Under the atopies of the city

Sob as atopias da cidade

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ABSTRACT
This article is a socio-philosophical reflection on the possibility of coexistence in contemporary cities. The central argument is that Atopic Cities, formed by hyperflow-positive urban environments, are characterized by their claim to be flat, unobstructed by the negativities that could oppose the flows of consumption and create barriers, "rough" inscriptions in space. These cities do not support the asymmetries of contingent life; they are superficial and only stimulate mere life.

Keywords: cities, consumption, atopies.

RESUMO
Este artigo é uma reflexão sociofilosófica sobre a possibilidade de convivência nas cidades contemporâneas. O argumento central é que as Cidades Atópicas, formadas por ambientes urbanos hiperfluxopositivos, caracterizam-se por pretenderem serem planas, desobstruídas das negatividades que se poderiam contrapor aos fluxos do consumo e criar barreiras, inscrições “rugosas” no espaço. Essas cidades não suportam as assimetrias da vida contingente; são superficiais e apenas estimulam a mera vida.

Palavras-chave: cidades, consumo, atopias.

1 INTRODUCTION
Modernity is urban and the city is modern. Modernity and its two main workhorses (capitalism and its philosophical by-product, the Enlightenment and its associated teleologies and historical metanarratives) promised guaranteed human emancipation. However, the modern city, and its extreme derivations in the contemporary context of megacities, has become the most acute phenomenal expression of technical progress that, on the one hand, has benefited humanity, but has also unleashed and harbored unusual and extreme forms of urban

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servitude and all the brutal violence and inequality that have characterized modernity for centuries. The more general question, which served as a basis for reflection, was to what extent we can still think of the city as a plausible reality in which to live. Are there still “liberating thoughts” in the contemporary city or would it remain to be said, adopting nihilism as a social critique and, to paraphrase Nietzsche, that today's city is not worth as much as we used to believe?

The expanded dimension of consumption and the transformation of being into being-value, and everything that exists into merchandise, has made contemporary society the most complete expression of the Consumer Society, whose main characteristic is excess, the trivialization of life, discarding, human expulsion and the violent obscenity of exchanges. Since Nietzsche, Marx, Simmel, Weber and Heidegger, this reified dimension of exchange relations has been highlighted in sociological theory. Simmel, a reference author for contemporary urban studies, had already discussed in his Philosophy of Money and in his critique of modern culture, what would be one of the predominant aspects of modernity and which was the target of Nietzsche and Heidegger's harsh nihilistic criticism of modern rationality. The idea of a general equivalence of values, however, as Frédéric Vandenberghe points out when analyzing Simmel, gave more than mere operationality to exchanges: it leveled subjects and objects on similar levels: "In exchange, everything happens as if the fundamental relationship between the subject and the object, which is a condition of value, passed to the objects themselves to allow them to be measured in relation to each other" (VANDENBERGHE, 2012, p. 227).

Cities, especially those (but not only those) that are the target of extensive intervention projects by so-called entrepreneurial urbanism, have become an obscene market for things, signs and people, where everything can be sold, including the city itself, as a city, to the extent that it has become a fissured locus of consumable heterotopias. Difference has also become a commodity and every day it is depoliticized and becomes more of a performance than an insubmission and a reference point for identities. This excess of everything, of consumption and the hyper-neurotic flow of capital's accelerated income, is a fatal form of
consumerism in the contemporary city and urban life. A city that has become more of a city, i.e. more marked by the elements that confer and inform an urban character, becomes less of a city. In other words: the more a city enhances its urban characteristics, the more it becomes unfeasible as a city, as a space for living together, to the point where we can talk about the city as a utopia of itself.

Inspired by the reflections of Byung-Chul Han (2014), I call this city, which is highly integrated into global flows of exchange and consumption, the Atopic City. Byung-Chul Han refers to an atopic other (which has no place in society, as a topos of consumption). I understand that if the city is the consummate expression of the Consumer Society, then the city itself is a single, flat topos of consumption. In other words: it is all a single "place" of consumption, so the city is therefore atopic.

