

**“But I Want the Truth!” The Legacy of Martial Gueroult in São Paulo
Philosophy, 1935-2018**

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Introduction: The Horizon of Praxis

The wall between philosophy and praxis was shuddering. It seemed about to fall at any moment. Marxism, appointed and determined by history to synthesize the two, had unleashed the “natural intelligence of the people,” as Fidel Castro put it in June 1961 to a cohort of new literates (Castro 1961). Centuries before, the frontiers of Western knowledge had been strained to the breaking point with the discovery of the New World. Now the New World was going to push the limits of experience and convention for European leftists. The revolution was on, beginning in Cuba, and members of the European left were forced to scramble for a last-minute seat. Among those in the scrum were Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, disillusioned with a dragging Algerian war. Personally invited by Castro to witness the gains of a revolution less than a year old, the pair touched down in Havana during Carnival in 1960 and were greeted personally by Che Guevara. Sartre felt that all his revolutionary hopes had been fulfilled during the visit. For the Cubans, he wrote, “it is not the principles that count” (Sartre 1961, 97). Ideology was for the first time developing organically from praxis. In the flurry of revolution, there was “not a minute for theory, not an action that is not based on experience” (Sartre 1961, 97).

Sartre's next stop was Brazil. In Araraquara he told a Brazilian welcoming committee that “praxis is the origin of the dialectic” (Sartre 2009, 100) between extrinsic reality and unmediated consciousness. Yet his Brazilian hosts were not revolutionaries but academics: the sociologist Fernando Henrique Cardoso; Bento Prado and José Arthur Giannotti, philosophers; and Roberto Schwarz, a literary critic. These were tenured professors at the elite University of São Paulo. The interdisciplinary cohort awaiting Sartre at the airport had met twice a month since 1958 as the “Marx Seminar,” a working group on *Capital* that would attract some posthumous notoriety for its role in popularizing dependency theory (Chilcote 2014, 141). Four years later, Michel Foucault, on the first of a series of visits to Brazil, presented chapters at USP of what was to become *Les Mots et les Choses (The Order of Things)* (Liudvik 2014). His reception was cooler than Sartre's. USP philosophers, trained in a rigorous systematic approach to philosophy, considered his deconstructive method illogical and scattershot. Giannotti, primarily a philosopher of logic, remembers telling Foucault that he was no philosopher and had better stick to history (Parro and Lima da Silva 2017, 208). Many French would have agreed with Giannotti. Like Sartre, who had never pursued an academic career, Foucault was not heavily embedded in French academic philosophy, where Brazilian intellectual loyalties still lay (Chaplin 2007, 340). As Carlos Fraenkel has put it, USP scholars dedicated themselves to close reading of the classics, while “a living philosopher like Sartre, by contrast, was dismissed as frivolous [. . .] *L'Être et le Néant* was first translated into Portuguese not by a scholar, but by journalist Paulo Perdigão.” (Fraenkel 2016, 87). Except in the articles published by later generations of USP graduate students, very little historical mention is made of the Sartre and Foucault visits from the perspective of their highly trained Brazilian philosopher hosts. Concurrently, historical coverage of the Marx Seminar tends to focus on the more famous members of USP's sociology department (see Chilcote 2014), including future president Fernando Henrique Cardoso, whose penchant for autobiography has allowed him to assert a monopoly on 1960s USP history in English.

On the other hand, the “vital” Brazil that tantalized Sartre and Beauvoir, popularized also by Claude Lévi-Strauss's quixotic memoir *Tristes Tropiques*, also taints accounts of Franco-Brazilian philosophical exchange at USP (see Lévi-Strauss 1974). Roberto Schwarz's account of “misplaced ideas,” in which grim economic realities made liberal universalism impracticable in Brazil (Schwarz 1992, 22), has encouraged Brazil scholars to imagine an unbridgeable philosophical chasm between European and

Brazilian academic departments.¹ USP, and particularly its department of philosophy, has been marked since its inception by an ambivalent cosmopolitanism. Furthermore, USP philosophers, who did not achieve independence (i.e., full professorships) from their French mentors until the early 1950s, had to make their peace with the international nature of their discipline and with the fact that most of the debates in which they were qualified to participate were thoroughly Francocentric.

This article attempts to correct the myth of Brazil as the “sad tropics” in which European ideas are inevitably “misplaced.” Such a Brazil would be ‘too particular’ to produce substantive contributions to universal thought or to global academic discourse. The particularity of USP philosophy is better understood as a Francophone orientation and training. However, USP philosophers did not follow identical lines of investigation to those of their French peers. They inherited from a small cohort of French philosophers a set of intellectual tools first developed in France, then repurposed these tools to fit their personal academic interests. This article examines how these pedagogical tools were first institutionalized at USP, and how an early cohort of USP philosophers interpreted and reinterpreted them during the second half of the twentieth century, not only in their academic work but also in extracurricular endeavors. The protagonists of the cohort in this essay, José Arthur Giannotti, Paulo Arantes, and Marilena Chauí, among the most senior philosophers at USP, have achieved reputations within Brazilian academic philosophy and beyond it. Despite sharing a similar formation and having been exposed to a common set of philosophical tools developed in midcentury France, these philosophers have diverged widely in their interpretations of this shared experience and of the meaning of their French training.

While this article also deals with the department’s experience of the past century of Brazilian history, it does not treat these events as a dominant cause of USP’s intellectual turns. Transatlantic philosophical debates, some jarred forward by global events like the 1968 student movements, are the primary context in which I interpret intellectual developments at USP. The published work and other intellectual output of Giannotti, Arantes, and Chauí constitute the main corpus of primary sources. Other sources include interviews with these faculty members by this author and others, university dossiers and curricula, secret police dossiers, and the departmental journal.

¹ For example, see Elizabeth Kutesko, *Fashioning Brazil* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018); Stephen Hart, *The Cambridge Companion to Latin American Poetry* (Cambridge, Cambridge; 2018); Teresa Caldeira, *City of Walls* (Berkeley: California, 2000), and the numerous works which attempt to transplant Schwarz’s methodology to other postcolonial contexts.

French intellectual developments also shaped the department’s evolution. I treat relevant philosophical debates as the carefully considered work of professionals, French and Brazilian, speaking a common philosophical language and sharing at least some training; conversely, I avoid analyses which foreground Brazil’s subaltern economic condition.

The Creation of USP and the Development of the Method

French philosophical influence in Brazil was present almost from the first days of colonization. In 1934, when USP was founded, the most recent wave of influence had been the century of positivism, which had begun with Auguste Comte’s rise to fame in the 1830s. Traces of positivism, and more importantly of the desire of members of the burgeoning São Paulo middle class to assert themselves as educated cosmopolitans, lingered in the educational demands of the 1932 Paulista uprising, and of the immediately subsequent “Manifesto of the Pioneers of the New Education,” drafted largely by the prominent liberal Fernando de Azevedo, which would play a crucial role in chartering USP. After the suppression of the uprising, the Paulista ruling class and the Vargas ruling class subsequently underwent a process of assimilation under the federally appointed governor Armando de Salles Oliveira, which allowed Azevedo, along with the journalist Julio de Mesquita, to present his charter for a university to Oliveira. In 1934, Oliveira responded by signing Decree 6283, consolidating the University of São Paulo from the preexisting Faculty of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters and a nearby polytechnic (Celeste Filho 2009, 189). The decree authorizing USP’s creation dedicates it to “the progress of science” and “training specialists in all areas of culture” (Oliveira 1934). The *modus vivendi* between the humanities and the natural sciences outlined in the USP charter represented a conscious attempt at democratizing the elite liberal positivism that had dominated the Old Republic, with the most recent wave of primarily working-class European immigrants as the main beneficiaries (Costa de Moraes 2012, 43). Azevedo believed that the creation of a researcher class would lead to the mass discovery of empirical data on Brazil’s domestic problems and relative weakness on the world stage, which in turn would organically generate remedies (Poyer 2007, 26-30).

Simultaneously, Georges Dumas, a prominent French positivist, social scientist, and psychologist, had taken an interest in Brazilian education. After five trips to Brazil between 1908 and 1925, culminating in the creation of a Franco-Brazilian institute in São Paulo (Bandeira de Meló 1682-9), Dumas inaugurated the Brazilian

Studies department of the Sorbonne in 1927. From Paris, beginning in early 1934, he scouted recent Ph.D. graduates for posts at USP (Natali 1978), including fellow Comteans like Paul Arrousse-Bastide. Other early hires, like the Kantian Jean Maugué in philosophy and the social scientists Fernand Braudel and Claude Lévi-Strauss, had less in common with their patron. There was a sense that members of the French mission had no less profound a duty than to “form a new elite,” as Lévi-Strauss put it, congruent with Azevedo’s researcher class (Lévi-Strauss 1992, 15). When Lévi-Strauss and Maugué arrived in São Paulo in 1934, a few months after the others, they found “no buildings and no students” (Natali 1978). USP only existed on paper. Maugué, though barely into his thirties, used his boundless reserves of charisma to buoy the philosophy department through these turbulent first years. Though a Kantian, Maugué drew on the Christian Platonism of his own mentors, Emmanuel Mounier and Étienne Borne (briefly the first holder of Maugué’s post at USP), in his attempts to synthesize form and content in pedagogy (Volant 1985, 163). His film showings and depth of literary knowledge were remembered fondly after his permanent departure in 1943 (Soares Cordeiro 2008, 137).

