

# ‘He didn’t even know there was a dictatorship’: The complicity of a psychoanalyst with the Brazilian military regime

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## Introduction

The troubling history of psychoanalysis in Brazil during the period of the civilian-military dictatorship (1964-1985) has come under increasing scrutiny in recent years as an instance of institutional complicity with authoritarian rule (Russo, 2012a; Rubin et al, 2015). One now well-known incident that has caused a great deal of soul-searching, as much for the international ‘cover-up’ that meant that it remained a kind of open secret – or running sore – for over twenty years as for its intrinsically disturbing characteristics, was that of Amilcar Lobo. Lobo was an army doctor who was under psychoanalytical training in the Psychoanalytical Society of Rio de Janeiro (SPRJ) during the so-called ‘years of lead’, the term given to the most violent period of the dictatorship, between 1968 and 1974, at the same time as working as a member of a torture team in some of Brazil’s cruellest political prisons (Vianna, 1994, 2000; Wallerstein, 2000; Kupermann, 2014). The revelation of this case created a crisis in the two psychoanalytical societies of Rio de Janeiro at that time and produced a split in the SPRJ, with the consequent creation of a new organisation under the control of the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA).

This set of events has been much discussed, although it has taken quite a time for this to occur, and the major text on the topic (Vianna, 1994) is still not available in English. One important element in the story that has not been much commented on previously, however, is how the location of the Lobo scandal in Rio was used by the members of the *São Paulo* psychoanalytic society to suggest that somehow the problems of political collusion were located *only* in Rio, and not more generally in Brazil. The idea that has often been promoted in the Brazilian Psychoanalytical Society of São Paulo (SBPSP) is that that society, in contrast to those in Rio, passed relatively unscathed through the dictatorial period, and that its members always dealt with its internal conflicts and those with other institutions in a peaceful way, with no acting out (Russo, 2012a; Coimbra, 1995). In fact, as we have discussed elsewhere (Frosh and Mandelbaum, 2017), there is strong evidence that the conservatism of the SBPSP during the dictatorship was very marked and that this was accompanied by a climate of fear in the Society. There has been very little acknowledgement of this history and the desire to

obscure it has sometimes been explicit. For example, in the introduction to an official book documenting the history of the São Paulo society, *Álbum de família: imagens, fontes e ideias da Psicanálise em São Paulo (Family Album: images, sources and ideas of psychoanalysis in São Paulo)* (Sociedade Brasileira de Psicanálise, 1994), Leopold Nosek, the Chairman of the SBPSP at the time, directly associates the dynamic of memory and forgetting with Jorge Luis Borges' story *Funes, the memorious*. This story is in many ways about the importance of *forgetting*, as Funes suffers from an inability to forget anything and a consequent block on his capacity to live in the present. Nosek (1994) applies the same principle to the Psychoanalytic Society:

Thus was the path for the book. A summary of images, with very little explanatory text. An iconography merely as the raw material for dreams. Family albums. We know how much is hidden in family pictures. They are not true, although not properly lies per se... They are images for dreams. Intrinsically they bring about the possibility for each person to dream this history, making use of his/her patrimony enhanced or stimulated by the images offered here. [The texts and photographs in the book] are also suggestions to be taken as remains of the day for us to dream our psychoanalysis, our environment, our history, and finally, our identity (p. 12).<sup>1</sup>

This piece is illustrative of a way of conceiving psychoanalysis that had and continues to have a marked presence in the SBPSP. The history of the institution was not investigated. Instead, as a justification for this lack in the commemorative edition, Nosek offers one of Borges' stories in which remembrance of history is a trap making living in the present an impossibility. In place of the stringent work of memory and reconstruction of history, readers are invited to *dream* the history of psychoanalysis in São Paulo – each person's dream having as much value as that of any other, and as much value as any historical report. What seems to be happening here is that psychoanalysis is being presented as an ideology that masks and relativises instead of pursuing the truth.

In addition to the political conservatism of the SBPSP, the Society was also organizationally conservative, particularly in relation to training. This situation took the SBPSP some time to confront, and needed a strong intervention from the IPA, as well as the end of the dictatorship, to force it to do so. Specifically, the IPA was concerned about the high fees and small number of training analysts in São Paulo, which meant that psychoanalysis there was concentrated under the control of a coterie of an elite, conservative group. De Azevedo (2008), reflecting back on this period, comments,

The SBPSP had at that time only thirteen training analysts, all with their offices full of patients and candidates, which meant that it was at that time very difficult

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<sup>1</sup> All translations from Portuguese in the current article are by the authors.

to get a place for a training analysis. (Later, when I was in charge of the board, along with Marcio Giovannetti, we came to discover that there were more than 250 people in line, waiting for a vacancy with a training analyst. After a more detailed investigation and selection, I believe we were left with about 150 applicants.) Can you imagine how, after years and years of waiting, this analysis became something mysterious, vital and very important, because without it, it would not be possible to start at the Institute and take the courses, to finally be considered a psychoanalyst? The few who got it formed groups of five to ten people – and, I believe, they could not help but feel privileged and chosen. One of the most persistent criticisms accused the SBPSP of being an elitist and selective group. (pp.180-1)

The IPA's intervention in the early 1980s required the SBPSP to triple the number of training analysts or face the closure of the institution – something that was achieved, rather remarkably, in less than two years (de Azevedo, 2008, pp. 181-2), although it took considerably longer for the SBPSP to be allowed to take in new trainees.

