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Made a Moby-Dick: an Organizational Reading of Paulo Guedes' Privatist Monomania as a Discursive Strategy of Neoliberal Authoritarian Leadership in Brazil

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Abstract

Authoritarian leadership is a challenge for organizational analysis. The perplexity regarding how we have accepted its occurrence various times throughout history runs through the thinking of intellectuals such as Adorno, Habermas, Sloterdijk, and Arendt. A complementary way of studying it is through literature. Literature has enormous potential for interpreting the world and, given the creativity of its authors, it can deal with complex themes, characters, and events, with a freedom that, due to its methodological rigor, science often does not allow. As organizations are also constituted discursively, the textual elements of literature give us an epistemological freedom, enabling analyses that can address traditional organizational topics, such as leadership, in another way. This theoretical essay proposes to use a classic of literature, the novel *Moby-Dick*, to conduct a critical discourse analysis, based on Norman Fairclough, of the neoliberal-authoritarian monomaniac leadership of Paulo Guedes, the Minister for the Economy of Jair Bolsonaro's government. The objective is to demonstrate the potential and richness of using literature combined with discourse analysis to understand organizational phenomena. The interpretation will be guided by the leadership style of the character Ahab, ship captain of the Pequod, who as a result of his obsession with hunting the giant white sperm whale, Moby Dick, leads his vessel to a tragic end, similar to what has occurred to Brazil due to the hatred toward the State present in Paulo Guedes'

discourses.

Keywords: authoritarianism; neoliberalism; leadership; monomania; Moby-Dick.

Introduction: authoritarian leadership as a challenge for organizational analysis

Leadership is a recurrent topic in Administration that, in the academic mainstream, has been developed by concentrating on identifying styles or models that would provide a guide to the best practices for managing people, especially in private companies (Pietraszewski, 2020; Zhu, Song, Zhu, & Johnson, 2019). In the articles that review and categorize the most influential theories on the topic in the area, there is a perceived emphasis on identifying elements that lead to a sort of good leadership for businesses (Graeff, 1997; King, 1990; Van Seters & Field, 1990). However, analyses that critically study people in leadership situations are much less frequent, primarily ones that involve violent or authoritarian discourses, attitudes, and decisions that are damaging to specific social groups, especially minorities, and in various types of organizations, whether public or private (Pereira, Maranhão, & Rezende, 2018; Vizeu, 2011). As Alvesson (2020) discusses, despite the field being highly fragmented – given the great variety of theories that have emerged in a short space of time, primarily in the second half of the 20th century – there appears to be convergence toward leadership superpositivity (one that is only capable of doing good). That does not mean that there are no debates about pernicious leaderships in Administration – the emergence of Abusive Theory, based on the works of Tepper (2000), is a relevant example in that sense (Fischer, Tian, Lee, & Hughes, 2021). Recent reviews of the academic literature, however, such as those of Zhu et al. (2019) and Pietraszewski (2020), show that theories along these lines still remain less present that those more geared toward positive views about leadership.

For the critical analyses, that is not by chance: leadership hyperpositivity also represents a discursive strategy for legitimizing a particular ideology in Administration (Cunliffe, 2009; Tragtenberg, 2005). According to some current critics, the discussion about these forms of leadership is a powerful discursive resource for promoting deletions in the organizational environment, especially of conflicts that exist in organizations, primarily given the antagonism caused by the capital/labor relationship (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012; Learmonth & Morrell, 2017). It is in this sense that the very use of the term **leader** by Administration reflects that specific discursive strategy. According to Learmonth and Morrell (2017), "the terms 'leader' and 'follower' are increasingly substituting expressions such as 'manager' and 'worker' and becoming routine ways of talking about hierarchical groups within organizations" (p. 257). One specific ideological component, however, has contributed to the hyperpositive reading of heroic leadership in Administration (Collinson, Jones, & Grint, 2018), which is the advent of neoliberalism. Recently, a wide body of literature has shown the authoritarian roots of that social phenomenon (Brown, 2019; Chamayou, 2020; Dardot & Laval, 2016; Gago, 2017; Han, 2014; Lazzarato, 2013; Safatle, 2021). According to Learmonth and Morrell (2017), "the exponential growth of the appeal of leadership since the 1980s has occurred during a period that has also witnessed the rise of neoliberalism and the consequent generalized defeat of union power" (p. 266). The analyses that overvalue the positivity of leadership therefore appear to focus more on the perspective of managers than of those being managed.

Leadership has therefore become a typical discursive resource of neoliberal society, in which all of the mythical characteristics of the hero are found in the figure of people in a managerial

position in organizations (Collinson et al., 2018). The language of leadership therefore gains much strength when neoliberalism is established as that phenomenon of domination of the corporate logic in social life, as a "new world reason" (Dardot & Laval, 2016). In the sociological literature, the analysis of neoliberalism has been recurrent as containing a privatist monomania, which puts the leader-entrepreneur-individual in opposition to the collective, understanding the former, as Rosana Pinheiro-Machado (2019) does, as "a machine for grinding down collectivities, de-democratizing, disaggregating, and individualizing" (p. 49). Besides being established as a process of breaking down the collective, neoliberalism has taken root as an instance of control of the subjective or a device of management and domination of psychic suffering, making the economy, as Safatle (2021) would say, "the continuation of psychology by other means," an authoritarian mechanism of subjective domination through the logic of productivity. Neoliberal authoritarianism is therefore discursively built around a common enemy, the State that represents the failed social collective, and in favor of a hero, the individual-company. Thus, it has "as a main characteristic the generalization of competition as a rule of conduct and the company as a model of subjectivation" (Dardot & Laval, 2016, p. 17).

Although the literature is not majoritarian, as the works of Mackey, Ellen III, McAllister, and Alexander (2021) and Zhu et al. (2019) indicate, the concerns about these authoritarian leaderships, usually called destructive, have increased in recent years in Administration. What is observed in these studies, however, is that they do not focus on analyzing the context (neoliberalism) much and continue to favor the relationship between negative perceptions of authoritarian leaderships and negative results in terms of productivity, creativity, performance, or profit in private companies (Bodla, Tang, Dick, & Mir, 2019; Chiang, Chen, Liu, Akutsu, & Wang , 2021; Guo et al., 2018; Hiller, Sin, Ponnapalli, & Ozgen, 2019; Karakitapoğlu-Aygün, Gumusluoglu, Erturk, & Scandura, 2021; Shu, Chiang, & Lu, 2016). This leads to a number of questions: if authoritarian leadership led to positive results or expectations in terms of profitability, performance, creativity, or productivity, would it be acceptable? Or should it not have been refuted, from the beginning, by a critical reflection that showed it to be incompatible with ethical assumptions of respect, equality, or justice and with democracy itself? These questions are relevant because, in other areas of social sciences and humanities in which leadership is critically studied, the understanding it usually reached that it is ethically and politically reprehensible, even when it obtains positive material results, as in the case of the leadership policies of countries that have achieved great economic recoveries (that is, positive material results) at the cost of persecution and extermination of opponents and minorities, as in the case of Hitler's Germany and of the Soviet Union under Stalin, of which Hannah Arendt's (1989) analysis is a classic example.