The term Atopic designates this flat urban configuration (in the Deleuzian sense of "smooth") that reflects the widening of the Consumer Society in the most violent, extreme and excessive way. My argument is that Atopic Cities, formed by hyperflow-positive urban environments, are characterized by their claim to be flat, unobstructed by the negativities that could oppose the flows of consumption and create barriers, “rough” inscriptions in space. These cities do not support the asymmetries of contingent life; they are superficial and only stimulate mere life. They are pornographic, to use another term suggested by Byung-Chul Han (2014), in the sense that they expose everything as something for sale; and they deny death — which identifies our finite humanity — because they are designed to oppose any obstacles that might resist the immediate, consumerist and “pacifying” dream of the negative tensions of ordinary life. Atopic cities are made up of spaces that claim to be categorical in the imputability of extended forms of normative coercion to inhibit all sorts of contradictions and counter-uses (LEITE, 2007; 2023).

The other side of the problem lies in the disturbing doubt about the future. The critical perspective adopted here shares a certain approximation to the critical nihilism of Nietzschean origin. The Atopic City is a consummate expression of urban life. In this sense, I inevitably share the view that the typical
The traditional city has been killed by uncontrolled capitalist development, victimized by its endless need to dispose of the unbridled accumulation of capital capable of financing the endless and disorderly expansion of urban growth, whatever its social, environmental or political consequences (2014, p. 20).

Although I agree with the diagnosis, I can't believe in the viability or effectiveness of prescribing a cure: for Harvey, only a new and vigorous anti-capitalist movement could reverse the current situation. The hermeneutic perspective adopted here, associated with nihilism as a social critique, doesn't believe as much, but wants to believe that it is still possible to glimpse forms of inobedience that create *topos of meaning* in the flat smoothness of urban Atopies, amidst the pessimism that reflects on urban life as "an expression of the uselessness of the modern world". [...] (NIETZSCHE 2008. P. 41).

I should make it clear from the outset that the topos to which I refer is nothing like Henri Lefebvre's (1999) notion of "topia", which refers to the street as a "meeting place". The *topos* to which I refer, and on which I reflect, are rather expressions of disordered conflicts; *places* that have become *counter-usual* because they are outsider expressions of urban life, and which revive unsubmissive paths of life. Unveiling these *topos* and making them "show themselves" is perhaps one of the most important and urgent tasks in interpreting the contemporary city, and one that this book has only attempted to introduce.

Human beings organize and give meaning to time through symbolic markings such as the hours, months and seasons, through which they create regularities and make the recurring facts of life more predictable and intelligible. For places that have more or less defined seasons, such as the countries of the Northern Hemisphere, summer is a season that is looked forward to with redoubled joy. It seems that all the desires overpowered by the daily toil of all the other seasons come back to life. What spring announces, summer must fulfill: the sun, the flowers, the heat, the seduction, the wandering, the leisure, the non-work, the vacations. It's no coincidence that people in many societies choose this...
season to travel. In the countries of the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, it is the most favorable season for tourism, which is intensifying at all latitudes. Of course, I'm referring to a tiny fraction of the population, whose summer heralds a break from their daily routines. For the vast majority of the world's population, summer is just a hot season. Summer would therefore be — but it isn't — a break in the positive flow of the society of transparency if it weren't also used to feed the consumer society.

For everyone, perhaps, summer has the same socio-optical specificity: it is the clearest of the seasons; the most visible, the most naked, the least insinuating and, perhaps, the most obscene because it exposes everything to the same clarity and transparency: little is hidden in the thin shadows and penumbras of the long days and clear nights. The boreal summer in the Northern Hemisphere, which takes place between June and September (or the astral summer in the Southern Hemisphere, between December and March) is a season that seems to prepare everyone for a certain new beginning. The Summer Solstice (from the Latin sol + sistere, which does not move) means the moment when the sun reaches its greatest inclination in relation to the equator, making the days longer and warmer. In this sense of “time standing still”, when the sun doesn't seem to move, the long summer days seem to increase the positive enjoyment of life.