In a previous paper (Frosh and Mandelbaum, 2017), we have presented evidence to show how the institutional conservatism of the SBPSP was mirrored by *political* conservatism and we have suggested that this also had connections with conservatism in psychoanalytic thinking and practice. In the current article, we add to this a testimony that there was at least one case of a São Paulo psychoanalyst being complicit with the torture regime during the years of lead, suggesting that the self-narrative of the SBPSP as 'clean' is not to be taken as transparently correct. We should note in what follows that we are not claiming our particular case is identical to that of Amilcar Lobo, who was clearly working as part of a military torture team. In our case, the psychoanalyst involved was a psychiatrist to whom prisoners were referred for psychiatric examination; nevertheless, as will be seen, there was a considerable degree of compromise involved. Our further argument is that this was linked in some important ways with a psychoanalytic attitude that was quite widely shared in the ruling rightist circles in Brazil at the time: that political resistance was a consequence of psychological dysfunction, or rather, that it indicated a subversive and disturbing psychosocial 'pathology'. Finally, we should note that an aim of this paper is to contribute to the movement from 'dreaming' the history of psychoanalysis to uncovering some of its reality.

### **'He used to be a good person.'**

The material presented here has arisen in the course of a research project, *Psicanálise e Contexto Social no Brasil: Fluxos Transnacionais, Impacto Cultural e Regime Autoritário* (*Psychoanalysis and Social Context in Brazil: Transnational Fluxes, Cultural Impact and*

*Authoritarian Regime*),<sup>2</sup> in which we have interviewed Brazilian psychoanalysts about the practice of psychoanalysis during the dictatorship. In one of these interviews, a senior psychoanalyst with intimate knowledge of the SBPSP talked to us about the powerful tendency within the Society to avoid dealing openly with problematic issues. Even for someone as influential as himself, our interviewee stated, '*the hardest place for me to speak publicly is the Society*' – harder even than speaking in a plenary session of the entire IPA. According to this interviewee and others, the situation during the dictatorship was even worse, and in particular it was impossible to speak about experiences of torture or being tortured, or to acknowledge the links some analysts had with the military. But even now, he told us, the history of the Society is sanitized so that there is little explicit recognition of the positions that some analysts had taken during the dictatorship period (see Frosh and Mandelbaum, 2017, for more detail on this process of institutional silencing).

It was in this context that our interviewee mentioned the case of a psychoanalyst who worked in prisons and collaborated with the military apparatus.<sup>3</sup>

*At that time there were denunciations against an analyst from the Society who purportedly had collaborated with the apparatus of repression. This is never spoken about, because it was an analyst who had worked with the military police, and they called him to issue his opinion on a person arrested who was less than 18 years old.*

*[Interviewer: Can you tell us his name?]*

*No, I prefer not to say anything about the psychoanalyst, but if you want to discover this, it is easy... This is completely covered over at the Society, it is never mentioned. He was called to the prison to give an opinion on whether the person could be arrested or not, and [the arrested person] was imprisoned. ...Ivan Seixas was a 17 year-old boy whose father had been tortured and nowadays he continues to denounce torture. And when I was at the DEOPS<sup>4</sup> he also came there, Ivan Seixas, he was part of a group of crazy people that exploded bridges, they were really mad, but he was in opposition to the regime.*

Although in this first mention of the case the interviewee refused to give the name of the psychoanalyst he was referring to, later in the interview, whilst again discussing secrecy in the Society, he decided to speak more openly.

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<sup>2</sup> We are grateful for the support of the Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo in carrying out this research.

<sup>3</sup> Interview carried out in Portuguese on 24 February 2016. The interviewee was a leftist militant in the students' movement during his years at medical school. He was in prison for approximately 9 months at the beginning of the 1970s.

<sup>4</sup> The Department of Political and Social Order (DEOPS), which was the main centre of investigation and also imprisonment.

*Look, there was a person in São Paulo accused of collaborating with torture. Nobody mentions that, you don't know most of it. Want to know? He wasn't a bad person, he was involved because he was an employee – a civil servant, a doctor at the police corporation. It would be worthwhile checking into this to be able to say 'he didn't do it or he did.' He disappeared. I can tell you his name, Emílio de Augustinis. I've met him. He used to be a good person. Dumb, naïve, alienated. He didn't even know there was a dictatorship, or he knew, he had no critical sense about anything, and participated in a Society where negligence is put up against critical sense. Who do you find in the Society? Groups closed in on themselves, a remnant of what became anachronistic, the belief that the group has the psychoanalytic truth.*

There are several different issues compressed into this passage. First, the context is the seemingly paradoxical silence of a psychoanalytical society supposedly involved in a practice of free speech, but unable to speak about a significant event in its own history. Secondly, there is the characterization of the psychoanalyst as someone who involved himself in the torture apparatus just because he was a civil employee, not because of any personal decision or possibly even political commitment. After all, he was a *'good person, dumb, naïve, alienated'* – a formulation reminiscent of Hannah Arendt's critical consideration of why ordinary people engage in violent practices against others, with dreadful consequences, while they seem to think and claim they are just obeying orders (Arendt, 1963). Augustinis was a medical doctor in the Criminal Biotypology Institute of the Department of Criminal Institutes of the State of São Paulo and, as our interviewee describes, he was called into this case ostensibly to give a view on the mental state of the prisoner. In the narrative, the psychoanalyst's disconnection from events is portrayed as extreme: *'He didn't even know there was a dictatorship, or he knew, he had no critical sense about anything.'* In São Paulo during the 1970s, it was inconceivable that anyone, young or old, from any social class, literate or illiterate, would not know there was a dictatorship in the country. People were afraid; there were no direct elections; newspapers, books and cultural events were censored; meetings were prohibited. Of course, one could say that this is only an ironic and exaggerated way of speaking, not to be taken literally. But the argument our interviewee is making is that this psychoanalyst's supposed 'ignorance' of the political situation – an ignorance which allowed him to go along with its violence – was paralleled by an *active* kind of 'ignorance', or denial, in the SBPSP: *'and [he] participated in a Society where negligence is put up against critical sense.'* That is, Emílio de Augustinis was, in our interviewee's view, a man well adapted to the psychoanalytical institution to which he belonged.<sup>5</sup> His disconnection was first attributed to his personality – *'dumb, naïve, alienated'* – but strengthened by the *'negligent'* and noncritical psychoanalytical institution where he was training. Additionally, this institutional way of functioning and thinking can be

