



# Educating in Times of Pandemic: Images as Micropolitics of Epistemic Disobedience to the Modern and Humanist Epistemologies of the Global North

## *Educando em Tempos de Pandemia: imagens como micropolíticas de desobediência epistêmica às epistemologias modernas e humanistas do Norte Global*

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Souzana Mizan\*

\*Universidade Federal de São Paulo (UNIFESP), São Paulo, São Paulo / Brasil  
[souzana.mizan@unifesp.br](mailto:souzana.mizan@unifesp.br)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8818-5403>

Daniel de Mello Ferraz\*\*

\*\*Universidade de São Paulo (USP), São Paulo, São Paulo / Brasil  
[danielfe@usp.br](mailto:danielfe@usp.br)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8483-2423>

**ABSTRACT:** In this article, we take the risk of reading the contemporary world based on images that have been published on social media during the pandemic crisis. By questioning the abyssal lines (SOUSA SANTOS, 2007) imbued and naturalized by the projects of Modernity and Humanism, the article discusses the ways in which nature invaded, in the middle of the pandemic, “this side” of modernity. The following section explores the undemocratic virus by problematizing the abyssal lines of social class differences. Then, in order to further complexify the stark differences between white supremacy and black genocide, the next section demonstrates that we have not overcome this historical crisis of humanity. Section five investigates the abyssal lines between access to education and the perpetuation of a project for education that secures the denial of its existence. In the conclusion, we explain the reasons that make us conceive of these images as procedural micropolitics that have the potential to construct “new modes of subjectivity” (GUATTARI; ROLNIK, 1996, p. 30) and suggest a pedagogy of visual literacy and its micropolitics and an epistemic turn in the notions of “crisis”.

**KEYWORDS:** pandemic; modernity; humanism; education.

**RESUMO:** Nesse artigo, nos arriscamos a ler a atualidade a partir de imagens que foram publicadas nas mídias sociais durante a crise da pandemia. Por meio de questionamentos das linhas abissais (SOUSA SANTOS, 2007) imbuídas e naturalizadas pelos projetos da Modernidade e do Humanismo, o artigo discute de que maneiras a natureza invadiu, em meio à pandemia, o “lado de cá” da modernidade. A seção seguinte explora o vírus não democrático, problematizando as linhas abissais das diferenças sociais de classe para em seguida complexificar as diferenças gritantes entre a supremacia branca e o genocídio negro, demonstrando que não superamos essa crise histórica da humanidade. A seção cinco investiga as linhas abissais entre o acesso à educação e a perpetuação de um projeto de educação que firma a negação de sua existência. Nas considerações finais, explicamos as razões que nos levam a conceber essas imagens como micropolíticas processuais que têm o potencial de construir “novos modos de subjetividade” (GUATTARI; ROLNIK, 1996, p. 30) e advogamos por uma pedagogia de letramento visual, suas micropolíticas e por uma virada epistêmica nas noções de “crise”.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** pandemia, modernidade, humanismo, educação.

## 1 Introduction: decolonizing modern notions of crisis

Yet in fact modernity is a surprisingly simple deal. The entire contract can be summarized in a single phrase: humans agree to give up meanings in exchange for power.

Harari, *Homo Deus*, 2017.

Indolent reason (SOUSA SANTOS, 2002, p. 237) has dominated the three pillars – modernity, humanism and science – of societies in the Global North and contributed to the production of non-existence of everything that this reason placed on the other side of the abyssal lines, a metaphor used by the Portuguese sociologist to refer to everything that deviates from the norm and that the modern man has objectified. In this way, modernity provided “the consolidation of the empire and nations/empires in Europe, a discourse that constructs the idea of Westernization, the subjugation of peoples and cultures, and the counter discourses and social movements that resist Euro-American expansion”<sup>1</sup> (MIGNOLO, 2000, p. 107). Modernity

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<sup>1</sup> In the original: a consolidação do império e nações/impérios na Europa, um discurso que constrói a ideia de Ocidentalismo, a subjugação de povos e culturas, e os contradiscursos e movimentos sociais que resistem à expansão Euro-Americana.

propelled a Humanism fabricated as “[t]he antidote to a meaningless and lawless existence”, in which the god-man roles are reversed and man is expected to give meaning to the universe (HARARI, 2017, p. 259). However, the great triumph of the Global North is science, high technology and connectivity, that is, the masterful results of modernity and humanism, concrete evidence that the Sapiens have succeeded.

All of a sudden, humanity is experiencing a health crisis, which is not a new reality for humans, who have already gone through polio, cholera, black plague and other pests, but is unprecedented for the absolute majority of the current inhabitants of the earth. Science, so despised by Brazilian education ministers, flat earthers and negationists on duty, has mobilized itself as never before, reinforcing in this period of health crisis the important role of scientific research. The lethal pandemic virus mainly threatens elderly people and people with diseases, but it also affects younger people without a history of pathologies. In addition, this health and hygiene crisis is accompanied by a negative impact on the economy, because it requires social distance, and the impossibility of contacting other humans for fear of being contaminated. Confinement thus restricted people’s physical movement, forcing them to work and study remotely, creating jobs that can be developed at a distance. The economic consequences of this crisis have led many governments, including the Brazilian government, to create a denialist stance on the current reality, ridiculing deaths, inventing miraculous medicines and hastening the opening of the confinement that leads to “herd immunity” or natural collective immunity that comes at the cost of many deaths when there is no vaccine.

As such, the economic crisis would not be a new phase in the world economy, since our governments, based on the discourse of economic and financial crisis since the 1980s, increasingly establish severe policies for citizens to retire and, progressively hinder access to health and education with the constant cuts in funds that governments allocate to these sectors. Sousa Santos (2020), in the booklet that he published at the beginning of the pandemic *The cruel pedagogy of the virus* points to this constant financial crisis of capitalist societies:

Since the 1980s – as neoliberalism was imposed as the dominant version of capitalism and it became more and more subject to the logic of the financial sector –, the world has been

living in a permanent state of crisis ... the financial crisis is used to explain the cuts in social policies (health, education, social security) or the degradation of wages.<sup>2</sup> (SOUSA SANTOS, 2020, p. 5)

Another result of the permanent crisis of human greed is the environmental crisis that governments are trying to deny by claiming that the transition to an ecologically responsible economy will stop “development”. Unfortunately, it seems that nothing is capable of slowing or stopping the ecological catastrophe that is becoming more and more imminent. The virus and its spread sank into oblivion the oil spill that reached 2,000 kilometers of the Brazilian northeastern coast at the end of 2019, the rupture of the dam in Brumadinho that buried 270 human lives under a sea of toxic mud in early 2019 and the rupture of the dam in Mariana and its mud reaching the river Rio Doce, whose waters supply many riverside and native populations that inhabit the banks of the river. Moreover, the current government’s constant disregard for the devastation of the Amazon rainforest poses a threat not only for the people of the forest but also for the earth as a whole. President Bolsonaro, in an announcement in July 2020 in the middle of the pandemic, called the rainforest the symbol of the country, to affirm, later on, that the forest does not catch fire because it is humid and “it is the Indigenous who cause fire” and, furthermore, that what catches fire is the periphery (probably referring to the periphery of the forest). This statement of the President is a criticism of the decree that he had to sign and that prohibits burnings for 120 days in the Amazon rainforest. This decree contradicts the inclinations of the Environment Minister who, in a ministerial meeting in April 2020, suggested that “while we are at that moment of tranquility in terms of press coverage, since the press only talks about COVID, we need to let the herds of cattle invade (the rainforest) while we’re changing all the regulations and simplifying norms. Those of IPHAN, of the Ministry of Agriculture, of the Ministry of the Environment, of the ministry of this, of

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<sup>2</sup> In the original: Desde a década de 1980– à medida que o neoliberalismo se foi impondo como a versão dominante do capitalismo e este se foi sujeitando mais e mais à lógica do sector financeiro–, o mundo tem vivido em permanente estado de crise... a crise financeira permanente é utilizada para explicar os cortes nas políticas sociais (saúde, educação, previdência social) ou a degradação dos salários.

the ministry of that”,<sup>3</sup> in the words of the minister. In fact, the president, based on a conspiracy theory, claimed that Brazil suffers unfair accusations in relation to Europe’s colonial environmental policies and characterized the European continent as an “environmental sect”.