Unlike the empty, gray and slow streets of winter, which expel life; the heat of summer invites passers-by into the street, sends the most reticent blasé out into the sun and stimulates the idea, however illusory, of a temporary redemption from the ordinary sufferings of city life:

At dusk on summer days, sometimes,  
Even though there's no breeze, it seems  
A light breeze passes through for a moment...  
But the trees remain still  
In all the leaves of their leaves  
And our senses had an illusion,  
They had the illusion of what would please them...  
(Fernando Pessoa¹)

¹ Alberto Caeiro, in “O Guardador de Rebanhos - Poema XLI”, Heteronym of Fernando Pessoa
The illusions of well-being cause this joyful torpor and please the senses, but they don't solve the peremptory questions that remain in the course of this strategic and purposefully emotional capitalism (HAN, 2014d). In this kind of new psychopolitics of consumption, emotions are more than ever used to nourish market drives: fear, hunger, desire, love, faith, longing, hatred and charity. For each emotion, there are endless products that represent them in the symbolic market of simulacra.

2 NIHILISM AND CONSUMMATION

The Atopic city, with its inescapable frustrations of unattainable goals of success, production and happiness, can make us think that an alternative to emancipation, as initially proposed by the modern project, is no longer possible (LEITE, 2022). Could nihilism be the only way to understand life impoverished of meaning in contemporary megacities?

The question doesn't seem to be whether or not to bow down to unavoidable pessimism. A reversal of the thesis of the inevitability of facts would be yet another mistaken metanarrative of history. But in fact, the horizon that emerges from the new global forms of accumulation and concentration of wealth is neither favorable to the classic project of modernity nor even to the mitigated desire for stability of the post-war liberal system and welfare state. Saskia Sassen (2015), in a recent study on the global direction of the world economy, argues that instead of a better distribution of wealth and improvement of life, contemporary capitalism has exacerbated the most radical forms of exclusion, which she rightly calls expulsion, to designate extreme forms of banishment of people and life in general, whether from environmental and/or human systems.

My thesis is that we are witnessing the construction not so much of predatory elites but of predatory "formations", a combination of elites and systemic capabilities with finance as a key enabler, which pushes towards acute concentration. (SASSEN, 2015, p. 24)

The data and arguments presented by Sassen are consistent and generate a certain amount of fear and doubt about our near future, at the same
time as they announce a harsh reality, measurable by the global levels of inequality. Since the 1980s, there has been a sharp contraction in the opportunities for the middle classes to access wealth, leading to a greater concentration of global wealth. Sassen’s diagnosis is, in this sense, accurate and relentless:

Inequality, if it continues to grow, at a certain point could be described more as a form of expulsion. For those at the bottom or in the poor center, that means expulsion from a living space; for those at the top it apparently meant getting out of the responsibilities of being a member of society through self-separation, the extreme concentration of wealth available in a society and the total lack of inclination to redistribute that wealth. (SASSEN, 2015, p. 26)

Faced with this technical diagnosis, the socio-philosophical question arises: if the being cannot escape its condition of being-value, how can it emancipate itself while immersed in the atopy of consumer society? Based on the reflections of Michel de Certeau (1996), Leonardo Lippolis, in his Viaje al Final de La ciudad (2015), suggests that the transition from modernity to post-modernity is a time of sedimentation of the strategies referred to by Certeau. And for him, only through the tactical margins would it be possible to find a way out:

In the postmodern, since the territory is all in the power of domination, it only seems possible to find spaces of habitability in the margins and in the intervals of power. (LIPPOLIS, 2015, p. 100)

The idea that human actions of contestation on different axes of conflict can occur in the interstitial zones of everyday life or power relations is still timely and has strong heuristic appeal. The idea has appeal precisely because it refers the debate to ordinary, and not necessarily organized, forms of manifestation, dissent and dispute; and no less important for compressing politics as symbolic action. With Byung-Chul Han (2014b) we can think that radical action could break the contiguity of power in the Atopies of society. Perhaps more than breaking centralized power, through tactical actions in the in-between spaces, a more forceful rupture would be necessary:
In the hell of the equal, the arrival of the atopic other can take on an apocalyptic form. Or to put it another way: today, only an apocalypse can free us - or rather, only it can redeem us - from hell in the direction of the other. (Han, 2014b, p. 11)