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<sup>5</sup> The registers of the Brazilian Society of Psychoanalysis of São Paulo (SBPSP) show his first attendance as a candidate in 1971; he became an associate member in 1985 and left the institution in September, 1997. All the events described in this paper happened within this period.

expanded from the specific sociopolitical context to a problematic institutional tendency in psychoanalysis itself, *'a remnant of what became anachronistic, the belief that the group has the psychoanalytic truth.'*

## Testimony

In following up this set of claims by our interviewee, we have explored Emílio de Augustinis' case. We are especially interested in understanding the connections between his deeds as a psychiatrist in the penitentiary system during the dictatorial period and his thoughts as a psychoanalyst. To aid in this, we have examined a clinical paper he published in 1977 for the *Jornal de Psicanálise*, the official journal of the training institute of the SBPSP, *Notas surgidas na primeira experiência de supervisão* (*Notes arising from the first experience of supervision*), and a later paper written by him with another psychoanalyst, Claudio Cohen, *É possível a autonomia do sentenciado no sistema penitenciário?* (*Is the autonomy of the sentenced person possible in the penitentiary system?*) (Augustinis 1977; Cohen and Augustinis, 1998). Our first step, however, was to trace the adolescent prisoner referred to in the account we had been given, Ivan Seixas, who is now a journalist engaged in disseminating knowledge about the dictatorship, working in close connection with the National Truth Commission established by the former president Dilma Rousseff in 2011. In an interview carried out with Seixas in October 2016, he gave us an extended testimony concerning what had happened to him and his encounter with Augustinis. As this relates a previously undocumented set of events, we reproduce the key narrative at length below.<sup>6</sup> The extract follows an account by Seixas of how he had been captured by the military at age 16, along with his father.<sup>7</sup> He stated,

*I was a militant from a clandestine armed struggle organization. I was one of the participants in the armed struggle. I wasn't just 'support', I was a warrior and entered into armed struggle; my entire family were militants and so on. When we were captured, my father and myself, we were captured together, tortured together and my father was assassinated after two days of uninterrupted torture. My mother and my sisters were also captured, they remained in jail for a year and a half and I was there for almost 6 years, from 16 until I was 22 years old.*

He was never charged with anything, but held first in the 'Taubaté House of Custody and Treatment'. He said, *'the common prisoner was condemned to so many years in jail and*

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<sup>6</sup> Interview carried out in Portuguese on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2016.

<sup>7</sup> One of the reviewers of this paper commented that s/he knows Seixas and confirmed, 'He joined his father in the revolutionary movement at age 14 and was already engaged in "actions" at age 16. He was quite rebellious in prison against the authorities, and I can picture the scene as he describes it. Today, Ivan is widely recognized as a human rights activist and one of the people who fought to have the former political police headquarters, where people were tortured, turned into the Museum of Resistance.'

*then two or three additional ones, however many years it was, as a security measure. This was extendable depending on the opinion of a group or of a single psychiatrist who would say, "The man is still dangerous," and the prisoner could not get out.'* Seixas told us that young men were sent there because they were seen by definition as being dangerous. In November 1971 he was transferred to the state prison at Tiradentes and then to the State Penitentiary. He went back to Tiradentes but after a hunger strike was transferred back to the Penitentiary *'supposedly to carry out some exams, in reality they wanted to make me lose my balance and force me to go on television, at that time there was that thing of making militants deny the struggle, speak favorably about the dictatorship, etc.'* Below we reproduce his detailed account of his contact with Augustinis.

*When I went to the penitentiary, they did not tell me where they were taking me. They hid the fact that I was there. I was left there hidden for two months. During that time there I did three or four interviews I believe. I underwent an electroencephalograph; a psycho-technical test that was a small square and circle you had to match, a very simple thing; another which I think was the Rorschach; another conversation with a psychologist; an initial interview I believe it would be the medical history; and the last was with the director of the Criminal Biotypology Institute, who was Emilio de Augustinis, and he ended up telling me what they wanted from me. During the two months I was there, I was not allowed any visits at any time, I had absolutely no rights whatsoever, I was hidden there, with precisely that goal. So, I took the four exams, including the electro one, and the last conversation with Emilio de Augustinis... [He] came to talk to me, [they] took me to talk with him, and he begins his preaching, that I was very young, that I had to get out because I was going to die in prison, because I had my whole life ahead of me. And I let him speak until he says, 'Wouldn't you like to get out?' 'It's obvious I want to get out,' so he says, 'Why don't you get out?' I said, 'Because you are keeping me jailed, that's why,' a rather stupid question and he says, 'No, but there is a way for you to get out.' And then I realized, well here comes the attack. I said, 'Which way is that?' He said, 'You go on television, make a statement repudiating this madness you got yourself in, defending the government and then you are out.' I said, 'That I will not do.' He then said, 'Why not?' I thought about how I could respond to such a stupid situation, so I started mocking him; as always, I was very sarcastic, as always I fell back on teasing. I said simply, 'Because I am not at all photogenic' and let out a laugh, and he was infuriated and began to scream, 'Guards, guards, take him from here!' They pushed me away; I was trying to return some blows, they took me back to the cell and I remained there another 10, 12 days, and when the period I spent there ended I was taken to the Tiradentes prison once again.*