Maugué was replaced by his Brazilian assistant, João Cruz Costa, a former medical doctor like Dumas (Cruz Costa 1975, 107). Cruz Costa, more literal-minded than Maugué, attracted a small clique with his earthy humor and hangdog Brazilian nationalism. However, his influence was soon overshadowed by that of a French professor who spent only two years at USP (Soares Cordeiro 2008, 15). Martial Gueroult (or Guéroult) was at USP from 1948 to 1950, but his authority at USP shot into significance after the 1953 publication of his *Descartes selon l'ordre des raisons*. This book, published in two parts, hinted at Gueroult’s belief that philosophy as a productive discipline was consummated or, equivalently, dead, and that history of philosophy is the only valid continuation of the older discipline (Guéroult 1984, 18). This would be the version of Gueroult’s thought adopted at USP; in the event, however, the claims of *Descartes* are much more modest. This first version of what became known at USP as the “Gueroultian Method” derives its structural approach to Descartes’s philosophy from Descartes’s own work. Descartes frequently claimed that his own work was systematic, (Gueroult 1984, 5) and that, as Gueroult put it, “everything is so arranged that no truth can be taken away without the whole collapsing” (Gueroult 1984, 5). Descartes also believed in a kind of analytic time resembling stages of a mathematical proof, in which human consciousness, granted as a constant in each individual, could progress from empirical observation to rational-philosophical certainty. For Descartes,

it was the goal of human life to apply this predictable natural reason to every possible practical environmental object; pure mathematics, which Descartes considered a trivial set of puzzles, was expressly forbidden (Gueroult 1984, 281). This is what Descartes called, as Gueroult narrates it, “experience ‘according to the truth,’ meaning experience rectified and disclosed by the linkage of reasons” (Gueroult 1984, 282). Raw experience could be predictably processed into the stages of a quasi-mathematical proof.²

Before attempting the process, however, the good Cartesian was obliged to develop his reason to its highest capacities. “In virtue of the complexity of his nature, man is therefore called upon, in order to realize himself fully as man, to furnish two exactly opposite efforts, the one consisting of liberating himself from the senses in order to arrive at science, and the other consisting in liberating himself from the subjections and habits required by science, in order to rediscover life and to govern it according to true reason” (Gueroult 1985, 218). Descartes considered his *Meditations* to be a written version of this process of deriving rational certainty from external reality. Gueroult continues:

The *Meditations* unfolds in conformity with the rules of a method requiring us to follow the necessary linkage of reasons. Consequently, *it seems it should come under the jurisdiction of that method*,³ whose validity has already been constituted before it. On the other hand, the conclusions to which the *Meditations* leads us would be without force if the validity of that method were not firmly established. But this validity can only be founded by the *Meditations* itself, which constitutes the highest philosophy. From this it appears that the enterprise can only succeed by revealing an ultimate foundation that, once attained, it appears as valid by itself, independently of the process by which it has been attained. (Gueroult 1984, 13)

Therefore, the historian of philosophy can easily follow Descartes’s progression from empirical observation to the mathematical certainty of each philosophical proposition contained in the *Meditations*. He can write them down and explain them just as Descartes would have wanted. Yet there is a contradiction here. Gueroult is not replicating Descartes’s “highest philosophy.” Instead of taking the empirically sensible world as his starting point, he is applying his natural reason to the stages of proof in Descartes’s writing, a decision which does not coincide with the injunction to “rediscover life” found in Descartes’s “highest philosophy.” Gueroult is, far from practicing Descartes’s methods, rather inventing a new kind of philosophical writing: the structural history of

² Some aspects of reality would remain unknowable at the end of this process. But reason would have cordoned these off from the intelligible parts, while the latter would have been subject to the complete process of rational analysis.

³ Emphasis mine—EC.

philosophy. Gueroult, who in the decades leading up to the publication of his *Descartes* had been working on an unpublished but massive theory of everything he called the *Dianoématique*, was surely aware of the leap, and for the rest of his life he would publish other structural histories of philosophy with no explanation whether his method was derived from his new subject philosophers or from Descartes. But it was not until 1957 that Gueroult would expose this general belief in structural history to the reader.

In his 1957 “Logique, architectonique et structures constitutives des systèmes philosophiques” (Gueroult 1957, 19), published in the *Encyclopédie Française*, Guérout identifies the validity of a given philosopher’s oeuvre with its internal consistency. As in science, so in philosophy “any theory is only valid insofar as it is demonstrated” (Gueroult 2007, 235). Philosophies are not true or false: they are more and less coherent, systematizable. Any philosophy that is not systematizable “renounces its status as philosophy and degrades itself into mere opinion” (Gueroult 2007, 236). Each philosopher has private reasons from which the whole system can be derived; “causes outside the internal implication of concepts” have no possible bearing on the system (Gueroult 2007, 237). This defines the task of the historian (who must also be a logician) of philosophy:

Since all philosophies are constituted by combinations of reasons that give them this need and universal validity that make each object an object, it seems legitimate to seek to discover the specific laws of such combinations. In this way, we reach the notion of a *Logic of Philosophy*. (Gueroult 2007, 239)

Since all philosophy is constituted entirely by a combination of pure logic and architectural procedures, put into operation under varying conditions and according to different assumptions, it is only through the analysis of these structures and their intersections that we can apprehend it. Thus, a certain methodology in the history of philosophy is necessitated, in view that this history is conceived as that which gives access to the spiritual realities eternally alive in the great philosophical monuments. This method commands the monographic study, the discovery of the constitutive structures and the combinations that result from them. (Gueroult 2007, 246)

This “method” is what would become USP’s greatly treasured Gueroultian Method. The historian of philosophy picks out the works of a given philosopher’s oeuvre, which he or she considers to be canonical. Within this canon, he or she then picks a certain array of key concepts or terms, what Gueroult likes to call “reasons,” and traces their development through the oeuvre as though tracing the steps of a mathematical proof. As Christophe Giolito has remarked, Gueroult knew that the

choice of terms and the choice of canon were both arbitrary but cared more that such choices be rationalizable than that they be rational or authoritative (Giolito 2002, 79).

Even Gueroult’s version of Descartes was not systematically coherent, and in the last chapters Gueroult was forced to admit that there were in fact two internally consistent systems operative in Descartes. As Gueroult narrates it, Descartes purported at the outset to speak of “applied mathematical reason,” but was forced to endorse two systems, one empirico-rationalistic and the other in the tradition of “Plato, Plotinus and Saint Augustine” (Gueroult 1985, 229). The second system, assuming a chain of emanations, levels of reality, deriving from God, would obviate the rationalistic system (Gueroult 1985, 229), and so the Cartesian corpus, far from being logically coherent according to the ‘Gueroultian method,’ is in fact “eclectic and syncretic” (Gueroult 1985, 203). Descartes pretends that he has a single system grounded in science but escapes the implications at the last moment by claiming that science is merely a tool God uses to humble man. Had Gueroult recognized these contradictions before starting work on *Descartes According to the Order of Reasons*, he might have had to abandon his claim to have systematized, or rather exposed the systematization of Cartesian thought. Gueroult wriggles out of his failure by filing the emanative model with the natural phenomena Descartes considered to be inaccessible to reason, which must cordon these natural mysteries off from other phenomena: in Descartes’s words, reason describes (or rather circumscribes) even that which is beyond itself (Gueroult 1985, 237). Gueroult presumes that the same applies to theology. The reader will recognize this account of Descartes as impossibly vague, a simple reproduction of Descartes’s own fudgings. According to Giolito, this vagueness persisted in Gueroult’s later structural histories. Real inconsistencies in philosophical bodies of work mean that Gueroult’s commentary is marred by a “too-prudent generality” (Giolito 2002, 92) or a reiteration of subject pieces lacking analysis.