The biblical idea of an extraordinary event as redemption, such as the revelation, is in this context almost an act of despair. Too nihilistic, perhaps. The evangelist John narrates in an incomparable way the final events that precede the end of this world and the final judgment of men, according to their deeds in this world. Han's meaning of disaster, however, is more literal than metaphorical: “disaster literally means no star (from the Latin: des-austrum)” (Han, 2014b, p. 11). A possible derivative interpretation is that only by giving up narcissistic centrality can we finally get closer to the other. In the Consumer Society, based on the widespread practice of high profitability of the "subject" of income, the reproduction of mere life and the denial of death; a displacement of the being-value star outside or against the production-consumption circuit would be a des-austrum for the system itself.

If getting out of the system seems unlikely, surviving in it shouldn't be the most appropriate formulation either, precisely because that's what we're all trying to do, in a more or less adjusted, more or less dissatisfied way. Leaving the system would not be the most appropriate formulation, given the absence of plausible utopias, although one can obviously ask to what extent one could confront — and how contemporary urban experiences confront — the Atopies of the contemporary city.

Nihilism, as a social critique, is associated with criticism of modern reason and the "end" of modernity. For Gianni Vattimo, the Nietzschean metaphor of the death of God finds a similar resonance in Heidegger's idea of the reduction of being to value, which leads him to affirm that after being there is nothing else. Nihilism, which has different approaches, is also expressed in this idea of Han's negativity, insofar as transparency is also a form of reason's trap, since it transforms everything into explicit values that leave being in the generality of equivalence, to the detriment of the singularities that differentiate us:
[..] we will say that, in the Nietzschean-Heideggerian sense, nihilism is the consummation of use value in exchange value. Nihilism is not being in the power of the subject, but being completely dissolved in the flow of value, in the indefinite transformations of universal equivalence (VATTIMO, 2007, p. 6)

These *vagueries of universal equivalence*, which dissolve *being*, correspond to Byung-Chul Han’s “hell of the equal”. They’re all talking about the same thing: modern society has installed such an idea of value that it has subsumed everything, making everyone the *same thing*, devoid of any greater meaning. In Nietzsche’s words: “What does nihilism mean? — That the supreme values have been devalued. The end is missing; the answer to "Why?" is missing. (2008. P. 29).

The question that emerges from this problem can be translated into a new enigma for the world. Without the traditional utopias on our political horizons, and with the *Consumer Society* marching forward at a rapid pace as an inexorable contemporary civilizing process, what can we do, apart from consciously resigning ourselves to a consummate nihilism? However, we shouldn’t blame ourselves for any disquieting disbelief about the future when we find ourselves powerless in the face of the world we have left. Our pessimism is not accidental, nor is it directed at everything, but it rests above all on a kind of *disenchantment of the world*, slightly different from that pointed out by Weber. This is not a resigned critique of a modernity that seems to have dragged the entire future of human society into an iron prison of economic rationality; rather, it is a critique that calls for — albeit somewhat desperately — some form of reluctance and rebellion (implying a certain transvaluation of values) in the midst of the decadent and imprisoning generalization of being as value in *mere life*. The pessimism referred to here is powerful, in the sense that it is capable of giving impetus to life. It is critical because it recognizes a certain uselessness in today’s society. In Nietzsche’s words: “Modern pessimism is an expression of the uselessness of the modern world — not of the world and of existence. (2008. P. 41)”.

This nihilism is thus both power and nostalgia: it stems from a desire to give new meaning to the world. As Vandenberghue rightly points out with regard
to Simmel's nihilism, it is necessary to give meaning to life in order to free oneself, since this Simmelian man, an icon of collapsed modernity, is without a compass: "uprooted and isolated, or engaged in a multitude of superficial relationships, modern man sinks into the void of absurdity" (VANDENBERGUE, 2012, p. 237).