*Afterwards, I encountered this man [Augustinis] some time later, a little before the struggle for amnesty.<sup>8</sup> He attempted to speak to me to say that I was making him lose his reputation due to the denunciations I was making, and the journal *Movimento*<sup>9</sup> had written a long article on the health professionals who collaborated with torture and they included him as well. This was before the amnesty, it was in the year '78, '77. Most probably '78. And that was when he asked for my contact information, he wanted to talk to me because he alleged that I was confused, had no idea what I was saying and was hampering him. ... I said, 'I agree [to meet him], but with a witness, I will not talk to him alone.' I will never talk to those people without a witness. Then it was agreed that his attorney would come along and [my attorney] would come with me. We then set up a meeting with him at [the attorney's] office and the people set up, out of fear that I would kill the guy or whatever, set up a scheme or plan to protect me, to make sure I wouldn't do anything silly. So we began to talk and he said... 'Listen, I have always acted decently. There were some boys from Var-Palmares that were imprisoned,<sup>10</sup> who I helped a great deal and they got out of prison, and in your case I acted in the best way possible, I helped you, and then we had the conversation and I drafted the report, and that was all that happened. I don't know where you got that story from, that I invited you to go on television.' I spoke the following, 'Have you finished?' 'Yes, I have finished.' 'Well then, let me remember, because I have a good memory and remember dates and details. I went there on January 3rd, 1972. You were the Director of the Criminal Biotypology Institute and I spoke to Dr. XX who was a psychologist, I then spoke to Dr. YY who did the electro, I then took the psycho-technical test and the Rorschach test with I do not know who and finally the one I spoke to was you, you called me into your room and you began to speak...' He said 'It's true, good memory.' 'And then you started to say I had to get out.' 'It's true.' 'You said I was very young.' Everything I continued to say he agreed with, except that, 'At the end you said, "There is a way to get out of prison," and you had been sitting close to me, you leaned on the chair and said to me "There is a way to get*

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<sup>8</sup> In 1979, the Brazilian military president João Baptista Figueiredo passed the amnesty law, which provided a general and unrestricted amnesty to all the perpetrators of political crimes, whether they were members or defenders of the civil-military regime or those who opposed it.

<sup>9</sup> *Movimento* was an alternative weekly leftist newspaper that circulated in Brazil during the dictatorial period. We have traced a long article including an account by Seixas published in the newspaper on 16th September 1979, entitled *Os profissionais do terror: os médicos e enfermeiros que prolongavam ou acobertavam a dor dos torturados* [*The professionals of terror: the doctors and nurses who prolonged or covered the pain of the tortured*] (Oliveira, 1979).

<sup>10</sup> Var-Palmares (Vanguarda Armada Revolucionária Palmares, Palmares Revolutionary Vanguard Army) was an extreme leftist terrorist group that took actions during the Brazilian dictatorship with the aim of defeating the regime. We have searched without success in the DEOPS' Archives for more evidence on the connections between the 'boys' who were arrested and Emílio de Augustinis. We also spoke to one of them, Pedro Farkas, who, although not specifically remembering Augustinis, said he was taken to a psychiatric examination in order to establish if he was mad or a terrorist (sic). The lack of documentary evidence needs to be understood in relation to what seems to have been a systematic destruction of material that might have compromised individuals involved with the regime. One of the archivists told us, 'truckloads of documents have been burned.'



*out." Do you remember you said that?' He said 'I remember.' Then I said, 'You said: "The way is for you to make a statement that you repudiate what you did, renege on your companions, defend the government, and then you are out."' 'No, I did not say that.' 'Look man, you agreed with everything, this ending fits with everything you said to me, you know why? Because those boys from Var-Palmares that you say you helped, they did not go on television, but their parents went on television to speak poorly of the left and to defend the government, that is why they got out. That is, you have a connection with this entire topic, so do not come to say to me that you do not know what I am talking about, because you know very well.' So he tried to insist on this story, I punched the table and said 'Look, recognize what you did, say what you did, I am not here for any other reason but to restore the truth, that you know is the truth, so if we are to continue on talking you have to accept what you did, if not, there is nothing else to say.' And then he started saying he had a problem, that he was a psychoanalyst... that he was being hampered because his patients were breaking with him, and that this was causing him losses. I said 'I want you to get screwed, I want you to die, you did what you did and want me to take care of your professional life? Take responsibility for the shit you did, I have nothing to do with that.' 'But you admit that it may have been a ruse that I used to check up on you?' 'For me it could have been what you wanted, but what happened was: you tried to force me to go on television and I did not go, I got out of there and you began to call on the guys and they left with me being beaten and kicked around and I got into a fight with them right in front of you and you did not protest, so do not come and pressure me with your professional problem. Your professional problem is yours, all I have left to say is: I want all of you to come out, to feel what it is like to be harassed like you people harassed those of us from the left, so do not nag me with that sort of thing.' A very complicated atmosphere set in, he sort of began to whimper, we ended the meeting and the conversation was over, and that is the story with Emílio de Augustinis.*

## **The 'Mental Sanity Examination'**

The complete report of Ivan Seixas' 'Mental Sanity Examination' can be accessed on the site of *Brasil Nunca Mais (Brazil Never More)*.<sup>11</sup> This psychiatric examination, signed by Dr. Emílio de Augustinis on 29<sup>th</sup> February 1972, contains the history of Seixas' links, and the links of his father – who was arrested and tortured at the same time as him – to the armed resistance against the dictatorial government. In the report, it is possible to see a particular use of psychoanalytical concepts to describe Seixas' personality and seemingly explain his political engagement.