Another conception of crisis, which might be essential in our understanding of our current times, is discussed by Ricoeur (1994) in his conference on the crisis of historical consciousness and Europe. The French philosopher demonstrates a crisis of the Cartesian *Cogito* and, as a master of the hermeneutics of suspicion, questions the man in Modernity represented as an a-historical and uprooted being who creates abstract and falsely universal truths. *Cogito’s* conscience reveals itself as narcissistic and with a radical subjectivity that considers itself pure and innocent. One of the most precious results of the belief in this *Cogito* is modern science as an objective representation of an abstract mind. In this perspective, we can affirm that Modernity produced a crisis by introducing supposedly objective truths at the heart of the subjective mind:

But just as it is necessary to move from memory as recurrence to memory as recalling, towards memory as criticism, it is also necessary to dare to move from simple fusion to a true active exchange of memories. It is the most effective way to narrate *otherwise*: to go through the account of others in order to understand ourselves, to read our history through the eyes of historians that belong to peoples other than ours, perhaps even to other great cultures that have not participated in the process of the intertwining evoked earlier between the founding cultures of contemporary Europe; this is the immense task which a therapy of the European memory must propose<sup>4</sup> (RICOEUR, 1994, p. 92).

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<sup>3</sup> Available at: <https://noticias.uol.com.br/politica/ultimas-noticias/2020/05/22/salles-cita-foco-da-imprensa-na-covid-para-passar-boiada-no-meio-ambiente.htm>. Accessed on: Jul. 8, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> In the original: Mas do mesmo modo em que é preciso passar da memória-repetição à memória- recordação, à memória-crítica, é preciso ousar passar da simples mescla a uma verdadeira troca ativa das memórias. É a maneira mais eficaz de relatar *de outra forma*: passar pelo relato dos outros para compreender a nós mesmos, ler nossa história com olhos de historiadores pertencentes a outros povos que não o nosso, talvez até mesmo a outras grandes culturas que não tenham participado do entrelaçamento evocado antes entre as

Ricoeur, in spite of being a French philosopher, manages to cause a decentralization of his inevitably Eurocentric thinking, seeking in his hermeneutics of suspicion to open paths for other interpretations of human history that are not universal, but local and situated, because suspecting would open space for possible questioning, problematization, resistance and transformation of the historically established meanings, that is, it would make room for other meanings. Based on this rationale, other breaths would gradually “push” the “old” meanings towards a rupture/ crisis in the interpretive *habitus* (MONTE MÓR, 1999) of the meaning-constructing subjects (FERRAZ; MIZAN, 2019).

Necessarily, the *Cogito* reveals a more dialogical conscience when it seeks to know the unknown through the exchange of memories with historians who belong to other peoples who are not Europeans and who suffered from Eurocentric colonialism and anthropocentrism. These exchanges, necessarily, involve the translation process, because “translating is at the same time transcribing, transposing, displacing, transferring and, therefore, transporting while transforming”<sup>5</sup> (LATOURE, 2016, p. 30).

In this article, although we accept that, apparently, it is not easy to study reality while it is in progress, we risk reading the current times based on images that were published on social media during the pandemic crisis and that show us that the crisis that the humanity is living has its roots in the colonial, patriarchal, racist and capitalist projects of the 16th century, which allowed the appropriation of lands, peoples and cultures by the European mind with the purpose of creating hierarchies and subordinations that would make profit and markets grow constantly. Through the questioning of the abyssal lines (SOUSA SANTOS, 2007) imbued and naturalized by the projects of Modernity and Humanism, the article discusses, after this introduction, how nature invaded, in the middle of the pandemic, “this side” of the modern abyssal lines. Section 3 explores the undemocratic virus, problematizing the abyssal lines of social class differences in order to complexify the abyssal lines between white supremacy and black genocide in

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culturas fundadoras da Europa contemporânea, esta é a imensa tarefa à qual deve se propor uma terapia da memória europeia.

<sup>5</sup> In the original: traduzir é ao mesmo tempo transcrever, transpor, deslocar, transferir e, portanto, transportar transformando.

the next section, by demonstrating that we have not overcome this historical crisis of humanity. Section 5 investigates the abyssal lines between access to education and the perpetuation of an education project that fosters the denial of its existence. In the final considerations, we explain the reasons that lead us to conceive of these images as active and procedural micropolitics that have the potential to build “new modes of subjectivity” (GUATTARI; ROLNIK, 1996, p. 30) and, thus, we advocate for a pedagogy of visual literacy and its micropolitics and an epistemic turn in the notions of “crisis”.

## 2 Nature invades “this side” of the modern abyssal lines

The cases are so many that they would not fit on a simple note. A country that has already exercised international leadership in summit meetings related to the environmental issue is today an environmental villain, an outcast in the community of nations.<sup>6</sup>

Disavowal note, Associação dos Professores de Direito Ambiental no Brasil.

The hierarchies and subordinations of lands, peoples, languages and cultures that were the basis of the success of the European imperialist project, have created abyssal lines (SOUSA SANTOS, 2002, p. 237) that value only “the epistemologies of the North”, a metaphor for the “universal”, normative and homogenizing knowledge that Europe and the United States of America have legitimized and decreed as absolute truth. It is the epistemologies of the North that guide the thinking of authoritarian rulers, such as Trump’s in the United States of America and Bolsonaro’s in Brazil. It is no coincidence that both won the elections using the *Twitter* to communicate with the masses and, even after being elected presidents, they continued to spread hate speech about difference, a revival of the idea of the denying of science, a resistance to the need for environmental

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<sup>6</sup> In the original: Os casos são tantos que não caberiam em simples nota. Um país que já exerceu a liderança internacional em encontros de cúpula vinculados à questão ambiental é hoje vilão ambiental, pária na comunidade de nações. Available at: <https://www.revista-pub.org/post/24052020>. Accessed on: Aug. 6, 2020.

preservation and the legitimation of a necropolitics (MBEMBE, 2019) during the pandemic, that is, the government's use of state power to kill the other, whose life remains precarious with less or no value.

