

## A CASE OF PARRHESIA: COURAGE IN DISCOURSE AND ITS EFFECTS

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- **ABSTRACT:** This article aims to analyze the meanings of parrhesia and its effects in a statement by a Brazilian federal representative, that breaks with hegemonic discourse. More precisely, we describe and interpret how the production and emergence of parrhesia functions to configure meanings in a statement constituted and developed within the vote regarding the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff's mandate in 2016, delivered by Jean Wyllys. In this way, considering the postulate of Discourse Analysis, developed by Pêcheux, in which subject and meaning are constructed simultaneously in the historical movement, we hold that parrhesia, as Foucault observes it in his final works, produces, simultaneously, certain meanings and subjects circulating in the social space. Given this conceptual framework, we employ the theoretical and methodological tools of Discourse Analysis to investigate how truth-telling is constructed and what its effects are on the treadmill of resistance against discursive hegemony.
- **KEYWORDS:** discourse analysis; parrhesia; Jean Wyllys.

### Introduction

A 'discourse' is not an infrastructure; nor is it another word for 'ideology'. In fact, it is, rather, the opposite, despite what is often claimed either in writing or by word of mouth. (VEYNE, 2008, p.28)

Paul Veyne is right in saying what discourse is not, in order to dispel certain existing interpretations about discourse. Likewise, eschewing generic readings of discourse is desirable and even necessary in the scope of our object of investigation, since the exercise of parrhesia - which "implies speech equality, the right to speak", that is, isegory -, as understood by Michel Foucault, it is more than truth-telling, it is an ethical act whose implication is the conjuration of the effects of the discourse. "Foucault's 'discourses' are spectacles through which, in every age, people have perceived everything, and have thought and acted. They affect both those who dominate and those who are dominated; they are not lies invented by the former in order to

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fool the latter and justify their own domination” (VEYNE, 2008, p. 28). From this perspective, the so-called spirit of the time can then be translated as the set of discourses of a certain era, place, or society. They are a repository of truths historicized in the texts that allow us to observe how current discourses have been structured in different directions, sometimes complementary, sometimes contradictory. Therefore, discourse is not a series of false perceptions of what can be called reality, but, roughly speaking, of the interpretations according to which one can see *facts, reality, things*.

“And how can one explain the fact that things are not working and that the relationship between *parresia* and democracy can produce the ugly effects we have noted and which were denounced in 408 by Euripides in *Orestes*?” (FOUCAULT, 2010, p. 174, author’s emphasis). The dysfunction between democracy and parrhesia could not be more current. Although Brazilian history has been marked by three previous impeachments, the fourth democratic impeachment can be the proof or the spectacles that (de) focus parrhesia by the will of the mainstream media. Analogously, corresponding to the *Orestes* of Euripides’ tragedy.

The historical functioning of societies is marked by and in discourse since meanings are not only deposited there but also organized according to certain events. The discourse regimes by which the dispersion of discourse is widely employed, follows in the texts in their various modalities: oral, written, and hybrid, among others. Here, then the concept of the text is broadened to even include fashion, architecture, urbanization, and so forth. In other words, discourse is anchored in the text which is not only restricted to linguistic units, and writing is sustained in the discourse in a woven and continuous movement, so that to arrive at the discourse we need its positivation and the conditions in which it emerges.

The text/speech relationship is characterized by what I call variance: the original text is a fiction, or rather, the effect of historicity (...). Differently, we think of the text as an indication of a significant site, in its materiality, in the different significant directions that a text can take, in the textualization of the discourse. Because the connection of the text with its exteriority is crucial, there are always several, from its “origin” the texts in the same text. As units of discourse analysis, the text is considered in its material form, as part of a process, in the relation of description/interpretation (ORLANDI, 2017b, p. 245, author’s emphasis).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> TN: Works cited that have been previously published in English or English translation are used throughout the text when available and fully referenced in footnotes. All other translations are our own translations of citations are our own, with the original Portuguese version presented in footnotes. Original: “*A relação texto/discurso é caracterizada pelo que denomino variação: o texto original é uma ficção, ou melhor, efeito da historicidade (...). Diferentemente, pensamos o texto como indicio de um sítio significante, em sua materialidade, nas diferentes direções significativas que um texto pode tomar; na textualização do discurso. Porque é crucial a ligação do texto com sua exterioridade são sempre vários, desde sua “origem” os textos possíveis num mesmo texto. Enquanto unidades de análise de discurso, considera-se o texto em sua forma material, como parte de um processo, na relação descrição/interpretação*” (ORLANDI, 2017b, p. 245; grifo da autora).