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<sup>11</sup> The relevant pages of the Mental Sanity Examination are appended. The web reference is [http://bnmdigital.mpf.mp.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=BIB\\_02&pesq=Augustinis](http://bnmdigital.mpf.mp.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=BIB_02&pesq=Augustinis). Further documentation on Ivan Seixas' examination is at [http://bnmdigital.mpf.mp.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=BIB\\_02&PagFis=109372&Pesq=Ivan+Seixas](http://bnmdigital.mpf.mp.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=BIB_02&PagFis=109372&Pesq=Ivan+Seixas).

[He] reveals a good mental level. Correct judgement, reasoning and thoughts in those situations considered neutral and not directly related to him. In compensation, everything that affects him more intensely is reacted to by the patient (sic) in such a way that provides evidence for egocentrism and, mostly, a need for ready attention. He also displays primitive psychological mechanisms, characteristic of early stages of development, like splitting, projection and idealization. Altogether, such tendencies make it very difficult for him to have an appreciation of reality consistent with the objective data, and to be flexible. For this reason, all his past cannot be evaluated by him in a balanced way, it entails too much guilt, which he only manages to feel with difficulty when he notes the suffering due to his behaviour imposed on his mother and other relatives.  
(authors' translation)

Although the psychological examination was signed by a psychologist, Dr. Tamara Chalem, Augustinis signed the final 'Discussion and Conclusion' of the whole set of investigations included in the Mental Sanity Examination:

The exams allowed the judgement of a superior mental level. There is no evidence of psychotic disturbance. Yet his psychological immaturity is sharply evident and certainly hinders his appreciation of reality and therefore of adequate behaviour.

It is notable here how the prisoner's past political behaviour is attributed to his immaturity, and how the language of the assessment makes use of notions of 'primitive' mechanisms that distort his objective appreciation of reality – basically those described by Klein and elaborated by Bion, 'splitting, projection and idealization'. If he were more mature, he would certainly be more flexible, more observant and more tolerant of 'reality'. The reference to 'reality' and 'adequate behaviour' suggests that Seixas' psychological 'immaturity' is being seen as connected to his political militancy, considered in psychoanalytic terms as a form of acting out. This is consistent with the analysis offered to us by another of our interviewees of a predominant psychoanalytic way of thinking about political engagement and ideologies to be found both in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.<sup>12</sup> This interviewee suggests that the case of Lobo was not so much an anomalous 'scandal' as:

*the tip of the iceberg of a larger question, of larger questions, that the Brazilian psychoanalytic tradition ended up incorporating from the international psychoanalytic movement, above all the Anglo-Saxon, a matrix, as if psychoanalysis was solely a discourse, a clinical practice turned towards the treatment of psychic perturbations, and that it would not have any social or cultural wider implications ... I think this matrix was very powerful in the Brazilian psychoanalytic tradition, to*

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<sup>12</sup> Interview carried out in Portuguese on 20th January 2017.

*an extent that political engagement, having or not having a political ideology, was treated as being something of the order of the symptom, of the symptom to be analysed. I think this happened both in Rio and São Paulo, this understanding that everything, even ideologies, are symptoms that should be analysed and dissolved through analysis.*

It should be noted that promotion of the idea that political resistance to the dictatorship was a sign of pathology – both individual and social – was widespread during the most intense period of the dictatorship, and not confined to psychoanalytic thinking. Nevertheless, as suggested by Augustinis' report on Seixas, psychiatrists and psychoanalysts participated in this reductionist psychologizing of dissent, arguably following a tradition in which early Brazilian psychoanalysis was embedded in a vision of nation-building that tackled the control of racial mix and sexuality as primary concerns of a society emerging from slavery and supposed 'primitivism' (Russo, 2012b). This reductionism can be seen especially clearly in the attitudes of at least some psychoanalysts during the dictatorial period to student rebellion, which was interpreted as an expression of adolescent turmoil. For example, in a 1974 paper in the *Revista Brasileira de Psicanálise*, entitled *Perfil Trágico de Nossos Dias (The Tragic Profile of our Time)*, Mario Pacheco de A. Prado, a senior psychoanalyst from the Brazilian Society of Psychoanalysis of Rio de Janeiro, suggested that contemporary society was characterized by a regressive pathology in which, 'the primary process invaded the consciousness of young and old people (...) with the massive use of primitive mechanisms of a schizoid-paranoid nature' (Prado, 1974, pp.147-148). According to Prado, this social regression would partly be caused by the misleading idea that by avoiding repression people would be less ill, leading to the emergence of a generation that used violence as a mode of rebellion instead of working constructively through the Oedipal situation. Darcy M. Uchôa (1973), from the SBPSP, makes some similar points. He acknowledged that youth movements can be understood in part as the normal expression of adolescent rebellion and can be progressive and open to the creation of new institutional and social models and structures. However, under certain social and cultural conditions youthful rebellion can result in significant intergenerational conflict. When the demands of young people become too extreme – when, for instance, they are marked by aggression and violence towards authority – powerful emotional forces and repressed impulses are likely to be at work. Uchôa thus claims that whilst historical and cultural forces might fuel generational conflicts, if this conflict becomes manifested in active rebellion and violence it is due to the emergence of regressive forces that indicate deep emotionality and irrationality. 'Social conflicts, aggression and the desire to destroy authority,' he writes, 'arise as a projection in the social field of unresolved intra-familial conflicts, in which the government, the authority and the institution take the place in fantasy of the good and bad breast, which gratifies and persecutes' (Uchôa, 1973, p.172).