Reflections in this sense about authoritarian and antidemocratic leaderships, however, still remain in their infancy in Administration, but they are old (and continue to grow and be relevant) in other areas of knowledge, especially in political science (Frantz & Ezrow, 2011; Decker, Rothe, Weissmann, Kiess, & Brähler, 2013; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Runciman, 2018), in sociology (Aho, 2020; Pascale, 2019; Solt, 2012), and in history (Finchelstein, 2017; Moore Jr., 1966; Rollemberg & Quadrat, 2011); in the latter, the body of literature is so vast that it is unviable to adequately cite it. Fields such as economics (De Luca, Litina, & Sekeris, 2015; Vasilyeva & Libman, 2020), law (Acunha, Arafa, & Benvindo, 2018; Ginsburg & Moustafa, 2008), and psychology (Napier & Jost, 2008) have also demonstrated a growing interest in this discussion. Even in more distant areas, such as biology, studies have emerged that compare different ways of obtaining cooperation in the leader-followers

relationship in groups (Hooper, Kaplan, & Boone, 2010; King, Johnson, & Van Vugt, 2009; Van Vugt & Von Rueden, 2018). The most well-known analyses on the topic are found in philosophy, however, especially with the discussions conducted by Adorno (1969), Hannah Arendt (1989), Sloterdijk (2012), and Habermas (2012) about totalitarian regimes of the 20th century. The voluntary adhesion of many to authoritarian leaderships presented them with a challenge to the rational understanding of the world. This is a perplexity that again befalls contemporaneity, given the authoritarian impulse seen to be on the rise in various countries in the world, at the start of this 21st century, including in Brazil (Giroux, 2018; Nobre, 2020; Pinheiro-Machado, 2019).

This essay proposes that it is essential to adopt an organizational view of this debate, given that much of the criticisms of authoritarian leaderships in other fields is based on a wider relationship, of popular adhesion of the masses to authoritarian regimes. The analyses of Habermas (2012) and Arendt (1989), for example, adopt that perspective for organizations by resorting to Max Weber. In his discussions on rationality, Weber identifies correspondences between types of domination and types of leadership, connected by rationality, by tradition, or by charisma. Weber did not live through and did not analyze Nazism, but his theory on charismatic leaderships is still widely used to explain the insurgent authoritarianism of the era (Breuilly, 2011; Kershaw, 2004). However, Hannah Arendt (1989) presents another possibility of relating authoritarian leaderships and bureaucracies. She disagreed with the explanation of that phenomenon based on exclusively charismatic traits of its leaders. According to Baehr (2017), Arendt saw in Hitler a sort of "fascination without charisma" (p. 226), an allure that was reinforced by the silence of the bureaucracies. For Arendt (1989), the great risk of totalitarian violence did not emanate from an extraordinary leadership that supposedly seduced the masses, but from the whole bureaucratic functional body in agreement with the evil that it evoked. The origin of the leadership did not matter as much as its effect, propagated by the organizations under its authority. In Baehr's (2017) analysis, "for Arendt, leaders are not distinct from the masses; they are totally intertwined with them" (p. 222). Thus, authoritarian leadership can come from anyone providing others trivialize the evil it defends or practices – it does not necessarily involve being a heroine or hero with special charisma. It is in this sense that Sanders (2019) argues that "Arendt's major reservations with relation to charismatic leadership coincide with his general aversion to 'heroic leadership'" (p. 758). According to Arendt, it is not the aura of leaders with their personal (miraculous, bellicose, intellectual) achievements that should be the focus of apprehension, but the fact that the "credibility of totalitarian rulers essentially depends on the organization they lead," that is, on people's deliberate blindness in letting them lead the organizations they direct or on the incapacities of the opposition to confront them" (Baehr, 2017, p. 229). With Arendt, we therefore see a possibility of considering authoritarian leadership within a wider organizational context, which connects bureaucracies, ethics, and politics (Lederman, 2018).

The discourse used by authoritarian leaderships to convince has been widely associated with the idea of charisma, but, currently, many studies have emerged that analyze these same discourses as strategies of mobilization and domination, like there are in relation to the extremist insurrection movement, because it strongly reverberates on social media, making it quite an intense field of analysis today (Fernandes & Lima Neto, 2020). Interpreting all authoritarianism as the product of a charismatic leadership also leads to a deletion. Similarly to what happens with the heroic hyperpositive reading, it deletes the shared responsibilities of the various people involved who, by directly supporting or trivializing the violence, help set up and sustain the violent domination. This

implies the cynicism that Sloterdijk (2012) mentions to explain the rise of the Nazi State. It is not only the leader who is cynical, but everyone who pretends to ignore their threats.

In this paper, it is argued that a good way of facing that challenge of comprehending authoritarian leadership is to understand its strategic discourses of domination under neoliberalism. In that sense, the retrieval of a critical analysis about leadership is fundamental. One of the most emblematic ways that human creativity has established when facing authoritarian leaderships has been through the arts. That confrontation lies in Goya's paintings that portray the violence of 1808, in Picasso's *Guernica*, in Ai Wei Wei's arts, in Mo Yan's and Orrhan Pamuk's literature, in Orwell's *1984*, in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, and in Elza Soares' music.

And, for that, the literature can help us, especially a reading of *Moby-Dick,* since, according to Bikundo (2018), Pellar (2017), and Toni Morisson (1988), the main guide for interpreting that work is the antislavery, antiracist, and antiauthoritarianism struggle.

Leaderships and discursive strategies: literature and organizations

Discourses are social practices that build our perception of the real world, as the analyses of the so-called linguistic turn of the social sciences argue. That understanding also subsequently reached organizational analysis (Chia & King, 2001; Czarniawska, 2004; Westwood & Linstead, 2001) and has produced a series of studies that analyze the relationships between discourses and organizations, emphasizing different discursive elements, such as narratives (Gabriel, 2004), discursive strategies (Benke & Wodak, 2003), life stories or storytelling (Boje, Alvarez, & Schooling, 2001), intertextuality (Maclean, Harvey, Sillince, & Golant, 2018), corporate rhetoric (Linstead, 2001), dialogues (Gergen, Gergen, & Barrett, 2004), and silence (Fletcher & Watson, 2007), among other aspects. The discussions around the possibilities of analyzing discourses in organizations are very vast, and the variety of approaches is very wide, as indicated by the debate among Iedema (2011), Alvesson and Kärreman (2011), and Mumby (2011), but, among them, the proposals by Teun Van Dijk (2013), Wodak (2001), and Fairclough (1989, 1995) stand out. The common thread that is extracted for organizations, based on those different approaches, is that the organizational world is also constituted and interpreted through discourses that are permanently in dispute.