Although the Descartes book quickly attained near-biblical status at USP, Gueroult would never find equivalent fame in France, although Deleuze, Foucault, Bourdieu, and even Merleau-Ponty would cite him as an influence. Gueroult took after his mentor Émile Bréhier, who, in opposition to his generation’s fascination with philosophers’ biography and context—a movement headed by Ferdinand Alquié—had treated philosophical systems as transcendent but nonnormative, their worth determined only by logical coherence (Chauí 2015). Closely tied to Gueroult’s hegemony at USP was the reverence simultaneously granted to the Marxist historian of philosophy Victor Goldschmidt, who, although a student of both Bréhier and Gueroult,

published his seminal work, an account of the Platonic dialogues, before Gueroult's Descartes book (Goldschmidt 1947).⁴ Like the latter, Goldschmidt's *Dialogues* unmask its philosophical subject as inextricably bound to predictable rules of textual structure:

The solidarity indicated between method and doctrine is, in my opinion, the point that would be most important to deepen. Perhaps, then, we would end up with a complete reversal of the hierarchy commonly established between these two notions, in such a way, in particular, that a comparison between two systems would come to attach priority to the methods, to "common structures," rather than to points of doctrine (to dogmata, taken in isolation and promoted to a false autonomy), by which it could be that the true understanding of doctrines was granted in addition. (Goldschmidt 1947, xxvii)

This is not an exact recapitulation of Gueroult: the book is dedicated to Bréhier, and Goldschmidt would always consider himself Bréhier's student rather than Gueroult's.⁵ One can already see Goldschmidt's later doubts about Gueroult's approach to philosophical canon when he pointedly mentions that Socrates did not write (Goldschmidt 1947, xxvi). USP philosophers, however, were unaware of the (then still minor) disputes between their two idols. When Goldschmidt published a kind of manifesto of philosophical structuralism, it was regarded at USP as a capstone to the work of these two heroes of the French academy.

In 1953, Goldschmidt published "Historical and Logical Time in the Interpretation of Philosophical Systems," which would soon become a USP catechism. Goldschmidt proposes two fundamentally incompatible methods for approaching philosophy, the dogmatic and the genetic. Rejecting the contextualizing, historicizing impulses of the genetic method, implicitly associated with the reviled Alquié, Goldschmidt spends much of the article praising the dogmatic method for its presumption of the "indissoluble unity" of a philosopher's oeuvre (Goldschmidt 1953, 9). The diachronic element of the oeuvre, the sequence of publication and development of doctrine, for the practitioner of the dogmatic method becomes mere stages of a mathematical proof, unfolding in what Goldschmidt calls "logical time" (Goldschmidt 1953, 8). As in Gueroult's *Descartes*, the main reference and piece of evidence for Goldschmidt's claims about philosophy in general is the structure of Descartes's body of work. Goldschmidt argues that Descartes was fully aware of the pace at which his readers would come to understand his theses, structuring them according to this logical

⁴ Gueroult had been at work on the *Dianoématique*. See above.

⁵ Gueroult was never Goldschmidt's professor, but was on his dissertation committee.

time. Goldschmidt’s version of the “mathematical proof” model has something of rhetoric and personal choice about it, unlike Gueroult’s:

. . . all philosophy is a totality in which theses and movements are indissolubly joined. These movements, taking place in a logical time, imply memory and prediction; even if they appear as ruptures, they are made knowingly; they are decisions (“battles”, said Descartes); what, at the same time, measures the coherence of a system and its agreement with the real, is not the principle of non-contradiction, but philosophical responsibility. (Goldschmidt 1953, 13)

Also, unlike Gueroult, Goldschmidt is willing explicitly to call what he does history of philosophy. He is also willing to admit that the historian of philosophy largely recapitulates the corpus of the subject philosopher: “But the historian is not, in the first place, a critic, a doctor, a personal confessor or director of conscience; it is he who must accept direction, and this, by consenting to place himself in this logical time, whose initiative belongs to the philosopher” (Goldschmidt 1953, 13).

Despite this somewhat bland statement of resignation, Goldschmidt’s contribution was thought, at USP, to be a revolution in philosophy, a magic skeleton key capable of unlocking the whole discipline for aspiring philosophical professionals in Brazil. The philosophical skeptic Oswaldo Porchat (1933-2017), Goldschmidt’s student and later Teixeira’s, was among the most vocal evangelists for Goldschmidt’s version of the method (Krause and Videira 2011, 17). A colleague, Paulo Arantes, would later write that Porchat’s fervor for the Method took on near-religious overtones. Porchat began to believe in a “final judgment” which would be the last horizon of all human reason (Arantes 1994, 37). In preparation for this apocalypse, modern philosopher-historians had, in Porchat’s view, the duty of taking on the ascetic “renunciation” of avoiding normativity (Arantes 1994, 40).⁶ Gilles-Gaston Granger (1920-2016), also Guéroult’s student and also an historian of philosophy, did much to popularize the work of both Gueroult and Goldschmidt, his tenure at USP stretching from Goldschmidt’s publication of the *Dialogues* to that of Gueroult’s *Descartes*. Another early Gueroult popularizer was department head Lívio Teixeira, who had been Gueroult’s aptest pupil during the French philosopher’s brief Brazilian stint (Krause and Videira 2011, 15).

⁶ This image of the Method as an ascetic, monastic discipline has its origin in Gueroult himself. Gueroult, in the *Descartes* book, compared Descartes’s rationalism to “religious life,” which he characterized as a “liberation of pure mind, and pure spiritual love, [. . .] a voluntary reincarnation, in [the same] body, of this pure mind and love, under the form of passion” (Gueroult 1953, 219).

In France, Gueroult tended to be understood as an overreaction to Ferdinand Alquié's contextualism. Contextualists, or so Gueroult feared, wished to provincialize all existing philosophy by reducing it to a kind of Heraclitan effluence generated by shifting biographical context (Knox 2011, 361-90). Claims of continuity in philosophy were, in this model, mere symptoms of bourgeois ideology on the part of the historian of philosophy. Gueroult's most significant, and most modest point may simply have been to propose that continuity within a single philosopher's oeuvre exists (Knox 2011, 361-90). His readers at USP lacked this context and some tended to see Gueroult as a solitary genius, the first to demonstrate a great truth about the nature of philosophy.

USP philosophers also sympathized with the way in which Gueroult had retained a transcendental canon whilst rejecting metaphysics. Gueroult, as a rationalist, tended to see Alquié's antirationalism as a form of mysticism more or less equivalent to religion. In the Brazil of the early twentieth century there was an analogous tendency to believe in a Manichaean opposition between scientific reason and perverse metaphysics. This was especially true in São Paulo, where the influential modernist thinker Sérgio Milliet had in 1938 defined the great struggle of the century as one between tellurism, which Milliet considered interchangeable with religion, and a scientific pragmatism associated with Marxism (Mota 1994, 138-142). At USP, this would develop into a conflation of metaphysics and nationalism especially after the 1954 foundation of the Superior Institute for Brazilian Studies (ISEB) in Rio (Bresser-Pereira 2005, 206-7). In the early 1960s, this think tank infuriated USP academics by presenting itself as the face of a kind of romantic nationalism or political theology, although it was not taken seriously in other academic or political circles (Ioris 2015, 117-128). USP philosophers retained their fixation on dismantling ISEBian obscurantism long after its suppression in 1964 (Bresser-Pereira 2009, 320). This fit well with their tendency to conflate the Gueroultian suspicion of metaphysics with their own suspicion of the nationalistic governments that had dominated Brazil from Vargas's *Estado Novo* onwards, which in turn was largely impelled by the habit of these governments of conflating their national-romantic ideology with official Catholicism.

Once catechized in the Gueroultian Method, USP philosophers had to produce academic work of their own. In those years, this meant picking a philosopher to submit to the Method. Neither Gueroult nor Goldschmidt offered any guidelines for this process. At USP, the choice of philosopher often fell along class lines, although nearby institutions with more money tended to stereotype USP as the stomping ground of the radically materialist lower middle class (Soares Rodrigues 2012, 14). Most Brazilian USP

students were in fact the descendants of recent immigrants and most did have parents in the civil service, but there were exceptions. One such oddity was Bento Prado, a student of Lívio Teixeira and Gilles-Gaston Granger, a fallen aristocrat with an expansive interest in phenomenology, literature, language, and psychoanalysis despite an initial political commitment to Stalinism (Krause and Videira 2011, 17). Prado’s personal nemesis was José Arthur Giannotti, a working-class alumnus of a nearby technical school (Soares Rodrigues 2012, 110). The two often squabbled over science. Giannotti thought it the only subject worth studying and Prado found it repulsive (Soares Rodrigues 2011, 99). Prado may have felt isolated at USP in the early 1960s. French philosophers interested in phenomenology, Platonism, literature, psychoanalysis, theology or anything smacking of the metaphysical (typically the domain of the Sorbonne in contrast to the more materialist ENS) did not often take jobs in Brazil.