The argument that political resistance, especially by students and other young people, could be understood as a reflection of psychological deficiencies was related to a broader opposition on the part of the regime to new expressions of sexuality and modernization. For example, Benjamin Cowan (2016), in a subtle analysis of the relationship of right wing moralizing to fantasies of sexual subversion in 'Cold War Brazil', describes how anxieties about youth, women and sexual 'decadence' were central to national security strategy in the period. Disturbance in the psychosocial field (especially around sexuality) and in the political arena were bound up with each other in the thinking of the ruling group. This was one of the faultlines which eventually weakened the regime, as modernization of society increased in the late 1970s and early 1980s; but during the dictatorship it meant that there was a very strong tendency to link ideas of psychological immaturity and 'decadence' with political activism. Some psychoanalysts seem to have been willing to provide intellectual support for this link.

### **A Note on Augustinis' Publications**

Amongst the striking elements of the material quoted above is the use of Kleinian theory to interpret political resistance amongst young people as a projection onto the wider authorities of conflicts that might normally be contained within the family environment. This in itself is not surprising: Kleinian psychoanalysis, especially in its Bionian variant, was hegemonic in the Brazilian scene of the 1970s. Klein's papers *Notes on some schizoid mechanisms* (1946), *Envy and Gratitude* (1957) and *A contribution to the psychogenesis of manic-depressive states* (1934), and Bion's *Learning from Experience* (1962) and *Attention and Interpretation* (1970), were especially widely cited in the official journals *Jornal de Psicanálise* and the *Revista Brasileira de Psicanálise*. The Kleinian psychoanalytic vocabulary used in the report signed by Augustinis in 1972 to portray the prisoner as someone characterized as deploying 'primitive psychological mechanisms' is thus in line with the dominant psychoanalytic mode of his time, and it is also consistent with the language of his 1977 paper in the *Jornal de Psicanálise* about his first experience in supervision. In this paper, after a brief presentation in which he says it is a 'story of what happened in my work with a patient and my ideas about it,' intending 'to dispose of the whimsy of supposing that I'd be talking about real facts,' he describes seeing in his clinic a forty-year-old woman who had divorced some months before, and who was depressed and 'in this state, did not want to postpone a long desired analysis' (p. 25). He continues: 'very embarrassed, she did not expose herself much in this assessment interview' (p. 25). After twenty minutes, the analyst, signaling her to the couch, asked if she did not want to begin at that very moment. 'In these conditions, her embarrassment grew.' Slowly, she began to speak about the 'difficulties of her life.' 'For my part,' he writes, 'I tried to show the patient what I noticed in that specific situation, which was helpful for both of us' (p. 26). In the following session the patient was 'more determined.' She protested at the analyst's intervention, saying she knew what an analysis was, but she 'thought that analysis was too transferenceal, in her own words' (p. 26). In the third session, the patient said she was anxious, could not

sleep well and asked if the analyst could prescribe pills. 'My answer contained the idea that the patient, without noticing it, tried to distract our attention from the psychoanalytic work, replacing it with another, a medical one' (p.26). In the following session, she asked the analyst for advice, 'If she should return to her clinical work as a psychologist. As she did not have the answer in the terms she expected, she said she would think about it over the weekend' (p.26). On Monday, she came late to the session and said she had decided to go back to work, and she would stop the analysis. 'I can't go on because it is too difficult for me to speak.' Augustinis writes, 'I used at that moment what I thought I knew about her... but she seemed not to listen' (p. 26). In the next session she paid, thanked the analyst in a formal manner and went away.

After this brief presentation of the case, the paper moves on to an account of how at the time he saw this patient, Augustinis belonged to a group that was reading Bion's (1954) paper, *Notes on the Theory of Schizophrenia*. He tells us that, while reading phrases like 'the use of [thought] as a mode of action in the service either of splitting the object or projective identification' (Bion, 1954, p.113), he was immediately reminded of his patient saying, 'I can't go on because it is too difficult for me to speak.' He suggests that this apparently straightforward statement had a dynamic function that related precisely to Bion's formulation of thought as a mode of action: 'it included the activity of putting her difficulties into the analysis and leaving them abandoned there... She abandons analysis, continuing her life as always, without access to her psychic realities' (pp. 26-27). Finally, he writes in the third and final page of the paper:

This is the understanding I have got of what I suppose happened in the patient's mind, of how her mind was functioning... A plastic current language also at the service of an archaic functioning mind... This mixture evokes the image of an Indian dressed and acculturated by civilization, becoming neither Indian nor civilized, both Indian and civilized. Or that of an old building with a restored and modernized facade. Or someone disguised in a Carnival ball. (p.27)

Like the 'primitive' thinking of the prisoner Ivan Seixas, Augustinis' patient had 'an archaic functioning mind,' which is why analysis was difficult for her and she left it. From what Augustinis writes both in Seixas' psychiatric report and in his clinical paper, we might say that both could be approximated in his view to 'Indians', not really civilized, 'old buildings' in a 'modernized' (and seemingly better) world, primitive people whose minds, however, could be understood by the psychoanalyst. According to this view, if Seixas had a primitive functioning mind, Augustinis might have felt it was his duty to try to persuade him to 'change his mind', go on television and say he was regretful for what he did, and praise the government.