To examine the dynamics of parrhesia in the text in question, a speech by congressional representative Jean Wyllys in his description and interpretation, we will use a set of concepts from Discourse Analysis, thus following a method for tracking the construction of the effects of meaning. Therefore, the key concepts employed in the following analysis are: *production conditions*, *preconstruction*, *interdiscourse*, *interdiscourse*, and *discursive formation*. These are intertwined in the perception and also in the composition of the meanings and without examining each one in relation to the others, hence the discursive analysis of the meanings takes place in the suspended space in which there would be no pre-existence of other meanings, there would be no relationship with the world outside the communicative act and there would be no relationship with subsequent meanings. We believe that a brief review of these concepts can clarify how these concepts help us understand the act of truth-telling – parrhesia.

### Conceptual apparatus

The production conditions establish the power relations within the discourse and maintain the language in a necessary relationship with its exterior, thereby constituting the meaning in the text. Thus, the conditions of production are part of the constitutive externality of the effects of meaning that can resort to previous discursive productions, establishing the preconstructed. In its turn, this is developed within what has already been said, such that it constitutes the preconstructedconstructed in the discursive formation in which it circulates. In light of this, the preconstructedconstructed is likely to be understood “as a discourse that has been constructed elsewhere (...), [this] construction allows what works as a preconstructedconstructed to ‘pass’ without discussion as a basis on which the consensus rests” (ROBIN, 1977, p. 118-119, author’s emphasis)<sup>2</sup>. Thus, the pre constructed element is from another discursive platform, such as the parenchyma that composes the structure of the organ responsible for bringing creative oxygen to the new composition, which is the discourse.

“We shall call discourse a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation; it does not form a rhetorical or formal unity, endlessly repeatable, whose appearance or use in history might be indicated [...]” (FOUCAULT, 2002, p. 131). If Paul Veyne correctly pointed out what discourse is not, Foucault does so categorically and promotes the conciliation so that parrhesia establishes the web between the articulations of the concepts used here and the discursive analysis of the congressman in question, who is the focal point of this study.

Interconnected to preconstructed discourse there is discursive formation, which is an instance in which a given ideological formation characterizes a certain social formation whose concrete practices and relations transverse social life. Here ideology in its use

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<sup>2</sup> Original: “como discurso que se construiu alhures (...), [essa] construção permite que o que funciona como pré-construído ‘passe’ sem discussão como uma base sobre a qual repousa o consenso” (ROBIN, 1977, p. 118-119, grifo da autora).

as a conflict between the dominant class and the dominated of Marx and Althusser in the Ideological apparatus of the State, is incorporated as the discursive mechanism for producing meanings. Through discursive formation, ideological formation and social formation emerge as discursive positions. Pêcheux outlined discursive formation as “what can be said (articulated in the form of a speech, a sermon, a pamphlet, an exhibition, a program, etc.) from a given position at a given juncture” (PÊCHEUX, 2011, p. 73).<sup>3</sup> The discursive formation, then, resumes from its innumerable statements the reservoir of (effects of) meanings – interdiscourse.

Thus, it can be said that Interdiscourse is “the functioning of the discourse about itself”,<sup>4</sup> as the “subject’s discourse thread” (PÊCHEUX, 2009, p. 153)<sup>5</sup> that which is said in the act of utterance and which, due to the effect of the subject’s interpellation through ideology, appears as a *locus* of production of meaning. Now, observing the conditions of production implies observing the interdiscourse where the discursive formations circulate within which the preconstructed inhabits and from where they always return to be forgotten and remembered in a continuous flow of updating what is said (of the effects of meaning).

It is from the operationalization of these concepts, following Discourse Analysis methods that we investigate parrhesia in discursive production by the then federal congressman Jean Wyllys, to understand how truth-telling is established in it and what repercussions there may be, given that “there is something more essential than any truth: the demand for truth” (GROS, 2004, p. 12).<sup>6</sup> To begin with, therefore, we feel the discursive need to return to one of the most emblematic cases of parrhesia that have been heard; in this historical recounting, we can better understand Michel Foucault’s notion of parrhesia.