Leadership and discourse, as social practices, are relevant for organizational analysis, primarily because they are relational practices, involving social dynamics of interaction and interpretation between the people involved, as Fairhurst and Uhl-Bien (2012) highlight. One result of that is that the discourses executed by leaderships affect the social life of the people that follow them. The narratives driven by leaderships produce effects that can be inspiring or devastating, as Robert Shiller (2019) discusses in his book on narrative economics. Based on that, it is common for authoritarian leaderships to use specific discursive strategies to impose their will on social groups (Cindoglu & Unal, 2016), but the effects of that are usually tragic. Studies conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, for example, indicate that the recommendations of Democratic governors for residents to stay at home significantly influenced the reduction of mobility in the regions with a Democratic tendency in the United States (USA) (Grossman, Kim, Rexer, & Thirumurthy, 2020); that is, they directly impacted the behavior of those people who recognized the legitimacy of that leadership and, with that, they saved many lives (Barrios & Hochberg, 2021). Analyses of deaths from Covid-19, in turn, have shown that they were greater in regions that supported the denialist

discourse carried out by ex-president Donald Trump (Gao & Radford, 2021; Yamey & Gonsalves, 2020). Bruce, Cavgias, Meloni, and Remígio (2022), in turn, highlight how feminine leaderships in municipalities had a positive impact on reducing Covid-19 deaths and admissions per 100 thousand in Brazil, as they followed the international guidelines and not the denialist position of President Jair Bolsonaro, which was similar to that of Trump. Leadership discourses therefore produce concrete effects through different discursive strategies, and as Ladkin (2020) discusses regarding the case of Donald Trump, it is perhaps time to stop romanticizing them and to focus on the effects they can cause.

More comprehensively speaking, discursive strategies are words, images, or structures of language used to influence people through discourse (Kahl & Grodal, 2016), or as Hansson (2005) states, they are ways of arguing with a view to obtaining specific results. More restrictively, Ruth Wodak (2015) works with the idea of discursive strategy or linguistic strategy as a symbolic characterization of the real realized by linguistic means. In this sense, they would serve to classify groups or social phenomena in order to intervene in a particular context (Benke & Wodak, 2003; Kwon, Clarke, & Wodak, 2014). Benke and Wodak (2003) therefore group a number of strategies they call linguistic according to their dominant social function, such as constructive strategies – which attempt to create groups (Us vs. Them); strategies of perpetuation – which attempt to maintain or reproduce already established groups; strategies of transformation – which attempt to transform the *status quo* into something different; and destructive strategies – which attempt to demolish an image or current situation. The meaning of discursive strategy which is sought in this article, however, is not related with this logic of categorization, but with that of utilization of some linguistic elements to promote a specific domination, as analyzed by O'Brien (2015) regarding the concept of individualism in the USA, understood as a discursive strategy for "prioritizing individual instead of collective activities and celebrating actions initiated voluntarily instead of social obligatory commitments" (p. 173). Along these lines, the critical analysis of discourse as carried out by Norman Fairclough (1989, 1995, 2012a, 2012b) better fulfills this purpose because it emphasized the systematic use of some discursive elements to maintain the dominant ideology in society, as done in the works of Ramadhona (2021), Kirton and Greene (2019), Felicia (2018), and Conrad, Flores, and Fossá (2017).

Fairclough (1989, 1995, 2012a, 2012b) argues that critical social science should reflect on the causes and possibilities of social change, where critical discourse analysis would be capable of pointing to elements in the speech and texts produced by the dominant classes that indicate their effort precisely in the opposite direction, that of preventing such transformations. Fairclough (1989) therefore argues that there are three stages of critical discourse analysis: description of the text, interpretation of the relationship between the text and social interaction, and explanation of the relationship between the interaction and social context. Based on that, in order to demonstrate that behavior of the dominant classes, the starting point is the principle that discourses are not neutral and do not operate in a vacuum, and they should be considered according to the social position of whoever socially produces the text (spoken or written), thus making the connections between description and text, interpretation and interaction, and explanation and context in order to critically analyze it. Fairclough then uses the notion of hegemony to say that, in society, there are a number of ways of building social meaning of the discourses that are dominant, while others are marginal, subversive, alternative. In order to remain hegemonic, a discourse therefore assumes different strategies, valuing specific elements of a social category, emphasizing desired behaviors,

or praising certain groups and depreciating others. The notion of individualism presented by O'Brien (2015) is one example of a discursive strategy in the sense of the valuation/depreciation opposition of certain behaviors in society (the valuation of the private and of the particular in US society to prevent social mobilizations around the collective and the public). The analysis proposed in this paper follows that discursive strategy approach as a way of maintaining, in Brazil, neoliberal, conservative, and authoritarian hegemonic thinking. However, as a guide for analyzing that discursive strategy, the parallel with literature will be used.

Literature is a powerful tool for understanding the world. Yazell, Petersen, Marx, and Fessenbecker (2021) analyze the interdisciplinarity that exists between the social sciences and literature, elaborating a typology of uses and even identifying the most used works and characters, in which Robinson Crusoe occupies first place. According to those authors, the social sciences and philosophy are full of references to the literary arts used to help in understanding social phenomena. Various examples can be cited, such as those of Marx with Balzac and Shakespeare, Freud with his mentions of Virgil, Elizabeth Hutchins and the works of Charles Dickens, and Boaventura de Sousa Santos and *Alice in Wonderland.* Along these lines, literature has also been used to analyze leadership, even in studies closer to the mainstream of Administration (Coutu, 2006). The reading of good works of fiction, according to LeBaron (2009), is important because they are "opportunities for in-depth discussions using exploratory questions that help the readers to learn about leadership and about themselves" (p. 335). On its website, Standford Graduate School of Business, for example, even offers a course taught by Scotty McLennan, entitled "The Business World: Moral and Spiritual Inquiry through Literature," whose listing says it uses novels and plays as a basis for examining the moral and spiritual aspects of corporate leadership and of the environment in which business is done (Stanford, 2015). What the present article proposes, therefore, is to use literature as a guide for critically analyzing one discursive strategy of authoritarian leadership – the obsession with a particular theme (monomania) – where the literary work chosen to carry out that analysis was *Moby-Dick*, by Herman Melville.

There are many academic analyses that use literature to understand social phenomena associated with organizations, to the extent that Glaubitz (2016) talks about a literary turn in the field of organizational studies (Beyes, Costas, & Ortmann, 2019; Fischer, Davel, Vergara, & Ghadiri, 2007; Pinto & Ribeiro, 2018; De Cock & Land, 2006). Leadership is a social phenomenon that has been quite widely studied in this way. March and Weil (2005), for example, draw comparisons between styles of leading based on characteristics of characters from literature, using *Othello* and *King Lear*, by Shakespeare, *War and* Peace, by Leon Tolstoy, and *Don Quijote*, by Miguel de Cervantes. Shoup and Hinrichs (2020) also address that same theme based on literary narratives, again referencing *Don Quijote*, as well as *Pride and Prejudice*, by Jane Austin, and *Moby-Dick*, by Herman Melville. Sievers (2013) also brings an analysis of *Moby-Dick* to the organizational context, focusing on the question of leadership. These relationships are possible because discourses, as the social practices they are, are as consolidated in literary writing as in the organizational environment, as discourses are social practices and organizations are also discursively constituted (Chia & King, 2001; Gelis-Filho, 2012; Leclercq-Vandelannoitte, 2011); that is, as Helena Brandão (2002) argues, discourse is a social production that creates meanings for us and, in doing so, creates our own notion of the real.