This reductive psychoanalytic stance is ameliorated in the other paper we have found, published by Augustinis with his colleague Claudio Cohen in 1998, 26 years after he signed Seixas' psychiatric report and, as they write, the year in which 'the 50 years of

the Human Rights Declaration are celebrated' (Cohen and Augustinis, 1998, p. 55). By then Brazil had transformed itself into a democratic country, with freedom of speech and meeting, direct elections and no censorship. In *É possível a autonomia do sentenciado no sistema penitenciário?* (*Is the autonomy of the sentenced person possible in the penitentiary system?*), Cohen and Augustinis say, 'it is time to learn how to achieve an absolute respect for the "practice of autonomy" in all human relations' (p. 55). They state that, 'the penitentiary system seemingly works as a repressive system on individual autonomy, for those who committed an illegal act,' and this is criticized: 'When we take some distance to analyze these two societies, *macro* (external to prison) and *micro*, we observe that they are both arrogant' (p. 55). Later they acknowledge:

It is impossible to 'cure' – to modify values, drives, stereotypes, desires – in a coercive, restrictive environment, within the scope of the most absolute 'total institution', in the case of an 'involuntary patient' ... In this complex situation, even the health interventions inside this system may be used as a way of punishing the condemned individual. But despite this use of power... we may observe that in practice the oppressed individuals do not lose their autonomy, contrary to the efforts of the system. All the attempt of this 'system' is to act in a domineering way, removing any autonomy of the inmate... not respecting his/her individuality. This ideology ... is founded on the false premise that the paternalistic attitude will impose model, politically and legally correct behavior on the individual: it is, however, 'idealized' and hypocritical in light of the complexity and richness of real human behavior... There is still the wrong and inhuman approach of 'framing' the condemned through repression. (p. 56-57)

Curiously, this paper was published one year after Augustinis left the psychoanalytical society. Did he also recover his autonomy then? We do not know. We have, however, interviewed Augustinis' co-author, Claudio Cohen,<sup>13</sup> to inquire about the balance of authorship in this paper. Cohen recalled the work very well and explained that he is a psychoanalyst of the SBPSP and Professor of Ethics in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of São Paulo. He met Augustinis in the Penitentiary Council, which was a body that supervised the activities of the prison system and for which Augustinis worked. He told us that the joint paper came out of a discussion between them about differences in the social system inside and outside the prison and about how this relates to the issue of respect for the autonomy of the prisoner. Arising from this discussion, Cohen wrote the paper, which therefore may have reflected his ideas more than those of Augustinis. Nevertheless, the latter clearly signed up to them and allowed his name to appear as second author. It seems therefore as though post-dictatorship and post-institutional psychoanalysis, Augustinis may have been capable of adopting a more critical attitude towards coercive approaches to 'deviance' than he had whilst working as a psychiatrist in the *Criminal Biotypology Institute* twenty-five years earlier; and that

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<sup>13</sup> Interview carried out in Portuguese on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2017.

he was more respectful of the power of individuals to maintain their autonomy in the face of such coercion than he had been in his encounter with Ivan Seixas. Perhaps this reflects changes in the SBPSP too, for the description Cohen and Augustinis offer of the penitentiary system is reminiscent of what we have been told about the psychoanalytical society, in terms of its coerciveness and the attempts of each of these systems to control the autonomy of their inmates or members. By the late 1990s, this time had largely passed, even if the ability of the SBPSP to recognize what it had been involved in was still very limited.

We have not as yet been able to talk directly to Emílio de Augustinis. We have tried, and initially he agreed to an interview, but eventually his wife told us on the phone: *'he is 85 now, afraid of having lost his memories. He is retired, watching TV, Datena,<sup>14</sup> fearful of the bandits, afraid of letting me go to work.'*

## Conclusion

Our main aim in this paper has been to document the case of a Brazilian psychoanalyst implicated in the torture regime of the civil-military dictatorship in the early 1970s. In so doing, we have added to the historical evidence on the complicity of Brazilian psychoanalysis with the dictatorial regime, which is also shown both in the better-known case of Amilcar Lobo and in the generally 'conservative' atmosphere of the Brazilian Psychoanalytical Society of São Paulo, which we have reported on elsewhere (Rubin et al, 2015; Frosh and Mandelbaum, 2017). In addition, we have tried to raise some questions about whether the case of Emílio de Augustinis reflects systemic elements in Brazilian psychoanalysis, whatever it also says about his own political and personal investments. Despite the tendency of São Paulo psychoanalysts to present Rio psychoanalysis as 'more political' during the dictatorship and hence more corrupt, and to use the Lobo case as evidence of this, it is clear that there was a strong tendency towards complicity within São Paulo too, and the case of Augustinis – which of course may not be the only one – confirms this, even though there was a significant difference between his role and that of Lobo. Indeed, several psychoanalysts in our study, mainly from Rio, have asserted that the atmosphere in São Paulo was *more* oppressive than that in Rio, at least in the sense that there was more elitism within the Society and higher fees, and a more intense affiliation with the idea that psychoanalysis should be politically neutral and that it could be used to 'interpret' resistance to the regime. Be that as it may, what we can say with some confidence, in line with writers such as Russo (2012a) and (in the case of Argentina) Plotkin (2001), is that psychoanalysis had no exemption from the pressures to conform to authoritarian rule. At times the tendency of psychoanalytic institutions to eschew positions of engagement in the protection of