What this kind of joust or challenge shows is this solemn ritual of truth-telling in which the subject commits what he thinks in what he says and attests to the truth of what he thinks in the enunciation of what he says. In other words, I think that there is something in the parrhesiastic utterance that could be called a pact: a pact of the speaking subject with himself. It is a pact which has two levels: that of the act of enunciation and then [that], explicit or implicit, by which the subject binds himself to the statement he has just made, but also to the act of making it. This is what makes the pact double. On the one hand, the subject in parrhesia says: This is the truth. He says that he really thinks this truth, and in this he binds himself to the statement and to its content. (FOUCAULT, 2010, p. 64-65).

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<sup>3</sup> Original: “o que pode ser dito (articulado sob a forma de um pronunciamento, de um sermão, de um panfleto, de uma exposição, de um programa etc.) a partir de uma dada posição numa dada conjuntura” (PÊCHEUX, 2011, p. 73).

<sup>4</sup> Original: “o funcionamento do discurso com relação a si mesmo” (PÊCHEUX, 2009, p. 153).

<sup>5</sup> Original: “fio do discurso do sujeito” (PÊCHEUX, 2009, p. 153).

<sup>6</sup> Original: “há algo de mais essencial que qualquer verdade: a exigência da verdade” (GROS, 2004, p. 12).

## **An emblematic case of parrhesia**

Many are unfamiliar with the biodata of Socrates (469 - 399 B.C.), the Greek philosopher, who roamed Athens raising questions about reason, ethics, politics, among others. In a more or less rough synthesis, we can say that Socrates took the precept of not knowing as a basis for his inquiries, and to demonstrate to others through the artifice of refuting that one does not know something one believes to know and that this something can be known by another method; through inductive questioning. Socrates had this mechanism in mind as he roamed the streets of Athens inquiring about the certainties that existed in the Greek world, leaving many perplexed, because the “truths” were “collapsing in the air”, according to his investigations. However, it behooves us to clarify that the Socratic system is based on the citizen’s morality/ethics towards the polis, therefore, in a kind of social contract.

It was in these irrefutable speeches, supported by ethics and morals, that the conditions of production for maintaining the exteriority of the language were formed. With his restless conduct, Socrates established the preconstruction in the discursive formation in which he was inserted, particularly in the polis.

The interdiscourse was intrinsically linked to the effects of the meaning of virtue that discursive formations were being brought together in the ethical commitment to the city-state.

The proof of Socrates’ ethical commitment to his city-state lies in accepting the execution of the death penalty imposed on him by the court. The philosopher weighed the charge of corrupting young people and of not recognizing the gods of Athens. For many, condemnation was a mistake, for others it was a success in getting rid of the “man” that haunted them. For Plato (427 - 347 BC), the death of his master said a lot about how he was seen by his fellow citizens. In this way, the disciple described the defense of his mentor. Thus, we know what Socrates said to his court, especially in its outcome.

Wherefore, O judges, be of good cheer about death, and know this of a truth — that no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death. He and his are not neglected by the gods; nor has my own approaching end happened by mere chance. But I see clearly that to die and be released was better for me; and therefore the oracle gave no sign. For which reason also, I am not angry with my accusers, or my condemners; they have done me no harm, although neither of them meant to do me any good; and for this I may gently blame them. Still I have a favor to ask of them. When my sons are grown up, I would ask you, O my friends, to punish them; and I would have you trouble them, as I have troubled you, if they seem to care about riches, or anything, more than about virtue; or if they pretend to be something when they are really nothing, — then reprove them, as I have reproved you, for not

caring about that for which they ought to care, and thinking that they are something when they are really nothing. And if you do this, I and my sons will have received justice at your hands. The hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways — I to die, and you to live. Which is better God only knows. (PLATO, 2019, p. 14).

This leads us to hold that “man is a socio-historical and symbolic subject” (ORLANDI, 2017a, p. 154)<sup>7</sup>. Considering that the historical representativeness and the symbolism, which the platonic description reveals, not only establishes the philosophical division of thinking between the pre and post-Socratics, but also shows that beauty of the act is in the preservation of the virtuous speech of later generations.