The two memes (IMAGES 1 and 2) are re-readings of the famous paintings *The treachery of images* by René Magritte and *The Vitruvian man* by Leonardo da Vinci and they give one more “turn in the screw” in ideas historically established within systems of representation that communicate certain meanings. On the one hand, the replacement of the pipe in Magritte's painting with the image of Jair Bolsonaro's profile, expands the representation system and the codes “that allow us to translate our concepts into language – and vice versa. These codes, which are crucial for meaning and representation, do not exist in nature, but are the result of social conventions”<sup>7</sup> (HALL, 2016, p. 54). Thus, the meme in Image 1 reminds us of the lack of leadership in our country in pandemic times.

On the other hand, the meme in Image 2 is a parody of the Renaissance displacement of god by man and the belief in human rationality as the engine of the science we do. However, according to Sousa Santos, this rationality became an indolent reason, stuck in its own systems of representation and established codes. The daily stroll of Homem Virusiano, presents Jair Messias Bolsonaro (messiah, too, as a being between god and human) enraged, naked and trapped in a circle that has the shape of Covid-19, the virus that made most of the government leaders in different countries break with the idea of growth and capital for a few months. The only item that makes up his clothing are his shoes and socks so that he can perform his strolls during the pandemic, carried out without a mask, with handshakes and selfies taking.

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<sup>7</sup> In the original: que nos permitam traduzir nossos conceitos em linguagem – e vice versa. Esses códigos, que são cruciais para o sentido e a representação, não existem na natureza, mas são resultado de convenções sociais.



IMAGE 1 – Re-reading Magritte<sup>8</sup>



IMAGE 2 – Re-reading Leonardo da Vinci<sup>9</sup>



Crises bring about wars of narratives fought today between, on the one hand, government officials, who supported by academic research financed by industries, corporations and multinational companies argue that global warming is not underway and that in our predatory hunger we have not exhausted planet earth's potential, and, on the other hand, environmental and social movements that foresee that the anthropocene, that is, the geological era that humans inhabit Gaia,<sup>10</sup> is coming to an end.

The denial of science and the spread of medieval ideas about our planet are reflected in the meme (IMAGE 3) posted on Facebook in early 2020. The rust, the worn out look of the map and the cube-shaped globe to represent our planet criticize the Ministry of Education headed by the then Minister Abraham Weintraub, who vehemently attacked Federal Universities despite being a federal professor himself. The trend in relation to flat earth obscurantism is being countered with the actions and research carried out by public higher education in Brazil, although the aforementioned ex-minister considers the scientific work put into practice as “shambles”. Well, Brazil

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<sup>8</sup> Our translation: “This is not a president”. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/jornalistaslivres/photos/a.292153227575228/1676788509111686/?type=3>. Accessed on: Aug. 5, 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Our translation: “The daily stroll of the virusian man”. Available at: <https://www.brasil247.com/charges/homem-virusiano>. Accessed on: Aug. 5, 2020.

<sup>10</sup> The Gaia hypothesis, named after the ancient Greek goddess of Earth, posits that Earth and its biological systems behave as a huge single entity. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/earth-and-planetary-sciences/gaia-hypothesis>. Accessed on: Aug. 5, 2020.

2020 is a dystopia never before imagined. The aforementioned ex-minister of education – who lacks education – was appointed to be the representative of Brazil at the World Bank and assumed the position in the USA, since here in Brazil, he faces at least two lawsuits. And it is in this manner that the square wheel turns:

IMAGE 3 – The flat earthers’ “globe”<sup>11</sup>



IMAGE 4 – The world is sinking<sup>12</sup>



Another conviction produced within the neoliberal epistemologies of the North is that nature is a resource. Gaia and her knowledges, along with everything that was evaluated as subordinate because of being an object of interest to the modern subject, belong to “the other side” of the abyssal lines. The Cartesian humanist mind questions the fact that strips and zones of land are about to be swallowed up by the sea, whose level is constantly rising while the polar glaciers are melting. Image 4 is a graffiti in London eventually attributed to the artist Banksy, which simultaneously represents the two conflicting narratives about climate change.

Epistemic disobedience (MIGNOLO, 2008) can teach us that societies, thought up until now as only humans among themselves (LATOUR, 2020) in social sciences with a European epistemology, must

<sup>11</sup> Our translation: “Geography didactic materials have arrived in schools, sent by the Ministry of Education”. Available at: *Facebook*, author.

<sup>12</sup> Available at: <https://www.fastcompany.com/90185896/street-artist-banksy-takes-on-global-warming>. Accessed on: Jul. 19, 2020.

mobilize towards the preservation of everything the Cartesian, neoliberal, colonizer and racist man has placed on the other side of the abyssal line, everything, in theory, that does not have the human form of the Cartesian man, that is, animals, nature, climate, spirits and peoples of the forest among so many other beings. It seems so obvious, but it needs to be reiterated that, if progress and growth destroy the ecosystem, the cost will be very high, a process with no return. As Harari warns, “an ecological collapse will cause economic ruin, political turmoil, a drop in human living standards and can threaten the very existence of human civilization” (HARARI, 2017, p. 249).

Epistemic disobedience can stimulate micropolitics (GUATTARI; ROLNIK, 1996) from subjects who avoid reproducing models of teaching and human formation that are based on the norm, the universal and the canonical, and dare to put their agency into practice with the purpose of resisting the reproduction systems of a dominant subjectivity. As Mignolo (2008) reiterates, “the decolonial option is epistemic” (p. 290) and “identity in politics is crucial for the decolonial option” (p. 289). This attitude is also defended by Guattari and Rolnik (1996):

People who, in therapeutic systems or at the university, consider themselves simple depositories or channels for the transmission of scientific knowledge, for this reason alone they have already made a reactionary option. Whatever their innocence or goodwill, they effectively occupy a position to reinforce the production systems of the dominant subjectivity<sup>13</sup> (GUATTARI; ROLNIK, 1996, p. 29).

Image 4, of the house submerged in water with the wall that says “I don’t believe in global warming” disappearing, constructs visually the war of narratives fought since the 60-70s. The refusal to see the environment not as a natural resource, but as a fundamental element of human life on earth, shows that the environment as a resource also belongs to the epistemologies of the North and, therefore, to “this side” of the abyssal line. In this context,

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<sup>13</sup> In the original: As pessoas que, nos sistemas terapêuticos ou na universidade, se consideram simples depositárias ou canais de transmissão de um saber científico, só por isso já fizeram uma opção reacionária. Seja qual for sua inocência ou boa vontade, elas ocupam efetivamente uma posição de reforço dos sistemas de produção da subjetividade dominante.

many scientists estimate that this will be one pandemic of the many to come due to the melting of polar glaciers and permanent ice formations that can trigger the release of unknown “emerging pathogens” (RODRIGUES *et al.*, 2020). With climate change, many species are losing their habitats and are therefore doomed to extinction. However, the pandemic has also enabled teachings to humans.