**3 UNDERLIFE: ONTOLOGY OF TOPICAL DISOBEDIENCE**

In one of his essays reflecting on contemporary identity, Giorgio Agamben states: "the desire to be recognized by others is inseparable from being human" (2014, p. 77). Agamben takes up both the Freudian explanation of the relational formation of the ego (the persona is only constituted when it is distinguished from and recognized by an alter) and the more current approaches of sociology and anthropology on the reflexive and dialogical character of the identification processes that inform identities. Basically, the idea is that the social character of identity (whether personal or social) depends on the levels of reciprocal recognition that exist. In other words: it's not enough to see ourselves in a certain way, it's necessary for this idea-of-self to be socially recognized. Identity would thus have a doubly heuristic character: it exists to situate us socially and, when it doesn't exist, it tends to be instrumental, used as a political mechanism in the social struggle for recognition (HONNETH, 2011).

The poet Mia Couto, in one of his poems, *Identidade*, says: "I need to be another to be myself" (2014, p. 13). The idea that identities are constructed is clear and consensual. This other that we sometimes need to be is exactly the identity persona (mask) that Agabem refers to as something that has been lost in contemporary times. In addition to the so-called crisis and constant reconstruction of post-national identities, there is a more accentuated and comprehensive deconfiguration of the processes of recognizing sociocultural difference and personal singularities that seems to affect all identity personas in some way: these would be the broad biotechnological processes of identifying and monitoring the person in the digital circuit of cybernetic surveillance and control. Agamben (2014) draws attention to the paradox of the extreme impersonal radicality of today's processes of recognizing the person. Unlike
previous identities, typical of modernity, which were based on social criteria of differentiation, and therefore subject to processes of discrimination on the one hand and contestation and confrontation on the other, current processes empty the content of identity — and the contestatory political force derived from it — in favor of an impersonal and merely bio-technical recognition of the person:

The reduction of man to naked life is now such a fait accompli that it is now the basis of the identity that the state recognizes in the eyes of its citizens. Just as the Auschwitz deportee no longer had a name or nationality and was from then on just a number that had been tattooed on his arm, in the same way the contemporary citizen, lost in the anonymous mass and equated with a potential criminal, is defined only by biometric data and, ultimately, by a kind of ancient fate made even more opaque and incomprehensible: his DNA. (AGAMBEN, 2014, p. 84)

"Naked life" is life without those singularities that are capable of differentiating and identifying us in relation to others; naked life is life that has lost the ability to deform atopic smoothness. The nudity - de facto or symbolic - that was once a sign of contestation in a sexually repressive and socially repressed society is now hyperexposed to announce that our bodies no longer carry political power; that our personhood has been reduced to a number as much as we have been transformed into mere equals in this hell (Byung-Chal Han) of things and value-beings (Marx, Heidegger), in today's monetized (Simmel) and consumer society (Baudrillard).

The singularity that covers our naked body (which had been leveled with everyone else by the spheres of panoptic control) gave it some possibility of interpretation. Complete and obscene nudity only exposes and tears apart the subtlety of life, allowing for a direct and descriptive apprehension of life. And in order for us to be able to interpret, diverge and contest, life must not be completely naked and must be able to suggest itself, show itself, gradually unveiling itself to the interpreter. And for us to be able to unveil the life that remains to be partially uncovered, we need to be able to see in the negativities of contemporary urban life a possibility of challenging the disciplinary order. And the possibility of overcoming nihilism and re-signifying the world depends partly
on our ability to transgress the rejection imposed on *negativities* as obstacles to the flow of the *Consumer Society*.

There is no pretension here to any typology or even a comprehensive and exhaustive analysis of the countless negative behaviors that hinder the hyper-positive flows of the Atopic City. Among them, there can be as much *negativity from outside as negativity from within*. Among the former, there are the homeless, street kids, repeat job-seekers, wanderers and stateless people; war refugees; political persecutors without exile; madmen and misfits who have given up on living in society; illegal immigrants in neutral zones; prisoners without trial and conviction; *expellees* of all kinds; among others.

Among the *negativities from within*, we can talk about the embarrassing situation of legalized but discriminated against immigrants; children and adults subjected to slave labor; workers considered unproductive but employed; elderly people abandoned by their families in retirement homes; mad people, misfits and malcontents who insist on living in society; religious, ethnic, linguistic and gender minorities who try to remain inserted and respected in their cultural rights, among others. *Negativities* are all those expressions of unwanted conduct and even outsider personas that cause some form of embarrassment, insubordination, contestation or even mere subjective dissatisfaction with the positive flow of the obscene accumulation of the *Consumer Society*.