According to what Plato describes to us, Socrates not only used parrhesia, the truth-telling, in his defense presentation, but also made it a way of philosophizing. Parrhesia for Socrates cost his life, since instead of begging for forgiveness and continuing to live, he preferred to remain true to his principles. On the one hand, truth-telling seems to perturb to the point that those who do it end up losing their lives. Xenophon (431 - 354 a. C.) interpreting the judgment and attitude of his mentor Socrates in his defense says:

Now, it cannot be doubted, but Socrates, by speaking thus highly of himself, incurred the more envy; and made his judges still the more eager to condemn him: Yet, I think, indeed, he only obtained that fate, which the Gods decree to those they most love;—a discharge from life, when life is become a burthen; and that, by a means, of all others, the most easy. Yet here, as well as on every other occasion, Socrates demonstrated the firmness of his soul. For although he was fully persuaded, that to die would be the best for him; yet did he not discover any anxious solicitude; any womanish longings for the hour of his dissolution; but waited its approach with the same steady tranquility, and unaffected complacency, with which he afterwards went out of life. And, truly, when I consider the wisdom and greatness of soul, so essential to this man, I find it not more out of my power to forget him, than to remember, and not PRAISE him. And, if among those who are most studious to excel in virtue, there be any who hath found a person to converse with, more proper than Socrates, for promoting his design,—verily, we may well pronounce him, THE MOST FORTUNATE OF ALL MANKIND (XENOPHON, 2016, p. 222-223, author’s emphasis).

Parrhesia caused the death of Socrates, according to Plato and Xenophon. Because “[...] Socrates himself chose injustice to justice, despite his knowledge of this injustice”

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<sup>7</sup> Original: “*homem é um sujeito sócio-histórico e simbólico*” (ORLANDI, 2017a, p.154)

(MENDIETA, 2018, p. 148)<sup>8</sup>. Foucault bases himself on this when he studies through Xenophon, Plato, and Plutarco the striking character of the teachings coexisting with self-care (*epimeleia heautou*).

### **Analysis of a case of parrhesia**

The following is the speech of congressional representative Jean Wyllys during the voting in the impeachment trial of former Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff (04/17/2016).

Well, first, I want to say that I am embarrassed to take part in this farce, this indirect election, led by a thief, organized by a conspiratorial traitor, and supported by torturers, cowards, political illiterates, and sell-outs; this sexist farce. In the name of the rights of LGBT people, of the black communities being exterminated in the suburbs, of the artisans, the homeless, and landless people, I vote no to the coup. Sleep on this: scoundrels (VIANA, 2016).<sup>9</sup>

An analysis of this pronouncement (2016) by the federal representative Jean Wyllys transcribed above, requires that we understand some of its conditions of production, just as the discourse converges on Discourse Analysis through the presentation of the aforementioned concepts; in such a way that we may observe the immediate circumstances in which it is delivered and some of the forces that constrict it. Therefore, it is counterproductive to fail to mention the fact that obliged Jean Wyllys to vote and to distinguish his professional attitude towards other colleagues, as its relevance has to be measured, since removing a president in full exercise of her duties, after being democratically elected, generates a significant chain of related events. That said, when the representative comes up to the National Congress, surrounded by other colleagues and needs to say yes or no, it is to vote for the impeachment of former President Dilma Rousseff. The statements that preceded him also refer to the conditions of emergence of Jean Wyllys' discursive production, since most of them are shaped by moralism and based on the sayings: family, homeland, nation, corruption, among others related to these. Nearly all who voted in favor of Dilma's compulsory departure used the same argumentative expedient: stating that her withdrawal would strengthen family and nationalist values, and fight corruption.

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<sup>8</sup> Original: "[...] *O próprio Sócrates escolheu a injustiça à justiça, a despeito do seu próprio conhecimento desta injustiça*" (MENDIETA, 2018, p. 148)

<sup>9</sup> Original: "*Bom, em primeiro lugar eu quero dizer que estou constringido de participar dessa farsa, dessa eleição indireta, conduzida por um ladrão, urdida por um traidor conspirador, e apoiada por torturadores, covardes, analfabetos políticos e vendidos; essa farsa sexista. Em nome dos direitos da população LGBT, do povo negro exterminado nas periferias, dos trabalhadores da cultura, dos sem teto, dos sem terra eu voto não ao golpe. E durmam com essa: canalhas*" (VIANA, 2016).