IMAGE 5 – A fox in the middle of the city<sup>14</sup>

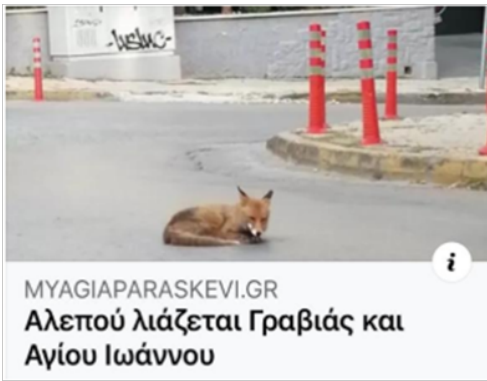
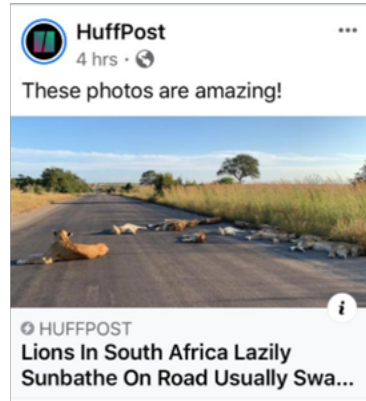


IMAGE 6 – Lions sunbathing<sup>15</sup>



One of the positive consequences of the first phase of isolation, which had greater adherence by the populations, was the decrease in air pollution. The abrupt easing of traffic jams and gridlocks has led urban dwellers to enjoy a blue sky, clear of pollution during the day and a majestic moon in a starry sky at night. The silence in the urban neighborhoods reminded the city inhabitants of the sounds of birds at dawn and, at times, made some of us witnesses to the crossing of abyssal lines by animals restricted in areas far from human houses, as Images 5 and 6 show us. In Image 5, a fox is sunbathing in the Agia Paraskevi neighborhood in Athens, Greece. In the next image, lions invade roads in South Africa. It is interesting to note that in both cases, of the fox and the lions, journalists report that

<sup>14</sup> Our translation: “A fox is sunbathing in the junction of Gravias and St. Jones st”. Available at: <http://myagiaparaskevi.gr/eidiseis/4266-alepoy-liazetai-gravias-kai-agiou-ioannou>. Accessed on: Jun. 19, 2020.

<sup>15</sup> Available at: [https://www.huffpostbrasil.com/entry/lions-in-south-africa-lazily-sun-on-road-absent-of-tourists\\_n\\_5e99bea8c5b6c45259d5b24a?ri18n=true](https://www.huffpostbrasil.com/entry/lions-in-south-africa-lazily-sun-on-road-absent-of-tourists_n_5e99bea8c5b6c45259d5b24a?ri18n=true). Accessed on: Jul. 19, 2020.

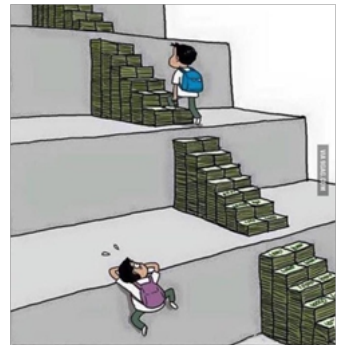
after the bold crossing of the abyssal lines, these animals considered “wild” by the human species allow themselves to “sunbathe” in the middle of the city. Resuming one of the basic projects of modernity, designed by the Global North, Harari (2017) teaches us that, through Descartes’ Humanism, only human beings could feel or desire, because all other animals are stupid automatons:

When a man kicks a dog, the dog does not experience anything. The dog automatically recoils and howls, just like a vending machine when preparing a cup of coffee, without feeling anything (p. 125).

It is sad, but this is how humanism treats our Gaia and its living beings.

### 3 The virus is not democratic: the abyssal lines of social class differences

IMAGE 7 – Inequalities<sup>16</sup>



One of the perspectives that emerged shortly after the beginning of the pandemic is that the virus is democratic. Santos (2020) states that this is due to the etymology of the word “pandemic”: “We know that the pandemic is not blind and has privileged targets, but even so, it creates a consciousness of planetary communion, in some way democratic. The

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<sup>16</sup> Available at: <https://br.pinterest.com/tayncosta/desigualdade-social/>. Accessed on: Jun. 19, 2020.

etymology of the term pandemic says exactly that: the whole of people”.<sup>17</sup> (p. 7). As a biological agent, in principle, it should affect everyone in the same way. However, in a society such as Brazil with deep-rooted social and economic inequalities, the social profile of this biological agent appears with all its strength. Factors such as access to basic sanitation and drinking water, qualified hospitals and healthy food, public safety and the possibility of employment during the isolation period make the virus a biological agent socialized in the perversion of the history that constitutes our society.

The meme, in Image 8, undertakes visual micropolitics through the juxtaposition of races to construct visually the social inequalities and the power to acquire necessary goods during the pandemic, such as the mask. The first photo used in the meme was posted on Instagram by presenter Luciano Huck with the caption “It is common to hear that ‘we are all in the same boat’ during the pandemic. But that is not true. We are in the same sea, but the boats are not the same. The conditions that each one has to face this moment are very different”.<sup>18</sup> Whoever produced the meme recycled Huck’s solidarity request phrase and contrasted the image of the man wearing a mask made with a garbage bag to a photo of the Russian Tair Marassulvo in Paris wearing a mask (probably produced by himself) with the logo of the French brand Louis Vuitton and in front of the brand’s store. The social reality emerges as a “slap in the face” in the materiality of the visual discourse that narrates opposite realities experienced by social communities during the spread of the “democratic virus”.

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<sup>17</sup> In the original: Sabemos que a pandemia não é cega e tem alvos privilegiados, mas mesmo assim cria-se com ela uma consciência de comunhão planetária, de algum modo democrática. A etimologia do termo pandemia diz isso mesmo: todo o povo.

<sup>18</sup> Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CAIfeuXB1zV/?hl=en>. Accessed on: Jul. 19, 2020.

IMAGE 8 – The virus is not democratic<sup>19</sup>



IMAGE 9 – Social classes<sup>20</sup>



We are not in the same boat because, as Faria (2020) asserts, “the virus cannot be democratic because society is not”:<sup>21</sup>

Expectations will change within the city itself. You live so much more or less depending on your living conditions. What the virus does is just to reflect the society already in place. Things don’t happen at random in spaces. The way we are born and die depends a lot on where we live, on the conditions we have. That is why life expectancy will never be the same between places.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> The meme juxtaposes two images: <https://www.otvfoco.com.br/luciano-huck-expoe-imagem-devastadora-gera-comocao/>, <https://revistamarieclaire.globo.com/Moda/noticia/2020/03/em-meio-surto-de-coronavirus-fashionistas-usam-mascaras-grifadas.html>. Accessed on: Aug. 5, 2020.

<sup>20</sup> Available at: *Facebook* author.

<sup>21</sup> In the original: O vírus não pode ser democrático porque a sociedade não é. Available at: <https://www.sedufsm.org.br/index.php?secao=noticias&id=5855>. Accessed on: Aug. 5, 2020.

<sup>22</sup> In the original: As expectativas vão se alterar dentro da própria cidade. Você vive tão mais ou tão menos a depender de suas condições de vida. O que o vírus faz é apenas refletir a sociedade já posta. As coisas não acontecem ao acaso nos espaços. O modo como nós nascemos e morremos depende muito do lugar em que vivemos, das condições que temos. É por isso que a expectativa de vida jamais será a mesma entre os lugares.