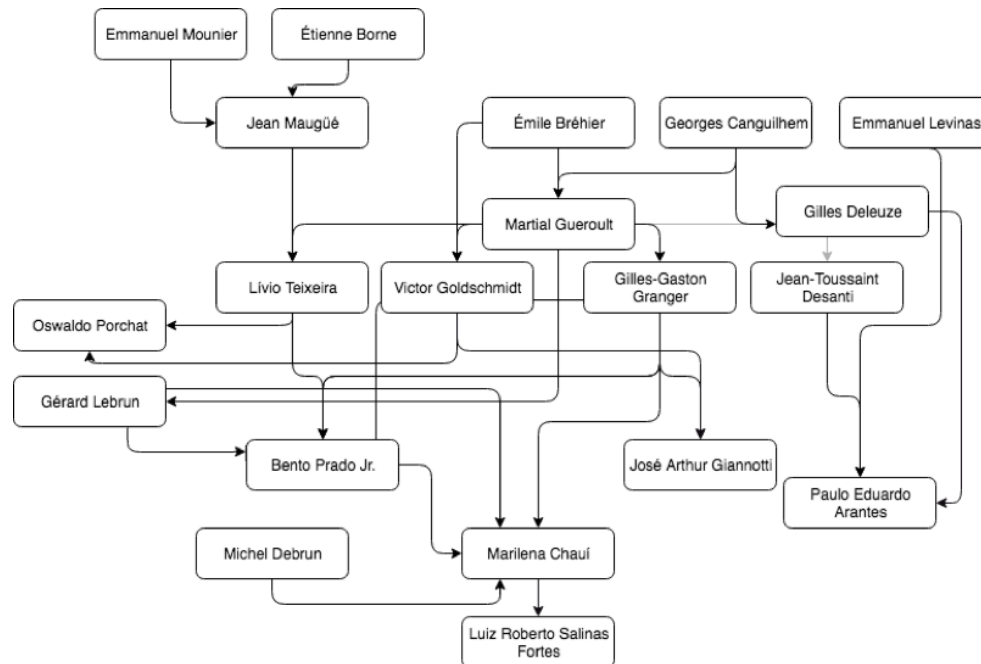


Figure 1. Black arrows point from academic director or professor to student. Grey arrows indicate indirect influence (collaborative work, etc.).

Giannotti: The Good Structuralist

Goldschmidt’s most prominent Brazilian student, however, was Giannotti (b. 1930), who also worked closely with Granger on both sides of the Atlantic. The eldest of the second generation of Brazilian students, Giannotti followed Granger to Rennes in 1957, shortly after the first generation of Brazilian students began to receive full

professorships (Giannotti 1958). Upon his return to Brazil in 1959, Giannotti was granted a post teaching philosophy of logic and received his doctorate for a dissertation on John Stuart Mill (Giannotti 1959). In the spirit of Gueroult, in whose inner circle he had been in France, and following Granger's version of formal logic, Giannotti focused on the contradictions within the Millian corpus, arguing that remnants of psychological mysticism persisted under a veneer of "English empiricism" (Cruz Costa, 1960). In a similar spirit, Giannotti helped found the Marx Seminar in order to encourage his USP colleagues to discard the young, humanistic Marx in favor of the mature, economic one (Rago Filho 2013, 13). Giannotti would later attribute his materialism to a longstanding friendship with João Cruz Costa, who early in his career had launched a crusade against phenomenology, which both men associated with the Hegelian-Crocean progress narratives of the right, in turn also conflated with metaphysics or ontology⁷ (Rago Filho 2013, 4). The stance against metaphysics was not derived from Marxism in either man, although Giannotti was nearly singlehandedly responsible for the creation of the Marx Seminar, inspired by his French experience in Trotskyist reading groups (Rago Filho 2013, 13). Nobody who became involved in the Marx Seminar had ever previously read Marx. In Fernando Henrique Cardoso's words, it was not considered "a requirement for being a leftist" (Bastos 2006, 75-6). Although explicitly founded in the spirit of Gueroult, the Seminar quickly strayed from structural analysis of the Marxian corpus. After economic analysis of Brazilian realities became popular, members began to slip into a romantic nationalism of the left, the context from which dependency theory would emerge. Cardoso claims that even Giannotti slipped with the rest into "regional ontology" (Bastos 2006, 77).⁸

⁷ Giannotti did later become interested in phenomenology as a possible way to systematize the layout of the human mind.

⁸ The original founders of the "Marx Seminar" were Giannotti, Fernando Henrique Cardoso in sociology, and Fernando Novais in history. As indicated above, the Seminar was largely Giannotti's brainchild and his intention was to read Marx's *Capital* according to the Gueroultian 'order of reasons,' with some formal inspiration from the Trotskyist *Socialisme ou Barbarie* reading group led by Claude Lefort which Giannotti had encountered in France. Other professors (Paul Singer, Octavio Ianni, Ruth Cardoso) and students (Bento Prado, Michel Löwy, Roberto Schwarz, Francisco Weffort) from a variety of disciplines soon became involved in the Seminar's fortnightly meetings and subsequent dinners on Maria Antônia Street. The death of Stalin may have precipitated a worldwide interest in reassessing Marx, but the Soviet Union was not a frequent topic for the Brazilian seminar. After 1959 the Cuban Revolution attracted much discussion. The readings soon drifted away from Gueroultian analysis of Marx as Brazil's economic dependency on the global north became the main external reference point. Marx Seminar members published a series of notable works on Brazilian economic reality and its history. Schwarz would later attribute the seminar's fixation on Brazilian reality to a hangover from the developmentalism of Juscelino Kubitschek. At the time of the seminar, it seemed plausible that Brazil's economy could catch up with those of the global north. Giannotti's interest in scientific

Giannotti's attachment to the spirit of the soil was, however, fleeting. During the last years of the Seminar he prepared his most famous work, *Origins of the Labor Dialectic*, for publication. It did not deal in national essences. Half intellectual history, half close reading of Hegel, Feuerbach and Marx, *Origins* continually affirms the power of categorical analysis to identify the true nature of things. Discussing Feuerbach's fixation with the subject-object problem, Giannotti inadvertently reproduces Feuerbach's position, opining that a resolution to the subject-object problem holds the key to resolving alienation. Resolving alienation becomes as central to Giannotti's philosophy as the subject-object problem was to Feuerbach's (Giannotti 1966, 68). For Hegel and for Feuerbach, alienation constituted a nonnegotiable substratum of human existence. Marx's innovation was to posit resistance to alienation as equally fundamental (Giannotti 1966, 139). In Marx, the unity of the human and the natural was possible and this synthesis would end all alienation (Giannotti 1966, 140). Feuerbach's pessimistic version of alienation, which he attributes to religion, does not permit the possibility of this diachronic overcoming.

These discrepancies between Marxian-Hegelian diachronia and the static analysis of Feuerbach leave Giannotti with a dilemma. If the Giannotti of *Origins* identifies himself with Marxism, he will be forced to ask whether science, can be trusted, as it is radically contingent on the unfolding of material-historical processes. But it is also Giannotti's favored engine for resolving alienation. If Giannotti does not ally himself with Marxism, he must grapple with exposing the temporal contingency of a thinker to whom he owes his most significant intellectual debts. Giannotti sees a partial answer in Marx's call for scientific socialism mediated by something strongly resembling sociology. Using Gueroult to improve on this model, Giannotti ventures to deny the

progress merged, for a time, with this optimistic developmentalism, while historians interested in Brazilian progress tended to apply a kind of retroactive optimism to Brazil's slavocrat past, a necessary predecessor to capitalism (Schwarz 1998). Giannotti, who was then working on his John Stuart Mill book, also suggested a close reading of Mill as an economic reference (Goertzel 1999). Of the seminarians, only two, Weffort and Ianni, were active Marxists, and as mentioned above Marx was chosen largely because he had not yet been read at USP. The Seminar has made a mark on historiography for three reasons. The first has already been discussed, which is its decision to host Sartre and Beauvoir in Brazil. The second is that many of its members later became internationally prominent. Cardoso was elected president, while Weffort, Gabriel Bolaffi and Brandão Lopes became his ministers. Paul Singer, Octavio Ianni and several others became famous in a purely academic capacity. The third reason for which the seminar has become internationally notable is its role in the spread of dependency theory in the 1960s and 1970s. Interest in the proto-dependency theories of Marx and Luxembourg grew from the failure of the developmentalism which dominated the latter years of the seminar. This interest later reemerged as fully fledged endorsement of midcentury dependency theory in the academic output of Cardoso, Weffort and others in the early 1970s (Goertzel 1999).

Hegelian assumption in Marx that there is real antagonism between capital and labor. For Giannotti, a real and therefore metaphysical contradiction would “theologize” capital (Giannotti 1966, 80). Instead, Marx is logically describing a kind of verbal game or system produced by capitalism, which would have no necessary relationship to reality. At the crux of *Origins*, Giannotti asserts that logico-empirical criticism, of this sort and also including his own recapitulation of Marx, is the historical engine which exhausts capitalist discourse and therefore capitalism itself, although Giannotti denies the teleological element in his own argument (Giannotti 1966, 80). In this way Giannotti can have his logical-empirical cake and also eat it without the messy intrusion of the apparently insurmountable is-ought question: without metaphysics or diachronia, what is the point of logico-empirical criticism?