The moments preceding the speech by representative Jean Wyllys, filled with votes to the contrary, insults, and curses, produced an “air of saving the nation” hovering about the room. All those who pinned themselves on the moralist discourse of family and populist values sparked the ethos of the politician (CHARAUDEAU, 2015; MAINGUENEAU, 2015), undaunted, concerned with the problems of the population and, above all, honest. They seemed to press an imperative that the president be permanently removed to re-establish “order and progress” in Brazil. It wasn’t only a handful who nominally cited family and friends to endorse their vote of repudiation of the government of Dilma Rousseff; others thanked God for being able to deliver the nation from the “thievery”.

In this scenario, the federal congressional representative Jean Wyllys took a stand against the impeachment of the then head of state, however, as it is possible to see from the transcript of his speech, he did not do it haphazardly; he produced a resistance marked by its political action. He played the role of a member of congress marked by the socio-historical representativeness of those who entrusted him to perform ethical and moral conduct before the Republic, just as Plato described his mentor who preferred death to living in dishonor.

It is worth mentioning a significant occurrence in this episode, however, which cannot be seen in the transcript above. When the congressman stands to speak, and he is booed, he remains silent. This happens for only a few moments, but long enough to show how the deputy is seen and treated in the Legislative Chamber, and how silence can structure the speaking. “The functioning of silence attests to the movement of discourse that takes place in the contradiction between the ‘one’ and the ‘multiple’, the same and the different, between paraphrase and polysemy” (ORLANDI, 2007, p. 17)<sup>10</sup>. In the didactic way he dealt with what happened, the deputy showed respect for those present and, mainly, respect for himself, one trait of the parrhesia. Therefore, speech taking manifests itself later on to the poignant effect of silence. That is: “[...] Taking the speech and being silent thus form an inseparable pair, in such a way that the second gesture comes to some extent to ensure that they put the first one into good use.” (MONTIGLIO, 2015, p. 26)<sup>11</sup>.

Jean Wyllys’ positioning aligned with the image of himself made use of parrhesia, as Foucault describes:

In parrhesia however, as if it were a veritable anti-irony, the person who tells the truth throws the truth in the face of his interlocutor, a truth which is so violent, so abrupt, and said in such a peremptory and definitive way that the person facing him can only fall silent, or choke with fury,

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<sup>10</sup> Original: “O funcionamento do silêncio atesta o movimento do discurso que se faz na contradição entre o ‘um’ e o ‘múltiplo’, o mesmo e o diferente, entre paráfrase e polissemia” (ORLANDI, 2007, p. 17).

<sup>11</sup> Original: “[...] Tomar a fala e ficar em silêncio formam assim um par indissociável, de tal modo que o segundo gesto vem em alguma medida garantir que se faz bom uso do primeiro”. (MONTIGLIO, 2015, p. 26).



or change to a different register, which in the case of Dionysius is the attempt to murder Plato (FOUCAULT, 2010, p. 54).

The congressman's declarative action tears off the veil woven by productions bound to moralism, constructing a declared opposition to what was happening at that moment and pointing out those who were responsible, attributing terms to them such as: *thieves, traitors, conspirators, torturers, cowards, and political illiterates*. When the mainstream media supported possible truths or half truths about Dilma Rousseff's way of administering the country, and also about the Workers' Party, the need to leave was clear, accordingly Jean Wyllys broke the hegemonic discourse while saying what he said and in the way he did it.

By accepting all the risks involved in producing a 'rupture' the congressional representative distanced himself from his other "colleagues" by employing parrhesia, "the free courage by which one binds oneself in the act of telling the truth" (FOUCAULT, 2010, p. 66). This point makes the congressman individualize his speech from the other members of Congress. It is like a framework that magnifies this historic moment. It is all about the appearance of the different, the uncertain, the sensible, the audacious, and the sharp criticism.

"*First, I want to say that I am embarrassed to take part in this farce*",<sup>12</sup> the congressional representative says, announcing and anticipating possible meanings that will be mobilized to defend his vote. The congressman could very well have skipped this congressional session, however, he preferred to go even though he *felt embarrassed to join the farce* he mentioned, taking a stance of defending a position that was not aligned with the social discourse disseminated by the mainstream media (ANGENOT, 2015). Jean Wyllys uses parrhesia with a critical tone to denounce what was being done in that instance of voting as it constitutes an indirect election. In harmony with his frank discourse, he said everything; without hiding or staging a role as a *stage clown*, the congressman spoke the truth, and thereby, turning him into someone who practices parrhesia.