Texts, taken as elements through which discourses materialize, help us to understand the social dynamics that are behind the texts themselves (ideologies, values, political positions, and world views). One of the ways of conducting that textual analysis of discourses is through the use of fictional or literary narratives that allow us to establish parallels, metaphors, themes, and dramatic arcs that help us to discursively understand the social world (Glaubitz, 2016; Savage, Cornelissen, & Franck, 2017). Shoup and Hinrichs (2020) say, for example, that "great literature" would be "the main vehicle through which cultures communicate, shape, and teach values to their own culture and to the world in general" (p. 15). In addition, literature allows us creative freedom of interpretation, which Beyes et al. (2019) call epistemological freedom, enabling less rigid ways of understanding social phenomena than those traditionally used by the scientific world. Various works have therefore related great literary works and their authors with organizational questions, such as Kafka (Beyes, 2019; Caygill, 2019), Borges (De Cock, 2000), Toni Morrison (Jurkiewicz, 2006), Pynchon (Beyes, 2009), Houellebecq (Cnossen, Dekker, & Taskin, 2017), D. F. Wallace (Michaelson, 2016), Murakami (Śliwa, Spoelstra, Sørensen, & Land, 2012), as well as Shakespeare, Cervantes, Jane Austen, Tolstoy – as already mentioned – and Herman Melville, from whom we will analyze elements of *Moby-Dick*[1].

Leadership, monomania, and a devastating capitalist company: organizational readings of *Moby-Dick*

"Moby Dick is known before knowing it," the writer and professor of creative writing Johnathan Lethem (2018, p. 701) states, since even those who have never read it have already heard of its content. The literary richness and complexity, the density of the interpretations, and the universality of the themes of this work of Herman Melville, originally published in 1851, have already placed it as a great novel of US literature (Bloom, 2007; Kazin, 2007; Philbrick, 2011; Selby, 1999; Spanos, 1995, 2008; Zoellner, 1973). *Moby-Dick* is a deep and long piece of work, with many characters and that articulates various know-hows: metaphors and biblical references; cetology; Shakespearean, Miltonian, and Byronian allegories; existentialist reflections; moral dilemmas; and discourses about ethnicities and races, friendships and admiration, terror and tyranny, industry, capitalism and development, ecology, and navigation (King, 2019; López, 2014; Kopcewicz, 2012; Parsons, 2012). One of its most notable elements, however, is the theme of obsession, portrayed in one of its main characters, Captain Ahab.

Ahab – a character whose first appearance occurs only in chapter 28 of the book – is a white man almost 60 years old, the captain of the whaler Pequod, which sets sail from Nantucket, Massachusetts, USA, on a worldwide pursuit of a giant white sperm whale, called Moby Dick. In a previous confrontation with Moby Dick, in which it escaped him, Ahab's leg was mutilated and he went on to use a white prosthetic, made of whale bone. In Melville's work, Ahab is obsessed with killing the giant whale that ripped off his leg. For that reason, he recruits a multiethnic crew – Persians, indigenous Indians, whites, and blacks from America and unidentified islands – which he leads toward this single objective, which is indicated as a monomania. Ahab is described as having a "dominating severity," with a view with "a resolute obstinacy, incapable of surrendering," and, through the discourses he gives, he enthralls, terrorizes, and controls his crew (Melville, 1851/2002, pp. 130-131). The violence that Ahab evokes is a discursive violence directed at those under his command, to build in them the same hatred he has of what he calls a leviathan of the seas.

Throughout the book, Captain Ahab makes lengthy imprecations against Moby Dick, he blasphemes, and he shows obsession, self-absorption, and impetuousness. He spares no effort or people to achieve his objective. Kopcewicz (2012) highlights "Ahab's selfish evil, his stature of demigod, and his desire to transcend the limitations of men through various forms of sacrifice" (p. 40). As is popularly known, Ahab's monomaniac leadership leads to the destruction of the whaler and almost the whole crew, in a tragic confrontation with Moby Dick. Monomania is, for him, a discursive strategy of domination that leads everyone to tragedy.

Monomania was categorized as a psychiatric disease by Jean-Étienne Esquirol, between 1810 and 1838 (Duffy, 2010; Tambling, 2003; Walsh, 2014). According to Walsh (2014), it was defined as "a fixed idea," that is, "a single pathological concern in a sane mind" (p. 39). In the *History of Madness in the Classical* Age, Foucault (1978) comments on that "scandal that represents an individual who displays madness on one point but remains reasonable on all others" (p. 571). According to him, monomania formed part of the scientification process of the disciplinary power of medicine, especially of madness, which extended to other instances of modern social life. Duffy (2010) and Walsh (2014) show that the diagnosis of partial madness had a great impact on society, surpassing the frontiers of scientific discourse and primarily reaching literature, in works such as *The Human Beast*, by Émile Zola, of 1890, and *Moby-Dick*, as well as the works of Emily Brontë, Dostoievsky, and Edgar Allan Poe. Retrieved from the role of psychiatric pathologies in the 20th century, monomania remained as a concept, becoming a discursive discourse (Godoy, 2016), an element of discursive practice for portraying behaviors seen as insistent and socially damaging (Fairclough, 1995). In that sense, "Ahab's monomaniac search for Moby Dick became an emblematic abbreviated form for any obsessive search that destructively consumes everything," Timothy Marr (2018, p. 681) states. Ahab's monomaniac conduct therefore represents the authoritarian leadership that is presented as rational and that subjugates and sacrifices people under its influence to fulfill its own objectives. It is a violent domination that operates discursively.