If ISEB had kept USP philosophers on their toes combating nationalism, the 1964 military coup raised much more severe concerns. Between 1968 and 1969, all but five professors were quietly retired in a purge that extended across humanities departments at USP. Giannotti, fired for his brief and disastrous flirtation with the USP student movement, was not required to leave the country, but was able, with help from the Ford Foundation, to rework the Marx Seminar into an independent think tank, CEBRAP (Giannotti 2007). Soon Giannotti was able to recruit most of the other forcibly retired professors into CEBRAP. During his exile from USP, which would last thirteen years, Giannotti began to contribute to the USP departmental journal, *Discurso*, inaugurated in 1970. The first issue opened with an article on Wittgenstein’s denial of metaphysics by Giannotti’s old mentor, Granger, who laid out the departmental philosophy in a nutshell. “Absolute truth,” Granger writes, “does not exist in philosophy, which can only be coherent or internally consistent,” the Gueroultian position *avant la lettre* (Granger 1970, 40-47). Giannotti’s contribution to the same issue claims, albeit incidentally, that the horizon of all human knowledge is that of a presumably universal “bourgeois consciousness” (Giannotti 1970, 52). A contribution by Bento Prado echoes Giannotti’s formulation, seeking an “unspeakable vitality under piety,” with “metaphysics, egocentrism and humanism” as several superimposed “contradiction games” out of which we must try to reason ourselves, even if we know that we will never finish (Prado 1972, 32). Although *Discurso* was intended as a protest of the dictatorship’s extremely repressive and often contradictory efforts to police free thought in Brazil, USP philosophers were not, as a rule, interested in militancy, with the sole exception of Luiz Salinas Fortes, who would die in the 1980s from the lasting effects of his dictatorship-era torture.

Although he would not resume his teaching position until 1982, Giannotti was able to visit the department, and was present for the drama of Foucault's return in October 1975. Giannotti, like Bento Prado, mistrusted personal charisma and European influence, but even he admitted that French charisma made them very good teachers, nobody more than Foucault (Parro and Lima da Silva 2017, 209). Foucault was personally skittish, however, and disappeared back to France midway through his intended month-long course after the murder of a São Paulo journalist, Vladimir Herzog. Those who had been in the course remember a curious incident slightly prior to Foucault's departure. A student, identified by some as Luis Gonzaga, was experiencing a mental breakdown whose causes were uncertain (Parro and Lima da Silva 2017, 215). Giannotti describes the scene: Foucault was expounding on psychiatry's true character as a set of neo-Inquisitorial practices dedicated to “the extraction of the truth” (Parro and Lima da Silva 2017, 217). Gonzaga burst into the lecture hall clutching a handle of cachaça. “But I want the truth!” he cried (Parro and Lima da Silva 2017, 217). Foucault blanched and left the room for ten minutes, eventually returning to finish the lecture. Other faculty have given different accounts, one describing public masturbation (Parro and Lima da Silva 2017, 214). Interest in Foucault's books continued after he was gone, although Giannotti did not find himself deeply affected by the lectures. Instead, he doubled down on his CEBRAP work, which was interdisciplinary, founded on a principle of accommodating as many forcible retirees as possible, and focused on the concrete problems of São Paulo society. By 1976, despite some steps towards liberalization under Ernesto Geisel, CEBRAP members faced harsh interviews and even bombing attempts (Giannotti 2007). Giannotti was planning to stay at Columbia University permanently in 1982 when his colleagues called him back and insisted he return to USP. After the amnesty of 1979, CEBRAP experienced an identity crisis with no repression to resist; before long it began to convert itself into a training center for college teachers (Giannotti 2007).

Giannotti continued over the course of the 1980s to pursue his two favorite subjects, Marxism and the categorical reduction of existing reality into language games. As a result of the latter interest Giannotti became the first Brazilian translator of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* (Kraus and Videira 2011, 17). In a 1983 essay collection entitled *Work and Reflection*, Giannotti again expresses his discomfort with Marx's reduction of reality into the conflict between capital and labor, which he perceives as arbitrary linguistic categories (Giannotti 1983, 373-4). Yet the ‘reality’ behind the illusory class struggle may be a reality which consists of conflict on every possible scale: by

“theoretical and practical questioning” we may discover the arbitrariness of each conflict narrative by substituting a new one in its place (Giannotti 1983, 294). One could and should, although this is not explicit in Giannotti’s narrative, excavate smaller and smaller subconflicts, each temporarily reified in language by the critic but together potentially infinite in number. This is the most assertive, positive statement of Giannotti’s philosophy, but at other times he proposes more cautious versions of it. In a rare article of the 1990s, Giannotti discusses friendship, which he identifies as perhaps the remnant of a moral, Christian exercise in sublimated eroticism, but which “has ceased to be the moral exercise par excellence” (Giannotti 1993, 194). It is now another “modern game” (Giannotti 1993, 194) to be analyzed by the philosopher/historian of philosophy, to be analyzed in terms of its outermost limits, as a social structure perhaps superficially threatening bourgeois individualism but upon closer examination complicit with it. For the first time in Giannotti’s work, however, there is a tragic sense here in the reduction of human life to the social game. The essay closes with the warning that “we ought at least be aware that this friendship, which we lack so deeply, insofar as it has become divorced from the [classical and medieval] perfection of the self and the other, finally loses its links with the old virtue, and can become a perverse scheme to engulf the Other and annihilate any real sense of alterity” (Giannotti 1993, 195). Here there are two unique features of Giannotti’s language-games which do not previously appear in his philosophy. First, their subsumption of all reality can be historicized; there was a time when objective social reality eclipsed or suppressed them. Second, Giannotti’s negative moral assessment of them is made explicit.

In the 2000s and 2010s, Giannotti continued to pursue the closely linked ideas of the language game and the social game, which he continued to distinguish from extrinsic reality, but with the caveat that external reality can never be captured in language (Giannotti 2012, 69). In a 2012 interview, he stated that he considered several aspects of human life, most prominently capitalism but also all the arts, to be “nonverbal language games”, a frequent theme in his work of the 2000s and 2010s (Giannotti 2012, 70). Despite the arbitrariness of language and these nonverbal languages, they cannot be transcended. The same is true of morality, which despite being wholly arbitrary cannot be exorcised from our human world (Giannotti 2012, 79). Despite often criticizing Foucault in previous interviews, Giannotti in 2006 acknowledged his and Foucault’s shared debt to Gueroult’s old mentor Georges Canguilhem, who tried to be an “historian of truth itself,” in their account of all human intellectual history as vast set of “truth games” (Giannotti 2006, 51). This account of

arbitrariness is opposed to Heidegger’s romantic metaphysics, which perceived human intellectual history as “the disclosures and concealments of being,” somewhat as medieval philosophy regarded evil as the absence of good. In 2018, Giannotti reiterated this polarization between Heidegger and Wittgenstein: Heidegger believing that language subdivides indeterminate being (which Giannotti seems to associate with Heidegger’s predilection for “totalizing mission[s]” and “sacred atmosphere[s]”), Wittgenstein refusing to look outside language but rather descending further and further into grammatical considerations (Giannotti 2018, 480). Giannotti had settled on Wittgenstein as his hero in the 1990s and was reiterating this commitment. The implication in the 2018 interview was that Wittgenstein and Heidegger represented the two great philosophical poles of the twentieth century. By flirting with a totalizing, metaphysical Being, Heidegger had lapsed into fascism. Giannotti, by picking the Wittgensteinian descent into grammatical investigation, was rejecting the authoritarian option.

In the same 2018 interview, Giannotti summarized his lifelong commitment to the Gueroultian synthesis of philosophy and history of philosophy, with all its attendant uncertainties, with cogency:

Currently intellectual life is extremely diversified. Everyone who enters it, if honest with him or herself, chooses an abscondite God, wagering that this deity holds the key to his or her immortality. And so we come to Pascal’s wager: if we can’t prove God’s existence, let us bet on it. The diversity, however, of the great texts of philosophy leads us into polytheism, conjuring a sacred which, dwelling immanently in each text, loses its sacrality. Are we, the historians of philosophy, not the manipulators of this loss of sacrality? Are we not Pascalians without belief? (Giannotti 2018, 487)

Giannotti is comfortable with this polytheism-unbelief, content to be a historian of philosophy within the Gueroultian tradition, a sorter and categorizer of truth-claims by consistency, by the solidity of each ‘mathematical proof,’ who does not worry about the truth to which they aspire. Other USP philosophers, however, were less content to bracket truth, often for political reasons: how might it be possible to resist the dictatorship if normativity is a moot question? The most dramatic instance of this discomfort unfolded in the academic career of Paulo Arantes.