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<sup>14</sup> *Datena* is the name of a TV showman who conducts a sensationalist programme daily in the afternoons dealing with crimes that are reported in a terrifying manner.

people against state violence – an engagement that might be thought of as aligned with psychoanalysis’ generally humanitarian ethic and one that is reflected in the activities of some individual psychoanalysts (Hollander, 2010) – has led to silencing of dissent, cover-up of complicity with violence, and a kind of ‘dissociation’ that means that the implications of this are not thought about, or at least not discussed. As we have described elsewhere, a result of this was a state of anxiety and oppressive authoritarianism in the Brazilian psychoanalytic societies themselves – in São Paulo as well as in Rio – that has taken many years to begin to acknowledge. Is there a general conclusion about psychoanalysis itself that can be drawn? This is more difficult to establish, given the variations in psychoanalytic theory and practice, including institutional arrangements, across the world and also within countries – including Brazil, with its wide variety of ‘official’ and unofficial psychoanalytic societies. But it is clear that psychoanalysis has no particular protection against losing its way when faced with the pressures of authoritarianism, and that there is a danger from time to time – or maybe always – that its inward-looking theories, its tendency towards privatized clinical practice, and its frequent confusion of clinical with political ‘neutrality’, may make it prone to conformism when it feels itself to be under threat.

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## Appendix: Conclusion of Ivan Seixas' Mental Sanity Examination

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\* Fls. V \*

para inibir os impulsos momentâneos. - E' um S com bom potencial de realização e produção.

Conclusão - S com nível intelectual superior. E' imaturo, seu relacionamento com o mundo exterior é pouco objetivo em decorrência da projeção de seus afetos. Procura se auto-afirmar e dominar os outros, na tentativa de esconder sua insegurança. - Parece-nos que bem orientado, talvez com a ajuda de uma psicoterapia, venha a atingir a maturidade emocional e afetiva e adequar melhor seu comportamento". 19-01-72 - Profa. Tamara Chalem - Psicóloga.

- 8.- Em EXAME ELETROENCEFALOGRAFICO foi obtido o traçado de nº 2012, que determinou a seguinte apreciação:  
 "Traçado em condições técnicas satisfatórias. Exame realizado em vigília. Atividade elétrica cerebral - mostrando ritmo de base alfa dominante, regular, frequência 8 cps., amplitude média 40 microvolts, bilateralmente simétrico. - Durante todo o período de exame de repouso e com a hiperpnéia não se registraram disritmias paroxísticas ou outros sinais elétricos do tipo patológico focal - ou difuso. - Ritmo de base alfa dominante, regular e simétrico. - Conclusão - EEG NORMAL". 24-01-72 - Dr. Thomaz Presa Martins - Médico EEG.

\* DISCUSSÃO E CONCLUSÃO \*

- 9.- Os exames permitiram apurar nível mental superior. Não se verificou a existência de distúrbio psicótico. Contudo, aparece nitidamente evidente a sua imaturidade psicológica, o que certamente muito lhe deve dificultar a sua apreciação da realidade e portanto um comportamento adequado a ele.

- 10.- Pelos exames, concluímos pois por personalidade de imatura, insuficientemente desenvolvida. Necessita de proteção e tratamento que lhe possam garantir atingir desenvolvimento psíquico compatível inclusive com sua idade.

(segue)

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\* Fls. VI \*

- 11.- Tendo em vista o disposto no artigo 50 do Código Penal Militar, sua imputabilidade fica intensamente comprometida.

\* QUESITOS E RESPOSTAS \*

12.- QUESITOS DA PROCURADORIA MILITAR:

- a)- Possui o indiciado suficiente desenvolvimento psíquico para entender o caráter ilícito dos atos que praticou ?  
 b)- Tem êle capacidade para se dirigir de acordo com esse entendimento ?  
 c)- Caso negativo, por que ?

13.- RESPOSTAS AOS QUESITOS DA PROCURADORIA MILITAR:

- a)- Não, não possui suficiente desenvolvimento para o entendimento pleno do caráter ilícito dos atos que praticou.  
 b)- Não, plena não.  
 c)- Por personalidade insuficientemente desenvolvida. Vide itens 6, 7, 9, 10 e 11.

14.- QUESITOS DA DEFESA:

- a)- Há algum sinal evidente de sevícia, compreendendo principalmente a cabeça?  
 b)- Há constatável aparência de terror, pânico no examinando, inibindo as suas respostas ?  
 c)- Apresenta o examinando algum trauma capaz de influenciar as suas respostas ?  
 d)- Protesta-se por quesitos suplementares ?

15.- RESPOSTAS AOS QUESITOS DA DEFESA:

- a)- Não, não há sinal evidente de sevícia. - O paciente queixa-se de dores nas costas, atribuídas por êle a possível entorse na coluna vertebral decorrente de sevícias.

(segue)

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\* Fls. VII \*

- b)- Não, não há.
- c)- Não, não apresenta.
- d)- Prejudicado.

São Paulo, 29 de fevereiro de 1972.

*Emilio José Augustinis*

\* DR. EMILIO JOSÉ DE AUGUSTINIS \*  
- Primeiro Relator -

*Jose Francisco Stivanin*  
\* DR. JOSÉ FRANCISCO STIVANIN \*  
- Segundo Relator -

*Acauly Novalis*  
\* DR. A. CAULY NOVAES \*  
- Diretor Substituto -



WLF

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