In the beginning, Ahab is seen by the crew as someone who is obstinate and intelligent who "knew the course of all currents" and had "a delirious but methodical plan" (Melville, 1851/2002, pp. 193-194). Little by little, as Dowling (2010) highlights, they come to see "Ahab's somber power, charisma, and arrogance" (p. 176-177). "The rigidity of his monomania," Zoellner (1973, p. 6) tells us, and "the committed intensity of his hatred for Moby Dick, make him dogmatically affirmative," like a religious leader fighting all the evil of the world and dragging multitudes along with him. Thus, he imposes his own convictions on those under his command, demanding they take them as their own: "all your oaths to pursue the White Sperm Whale oblige just like mine; and from the heart, soul, and body, lungs and life, old Ahab is obliging," he says (Melville, 1851/2002, p. 477). He dominates the crew's imagination with promises of wealth, religious allegories, and with the discursive creation of a common enemy: Moby Dick, the great leviathan of the seas. In chapter 99, for example, Ahab promises a doubloon of gold to whoever sees the whale first and nails it to the ship's mast. According to Katie Mcgettigan (2017), "by nailing it to the mast he removes the money from circulation. However, the money continues to circulate in the mind of the crew, which exchanges it for different meanings" (p. 109). Ahab thus discursively builds a meaning for the irrational hunt of the white sperm whale, material and moral rewards. Thus, "Moby Dick personifies, for Ahab, all the obstacles that prevent him from being what he believes he could be" (Martins & Farina, 2011, p. 27), a great leader capable of overcoming nature and of leading people to their own beliefs, offering them money and honor. Moby Dick is thus not only an animal that injured Ahab, it

is something bigger, it is the central element of Ahab's discursive strategy for demonstrating his capacity for world domination, it is a civilizational challenge, as Toni Morrison (1988) highlights. There are a number of organizational analyses that a character with such characteristics therefore offers.

Ahab's monomaniac behavior can therefore be read a something that goes beyond mere leadership and assumes the role of a broader social representation. Toni Morrisson (1988) states that Ahab's monomaniac leadership is "an allegory of capitalism and of corruption" (p. 141), and long before the current discussions about the ferocity of the capitalist system in destroying the ecosystem, in Melville's novel the "allegoric meaning of the white whale is understood as brute and indifferent Nature, and Ahab, the madman who challenges that Nature." In this sense, it is a piece of work that discusses the destructive power of capital and of the consolidation of North American imperialism in the world, since according to Amy Parsons (2012), "the whaling industry was fundamental for the rise of the United States as a global economic power and it is the one that most resembles contemporary transnational capitalism" (p. 75). In Toni Morrison's (1988) critical reading of *Moby-Dick*, "on the Pequod, the multiracial, primarily foreign proletariat is working to produce merchandise, but it is diverted and converted from this work to Ahab's more significant intellectual search" (p. 142). It is about the traditional domination of labor by capital widespread in Administration, portrayed in the relationship between Ahab, who thinks and manages (he plans and leads) the endeavor, and the team, which executes his ideas until exhaustion (the manual labor in maintaining the ship and hunt for the whale). They are exploited workers who pay with their lives for the obsessions of grandness and power of the capitalist elites. Therefore, for Selby (1999), Ahab "is corporate capitalism on a cosmic scale, reflected in at least two modes of corporate power: a willingness to exploit fluid resources and a willingness to dominate weaker men" (p. 128) As Spanos (1995) states, "that madness – that 'monomania' – Melville appears to be saying, is not only Ahab's; it is Western civilization in general" (p. 124).

Due to the possibilities of organizational analysis of that novel, some even see in Melville's work a foresight of the theories of organizations. Shoup and Hinrichs (2020), for example, even state that "life in a whaling ship, as described in *Moby-Dick*, captured the principles of the classical organizational and institutional theories before those developed by social scientists such as Weber, Taylor, Follett, Mayo, and Selznick" (p. 63). It is important to recognize that the novel in fact enables complex organizational analyses, but it does not build organizational theories per se. Its biggest contributions to organizational analysis are therefore the various readings about leadership, objectives, and domination. Ahab's thinking is rational, his obsession is not a psychiatric pathology, his monomania is a social trait of an era in which goals should be persistently pursued in capitalist competition. After all, for the traditional literature on administration, managing is achieving goals. It is also for that reason that Ahab is not always read as a villain, but as a sort of tragic hero. From that perspective, according to Selby (1999), "Ahab is the hero of a truly American era who says powerful words like those of Shakespeare" (p. 53). He is the leader who embodies the desires for ascension of the middle class of small businesses that dreams of somehow becoming a Rockefeller, Dupont, Bezos, or Jobs, like Gatsby, from F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel. Selby (1999) adds that characteristic to captain Ahab, that of representing a competitive social class, since, according to him, "Ahab's monomania inflates the emerging ideology of masculinity of the middle class… [and] it becomes an exaggerated prototype of the pattern of masculine behavior that helped to ensure the global domination of American industry" (pp. 128-129).

Made a *Moby-Dick*: an analysis of Paulo Guedes' discourse

This part aims to analyze the discourses of the Minister for the Economy of Brazil, Paulo Guedes, during the first years of office of President Jair Bolsonaro. Through the notion of monomania brought by the authoritarian leadership of Captain Ahab, in *Moby-Dick*, and based on Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA), the minister's speeches are analyzed to demonstrate that they represent a discursive strategy of hatred toward the State, as a leviathan, and that they treat the Brazilian people with the same indifference that Ahab treats the crew of the Pequod. For Fairclough (1989, 1995, 2012a, 2012b), CDA is a theoretical perspective that includes various methodological possibilities for understanding the elements or moments of the social process of forming meanings and senses, which he calls semiosis. Semiosis therefore involves those meanings that are socially produced and structure our way of understanding the world, a fundamental element of which lies in the production of texts. In the semiosis of Guedes' discourse, a parallel can be established with Ahab's leadership style, his relationship with the Pequod, and the whale Moby Dick, in order to then forge a guide for analyzing his discursive strategy: the neoliberal privatist monomania, which does not shy away from being authoritarian and conservative, in order to obsessively fight the State, seen as a leviathan, while it praises the private sector as a magic solution for the social problems of Brazil. To structure that discussion, first the context is highlighted and then the relationship between the text and the discursive strategy.

The context: neoliberalism and pandemic in Brazil, a social shipwreck

At the end of 2019 and beginning of 2020, the world witnessed the great confinement that occurred in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The serious global crisis plunged large masses of the global population into poverty. The pandemic worsened the effects already felt from the precarization of work caused by the technological intensification of production lines, eliminating jobs at the same speed at which inaccessible qualifications were demanded of a large portion of workers. That pushed a high number of the workers into informality or into jobs with weak formal ties, such as food delivery and private transport services requested through apps, which has been metonymically called the uberization of the work of work (Fleming, 2017). In parallel to that, there has been an intensification of the processes of socioeconomic inequality with a major retreat of the Social Welfare States in various countries, due to the deepening of neoliberal policies worldwide (Stiglitz, 2019). Without the State's protection and adequate public policies, there has been a loss of income without rights to minimize its impact. According to World Bank analysts, as a result of the pandemic and government shortcomings in dealing with it, an additional 88 million people came to live a situation of extreme poverty in 2020. That remains a preliminary scenario, which the organization estimates may reach 115 million people and which, in 2021, should reach 150 million (Blake & Wadhwa, 2020). According to that report, it was the first time in 20 years that the amount of people in these conditions increased.