Arantes: Rebel Chronicler

Paulo Arantes (b. 1942) was, as a young man, a leading member of the JUC (University Catholic Youth), a branch of Catholic Action which, during Arantes's tenure, became increasingly associated with liberation theology and finally with outright socialism. Nearly a full generation younger than Giannotti, Arantes earned his undergraduate degree in philosophy from USP and finally a doctorate (1973) from Paris-Nanterre on Hegel and the young, humanist Marx, directed by Jean-Toussaint Desanti. Desanti, a Marxist, had a wide range of interests, from philosophy of mathematics to phenomenology, although his structuralism resembled Gueroult's. It was probably through Desanti that Arantes met Levinas, who introduced his Brazilian student to the idea that Heidegger and Hegel could be reconciled. Arantes returned from France, where he had also been close with Gilles Deleuze, a committed New Leftist, poring over Althusser's concordance to Mao Zedong in a phase he would later regret (Arantes 1994, 49). Academically he was willing to believe that the Gueroultian approach to philosophy was the best of all possible methods. This changed in the mid-1970s after a revelatory conversation with Bento Prado. Prado and Arantes were discussing Giannotti, whom Prado described as trying to construct a totally new philosophical system along Gueroultian lines. Prado asked, rhetorically, whether Giannotti's new system would also be subject to Gueroultian criticism. This introduced Arantes to a series of anxieties about the recursion and nihilism of the Gueroultian approach to philosophy.

In 1976, Arantes began to compose a research project around the "liquidation of the [Hegelian] historico-transcendental ideal" in Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida and, most importantly, Deleuze, directing the force of his Gueroultian deconstruction at poststructuralism itself (Arantes 1976, 223). Arantes formulates French structuralism and poststructuralism as a second and more severe version of German idealism. Both constitute a periodizable crisis in Enlightenment thought (Arantes 1976, 229-235). Structuralism had eliminated the sense of diachronia which had persisted in German idealism. This does not necessarily betray nostalgia for German idealism or a departure from structuralism or poststructuralism on Arantes's part, but it represents the beginning of critical thinking about the assumptions of structuralism which would eventually extend to open criticism of Gueroult's philosophical structuralism.

Arantes became editor of *Discurso*, the departmental journal, in 1978. In early issues, Arantes's thought is most closely associated with that of the literary critic Roberto Schwarz, first articulated for a wider audience in a 1977 essay collection called

Winner Gets the Potatoes. Arantes’s 1975 essay, “Idea and Ideology,” published in *Discurso*’s sixth issue, refers to Schwarz’s “misplaced ideas” coinage.⁹ The concept had already appeared in the 1972 issue of *L’Homme et la Société*, but derives it explicitly from Marx, who had remarked on the absurdity of idealism in bleak and backwards Germany in *The German Ideology* (Arantes 1975, 27). Arantes seems to imply that such misplaced ideas are an inevitable feature of alienated life under capitalism, but Marx, inspired by Stirner, attempted to imbue them with “knowledge of their own relativity, of their real but not absolute impropriety” (Arantes 1975, 33). Arantes, in his account of Marx, tends to assume that Marx’s approach was correct, and a preverbal, material “German bleakness” was the primary historical engine of political developments in Marx’s time (Arantes 1975, 33). Near the end of the essay, Arantes takes the contrarian position that Stirner’s criticism of the French Revolution (that it was crypto-Catholic, metaphysical, “sacred”) was fundamentally correct, but not necessarily because Stirner’s proposed counterproject, the dissolution of all ideas, through intense criticism and towards the final triumph of the ego, is practicable. Rather, Arantes seems to call for the moral evaluation of ideas and ideals, which can be proven “good or bad” through “particular analysis,” a solution contrary to the methodologies of both Stirner and Marx (Arantes 1975, 33).

With his renewed interest in moral evaluation, it is perhaps unsurprising that in the early eighties Arantes’s work took a sharp turn towards explicit humanism. In 1985, Arantes wrote that neither Hegel nor Foucault had been sufficiently humanistic (Arantes 1985). By 1988, Arantes began to polemicize against the hegemony of Gueroult at USP. The Method was USP’s “endearing family specialt[y],” like the trades taken up by the second sons of medieval lords, but it should not be taken seriously (Arantes 1988, 53-4). In a 1989 retrospective on the Marx Seminar, Arantes focuses intensely on the dominance of Gueroult and Goldschmidt over the Seminar’s reading techniques. Marx Seminararians were “reading *Capital* as Gueroult or Goldschmidt explained Plato or Descartes,” although the version of the Gueroultian Method presented by Arantes here is heterodox, positing that, in addition to suspending all consideration of truth-claims in the service of a systemic reading, the Method also ultimately historicized all Marxist claims away into “the movements that produced them” (Arantes 1989, 42). In Arantes’s account, Bento Prado tended to depart from

⁹ See the first page of this essay. Schwarz’s most central claim was that liberalism was “out of place” in economically backwards Brazil.

the Method in his work of this period, but only because he was more interested in Sartre's existentialism than in Marx (Arantes 1989, 42). Arantes's final verdict on the Gueroultian Method in the Marx Seminar explains his belief that the logical idealism of the Method could not but collapse back into materialism:

The Method in question was conceived to inhibit criticism (dogmatic disobedience) and the genetic approach (also violent, an attack on the autonomy of philosophical discourse), but it functioned according to a technique of distancing which ended up reintroducing materialism in the way it approached ideas. In other words: philosophical speculation remained limited to each of us, although we always spoke in its name (the future work . . .) while pressed into the service of the Seminar was a second nature much deeper than our philosophical superficialities, the intellectual routine which had gradually formed in the department's old Philosophy professorship, a certain well-trained mental life which [. . .] could not go far on its own. (Arantes 1989, 43)

At this juncture, the central question for Arantes was: "Is philosophy, after all, a productive force, or is it mere false consciousness?" (Arantes 1989, 44). Marxism would seem to indicate the latter, and the Gueroultian Method did nothing to rehabilitate even Marxism as a productive force. The piece ends on a hopeful note, with Arantes indicating Giannotti's reflections on education and university structure as a step towards both philosophical professionalization in Brazil and an active social role (i.e., as a productive force) for philosophy and philosophers (Arantes 1989). Arantes attributes this move away from hermetic loyalty to the Method partly to the introduction of phenomenology, in which, at the time, Giannotti was still heavily invested.

Arantes's most mature reflection on the Gueroultian Method came in 1994 with the publication of *A French Overseas Department*, Arantes's first book since the publication of his dissertation in 1991. In keeping with the book's wry, punning title, a pun Giannotti attributes originally to Foucault, Arantes's voice is jaded. The first Brazilian generation at USP, Arantes writes, were already disturbed by their situation, "condemned to be philosophers studying philosophy" (Arantes 1994, 19). What was the point of all this "primitive accumulation" of philosophical knowledge if not in the service of some infinitely deferred, unspeakably revolutionary deployment of it (Arantes 1994, 19)? Gérard Lebrun, an aesthete of the second French generation who joined the department in 1960, had been briefly treated as a potential messiah when he announced a project which would expose phenomenology as a fraud (Arantes 1994, 28). But after the coup and 1968 purge, the commitment to Gueroult had faltered (Chauí 2015). Liberation began to take on a quasi-metaphysical significance. The

historical context of philosophers’ lives also reappeared, but as a negative quantity. USP philosophers began to develop a model in which a partial degree of autonomy for historical philosophers from environmental context was possible (Arantes 2015). Evaluation of the degree of distance borne by philosophers from their historical contemporaries became a new component of their analysis, although this did not open the possibility of new philosophical discovery (Arantes 2015). This departure from the Method opened up further doubts about its validity, and a sense of foreboding grew through the Sixties and Seventies.

USP faculty, denied the possibility of creating new philosophy, had chosen, from the beginning, a favorite philosopher (or several) to subject to the Method. An inevitable side effect of this practice was their emotional identification with their favorite philosophers. Yet this also caused a restlessness in USP faculty, a desire to follow their heroes further by departing from the Method: “Conversely, what was gained on the one hand was lost on the other: the literality of a method which demanded that we interpret the systems *ad mentem auctoris*, where the reader was invited to become a faithful disciple (though a provisional one), partially annulled the fixed and frozen perspective opened up by the sobriety of the Method [. . .]” (Arantes 1994, 19). Although at the beginning of the Marx Seminar there had been a sense that the Method was “an intellectual discipline destined to remedy the evils of dependency,” now the suspicion grew that it, too, was a “word game floating in air” (Arantes 1994, 41). Arantes ventures the personal theory that Goldschmidt had not been utterly serious about his approach to philosophy (Arantes 1994, 22), that even Gueroult had a speculative side which his Brazilian impresarios had chosen to ignore (Arantes 1994, 118), and that the method had only been taken seriously at USP because of some preexisting Brazilian affinity for theories of everything (Arantes 1994, 32). With the Method, USP philosophers could have their cake and eat it, enjoying the human comforts of “sympathy for a given author” whilst simultaneously “discovering the master key to the world machine” (Arantes 1994, 32).