Thus, we get to know that the cure rate for Covid-19 is 50% higher in private hospitals,<sup>23</sup> that the periphery concentrates more deaths due to COVID under the age of 65,<sup>24</sup> that COVID is more lethal in peripheral regions of Brazil,<sup>25</sup> and that in the peripheries of São Paulo the new corona virus is 10 times more lethal.<sup>26</sup> In the pandemic, the confinement of people in their homes led citizens working on the street, such as traders and street vendors of the informal economy, to stay at home, thus failing to earn a living in this modern context of precarious work. Sousa Santos (2020) claims that this is not a new phenomenon:

Salespeople have been quarantining on the street for a long time, but on the street with people. The failure to work for those who sell in the informal markets of large cities means that potentially millions of people will not even have the money to go to health facilities if they fall ill or to buy hand sanitizer and soap. Those who are hungry cannot afford to buy soap and water at prices that are beginning to suffer the burden of speculation. In other contexts, those uberized in the informal economy who deliver food and parcels at home. They are the ones who guarantee the quarantine of many, but for that they cannot protect themselves from it.<sup>27</sup> (SANTOS, 2020, p. 22).

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<sup>23</sup> Available at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/equilibrioesaude/2020/07/taxa-de-cura-da-covid-19-e-50-maior-em-hospitais-privados.shtml>. Accessed on: Aug. 12, 2020.

<sup>24</sup> <https://agora.folha.uol.com.br/sao-paulo/2020/07/periferia-concentra-mais-mortes-por-covid-abaixo-dos-65-anos.shtml>. Accessed on: Aug. 10, 2020.

<sup>25</sup> <https://oglobo.globo.com/sociedade/covid-19-mais-lethal-em-regioes-de-periferia-no-brasil-1-24407520>. Accessed on: Aug. 10, 2020.

<sup>26</sup> <https://br.noticias.yahoo.com/covid-19-nas-periferias-de-sao-paulo-novo-coronavirus-e-10-x-mais-lethal-083010191.html>. Accessed on: Aug. 12, 2020.

<sup>27</sup> In the original: Há muito tempo que os vendedores vivem em quarentena na rua, mas na rua com gente. O impedimento de trabalhar para os que vendem nos mercados informais das grandes urbes significa que potencialmente milhões de pessoas não terão dinheiro sequer para acorrer às unidades de saúde se cáírem doentes ou para comprar desinfetante para as mãos e sabão. Quem tem fome não pode ter a veleidade de comprar sabão e água a preços que começam a sofrer o peso da especulação. Noutros contextos, os uberizados da economia informal que entregam comida e encomendas ao domicílio. São eles que garantem a quarentena de muitos, mas para isso não se podem proteger com ela.



In the case of the pandemic, workers in the delivery-by-mobile-application sector supplied the population with food and purchases and thus became a symbol of precarious employment. The cartoon (IMAGE 9) depicts the population who could work at home during confinement and who took advantage of this period to take care of their children, rest and take selfies and even play music on their balconies, as it happened in Italy, while mobile application delivery workers crossed the streets to deliver the requested goods, putting in this manner their own lives at stake. This configuration led these workers to develop a political awareness and, for this reason, they started to claim their rights by calling for work strikes during the pandemic. Undoubtedly, the risk of contagion by Covid-19 is much greater in this sector. For Latour (2020), herd immunity without vaccine is not a democratic stance, since a large number of invisible workers is forced to work so that others can continue to hide in their homes.

IMAGE 10 – Pandemic without a Health minister<sup>28</sup>



IMAGE 11 – Communism<sup>29</sup>



In this regard, memes 10 and 11 can provide the reasons why the pandemic and the virus, which are not democratic, joined the game of

<sup>28</sup> In this meme there is a pun with the words Ministry and Mistery in Portuguese. By taking away the syllable “ni” from Ministry, the cartooning creates an irony: “Mistery of Health”. Available at: <https://twitter.com/brunnomelocbn/status/1269804528838336512?lang=ar>. Accessed on: Jul. 20, 2020.

<sup>29</sup> In this meme, the ophthalmologist asks the patient to read PAN DE MIC and the patient reads Communism. Available at: <https://www.diariodocentrodomundo.com.br/essencial/caiu-na-rede-ensaio-sobre-a-cegueira/>. Accessed on: Jul. 20, 2020.

nationalist and neoliberal politics. The president's speeches and posture in relation to the lethal virus constantly contradicted the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Health, while we had a Minister of Health. Here are some phrases by Jair Bolsonaro that despise both the virus and the Brazilian people: "What is wrong is the hysteria, as if it were the end of the world. A nation like Brazil will only be free when a certain number of people are infected and create antibodies" (March 17); "After the stab, it won't be a little flu that will knock me down, okay?" (March 20); "Fatal cases of healthy people under 40 are rare" (March 24); "The Brazilian has to be studied, he doesn't get anything. The guy jumps into the sewer, gets out, dives and nothing happens" (March 26); "The people have been deceived all this time about the virus" (March 26); "Are some people going to die? They are, hey, I'm sorry. This is life. You cannot stop a car factory because there are traffic deaths every year" (March 27); "Forty days later, it seems that the issue of the virus is starting to go away" (April 12); "I'm not a gravedigger, okay?" (April 20).<sup>30</sup> This explains the reasons why we have been in the middle of a pandemic since May, with an unprepared Minister of Health, without updates by specialists about the phase of the pandemic we are in, and without reliable numbers of people infected, survivors and dead by Covid. The mystery about how the virus is being fought has been installed with the endorsement of the country's highest authority.

The cartoon in Image 11 comments on the war of narratives fought between science and fake news these days, notably in Brazil. The eye doctor in the cartoon is showing Snellen's century-old well-known chart of letters, the test that measures visual perception from a distance. Although these letters have no meaning at all, that is, they are not signs in this case, the patient, who considers himself patriotic for wearing the Brazilian national football team shirt that the Bolsonaristas have appropriated for themselves, sees communism in everything. These subjects, portrayed in this meme, divide the world in a Manichean manner between capitalists and communists, a division characteristic of the Cold War era, which can hardly characterize neoliberal societies and citizens 30 years after the fall of the Berlin wall. In the words of Camilo Vannuchi, a columnist for *Universo*

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<sup>30</sup> Available at: <https://jornaldebrasil.com.br/politica-e-poder/25-perolas-de-bolsonaro-sobre-a-pandemia-e-contando/>. Accessed on: Jul. 25, 2020.

*Online* (UOL): “The list of communists drawn up by the creative minds of the Bolsonarist troops grows every day. In the presidential cosmogony, not only *Folha* and *Grupo Globo*,<sup>31</sup> but also youtuber Felipe Neto, doctor Drauzio Varella, the UN, WHO, Pope Francisco and even Brastemp make up the list. Yes, Brastemp!”<sup>32</sup>

It seems more and more that

The governing authorities have become just caricatures, puppets of ventriloquists who know how to swear to amuse the public. Nobody can expect them to solve the serious problems. There is a humanitarian vacuum! But how did we get to this state of affairs? (VELTEN, 2020, p. 1).

Yes, how did we get to this state of affairs?

#### 4 Abyssal lines between white supremacy and black genocide: a historic crisis of humanity

IMAGE 12 – “You’re jealous of this”, told the white elite man to the courier Matheus, pointing to his white skin.<sup>33</sup>



<sup>31</sup> Two of the main mass media companies in Brazil.

<sup>32</sup> Available at: <https://noticias.uol.com.br/colunas/camilo-vannuchi/2020/05/28/que-ameaca-comunista-e-esta-de-que-o-governo-tanto-fala.htm>. Accessed on: Jul. 25, 2020.

<sup>33</sup> Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/MidiaNINJA/photos/a.164308700393950/1943611365796999/?type=3>. Accessed on: Jul. 25, 2020.