At the same time in which these phenomena occurred, in Brazil, after the 2018 elections, an far right government rose to power, becoming an example of the ill-fated synthesis derived from the "unhappy marriage between neoliberalism and moral conservatism" (Biroli, 2017, p. 25). The neoliberal-conservative regression reinforced a tendency to attack the State that worsened when the pandemic hit Brazil, which was classified as one of the worse cases of dealing with the crisis in

the world, precisely because it had dismantled its social protection apparatus shortly before the Covid-19 outbreak, with Constitutional Amendment n. 95 of 2016, regarding the "Ceiling for Public Spending," the Labor Reform (Law n. 13,467/2017), the Outsourcing Law (Law n. 13,429/2017), and the Welfare Reform (Constitutional Amendment n. 103, of 2019). Since Dilma Rousseff's impeachment, Brazil has undergone a process of democratic weakening (Santos, 2017), worsened by the violent, authoritarian, and denialist discourse on the part of politicians and supporters of Bolsonaro's government. Barbosa, Fávero, Ely, and Barbosa (2021) indicate that the political leaderships aligned with President Jair Bolsonaro, including the president himself, were responsible for the spread of 81% of the false information about treatments for Covid-19 in Brazil, carried out on Facebook, since January 1st of 2021. In addition, the socioeconomic results of that agenda have been worrying, with the worsening of the situation of social inequality with the increase in income concentration, reliving the effect caused by the dictatorial economic experience of 1964 (Souza, 2018; Uchoa-de-Oliveira, 2020), which put the country on the hunger map again, with an increase in misery, unemployment, inflation, and precarization of work (Souza, 2018). The result of that neoliberal-conservative experience has hence been a social shipwreck (Nobre, 2020; Pinheiro-Machado, 2019).

Leadership and the discursive strategy: "Brazil is an injured whale unable to move"

As Fairclough (1989, 1995, 2012b) discusses, in CDA, in order to critically understand the discourse it is first necessary to understand who enunciates it. In light of that, who is Paulo Guedes? He is an orthodox economist, who gained his PhD at the University of Chicago in the 1960s, at the height of that school's ultraliberalism, having worked for years in the financial sector. Moreover, Guedes is an authoritarian leader who uses discursive violence as a strategy of domination. This is the description given by ex-partners, ex-colleagues, and people close to him, according to profiles published by the national press when he rose politically during the 2018 presidential campaign (Baldocchi, & Motta, 2018; Costa & Bustamante, 2018; Gaspar, 2018; Infomoney, 2020; Takar & Temóteo, 2018). Guedes' leadership style is described, in these statements, as severe, polemicist, and aggressive, causing him to accumulate disaffections even among his peers, in the liberal-economic academic world he is part of and in the companies he has run. In the publications in question, the interviewees use labels such as "a strong personality" that "borders on aggressiveness," with "a certain degree of truculence," "frankness," "stubbornness," and that "is not worried about pleasing," and he is seen as a "megalomaniac" and "short-tempered," with a rhetoric full of "acid phrases" and who "defends his arguments emphatically and curses," with a "motor grader" style, that is, "he is not an easy character," thus having many similarities with the leadership style of the captain of the Pequod, such that he is described by one of his ex-colleagues as being "obsessive."

There are many similarities with Ahab's leadership style and trajectory. Like him, Guedes is an adventurous entrepreneur, viewed as a "classical speculator" (Takar & Temóteo, 2018) and seen by many in the financial market as a "brilliant strategist," a "guru." Guedes and Ahab are therefore seen as leaders who arouse an initial admiration for their intelligence and bravery and then repulsion for their aggressiveness and for not backing down from their positions. Guedes was supposedly in the habit of engaging in "lengthy rantings" against ex-colleagues and adversaries (Costa & Bustamante, 2018) and of holding meetings into the early hours of the morning without

reversing his positions, seeking to defeat his opponents through exhaustion (Gaspar, 2018; Infomoney, 2020), like Ahab in this extensive rantings against Moby Dick. And, primarily, just like the leader of the Pequod, Guedes has a monomania, a hatred toward the State similar to that of Ahab against the white whale. That characteristic would earn him criticisms for always holding an eschatological, catastrophic, and dramatic view of Brazil (Baldocchi & Motta, 2018). Just like Ahab, who in his lengthy existential and apocalyptic digressions assumes a moralist tone and justifies his obsession with Moby Dick as a divine mission, Guedes also assumes an anti-State posture as a vision guided by a fight by good against evil. It is no coincidence that his association with Jair Bolsonaro's antisystem and authoritarian discourse came easily. Guedes is, after all, "a Margaret Thatcher-style liberal," as one ex-colleague described him (Costa & Bustamante, 2018), who like Milton Friedman and the British Iron Lady did not shy away from having ties with the Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet, since he accepted an invitation to teach in the country during the dictatorship, following in the footsteps of some of his neoliberal colleagues from the University of Chicago.

Knowing who is enunciating, CDA seeks to understand how they enunciate, that is, their discursive strategy. In this sense, Paulo Guedes builds the discursive strategy of his authoritarian leadership based on three fundamental elements: (a) on the constitution of the State as a leviathan that should be fought at any cost (element A of Figure 1); (b) on the affirmation of the Brazilian people, multiethnic and diverse, just like the crew of the Pequod, as being on board a ship (Brazil) that may be sunk by that monster (the State), but whose desires and lives are invisible to the authoritarian leader that sees them as mere instruments for fighting the leviathan (element B of Figure 1); and (c) on the defense of a savior private sector, as a harpoon that will annihilate the leviathan, on an epic journey (marked by privatizations) in which good (the market/business community) definitively conquers evil (the State/public sector) (element C of Figure 1). Guedes' privatist neoliberal monomania is therefore built by combining those three discursive elements to impose on Brazilian society the idea we have of a common enemy: the State-leviathan, our own Moby Dick, against which we are capable of sacrificing ourselves to defeat. By combining these three discursive elements, Guedes wants, like Ahab did with the Pequod, that Brazilians of all classes, genders, and regions, from the public and private sector, assume as their own the goal of destroying a personal enemy that is seen, by him, as essentially perverse for the country. And he does so by provoking fear, through violent argumentation, and through the symbolism of war. Figure 1 thus shows graphically how this discursive strategy is articulated.