By calling the President of the Chamber of Deputies a thief in front of almost all of his colleagues while the media was present, the incident reflects many citizens' indignations who could not be there to say the same thing or even something worse than what the congressional representative said. According to statutes of Brazilian Criminal Law, Article 138 and Article 139, calumny and defamation are illegal in Brazil, however, as although just as calling a capitalist a profit lover is not a crime, to call a congressional representative a thief is not a crime either (the former President of the Chamber of Deputies, Mr. Eduardo Cunha was arrested shortly after for corruption and money laundering).

The *conspirator traitor* is none other than Mr. Michel Temer, who took over the leadership of Brazil with the lowest popularity in the country's history while being

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<sup>12</sup> Original: *Em primeiro lugar eu quero dizer que estou constrangido de participar dessa farsa [...]*.

unable to walk in the streets because the people only knew how to boo and shout insults at him. Now, it is essential to remember the Jean Wyllys' parliamentary immunity, registered in the Brazilian Constitution in Article 53: "Deputies and Senators enjoy civil and criminal inviolability on account of any of their opinions, words, and votes (CA No. 35, 2001)" (BRAZIL, 1988), because without this immunity the probability of having to support the burden, to tell the truth, would be relatively high.

It is necessary to return to the point in time Foucault remarks about the conversation Plato had with Dion and his uncle Dionysus, who is known as a Syracuse tyrant. The Greek philosopher responded with parrhesia to a question asked by Dionysus. "Dionysus asked Plato: 'What have you come to Sicily for?' And Plato replied: 'I am looking for a good man.' The tyrant replied: 'By the gods, it is clear that you have not yet found one!'" (FOUCAULT, 2010, p. 48). The way Dion protected Plato, Jean Wyllys' immunity protected him:

In other words, telling the truth to the tyrant Dionysius, who gets angry, opens up a space of risk for the person who tells the truth; it opens up a danger, a peril, in which the speaker's very life will be at stake, and it is this that constitutes parrhesia. (FOUCAULT, 2010, p. 56).

In this sense, when the congressional representative points out a series of serious qualities when telling the truth, imaginary formations (PÊCHEUX, 2010) are in circulation as it establishes contradictory discursive formations simultaneously. Imaginary formations are close to the discursive ethos and they can provide hints to surmising that Jean Wyllys creates a positive, beneficial and correct image of himself, in contrast, to opponents of his position, the image is negative, harmful, and incorrect.

Therefore, the duels between these imaginary formations antecede the moment of the utterance and, hypothetically, they continue to move afterward. Thus, the imaginary formation's enunciative support on which the congressional representative's militant progressive discursive formation is based, is one factor of his parrhesia. However, when a politician says that politicians *are thieves, conspiratorial traitors, cowards, illiterate politicians, and sell-outs*, the discourse seems more akin to what circulates in the discourse of the greater society than what you wouldn't expect to hear from a politician or member of this class. Thus, there is a nexus between the deputy's parrhesia and the people, considering the words he used to qualify other congressional members, and he ends up returning to the interdiscourse of the different meanings about the political class in Brazil.

The Doxa supports (AMOSSY, 2018) in order to raise doubts about the so-called farce produced discursively preconstructed in social places that shape the strength of parrhesia; it is in front of an audience immediately made up of politicians that one of their members brings to light what looks genuinely real and staged as a farce. When the congressional representative speaks, imaginary formations and discursive formations take shape, supporting their social and linguistic effects, the description of

something considered a farce, but not just any farce, it is a sexist farce referring to two characteristics: the one that deals with the indirect election, so it is a coup while the other one is about how the coup's target is a woman.

When Brazil was a Portuguese colony, the patriarchal ideology structured marital and family relations and gave men dominant power over women, validating acts of violence committed by fathers and husbands against their daughters and wives. Born out of the dominant minority's lifestyle, this ideology ended up influencing all society layers, spreading a feeling of possession over the female body among men, and linking male honor to women under their tutelage behaviors. Therefore, it was up to men to discipline and control women in their families, plus using physical force was acceptable and desirable for them (LAGE; NARDER, 2012, p. 287).<sup>13</sup>

One of the facets of Jean Wyllys' speech characterized by its parrhesia, is an ongoing antagonism in which women are pressed to believe they should be submissive to men for better or for worse. A female president who doesn't care about satisfying congressmen's desires was being destroyed in retaliation, and according to the congressional representative's words, this is a sexist farce. To better understand the effect of the meaning given to the sexist farce, it is important to point out an issue: in Brazil, despite the participation of women in the executive and legislative elections being guaranteed by Law nr. 9.504/97, female representation in politics is still low and the former President Dilma Rousseff was the first female President elected in Brazil.