In the assertive words of Nascimento (2019, p. 336), “it is precisely because the black identity, and consequently racism, are a creation of the whites, that the whites must be responsible for its end”. Summoning Frantz Fanon (2008), Nascimento stresses that “blacks have not only inherited the colonial weight of racism, but also the guilt of having been enslaved”.<sup>34</sup> We could think that racism and colonialism have marked the history of mankind and that they have already been eliminated. However, during the pandemic crisis we have witnessed new waves of institutional violence, with police officers attacking black and poor populations not only here in Brazil, but in the USA as well. The most shocking cases were George Floyd, in Minneapolis, and João Pedro, in São Gonçalo in Rio. In the first case, George Floyd was murdered by the white policeman who put his knee on the back part of Floyd’s neck and, refusing to remove it from there for almost 9 minutes despite the black man’s pleas, killed him. The same violent attitude is observed in the case of the boy João Pedro, 14 years old, who was playing with his cousins when the police invaded the house and shot him in the belly. After rescuing the boy by helicopter, the police forbid his parents to enter with him in the helicopter and left the family 17 hours in search of the boy. His parents had to mobilize social networks to get some information about their son.

Another case of symbolic violence with a racist bias is what happened to Miguel in Recife. Miguel lost his life falling from the 9th floor of a luxurious apartment building where his mother’s employer lives. His mother, who worked as a maid in that building, had to take Miguel with her to work during the pandemic. While the mother walked the dog and the employer was having her nails done (activity not recommended during the pandemic), the boy decided to look for his mother and, therefore, the employer placed the 5-year-old boy in the elevator alone for him to go down and look for his mother. The employer, Sari Corte Real, pressed the 9th floor button and the boy fell and died.

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<sup>34</sup> In the original: E é exatamente porque o negro, e o racismo, por consequência, são uma criação dos brancos, que os brancos devem ser os responsáveis pelo seu fim. Frantz Fanon (2008) chamou atenção durante muito tempo, como filósofo pós-colonial e marxista revolucionário, para a ideia de que os negros não só herdaram o peso colonial do racismo, mas também a culpa por terem sido escravizados.

IMAGE 13 – The different versions of “I can’t breathe”<sup>35</sup>



IMAGE 14 – “I don’t care about Miguel’s death”<sup>36</sup>



In Image 13, the discourse of the Covid-19 white negationists in both North America and Brazil refutes the use of masks by alleging difficulties in breathing. This very same sentence “I can’t breathe” gains a completely different meaning in the mouth of George Floyd, who repeated the outcry over and over again before dying asphyxiated under the pressure of a white cop’s knee. These images (and the murder) represent the oppression and the social, racial and economic injustices that colonization and slavery have produced. In this sense, Harsin (2020, p. 1062) defends that we have experienced post-truth phenomena, so to speak the “weaponization of fake news, rumor bombs, bullshit, lies, conspiracies, misinformation; refusal or alacrity to believe truth-tellers; and buzzing debates and panic” which “can usefully be viewed through a lens of aggressive emotion and masculinity”. This aggressive white-supremacist masculine tendency reveals an emo-truth politics (HARSIN, 2020) which have showcased some popular COVID-19 responses (for example, Bolsonaro’s) by avoiding anything associated with perceived femininity: physical strength (“I have got an athlete’s records”), sexual conquest (“Wearing masks is faggot stuff!”), a lack of any emotions in order to show control and violence (“So what? I’m not a gravedigger!”).

In Image 14, we see a visual representation of Miguel’s mother’s boss, Sari Corte Real, who does not “give a damn” for the loss of the black boy’s life. There is not much to say about this image (and the murder), except to hold hands with Nascimento (2019, p. 335) and cry: “What I really want to

<sup>35</sup> Available at: <https://www.france24.com/en/americas/20200529-papers-still-separate-and-unequal-us-cartoonists-on-the-death-of-george-floyd>. Accessed on: Aug. 12, 2020.

<sup>36</sup> Source: Pretitudes/Instagram.

do is to cry – both as an intellectual and as a black writer – the mourning for several of me who got lost along the way”.<sup>37</sup> Racism, in this view, was shaped by a modern humanism (SAID, 2004) that places the human being at the center but opts for a certain definition of what is human, thus creating the categorization of human societies in terms of hierarchies of races. Mignolo (2008) contends that

The criteria that go unmentioned and have been used to determine the value of human lives are obvious signs (of a decolonial interpretation) of a hidden politics of imperial identity: that is, the value of the human lives, to which the speaker’s life belongs to, becomes a measuring stick to evaluate other human lives that have no intellectual option and institutional power to tell their history and classify events according to a classification of human lives: that is, according to a racist classification (MIGNOLO, 2008, p. 294).<sup>38</sup>

Likewise, the humanist project not only collaborated with the rise of the human being, in our case, the *Homo Sapiens*, but also determined which humans deserved to tell their stories: “Humanism must be critiqued because it dehumanized the whole world in the name of an anglo-eurocentric whiteness, which destroyed the project of modernity with the bloodstained hands of colonialism and capitalism”<sup>39</sup> (NASCIMENTO, 2019, p. 334), that is, it was “the project that transformed whites into humans and all blacks into animals”<sup>40</sup> (NASCIMENTO, 2019, p. 334). Despite humanism, the decolonial option beautifully ensures that

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<sup>37</sup> In the original: Eu quero mesmo é chorar, tanto como intelectual quanto como escritor negro, o luto pelo sumiço de vários de mim que se perderam ao longo do caminho.

<sup>38</sup> In the original: Os critérios não mencionados para o valor das vidas humanas são um óbvio sinal (de uma interpretação descolonial) de política escondida de identidade imperial: quer dizer, o valor de vidas humanas a qual pertence a vida do enunciador, se torna uma vara de medida para avaliar outras vidas humanas que não têm opção intelectual e poder institucional para contar a história e classificar os eventos de acordo com uma classificação de vidas humanas: ou seja, de acordo com uma classificação racista.

<sup>39</sup> In the original: O humanismo merece a nossa crítica porque ele desumanizou o mundo inteiro em nome de uma branquitude angloeurocêntrica, que destruiu o projeto de modernidade com as mãos sujas de sangue do colonialismo e do capitalismo.

<sup>40</sup> In the original: O humanismo é o projeto que transformou os brancos em humanos e todos os negros em animais.

Fortunately, the decolonial option grants the conception of the reproduction of life that comes from *damnés*, in the terminology of Frantz Fanon, that is, from the perspective of most people on the planet whose lives were declared expendable, whose dignity was humiliated, whose bodies were used as workforce: reproduction of life here is a concept that emerges from enslaved Africans and indigenous peoples in the wake of a capitalist economy, and that extends to the reproduction of death through the imperial expansion of the West and the growth of the capitalist economy. This is the decolonial option that fuels decolonial thinking when it imagines a world in which many worlds may co-exist<sup>41</sup> (MIGNOLO, 2008, p. 296).