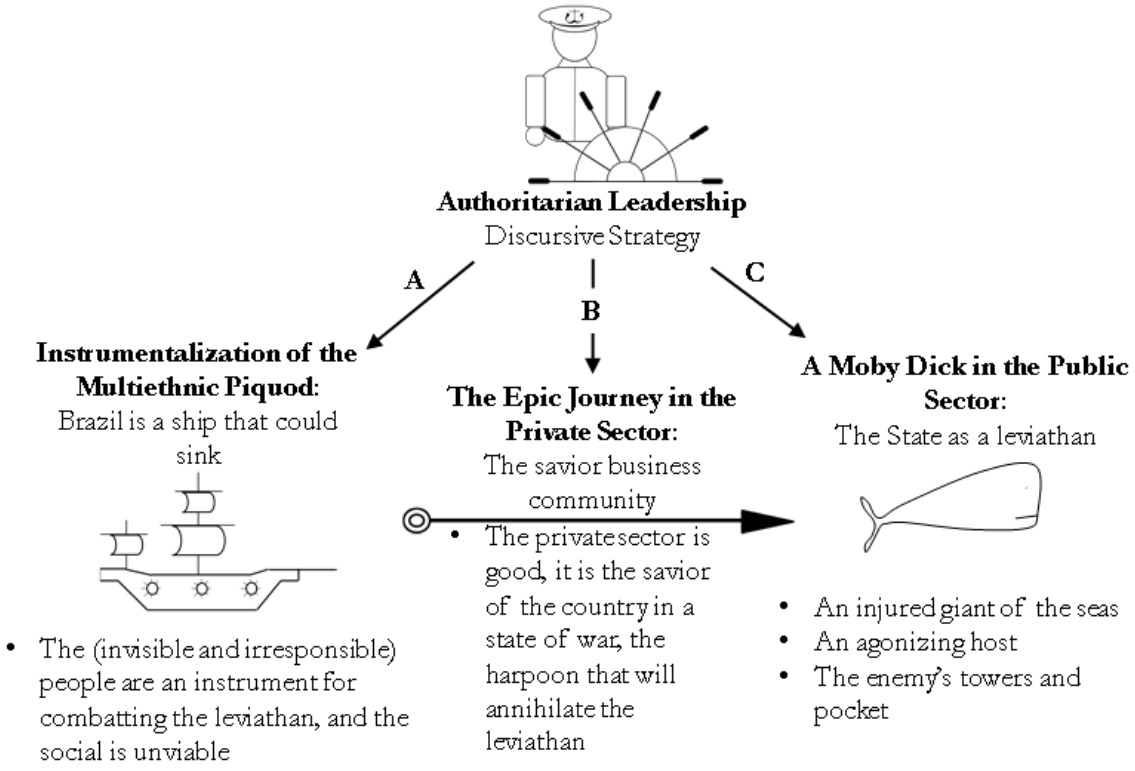

Figure 1. The Brazilian neoliberal monomania as a discursive strategy

Source: Elaborated by the author.

Table 1, in turn, shows through passages of Paulo Guedes' discourse associated with each one of those elements of his discursive strategy the speech that evokes the symbolic violence of his authoritarian style of leading. As Fairclough (1989) demonstrates, the context is fundamental for critically understanding the discourse and, in this case, Guedes tries with his discourse to create a context of bellicose urgency against the State, through the appropriation of what Sloterdijk (2012) calls the front culture, typical of authoritarian regimes. The front culture primarily makes intensive use of bellicose references, which in Guedes' case emerge in terms such as "war," "war economy," "state of war," "global wars," "enemy," "the enemy's tower," "the enemy's pocket," "AI-5," and "grenade." Given the context of urgency, there is the need for the discursive construction of the instrumentalization of the Brazilian people (like the crew of the Pequod) as something unimportant, which is invisible to the eyes of Guedes, like Ahab is indifferent to the Pequod, something that can be sacrificed to defeat Moby Dick. Although invisible to Guedes, the people do not fail to be irresponsible, as they have long contributed to the survival of the leviathan (the spendthrift State), just as for Ahab the Pequod took too long to find Moby Dick. This appears in Guedes' complaints about the Brazilian population "wanting to live 100, 120, 130 years," about poverty being the "enemy of the environment," or when questioning the scholarships granted by the government to "those without the least capacity," like "the doorman's son," as well as the supposed "crazy party" when the real was higher in value and there were "cleaning ladies going to Disneyland." This is speech that reduces, devalues, and blames the people themselves for their condition of poverty. Because of that, it would be no problem to sacrifice them in facing the monster.

Finally, the private sector undergoes an epic journey, the epopee of the business community that needs to be aggressive to defeat the leviathan, as it is the "strength of the nation," according to Guedes. It is the entrepreneurs who will save the country; it is privatization that will finish off our Moby Dick, since, for Guedes, companies are the "backbone of the economy," and the State merely serves to be sold off, since a "good state company is one that has been privatized." The entrepreneurs' heroism is such that they can, according to Guedes, without the need of any public policy, address the Covid-19 pandemic alone because "they have the capacity to go out there and buy leftover vaccine." As Dardot and Laval (2016) demonstrate, that apothoetic view of the business community is typical of neoliberalism, which understands that classic liberalism failed because it did not adequately emphasize the sovereignty of the private company in social life, granting too much space to the State. Brazil is therefore that "injured whale harpooned several times" that is bleeding out because of the excesses of the State, especially given civil service spending. Like the people in general, "parasite" civil servants are the ones responsible for keeping the Moby Dick alive, and thus hinder the success of private enterprise in the country. These excesses have to be addressed even if it is by means of violence, which Guedes shows when invoking dictatorial instruments such as Institutional Act n. 5 (AI-5) as a way of avoiding questions about his hatred toward the State in favor of the business community.

Table 1

Excerpts of speech and statements of the minister Paulo Guedes from 2018 to 2021

Discursive resource	Passages of Paulo Guedes' discourses
The State as the leviathan to be fought: an injured giant of the seas, an agonizing host, the enemy's towers and pocket	*"Brazil is an injured whale harpooned several times that has bled out and stopped moving. We need to remove the harpoons."* *"Everyone thinks that, so distracted, they embraced us, they curled up with us. We've already put a grenade in the enemy's pocket – two years without a salary increase… And now we're in the middle of that confusion, toppling the enemy's last tower… Another thing is the enemy's towers that we had to topple. One was the overspending on welfare, we toppled it as soon as we got in. The second tower was interest rates. Interest rates are falling and they'll fall further."* *"The government is broken. It spends 90% of all revenue on salaries and is obliged to give a salary increase. The civil service had an increase 50% above inflation, it has job stability, it has a generous pension, it has everything, the host is dying, the guy's become a parasite."* *"We're refraining from over-statization, as we know that excessive public spending has corrupted democracy and stagnated the economy and we're reversing that cycle so investments will come with those reforms."* *"Even now, when we still have that crisis with us in the omicron variant... We have to be careful with salaries, because we're still at war and we have to pay for our war, instead of pushing the costs on to future generations."* *"When the other side wins, with tem months you're already calling on everybody to break up the street? What responsibility is that? So don't be shocked if someone asked from AI-5… If the left radicalizes to that point, we'll need to have a response. And a response could be via a new AI-5, it could be via legislation approved through a referendum as occurred in Italy. Some response will have to be made."*
A Brazil that is sinking: the (invisible and irresponsible) people are an instrument for fighting	*"We see the importance, we discovered 38 million Brazilians, who were invisible, we have to help that group reincorporate into the labor market."* *"The plates of the European middle class, which has already faced two world wars, they're relatively small plates. And ours here, we have lunches where sometimes there*

