person, she/he/them is sentenced to a closed place, without contact with the exterior world. in these moments, we are conditioned to a situation because we experiment other intensities through our bodies...

[...]

'a bird's heart at the bottom of a captivity', says the song "Yáyá Masmemba" (Roberto Mendes's composition), metaphorizing a feeling, referring to the body inside the holds of slave ships. and this is the image that I rescue to allude to the body imprisoned in a minimal space.

and bodies subjected to torture methods...

I was tied to the bed without any possibility of being aggressive against others or me. this classic element of torture is determined without any restriction or prudence. this works according to whoever commands wants.

the method used in the Classical Age is still reproduced nowadays. the heritage of European medicine in mental illness treatment leaves its traces in Brazil, from the past to the present:

[...] They are normally chained to walls and beds. In Bethleem, the crazy agitated women were chained by their ankles to a wall of a large gallery and they wore only a burel garment. In another hospital, in Bethnal Green, a woman was subjected to a violent crisis of excitement: she was then placed in a pigsty, with their feet and hands tied. After the crisis ends, she was tied to the bed. (FOUCAULT, 1972, p. 149)

## Conclusions

The excessive medicalization during psychiatric internment and the logic of incarceration symbolizes what the hegemonic system of power wants to reproduce in deviant/dissident and socially vulnerable bodies. The apparatus of control that rules contemporary society through mental processes promotes deals and social contracts to maintain the idea of capitalism as ad infinitum: we refuse and disrupt this worldview with our existence. Our bodies that protest against this logic sustain positions that destabilize the contemporary social structure, neoliberalism, and its effects. The perceptions of the experience of madness promote disruptive states that, socially, are invisibilized, blamed, and interdicted. By using self-ethnography in this writing, in which one's provokes critical reflections from her/his/them experience and the social group to which he/she/they belong: we shout against the established order and strengthen the insurgency in the burning desire and option of choosing, of having the right to free thinking as part of the social organism.

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A COROA DO BIG BROTHER: APROPRIAÇÃO À SERVIÇO DO CAPITAL, FETICHIZAÇÃO DA VIGILÂNCIA E O SOFRIMENTO COMO LUCRO by Yuri Torres Paes Tripodi no site do Instituto HUMANIDADE, DIREITOS E DEMOCRACIA [IHUDD]. Link: <https://www.ihudd.org/blog/1/post/a-coroa-do-big-brother-apropriacao-a-servico-do-capital-fetichizacao-da-vigilancia-e-o-sofrimento-como-lucro-45> Accessed in 11/21/2021.

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TO SEE ALL VIDEOS OF YURI TORRES PAES TRIPODI ACCESS: [www.youtube.com/yuritripodi](http://www.youtube.com/yuritripodi)

WE DON'T NEED NO THOUGHT CONTROL | 'We won't stop until Assange is free' | Pink Floyd's Roger Waters to RT on US extradition appeal. Link: <https://youtu.be/yE9FiEMnYME> Accessed in 11/21/2021.



Yuri Torres Paes Tripodi is an artist of trans-languages, a trans non-binary person (genderfluid) racialized, northeastern, mad as an ethical of existence, and has mental disorders. She is a candomblecista [member of Candomble, an Afro-Brazilian religion], and intersects artistic languages in her creative process. Life as libertarian resistance. Insurrectionary and unsubmissive. Flame burning. She recently released her book [\*O corpo da loucura na contemporaneidade: um manifesto autoetnográfico\*](#) (*The Body of Madness in the Contemporaneity: a Self-Ethnography Manifesto - available only in Portuguese*), which can be purchased in Amazon.