## 5 Abyssal lines between access to education and denial of its existence

IMAGE 15 – Meme about schooling<sup>42</sup>



<sup>41</sup> In the original: Felizmente, a opção descolonial concede à concepção da reprodução da vida que vem de *damnés*, na terminologia de Frantz Fanon (1961), ou seja, da perspectiva da maioria das pessoas do planeta cujas vidas foram declaradas dispensáveis, cuja dignidade foi humilhada, cujos corpos foram usados como força de trabalho: reprodução de vida aqui é um conceito que emerge dos afros escravizados e dos indígenas na formação de uma economia capitalista, e que se estende à reprodução da morte através da expansão imperial do ocidente e do crescimento da economia capitalista. Essa é a opção descolonial que alimenta o pensamento descolonial ao imaginar um mundo no qual muitos mundos podem co-existir.

<sup>42</sup> Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/alfamarama/photos/a.541995495910137/2734065720036426/?type=3>. Accessed on: Aug. 12, 2020.

We need to defend education in Brazil. Under a highly frustrating and retrogressive scenario, in which a project of dismantling education takes place through projects such as *Escola sem Partido* (School without Party); through the implementation of projects such as the *Plano Nacional de Alfabetização* (National Literacy Plan) or even through militarization projects with the creation of civic-military schools (the latter, acclaimed by Brazilians who wish for the return of militarism, censorship and “the whip”), it is essential to restate time and again that the “The scholastic years are a source of fear for all who seek to perpetuate the old world or for those who have a clear idea of how a new or future world might look”(MASSCHLEIN; SIMONS, 2013, p. 10). Hence,

We resolutely refuse to endorse the condemnation of the school. On the contrary, we advocate for its acquittal. We believe that it is precisely today – at a time when many condemn the school as maladjusted to modern reality and others even seem to abandon it altogether – that what the school is and does becomes clear (MASSCHELEIN; SIMONS, 2013, p. 9).

It is essential to restate that we are in the middle of a pandemic, and that the difficulties our students – especially the underprivileged ones – face (for example, access to the virtual world) need to be problematized by everyone involved. On top of this, understanding that “certain actors in the edtech industry are treating the crisis as a business opportunity, with potentially long-term consequences for how public education is perceived and practised long after the coronavirus has been brought under control” (WILLIAMSON *et al.*, 2020, p. 108), is one of the main concerns for educators under the pandemic crisis. By the same token, schools and educators should not neglect the fact that “Markets have long been a central concern of the global edtech industry, but the pandemic may have presented it with remarkable business opportunities for profit-making, as well as enhanced influence over the practices of education” (WILLIAMSON *et al.*, 2020, p. 108). The neoliberal education has not vanished from the agenda. On the contrary, it seems to be gaining ground and influence, now, transferred to the virtual world:



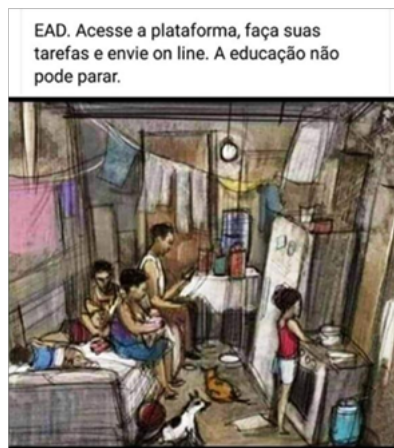
At the present time, public education has been forcibly decentralized into students' own homes, largely disaggregated from the institutions and practices of education and instead repositioned as a form of homeschooling mediated by technology tools, edu-businesses and other institutions (...). The current state of 'pandemic pedagogy', in other words, may not be seen by some businesses as simply an emergency response to a public health and political crisis, but as a rapid prototype of education as a private service and an opportunity to recentralize decentralized systems through platforms. (WILLIAMSON *et al.*, 2020, p. 108-109)

This is what many have been calling remote teaching instead of distance education. The institutional and pandemic crises have not create neoliberal education or inequality in terms of educational opportunities in the country, but they have certainly opened them wide:

IMAGE 16 – Inequality<sup>43</sup>



IMAGE 17 – Neoliberal education<sup>44</sup>



<sup>43</sup> Our translation: "Children, the class is about to start, go to your study room and turn on your laptops". In the enchanted world of neoliberals this is the solution for educating citizens. Available at: *Facebook* author.

<sup>44</sup> Our translation: Distance learning. Access the platform, do you activities and send them online. Education cannot stop. Available at: <https://campanha.org.br/noticias/2020/04/28/dia-da-educacao-em-tempos-de-pandemia-com-decisoes-de-olhos-vendados-para-realidade-nao-e-facil-comemorar/>. Accessed on: Aug. 29, 2020.

Images 16 and 17 are striking and sad for all those who are on the other side of the abyssal lines, that is, the invisible and subordinated by a neoliberal capitalist system that dehumanizes the Other. Another way to look into this context of subalternity, in the words of bell hooks (2003, p. xiii), is her call to the masses, just like the Black Lives Matter movement's, to organize political movements in which "citizens are summoned to fight for democracy and for the right to education; yet, to fight against all forms of domination". With this, hooks defends that the school is a place where "students are not indoctrinated to support the white and supremacist imperialist patriarchy" (p. xiii). The urgent lesson to be learned is, according to Sousa Santos (2020, p. 24), the following:

As a social model, capitalism has no future. In particular, its current version – neoliberalism combined with the domination of financial capital – is socially and politically discredited because it has led the global society to a tragedy whose consequences are more evident than ever in this moment of global humanitarian crisis.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, we would dare to say that we face a great global mechanism in which everything boils down to a self-destructive capitalist system in which few have much and many have very little, or almost nothing. According to Masschelein and Simons (2013), this is why we need to defend and fight for the school. Perhaps it is through education, and only through it, that we will someday be able to envision more critical citizens, participative and active in the building of more equitable relationships:

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<sup>45</sup> In the original: Enquanto modelo social, o capitalismo não tem futuro. Em particular, a sua versão actualmente vigente – o neoliberalismo combinado com o domínio do capital financeiro – está social e politicamente desacreditada em face da tragédia a que conduziu a sociedade global e cujas consequências são mais evidentes do que nunca neste momento de crise humanitária global.

IMAGE 18 – Inequity<sup>46</sup>



IMAGE 19 – Child labor<sup>47</sup>



Images 18 and 19, although similar to Images 16 and 17, are purposeful reiterations of Freire's (1996, p. 52) hope for better days, for a better country, for a critical education in which our students do not naturalize the more than 229,000 deaths (up to the moment of the writing of these reflections) in the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil. Similarly, educators and students cannot accept the dismantling of the federal university system, the affront and disbelief of science, the vexing, unprepared and macabre mismanagement shown in the famous video of the ministerial meeting,<sup>48</sup> the mistreatment of indigenous people and the destruction of the Amazon, the subservience to Trump and the American flag, the discrimination in relation to the LGBT community. Dear reader, the “square wheel” turns again; and the epistemologies of the Global North continue to inhabit us.

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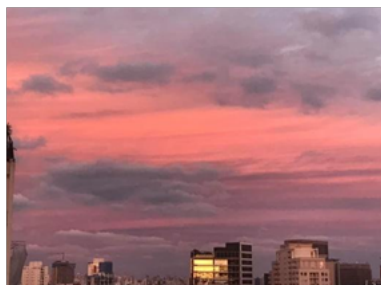
<sup>46</sup> Our translation: Social inequality and Distance learning classes. Available at: <https://campanha.org.br/noticias/2020/04/28/dia-da-educacao-em-tempos-de-pandemia-com-decisoes-de-olhos-vendados-para-realidade-nao-e-facil-comemorar/>. Accessed on: Aug. 29, 2020.