If the vote to remove the Head of State was a farce, such a pantomime would imply a patriarchal ideology, an integral component of Brazilian social formation. Thus, presenting the farce as sexist is more than raising a part of the staging, it means bringing a problem rooted in the social and cultural structures of the country that gives women smaller roles, *disciplining and controlling them, and legitimizing the use of force to do so*.

Jean Wyllys' parrhesia bases on social antagonism, so it's on the discursive formation in which the senses mobilized by the congressman fights the conservatism of power, oppression, and inequality. From this point of view, parrhesia could be just another face of the contradictions in the discursive space, however:

In parrhesia, in one way or another both the statement and the act of enunciation affect the subject's mode of being and, taking things in

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<sup>13</sup> Original: "A ideologia patriarcal, que estruturava as relações conjugais e familiares desde o tempo em que o Brasil era uma colônia portuguesa, conferia aos homens um grande poder sobre as mulheres, justificando atos de violência cometidos por pais e maridos contra filhas e esposas. Nascida do estilo de vida das minorias dominantes, essa ideologia acabou influenciando todas as outras camadas da sociedade, disseminando entre os homens um sentimento de posse sobre o corpo feminino e atrelando a honra masculina ao comportamento das mulheres sob sua tutela. Assim, cabia a eles disciplinar e controlar as mulheres da família, sendo legítimo que, para isso, recorressem ao uso da força." (LAGE; NARDER, 2012, p. 287).

their most general and neutral form, quite simply mean that the person who said something has actually said it, and by a more or less explicit act binds himself to the fact that he said it (FOUCAULT, 2010, p. 68).

The congressional representative shows himself the way he is and also presents himself in how he wants them to see him, breaking from the hegemonic declarations, its subjects, and its meanings. His social affiliation is marked in his discursive formation, allowing him to vocalize in the name of LGBT rights, giving the LGBT community political representation that had not existed until then in Brazil, while such legitimation marks a break from the Christian moralism around family values and the predominant empty nationalism.

The strength of Jean Wyllys's pronouncement is beyond his own words because his parrhesia includes the condemnation of the genocide of the black communities in the suburbs, areas artisans and professional artists, the homeless the landless. Thus the congressman does not exclude these people, which the State must aim to protect. The ideal family or the congressional representative's family did not influence the negative vote given by the congressman on the President's impeachment, nor was it cast from hollow nationalist values; the negative response and parrhesia were for all those who emerge in Jean Wyllys' discursive production against the government scoundrels.

### **Considerations: the very real dangers in parrhesia**

The dangers of telling the truth are practical. They are not fantastical fictions. When talking about parrhesia, Foucault made a series of reflections ranging from cynical philosophers, going through the ancient Athenian politics and reaching rhetoric; in all of them, he perceived their dangers and the demand for courage from those who use them. Thus, we do not focus on observing what "type" of parrhesia appears in congressman Jean Wyllys' speech, but rather point it out by describing its discursive functioning so we understand the effects of its meaning.

Therefore, we observed what the mechanisms used to build a sincere speech were. In this article on parrhesia we found certain conditions of production combined with an imaginary and discursive formation in the construction established in Wylly's discourse, from the perspective of Foucault's premises. Parrhesia is not a universal truth, and it is not even an exaggerated sincerity; it is a true utterance that takes up a place in which what someone says should not be said, as its consequences pose a risk with regard to the integrity of the speaker.

Thus, we can ask ourselves what dangers did the congressional representative take on for himself by challenging the discursive homogeneity of the government when he voted against the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff. To answer this question, newspaper headlines are elucidating:

*Afraid of threats, Jean Wyllys from the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL) gives up his mandate and leaves Brazil* (FOLHA DE S. PAULO, 01/24/2019, BARROS, 2019).<sup>14</sup>

*Death threats lead Jean Wyllys to give up congressional representative's mandate to leave Brazil* (EL PAÍS [Brasil], 01/25/2019, MENDONÇA, 2019).<sup>15</sup>