Another *negativity* that represents a specific type of topical inobedience is *counter-use* (LEITE, 2007; LEITE, 2015). *Counter-use* is topical because it necessarily implies a singular practice in the space that goes against the normatively expected uses. *Counter-use* challenges the atopic city above all because it is insubordinate to the uninterrupted flow of everyday social practices and expected uses of spaces.

*Counter-use* would thus be the *other topic*; and not the *atopic other*, as Byung-Chul Han puts it when he refers to an *atopic other* as the one who has no *place in society*, as the *topos* of consumption. The idea requires parallel reasoning: by losing track of the *other's* condition of atopy (because they are not on the *topos* of consumption), we equalize everyone and ourselves in the *hell of*
the equal. In other words, we are all in a city that breaks down the singularities of places, transforming all places into one: the place of consumption. If all places are part of a single practice, consumption, the differentiation of places ceases to exist. Everything becomes consumable and the main practice becomes the consumption of places (LEITE, 2007). As a single place, the city destroys the dissonant topos and transforms itself into an Atopic reality. We can therefore say that the Atopic City is precisely that which is based on and only recognizes places of consumption. If all places are of and for consumption, then the places subsumed by consumption become smooth and the city becomes Atopic. All other topoi, which represent some negativity, are not recognized — or if they are, they are also rejected. The condition of Atopy is not a given. Atopy is the result of power relations in the Consumer Society.

Leveled by the smoothness of the commercialization of the world, the Atopic City transforms the spaces of difference into niches for consumption (consumable heterotopias). The city is Atopic precisely when it denies otherness and transforms it into consumable heterotopias. Transmuted into mere items of distinction through consumption in the market for symbolic goods, difference is subsumed in the equality of being-value.

The negativity of the atopic other is subtracted from consumption. Thus, the consumer society aims to eliminate atopic otherness in favor of consumable, heterotopic differences. Difference is a positivity, as opposed to otherness. Today, negativity is disappearing everywhere. Everything is flattened so that it can become an object of consumption (HAN, 2014c, p. 10).

The notion of counter-use presupposes both a deliberate attitude of action and a symbolic dimension of conduct, since there remains a notion, albeit blurred, of confronting the expected standards of conduct and a certain subversion of the expected uses of spaces. Acting always refers to other beings, to use Heidegger’s expression. Counter-use is a phatic action, circumscribed in a contingent environment and subject to the randomness of being now; and only through a

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2 Heidegger defines factual life as “[...] being-there itself as there in any open expression regarding its being in its ontological character” (2012, p. 12).
The hermeneutics of phaticity is it possible to discern the ontology of this action, which is therefore "subject" to the temporalities and spatialities offered by the phaticity of everyday public life. For this reason, a hermeneutic understanding of the ontological character of this action is of interest, so that we can understand when (time) and where (space) the possibility of this being counter-using an environment occurs. Still with Heidegger, I would like to argue that it would only be possible to understand counter-uses in singular everyday concrete situations, such as "the being-there itself on each occasion" (HEIDEGGER, 2012, p.22). This dispels any attempt to standardize the action that counter-uses. There is no expected or fixed way for actors to act in this interactive "game" of uses and counter-uses of spaces: "Being-there operates in the how of being now" (p.25).

Counter-use thus generates another topic because it tears apart the smoothness of the atopia of consumption and creates places of contestation. Counter-use has its ontology in the dissatisfaction and disobedience generated by the lack of adaptation to the regulated spaces of the atopic city.