the leviathan, and the social is unviable	*are enormous leftovers. That goes to the end, which are the meals of the high middle class, even there there are excesses."* *"The worst enemy of the environment is poverty. People destroy the environment because they need to eat. They (the poor) have all the worries, which are not the worries of people that have already destroyed their forests, that have already fought their ethnic minorities, those things…"* *"The currency nervous, it has changed. There's no R$1.80 exchange rate. Everyone going to Disneyland, cleaners going to Disneyland, a crazy party. Wait there," he stated.* *"They gave scholarships to those without the least capacity. They couldn't read, write. They sent everyone. They went too far. It went from one extreme to the other."* *"The doorman of my building, once, he turned to me and said: 'Paulo, I'm very worried.' What was wrong? 'My son got into private university.' So why are you sad? 'He got a zero in the exam. He got a zero in all the exams and I got something saying: congratulations, your son got…' There was a space to fill in, where it said 'zero.' Your son got a zero. And he's just spoken to our school. We're very happy."* *"Everyone wants to live 100, 120, 130 years... there's no investment capacity for the state to be able to accompany it."*
The entrepreneur on their epic journey: private is good, the savior of the country in a state of war	*"For me, a good state company is one that has been privatized."* *"Our entrepreneurs have the capacity to go out there and buy leftover vaccine. […] If the private sector donates vaccines for that start, for us to vaccinate the priorities, we can give an exception for those donations."* *"We always continue with that idea of a micro and small enterprise as the backbone of the economy. That's the strength of the nation."* *"If I say the pandemic is really ravaging Brazil again, we'll declare a state of war, like we declared last year."* *"If the pandemic batters us again, if a variant is not attacked by the vaccine, if it's not working, we'll increase the war economy. The protocol is ready; we just have to enact the disaster clause of the Emergency PEC."* *"The War PEC is an important lesson and it should be integrated into our federative pact."* *"We could even make a plan for eradicating misery in 4 or 5 years, by selling, for example, state companies and transferring resources to a misery eradication fund, which is even there, which the PT created, but it couldn't operationalize it."* *"We're going to have to do in health the same as was done in the emergency assistance. A poor person is sick? Give him a voucher. He wants to go to the [Hospital Albert] Einstein? Let him go to Einstein. He wants to go in the SUS, he can use his voucher where he wants. There's no management in public health… The public sector can't accompany the health issue. The private sector is the solution… Even Nasa's rockets are already private. The state has broken, it can't send a man to the moon every year. The United States has a strong industry. The Chinese invented the virus and their vaccine is worse than the American one."*

Source: Elaborated by the author based on Oliveira, Betim, and Rossi (2021), Folhapress (2021), Fraga (2021), Shinohara (2020), and Exame (2020).

The result: tragedy

The result of this discursive strategy of Paulo Guedes has been the same as that of the Pequod, with its crew and Captain Ahab, an unprecedented social shipwreck. In 2022 in Brazil, the social data indicate a tragedy: more than 680 thousand deaths from Sars-Cov-2 (Covid-19); the ninth highest unemployment rate in the world according International Monetary Fund data, with 13 million unemployed, generating a rate of 13.7%; 77.5% of Brazilian families supposedly indebted according to data from the Consumer Indebtedness and Default Survey, published in 2021; 19.2

million families dependent on the *Bolsa Família* welfare program, around 40 million people – almost a fifth of the country's population, according to 2021 data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IGBE); an inflation rate reaching into double digits; and the Reports of the Brazilian Network for Research on Sovereignty and Food Security showing even more alarming data indicating that in 2022 there are 19.1 million people experiencing hunger in the country, an amount close to the entire population of the State of Minas Gerais.

Thus, just like *Moby-Dick*, the monomania of a leadership desiring vengeance leads everyone into tragedy. In Brazil, the Covid-19 pandemic was not definitively addressed by the federal government, which has been indicated in some studies as one of the worst in the world in addressing the spread of Covid-19 (Freitas, Silva, & Cidade, 2020; Sousa Júnior, Raasch, Soares, & Ribeiro. 2020; Werneck & Carvalho, 2020). As opposed to hatred toward the State, however, research indicates that it was the technical competence of the public bureaucracy, especially the Unified Health System (SUS), that avoided an even greater tragedy in Brazil (Rodrigues, Carpes, & Raffagnato, 2020). Despite that, in January of 2022, Paulo Guedes insists on the privatist discourse and appears during a G20 meeting, apparently with a homebroker open on his computer, a tool for directly trading in the capital market (a symbol of financial hegemony), and he continues to have distorted views of the reality of the country, which, according to him, is not undergoing a tragedy since "the pandemic quickly launched us into a future that we were already living," since, in his view, "Brazilians have one, sometimes two iPhones" (Andrade, 2022). Meanwhile, the country (our Pequod) is sinking, people are suffering, and Guedes continues to pursue the imaginary leviathan. Just like Captain Ahab, his speeches cause astonishment, but more frightening is the fact that he continues to lead. In this sense, the challenge so well set for understanding authoritarian leadership by Habermas (2012), Sloterdijk (2012), Adorno (1959), and Melville (1951/2002) persists. And Arendt (1989) appears to be right: it is the trivialization of Ahab's evil by the crew of the Pequod that is most worrying.

Concluding remarks

Literature and organizations have a discursive connection. As the social practices they are, the texts used to build fictional works enable multiple interpretations of the real, which can be used to understand complex social phenomena, such as organizations. This paper has attempted to show these possibilities using Herman Melville's main work, *Moby-Dick*, to guide a critical interpretation of the discourses of Paulo Guedes, Jair Bolsonaro's Minister for the Economy, associating them and contextualizing them as a neoliberal discursive strategy based on a monomaniac idea of hatred toward the State, just like the character Ahab, ship captain of the Pequod, establishes in relation to Moby Dick, the giant white sperm whale that injured him in a previous encounter. That interpretation accompanies the general axes of Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis and seeks to sustain the connection that exists between the situated discourse of Guedes, his speech and statements, and the general context of neoliberalism, associated with the authoritarianism established in Brazil after Jair Bolsonaro came to power. Based on that, we sought to highlight that there is a discursive strategy in Guedes' speech, which shows a similar behavior to that of the authoritarian leadership of the Pequod, combining three discursive elements: the Brazilian people, instrumentally led as a multiethnic Pequod – socially invisible and irresponsible; the public sector, seen as an enemy (a Moby Dick); and an epic journey for the private sector, seen as the country's

savior. These elements structure the neoliberal-authoritarian monomania of the minister Paulo Guedes, who repeatedly uses belligerent metaphors to compose a context of permanent war against the State in Brazil. The result of that, as in the book, is an unprecedented social shipwreck.

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Notes

1. Due to apparently editorial questions, Melville called the character of the book "Moby Dick," without a hyphen, and the book "*Moby-Dick*," with a hyphen. We will adopt that distinction to show when we are talking about the character and when we are referring to the work. For a summary of that discussion, see Erin Blakemore (2015).

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Inclusive language

The author uses inclusive language that recognizes diversity, shows respect for all people, is sensitive to differences, and promotes equal opportunities.

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First author: conception (lead), data curation (lead), formal analysis (lead), investigation (lead), methodology (lead), writing – original draft (lead), writing – review and editing (lead).

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