*After death threats against Jean Wyllys, rumors try to link the congressman to Adélio* (ESTADÃO, 01/31/2019, MONNERAT; SARTORI, 2019).<sup>16</sup>

These newspaper headlines were well known, and relate to the congressman's parrhesia position, and from them it is possible to reach some final considerations regarding the dangers. The use of parrhesia has never been more necessary, however, perhaps it has never been so dangerous. Inexorably, telling the truth (just) reminds us about Marielle Franco's case. The fight waged by parrhesia in the congressional representative's discourse makes sense, but few people would dare face it: "(...) discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized." (FOUCAULT, 1981, p. 52-53) which makes both Socrates and Jean Wyllys use the same parrhesia classified by Foucault as "judicial", rallying the cry of the helpless against those who hold power, thereby denouncing the abuses committed by them. For his part, Socrates received the death penalty for being inconvenient by using parrhesia as an integral part of his philosophical method.

Jean Wyllys, on the other hand, is not a philosopher, he is a congressional representative; he was not condemned to any kind of explicit punishment because of parrhesia in his utterances. So might there be more differences between the philosopher and the congressman than similarities as objects of analysis? In the interruption of the general and specific conditions of instances of parrhesia and attributes constructed from each discourse using parrhesia, there is a heterogeneity of effects and meanings of what was said. Socrates makes use of parrhesia:

a mission, and a mission on which he insists, which he will never abandon, and which he will practice constantly to the very end. You can see that from this point of view he is not like the sage. He will not be like Solon, for example, who, at risk and danger to himself, intervened in the city to tell the truth, but who intervened only occasionally, the rest of the time remaining silent in his wisdom. The sage intervenes only when his

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<sup>14</sup> Original: "*Com medo de ameaças, Jean Wyllys, do PSOL, desiste de mandato e deixa o Brasil*" (FOLHA DE S. PAULO, 24/01/2019).

<sup>15</sup> Original: "*Ameaças de morte levam Jean Wyllys a desistir de mandato para deixar o Brasil*" (EL PAÍS [Brasil], 25/01/2019).

<sup>16</sup> Original: "*Após ameaças de morte contra Jean Wyllys, boatos tentam ligar parlamentar a Adélio*" (ESTADÃO, 31/01/2019).

intervention is called for as a matter of urgency. (FOUCAULT, 2011, p. 85).

Clearly, the use of Jean Wyllys' parrhesia has its distinctions from those used by Socrates. The latter went to death because of parrhesia, while the former shows he will prefer to intervene when the urgency requires. Both occupations and repercussions in the current discursive period are attention-worthy, and luckily we can analyze the event of truth-telling that can oppose demagogic expression, which acts with such vigor, so much boldness in detenting and maintaining power.

If the discursive practice of parrhesia continues, after all, this seems to be its "mission", we will have stimulating conditions to analyze the different modes of resistance against the dominant hegemony; without Socrates or Jean Wyllys, parrhesia will be felt, since: "The discourse, through which someone weak, and despite this weakness, takes the risk of reproaching someone powerful for his injustice, is called, precisely, parrhesia." (FOUCAULT, 2010, p. 133-134).

SOARES, T. B. Um caso de parresía: a coragem no discurso e seus efeitos. *Alfa*, São Paulo, v.65, 2021.

- *RESUMO: Este artigo tem por objetivo analisar os sentidos da parresía e seus efeitos em um pronunciamento de um deputado federal brasileiro no qual há o rompimento com as produções discursivas hegemônicas. Mais precisamente, descrevemos e interpretamos o funcionamento de produção e de emergência da parresía como configuradora de sentidos em enunciado constituído e formulado no interior da votação do impedimento do mandato da presidenta Dilma Rousseff em 2016, proferido por Jean Wyllys. Desse modo, ao considerarmos o postulado da Análise do Discurso formulado por Pêcheux de que sujeito e sentido se constituem ao mesmo tempo no movimento histórico, entendemos que a parresía, aqui tomada tal como Foucault a observa em seus últimos trabalhos, produz, a um só tempo, determinados sentidos e sujeitos circulantes no espaço social. Ante esse quadro concebido, utilizaremos o aparato teórico e metodológico da Análise do Discurso para investigarmos como o dizer-a-verdade é construído e quais seus efeitos na esteira da resistência contra a hegemonia discursiva.*
- *PALAVRAS-CHAVE: análise do discurso; parresía; Jean Wyllys.*

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