It is therefore necessary to consider — epistemologically — the insertion of the social “actor” in everyday contexts of interaction. Gadamer does this by using the idea of play as hermeneutic self-experience. With this, he intends to overcome the “being” and “essence” debate, which would separate objectivist and subjectivist approaches, alluding to insertion into interactive processes as a “being-absorbed-in-the-game” (GADAMER, 2011). The basic idea is that the “subject” itself is formed in the act of playing. He neither precedes the rules of the playful social game (as the transcendental idealism of neo-Kantism and pure phenomenology wanted), nor enters it through predetermined structures (as structuralism supposed). The hermeneutic “subject” is constituted in the act of the game and determined by it. In this way, the true “subject” of the game is the game itself (and, as Certeau [1996] would say, tactical game). In the terms that interest us: everyday life, whether playful or conflictual, is always contingent. Neither is it structurally determined, nor is it fickle to the meanings of the individualized “I” or the “interactive I” (which, although interactive, is still only the “I-who-interacts”, in the more radical perspective of pure phenomenology or even symbolic
interactionism). From Gadamer’s perspective, there is a subtle variant in relation to phenomenological and interactionist approaches: there is no such thing as a being who interacts: the being is the game of everyday interactions. It is in this context that the social being is formed, immersed in and dependent on the rules of the game (variable in each situation and configured in each specific game) of everyday life itself.

Counter-uses are games of daily and contingent action that generate negative tensions insofar as they are based on different forms of inobedience, founding practices that challenge regulatory and/or hyper-flow-positive environments. Indeed, few actions challenge the disciplinary order; but many clash with it, and these actions are generally located in a kind of underlife: they are in the underground or marginal spaces of the contemporary city. This underlife is topical. Counter-use is topical. Those who survive don't have their "own" (CERTEAU, 1996), but they make marks in the smooth space of the atopic city and create places. Places that are on the margins of the smoothed spaces, neutralized and transformed into tops of consumption. These places of counter-use and topical underlife represent the creative possibilities of the Atopic City’s disobedience.

The possible transformative character of counter-uses is diffuse and unlikely. They are clearly more contestatory and unsubmissive actions than normatively organized revolutionary acts. They reveal much more dissatisfaction, sometimes random and disordered, than propositions about life; a counter-use expresses more rebellion and aims more at deconstructing what bothers us than it represents an action for orderly change. This makes it difficult to know the practical scope of a counter-use, since it arises more from a desire for confrontation and non-conformity, sometimes as transitory as the insubmissive and fleeting journey through guarded and forbidden urban spaces.

4 ATOPIC FOUR: RETURN AND UPRISING

Nietzsche understood that nihilism was the only and inevitable refuge for those who could no longer count on the redemption of the promise of modern
emancipation, whether through Christianity or the option of scientific rationality: "The downfall of the moral interpretation of the world, which no longer has any sanction after having tried to take refuge in the afterlife: it ends in nihilism" (NIETZSCHE, 2008. P. 27)

For Nietzsche, overcoming nihilism would be the most effective way of overcoming the loss of meaning in the world with the "death of God" and the loss of the eschatological meaning of Christian theodicy and its conception of a transcendent salvation. However, only by refuting the values of consumer society, which transforms everything into value, would it be possible to rise above the despair and helplessness of Christian metaphysics and Western reason. Nietzsche's approach that results in the possibility of overcoming or consummating nihilism has its origins in his reflections on the "eternity of time": the death of God means the loss of the ideas of beginning and final meaning (BARBOSA, 2010), a fact that leads him to rethink the idea of the linearity of time, as Diego S. Meca points out:

Everyone knows that the linear conception of time ended up being historically imposed in the West as a consequence of the triumph of Christianity, which supplanted and replaced the circular conception of ancient paganism. In fact, this new linear conception was nothing more than the most direct consequence of the new Christian understanding of what happened to the world in terms of creation, original sin, redemption and eschatology. So, according to this new conception, the world has a beginning in the past, which is creation, and will have an end in the future with the parousia, when the Redeemer will return triumphant in his condition as supreme universal judge. The result is a linear temporal structure, with past, present and future." (MECA, 2013, p.187)

The overcoming (or consummation) of nihilism and the idea of eschatology in Nietzsche is more or less presented in aphorism 361 of The Gay Science, when a demon reveals that we would have to live everything again that we have already lived, without there being anything new in our lives; that all pain and pleasure will always return. The eternal return in Nietzsche condenses the rupture with the linearity of time and rehearses his most forceful criticism of Christian modernity. Being condemned to live all over again is a post-metaphysics that inaugurates an existential perspective of being. On the other hand, the idea of overcoming
nihilism depends on the way in which the being sees its nihilistic condition: the idea of redemption is also metaphorized in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in the allegory in which a black snake (nihilism) tries to suffocate a shepherd, who, if only he could get rid of it by biting off its head. In doing so, the shepherd frees himself and laughs, laughs a lot.