Arantes’s work from around the time of *A French Overseas Department* shows him embracing the two philosophical subjects the Method most encouraged USP philosophers to reject: the “ballast” of social context and the “malign and seductive Logos” of normativity (Arantes 1994, 41). Arantes’s frustration with Gueroult suffuses his 1993 review of Lebrun’s book on Hegel, *The Patience of the Concept*. Arantes had identified with Hegel since his undergraduate years, and this emotional identification is particularly apparent here. Arantes accuses Lebrun of reducing the Hegelian dialectic

to “a mere language game,” emptying out any content in favor of “reading the Method” (Arantes 1993, 156). By way of a counterproject, Arantes posits, implicitly endorsing, a Hegel for whom “History is the handmaiden of theology” (Arantes 1993, 163). Although he disavows a personal endorsement of theology, Arantes ends with the claim that “there is more theology here” than one might suspect (Arantes 1993, 165). Over the course of the 1990s and 2000s, Arantes became interested in the theologically-saturated Marxism of the Frankfurt School, especially in Walter Benjamin’s assertion of the inherent violence of state power, with the modern nation-state presupposing a permanent state of exception (Arantes 2008). This theory Arantes connected not only to Brazilian reality but also to world events in general. In the early 2000s joined the National Humanist Society, an outward sign of his rejection of the Gueroultian equivalency between philosophy and pure logic.

In an edited volume called *Philosophy and How to Teach It*, first published in 1993, Arantes reflected again on the history of the department. He is most critical of the Brazilian particularism and nationalism initially encouraged by Cruz Costa and his acolytes (Arantes 1995, 41-53). In the second part of the essay, however, Arantes returns to the Method, this time reflecting on its political implications. It was built initially on a “disdain for the bad taste of dogmatists attached to the undecidable question of the truth of systems,” a desire to dismantle national, philosophical and religious metaphysics alike: distinctly a project of the political Left. However, it led to a kind of counter-idealism with its fixation on canon, so that “a mocking soul might not have hesitated to baptize our synthesis that of the ‘transcendental Left’” (Arantes 1995, 65). The connection to left politics was assumed by USP philosophers at the time (the Sixties and Seventies), to a point at which they “circulated a small origin-myth—possibly true—that attributed to Victor Goldschmidt the view that the rigorous study of philosophical systems would lead directly to socialism” (Arantes 1995, 65). Meanwhile, USPians’ political “adversaries, who belittled the professional restraint which bound us, philosophized as though they had been born into the age of Great Theories, thus losing themselves in a blunder whose political coloration was frankly right-wing” (Arantes 1995, 65). This is a reference mostly to ISEB. Against both these extremes Arantes was developing a version of left politics built on messianic hope for the future.

Arantes’s messianism is most clearly delineated in his 2014 essay collection *The New World Time*. The early essays are devoted to the modern (capitalist) nation-state as a permanent state of exception, underwritten by the secular theology of reason of state

“emancipated from medieval tutelage,” with Walter Benjamin, Carl Schmitt, Reinhart Koselleck, and Moishe Postone as frequent referents (Arantes 2014).¹⁰ As secularizing or secularized Christs, Columbus, Luther and Robespierre inaugurated an accelerated time oriented around an imminent apocalypse, a logic maintained by modern and postmodern capitalism. Columbus had to convert (or exterminate) Native Americans quickly, before the second coming, just as Luther had to reform the Church and Robespierre finish the Revolution. The logic of ‘extraordinary wartime powers’ granted to these men by themselves was quickly generalized as the modern state monopoly on time. Formulated as a sovereign cure for historical crisis, the “mistaken Enlightenment moral project of planning history” (Arantes 2014) became the official ideology of the nation-state, culminating, inevitably, in Auschwitz. Yet the rationalizing, mechanistic, bellicose logic of the Holocaust survives in capitalist states generally, where mechanical reproduction and technocracy continue to dominate. This new temporal logic of crisis, still dominated by capitalism and the nation-state, claims to be future-oriented and linear, but it is actually circular and presentist. This can only be subverted by Revolution, “the only Emergency Exit,” coming in through the “narrow gate”¹¹ of the Benjaminian messiah (Arantes 2014). This will break the cycle of presentist, capitalist time and usher in, in authentically linear fashion, a socialist future.

Arantes hews closely to Walter Benjamin¹² in these claims, and while much of the book is preoccupied with Brazilian and even specifically Paulista political events, it is fundamentally a universalist work with primarily European philosophical referents. With respect to New World particularity, at most there is a profound consciousness of the Protestant Reformation and the colonization of the Americas as the mutually inextricable twin apocalyptic events which inaugurated the “new world time” and the permanent state of exception. Perhaps, in a profoundly utopian book, there is a bit of wistfulness in the remark that St. Thomas More’s *Utopia* “contradicted its own principles¹³ in order to find its home in the New World” (Arantes 2014). Arantes had spent much of his career working up to the criticisms of the Gueroutian Method found in *A French Overseas Department*: it ignored diachronia (especially important to Arantes

¹⁰ Google books edition purchased for consultation lacks page numbers.

¹¹ A direct, uncited quotation from Benjamin. See W. Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, Addendum B: “For that reason the future did not, however, turn into a homogenous and empty time for the Jews. For in it every second was the narrow gate, through which the Messiah could enter.”

¹² See, in addition to the *Theses*, Benjamin’s claims on royal absolutism and the state of exception in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*.

¹³ Utopia=no place.

as a Hegel scholar), history itself, social baggage, moral evaluation, and truth. With his heterodox, messianic Marxism, Arantes had incorporated all these missing elements into a philosophical system nearly opposite to Gueroult's, while also avoiding the "regional ontology" and obsession with Brazilian particularity which had caused him to lose patience with the Marx Seminar. The only immanent logical system subject to 'Gueroultian' critique in *The New World Time* is that of capitalism itself: and even in this case the solution is not mere criticism, as in the apocryphal quotation from Goldschmidt, but messianic supersession.

Chauí: The Practical Skeptic

Marilena Chauí was born in 1941, the daughter of an elementary school teacher and a journalist. When she first received her training in the Gueroultian Method in the early 1960s, the process of disillusionment with the household gods of her youth, including Descartes, Jesus Christ and the Brazilian nation, was exciting, a *coup de foudre*, although high school philosophy classes had already made her question Christianity (Chauí 2015). After a master's thesis on Merleau-Ponty, she was sent to study in Paris for the 1968 calendar year, where she was active in the 1968 student movement and was present for the foundation of Paris 8 (Chauí 2015). Her French mentors, in France and in São Paulo, were Granger, Lebrun, and Michel Debrun, a philosopher of political science sympathetic to ISEB who came to Brazil in 1956 and never left. She returned from Paris on the day of the AI-5 purge of USP faculty, a bewildering experience for a graduate student still working on her dissertation (finally defended in 1971). With only five professors and many new students suspected to be government plants, the department struggled to carry on teaching. Chauí describes the foundation of *Discurso* as one of the department's first acts of retaliation against the environment of terror and uncertainty the firings and investigations had created. In 1974, after watching Miguel Reale, a new USP rector associated with the 1930s Brazilian Integralist Action, a proto-fascist movement, proclaim that the movement had finally won with his appointment, Chauí began to study integralism as though it were a philosophical system to be subjected to Gueroultian critique (Chauí 2015). This led her to the critique of ideology, a theme that would consume her subsequent work for some time.

After a commission from Editora Brasiliense, the critique of ideology became a full-length book, *What is Ideology?*, Chauí's most famous work. This contains a detailed intellectual history of the term ideology, originally a product of postrevolutionary French scientism but quickly dismissed by positivists as crypto-metaphysical (Chauí

1980, 47). Chauí does equate ideology with delusive metaphysics, but also with the alienation imposed by capitalism: only with the resolution of class contradictions under communism can ideology be superseded (Chauí 1980, 47-101). There is no explicit hint, however, of the alleged Goldschmidian idea that the critique of ideology will lead mechanistically to communism. Just as Chauí’s engagement with ideology tended to result in her conflation of ideology, metaphysics, nationalism, and alienation, it also led her to think of the dictatorship as a continuation of ISEB, which it had abolished in 1964 (Lamounier 1979, 158). “The autonomy of medieval philosophy,” she wrote in 1980, obscured real, conflictual, feudal relations just as ISEB, integralism, sociological dogmatism and so forth mask the truth in freedom sought by philosophers (Chauí 1980, 132-143). The dictatorship did, in fact, share ISEB’s anti-intellectual orientation, abolishing philosophy courses in high schools in favor of “moral and civic education,” a move which Chauí gained the nerve to protest publicly in 1975 (Chauí 1978, 157). Over the course of the 1970s, the repression of the dictatorship relaxed, and after the labor gains of 1979 Chauí began openly to support the Workers’ Party (PT), although some within the Party found her contributions obscurantist (DOPS 1982). As Giannotti would tell Ronald Chilcote years later, her concern for education was not simply limited to undermining ideology, although her experiments with classroom hierarchy were certainly directed to that end (Chauí 2015) (Chilcote 2014, 44).