<sup>47</sup> Our translation: Neoliberalism not only makes Brazil bleed, but also destroys the dreams of the next generation. Available at: *Facebook* author.

<sup>48</sup> Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6cg5AAcijv4&ab\\_channel=UOL](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6cg5AAcijv4&ab_channel=UOL). Accessed on: Aug. 29, 2020.

## Final remarks: For an epistemic turn in the notions of crisis, and for a pedagogy of visual literacies and their micropolitics

IMAGE 20 – The clean air in the cities<sup>49</sup>



In conclusion, we argue that education, both in times of pandemic and in times of supposed normality, needs to create spaces that foster the decolonial option in the form of epistemic disobedience to the epistemologies of the Global North which in turn fuel the rise of alt-right movements in the country. The epistemologies of the Global North insist on teaching what they consider universal, normative, neutral, scientific and disembodied knowledge. The rupture, caused in Traditional Linguistics by the demands raised by Applied Linguistics, fosters unruly (MOITA LOPES, 2006) and transgressive (PENNYCOOK, 2006) perspectives, through the unlearning (FABRÍCIO, 2006) of notions we are constituted by and the deconstruction (MAKONI; MEINHOF, 2006) of common sense notions of language. In this sense, Mignolo (2008) relates decoloniality to epistemic disobedience to the disembodiment of languages in modern epistemologies:

By linking decoloniality to identity in politics, the decolonial option reveals the identity hidden under the pretense of universal democratic theories at the same time that it builds racialized identities that were risen by the hegemony of Western categories of thought, stories and experiences (again,

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<sup>49</sup> Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=3061608897228798&set=pb.100001391544747.-2207520000.&type=3>. Accessed on: Jul. 19, 2020.

Greek and Latin foundations of modern / imperial reason)  
(p. 297).<sup>50</sup>

We have also shown that this crisis, despite being seen in financial terms, as a moment of transition between a phase of prosperity to another of depression, needs to be problematized as crises of the established order (be them political, educational, religious or ideological). This is what needs to be questioned. The metaphor of the epistemologies of the Global South questions the modern and humanist epistemologies of the Global North, that in the processes of its capitalist and patriarchal colonization established the modern abyssal lines that eliminate difference, thus producing a crisis for introducing supposedly objective truths at the heart of the subjective mind (RICOEUR, 1994).

We have also ventured into the reading of reality through a variety of image genres, such as memes, cartoons and photos that were published on social media. These images foster world readings that break with universalist meanings, that is, modern narratives and neoliberal views on global warming, on the preservation of the environment and on the crisis we are experiencing. By exposing a president who (mis)governs and by bringing to the fore the racial, economic and digital inequality that worsened in the pandemic, these images battle with discourses that seek to reintroduce flatearthist cosmology. Unfortunately, we are also experiencing a crisis at the level of the individual and this reveals that the epistemologies of the Global North emotionally affect the subjects who end up aligning themselves with the alt-right and the “ruralist contingent”, the “evangelical contingent” and the “gun bill contingent” of our national congress.

We understand that, in order to live with the crises put forward by modernity and humanism, “a politics of representation in which power is in the community and not in the State or in any other equivalent administrative institution” (MIGNOLO, 2008, p. 298) is necessary. The cartoons, photos and memes that weave our narrative as knowledge arise from epistemologies

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<sup>50</sup> In the original: Ao ligar a descolonialidade com a identidade em política, a opção descolonial revela a identidade escondida sob a pretensão de teorias democráticas universais ao mesmo tempo que constrói identidades racializadas que foram erigidas pela hegemonia das categorias de pensamento, histórias e experiências do ocidente (mais uma vez, fundamentos gregos e latinos de razão moderna/ imperial).

of the Global South; they constitute voices that seek to cross the invisible abyssal lines that divide the world into different universes. We conceive of these images as procedural micropolitics that have the potential to build “new modes of subjectivity” (GUATTARI; ROLNIK, 1996, p. 30). As asserted by Guattari and Rolnik (1996),

The guarantee of procedural micropolitics can – and must – only be found at each step, starting from the agencies that constitute it, in the invention of reference modes, of praxis modes. Invention that allows, at the same time, to elucidate a field of subjectification and to intervene effectively in that field, both inside and in its relations with the outside. For the social professional, everything depends on their ability to articulate with the enunciation agencies that assume their responsibility at the micropolitical level.<sup>51</sup>

Although images – as possibilities for visual literacies in language education – have not been established as part of the curriculum or as current visual pedagogical practices in school education, our hope is that the images discussed here will encourage other agencies, from each subjectivity, from each context, from each class. May we even discuss other interpretations of the images discussed here. This may be at the heart of teacher education in the midst of the pandemic (and after it): what remains for us is to act through micropolitics, encouraging the active and participative agency of students, teachers and everyone involved in education. We can, still at the micropolitics level, recognize the subjectivities and the unique processes of subjectification of each student. In addition, we can, if we wish to, discuss how each of our students see themselves and see beyond the sovereign and powerful human (built as a consequence of universal humanism):

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<sup>51</sup> In the original: A garantia de uma micropolítica processual só pode – e deve – ser encontrada a cada passo, a partir dos agenciamentos que a constituem, na invenção de modos de referência, de modos de práxis. Invenção que permita, ao mesmo tempo, elucidar um campo de subjetivação e intervir efetivamente nesse campo, tanto em seu interior como em suas relações com o exterior. Para o profissional do social, tudo depende de sua capacidade de se articular com os agenciamentos de enunciação que assumam sua responsabilidade no plano micropolítico.

IMAGE 21 – Gaia<sup>52</sup>



The radical change introduced by the questioning of the projects of modernity and humanism shows that the Sapiens, especially those who aligned themselves with rampant capitalism and consumerism, did not work. This final image (IMAGE 21) can be read in many ways: a romantic apology to Mother Nature, a European “environmental sect” sending a message to the president, a Greenpeace slogan, an ecological company advertisement, an elegant message from Gaia. Whatever the interpretations, the image reminds us that the decolonial refutes the Western idea that “human lives can be discarded for strategic reasons and for the civilization of death (massive slave trade, famines, wars, genocides and elimination of differences at any cost)” (MIGNOLO, 2008, p. 315-316) while defending “the celebration of life on the planet, including human organisms that have been separated from nature in the cosmology of European modernity” (MIGNOLO, 2008, p. 315-316), and this makes a huge difference in decolonial thinking.

Finally, the last image suggests that Gaia and humans still have a lot to dialogue for. All these crises have shown humans some learnings that, according to Sousa Santos (2020), are possible at that moment: 1. We can “stay home and have time to read a book and spend more time with our kids”; 2. We can and should “consume less, dispense with the habit of

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<sup>52</sup> Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/trendingcomblog/photos/a.392089094540186/893481271067630/?type=3>. Accessed on: Aug. 2, 2020.

spending time in shopping centers, looking at what is for sale and forgetting everything we want but that can only be obtained by means other than buying it” (SOUSA SANTOS, 2020, p. 6). We can, as language educators, renounce Global North epistemologies and ontologies that have led us to believe in universalisms and single truths. At least our creative students (the very ones we criticize for prosuming images on social media settings) show us that this is possible.

### Authors' Contribution

We sincerely declare that both authors contributed equally in the conceptualization, investigation and analysis presented in this paper.

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