This allegory therefore teaches that overcoming nihilism depends on a supreme decision of the will by which we free our existence from nihilism and take the first step towards an *über*, a beyond of man (Mensch) as a new way of being and existing. (MECA, 3013, p. 185)

This man freed from nihilism is precisely the new man, the Übermensch. By freeing himself from nihilism, he also frees himself from the sense of helplessness generated by the crisis of the high values of modern society (represented by the “death of God”). Overcoming linear time allows us not only to escape from the teleology of history that emerged with the celebration of the idea of Christian salvation and modern emancipation; it allows us to remake ourselves by being able to experience another worldview of the world of life: life no longer as a normative obligation, but as a contingent possibility; existence and time no longer as a divine design, but as the result of contingent experience (the here and now) and free will that is capable of reworking the past, the present and the future:

Living time as an eternal return means that the three dimensions of time occur simultaneously in each instant of lived temporality, which makes the instant equal to eternity. At every instant, reworking the present and the past and building the future means that, at the same time, we condense the past and the future into the present, as eternal return. As we can now easily understand, the eternal return is nothing other than *amor fati* (love of fate) and the will to affirmative power with which we give meaning to our existence. (MECA, 2013, p. 190)

The life that emerges from the post-nihilist experience can only be understood without the ties of normative reason and religious metaphysical determinations. The reworking of time takes place in the phatic dimension of everyday life: “(...) ‘Phatic life’ means: our own being-there as ‘there’ in any open expression with regard to its being in its ontological character” (HEIDEGGER,
2012, p. 14). In his Analysis of Dasein, Heidegger points out precisely that "The 'essence' of Dasein lies in its existence" (2012, p. 139). This existence, however, needs to be understood as a phenomenon, as "what-is-shown-in-itself" (2012, p.103).

The showing of being, being revealed in its clearest expression, makes phenomenology an analysis of being-not-covered. The phenomenological expression of being-there as “there” is in line with the being that reveals itself beyond the linear and restricted temporality of the metanarratives of emancipation through reason or salvation through institutionalized religion. Overcoming nihilism implies being-in-the-world without disguise: immersed in its non-linear everyday life that allows it to rethink the meaning of life: to reinterpret itself and the world.

The perception of the non-linearity of infinite time and the finite dimension of being, which is being-for-death, impacts on our visions of change:

From an ethical point of view, the eternal return repositions the problem of the meaning of life and the purpose of the world from the perspective of the incessant creation of new configurations within effectiveness alone. More precisely, what fulfills the Nietzschean program of overcoming Christian teleology is the world thought of from the perspective of the eternal return, with the will to power as the dynamic of eternal recurrence (BARBOSA, 2010, p. 88).

The eternal return can materialize in various ways. One of them lies in the seasons. Fall, winter, spring, summer. When the last season ends, time stumbles in its linearity and falls, like the leaves, again in the fall. The cycle of social life begins again. Curved time returns and contingency can always be used to experience the past and the future in the present. The Flow of the Atopic City repeats itself every season, but not in a linear way: it also bends to the same seasons that repeat themselves in the eternal return of the infinite present. Consummating nihilism would be the equivalent of remaining a mere value-being, after which “there is nothing more”. The transvaluation of values, necessary to overcome our alienating nihilistic condition, and that of being-value-merchandise, requires a “decision of will” that involves refusing and strongly opposing the Atopy of life and the contemporary city and its supposedly smooth and linear positive
flows. The new city calls for negativities that contest mere life; it demands a transvalued Übermensch: simple, topical, serene, a being-for-death in its condition of infinite return and consequent upheaval. And one that is as capable of laughing at the world as at itself.
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