Chauí’s fundamental philosophical loyalty, over the entire course of her mature career, was to Spinoza, although in 2015 she continued to pay lip service to the Gueroultian idea that philosophical systems were discrete and non-normative: “Each work must be read in its perfect uniqueness and its necessary relation to its time” (Chauí 2015). Partly she avoided the risk of her Gueroultian allegiances rendering Spinoza irrelevant by formulating Spinoza’s philosophy as fundamentally descriptive rather than normative (Chauí 2015). Yet this was to invite the accusation that Spinoza’s philosophy is mechanistic and socially irrelevant. In 1993 she acknowledged that Christians, Kantians, Platonists and so on were likely to see Spinoza as promoting a “mindless, involuntary” view of man and the universe, but responded that only by assimilating himself to nature could man reconcile “reason, desire and virtue” (Chauí 1993, 63-4). Over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, Chauí began to read philosophers associated with a clear sense of diachronia quite distinct from Spinoza’s sense of time, including Hegel, St. Augustine, Joachim of Fiore, and Walter Benjamin. At the same time, she moved from the general critique of ideology to the specific critique of technocracy or what she called the “ideology of competence” (Chauí 2014), which creates a new class

divide between those with “scientific, technical and administrative knowledge” and those who “lack this knowledge and therefore have the duty to obey” (Chauí 2015).

These new dual loyalties, to diachronia and to the criticism of technocracy, coincided with her renewed sense of civic duty and commitment to education. She became involved in the publication of numerous high school textbooks, as well as working closely with Giannotti on CEBRAP and other sociologically-oriented think tanks. Deepening democracy and making the masses aware of their rights as citizens became her primary political concerns, and she felt that these were a logical fit with Spinozan pantheism. However, these commitments were tainted by an increasing sense of helplessness, of the neoliberal restructuring of Brazilian universities making her job increasingly difficult. A 2010 essay collection acknowledges that even Spinoza’s philosophical commitments defy easy systematization along Gueroultian lines. Where to put his flirtation with millenarian Judaism (Chauí 2014, 44)? Millenarism also offered a tempting alternative to Chauí’s burgeoning sense of historical fatalism. The Protestant-secular hope for boundless progress, another version of linear time, has, however, been destructive, paralleling Chauí’s own experience as an academic living through the twentieth century. Once upon a time, Chauí reflects wistfully, there was the Jesuit college, which was secularized into the French department of her own formation. Now there is technocracy (Chauí 2014). Either the Jesuit or French secular version of university education was preferable to the technocratic curricula of neoliberalism, which have annihilated the otium and formation in sensitivity necessary for the humanities to realize their critical potential.

In a piece for Iván Domingues’s edited volume *Ethics, Politics and Culture*, Chauí recalls the semi-secularized, semi-Christian haze of early modernity, when there was a distinction between the good and the useful (Chauí 2002, 161-163). For Christian pedagogues, the Good could be conjured by recourse to a catalogue of educational constructs intimately linked to human psychology and not closely linked to pure reason, which pertains only to the useful (Chauí 2002, 163). Over the course of the Reformation and Counterreformation, this catalogue dwindled merely to the vituperative approach, the castigation of human weakness coming to be considered the summa of pedagogy (Chauí 2002, 162). This Chauí considers to have been an inevitable consequence of the Christian doctrine that human nature cannot attain salvation alone, unaided by grace (Chauí 2002, 169). However, she considers the problem not to have been the reduction of all rhetorical styles to vituperation, but rhetoric itself: the only good rhetoric is the “rhetoric against rhetoric” proposed by Spinoza (Chauí 2002, 170). All rhetoric may

inherently be vituperative, and this is where malign hierarchy gets its foothold, since “whoever denounces human nature wishes to subjugate it” (Chauí 2002, 170). One must denounce rhetoric, indeed all language, instead. Both virtue and language must be annihilated by ascendant Nature for hierarchy finally to fall, a reiteration of the Marxist command that man and nature must unite in order for alienation to end (Chauí 2002, 176).

How will education survive the death of rhetoric and hierarchy? Chauí cannot and will not answer. Her only hope is for Spinozan self-realization for all, “each one’s unique power to increase his or her strength to exist, to act, and to be happy” (Chauí 2015). This is a long way from Gueroult, although Chauí’s “rhetoric against rhetoric” in practice might be a discipline approaching the Method as institutionalized at USP. The difference is that Gueroult was not trying to undermine existing philosophy by reducing it to its logical underpinnings, but to save it. Chauí probably would have wished to save Spinoza’s works from their dissolution in “rhetoric against rhetoric,” but does not seem to have been aware of their jeopardy. Initiated into the critique of metaphysics by the Gueroultian method, Chauí ended her career trying to maintain a similar approach by collapsing, as she had previously collapsed metaphysics into ideology, ideology into nationalism and both into neoliberal technocracy. Technocracy in higher education became an oppressive ideology crippling the self-actualization of the masses, rather than a cultural turn towards material and practical investigation. The professional philosopher may be a skeptic, a critic, even a kind of Gueroultian logician, but this is, for Chauí, the polar opposite of (for her, metaphysical) technocracy rather than something strongly resembling it. The result of this is that Chauí was never able to articulate a strong counter-pedagogy: as a student of Granger like Giannotti, her philosophical interests hewed too close to logical rationalism for a humanistic critique of technocracy to emerge.

Conclusion: Gueroult’s Legacy

In one of the only English-language reflections on the Gueroultian legacy in São Paulo philosophy, Ronald Porto Macedo and Carla Henriete Bevilacqua Piccolo summarize it as follows:

Brazilian philosophical production had just begun and so was not much developed, and in this context the French mission represented a foundational moment, introducing Brazil to a unique way of philosophizing—more scholarly, methodologically strict, and distant from the lawyerly style of the past. The concern with a close and structural reading of classical texts was such

that the curriculum was gradually veering toward the history of philosophy and away from philosophy itself. (Macedo and Piccolo 2016, 848)

Although aware of the Gueroultian Method, which they call the “structuralist study of a thinker according to Gueroult’s ‘order of reasons’ (i.e. according to the internal logic of the argument [. . .])” (Macedo and Piccolo 2016, 849), Macedo and Piccolo only present part of the picture when they pinpoint the transition from philosophy to history of philosophy as the primary legacy of the Gueroultian method in Brazil. Gueroult originally devised his method as a response to excessively contextualizing histories of philosophy like Ferdinand Alquié’s. It is likely that, when Gueroult embarked on his Descartes project, he already viewed it as a foregone conclusion that no new or original philosophy was possible, an assumption shared by his archenemy Alquié. Gueroult wished to salvage the canon and restore something of its transcendence, in his words “the presence of a certain real substance in each philosophy” (Dosse 1997, 77) yet did not wish to question the ‘end of history.’ Gueroult’s main desire was to stave off, if only for a little longer, philosophy’s replacement by (technocratic) sociology (Dosse 1997, 81). Gueroult also appears, although his reasons are not entirely clear, to have associated Alquié with nationalism and metaphysical obscurantism, an animus indirectly passed on to his USP acolytes.

For the second and third generation of USP philosophers, the Gueroultian Method was the first totalizing account of philosophy to which they were exposed. They were unable to situate it in its historical context, not only because of its discouragement of context-seeking but also because of their natural unfamiliarity with Gueroult’s academic feuds. They were also largely unaware, over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, of Gueroult’s relative lack of importance in French academic debates, of his dearth of disciples, although Foucault seems to have derived his notion of philosophical discontinuity from Gueroult’s image of hermetic, entirely discrete systems (Dosse 1997, 81). Precisely because of this distance, Gueroult’s work took on a life of its own in Brazil, since all USP philosophy until at least the early 1990s was either a continuation of or a reaction to the institutional USP version of the Method, not necessarily because of USP curricula but because of the pedagogical protocol passed down from the first French generation to the first and second generation of Brazilian students. USP, from its foundation, was meant to transform the burgeoning São Paulo lower-middle and middle class into professional academics. Once mastered, once reproduced in a dissertation on a single philosopher, the Method could be said to have coined a new professional.

Professionalization was the chief reason for the Method’s appeal, but its vagueness and structural dogmatism brought with it several pitfalls. The most obvious one is the one which for so long troubled Arantes: what was the point of studying the history of a dead discipline? If each philosophy is a mere language game, what is the practical application of such structural asceticism? Arantes could only satisfy his own discomfort by recourse to humanism and secular messianism, both a return to truth of sorts. Another, less obvious problem was the Method’s tendency to blur the line between professionalization and technocracy. Gueroultian pedagogy encouraged a view of philosophy where competence in the Method, in squeezing the messy oeuvres of past philosophers into the clean lines of mathematical proof, became the main criterion by which a USP postgraduate student or philosopher was judged to be ‘good at philosophy.’ Chauí’s discomfort with the ‘ideology of competence’ never extended into a critique of Gueroultian pedagogy, but the typical features of technocratic education, hyperspecialization and an impersonal approach to pedagogy, are also present in Gueroultian pedagogy. Rhetorical skill and technocracy should be natural enemies, but Chauí was only able to endorse rhetoric as a ‘rhetoric against rhetoric’ which would annihilate manipulative pedagogical speech through some non-technocratic mechanism. Giannotti, conversely, was able to recognize the hyperspecialization, the technocratic resonances of his approach to philosophy, but, unlike Chauí, was never a critic of technocracy or specialization, and remained comfortable with the department’s twentieth-century evolution.

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