

Popular Pedagogy in the Times of COVID-19: Digital School or Digital Culture

William Soares dos Santos^{1, *}, Mariarosaria de Simone²

¹Department of Didactics, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

²Department of Humanities, University of Naples 'Federico II', Naples, Italy

Email address:

williamsoares@letras.ufrj.br (William Soares dos Santos), mariarosaria.desimone3@unina.it (Mariarosaria de Simone)

*Corresponding author

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Abstract: This work seeks to reflect upon the importance of critical training in the use of digital media in educational contexts. In such a period in which the school is necessarily forced to become 'digital', one wonders if this complex, and probably necessary, path of renewal brings along an equally and devoted commitment regarding better practices concerning educational intentionality with the use of the new technologies. Therefore, it is in this direction that we have chosen to bring critical research about a reading experience in the Brazilian context. It is an experience that highlights the importance of a perspective of social emancipation where action and reflection are intimately connected and translate into the promotion of a "praxis" that is critically deepened against the hegemonic thought of neoliberalism, which is, at the same time, dispersive. We defend a reading perspective against the manipulations of oppressors who, thanks to the web, feed hate, racism, and misogynist ideas, which are contrary to any kind of equality among human beings. Along with this perspective, the role of educational agencies is invested with an enormous responsibility in promoting digital literacy that provides everyone, especially young people, with tools capable of allowing management and the critical use of the enormous amount of information in which we are immersed. Today, it is important to strive for perspectives of education based on freedom, on the autonomy and the construction of truly democratic societies, in which the benefits and responsibilities of the democratic rule of law can be shared by all people, regardless of their color, origin, religion, sex.

Keywords: Education, Narrative Studies, Education During the COVID-19, Education and Democracy, Digital Literacy

1. Introduction: Digital School or Digital Culture

During 2020 and 2021 was a period in which, due to the pandemic, educational contexts, both formal and non-formal, had to transform themselves into virtual contexts, from classes in the classrooms to the Classroom, from universities to Microsoft Teams rooms, from gyms to courses on YouTube, from singing and theatre schools to online courses on Zoom or via video calls from WhatsApp, we must strongly question how fundamental is the educational responsibility of educational institutions and teachers, doing so for now, even behind the PC screen, in promoting, in addition to their own areas of interest, also a critical training in the use of digital

tools. By that we mean a digital education that favors paths where one takes care of the relationship 'in presence', even when one is at a distance, and where, in a 'critical and cooperative' climate, the co-construction of knowledge is encouraged, together with an ethics of responsibility and an ecology of communication.

Beyond the diatribe between those who demonize and those who support the educational potential of the web and of the digital environment, between the apocalyptic and the integrated [1], it would seem more constructive to start from a fact: "in a culture like ours, used for some time to divide and to divide everything in order to control it, it is perhaps disconcerting to be reminded that, as far as its practical consequences are concerned, the medium is the message. That, in other words, the individual and social consequences

of each medium, that is, of each extension of ourselves, derive from the new proportions introduced into our personal affairs by each of these extensions or by each new technology” [2].

If therefore “many were inclined to affirm that the meaning or the message of the machine should not reside in the machine itself but in the use made of it, the “message” of a medium or a technology is in the change of proportions, rhythm, or patterns it introduces into human relationships” [2]. For this reason, and to avoid the opaque position of ‘technological idiot’ [2], position according to which what matters is not the ‘medium’ in itself, but the way in which it is used, it is urgently necessary to reflect on the educational implications of this momentous transition from the “Gutenberg Galaxy” to the “Internet Galaxy” [3].

If, in fact, as emerged from its 2019 edition, with the significant title “UnLearn, ReLearn: What it means to be Human” [4] of the “World Innovation Summit for Education” (WISE) [5] held in Doha, Qatar, one of the most impressive conferences on state of the art and the future of educational systems around the world, the demand for education at a global level is growing dramatically, it is questionable with which models it is possible to satisfy it in a sustained way, guaranteeing both quality and accessibility. And above all, we must ask ourselves how to promote subjective skills, such as those of “learning to learn” [6] and “relearn” in an increasingly complex and dominated world, now more than ever due to the pandemic, by technologies, avoiding the so harmful “banking education” [7].

But at what point are we? Referring, only at national level, to the 2019 report of AGCOM, the Authority for Communications Guarantees, entitled “To educate digitally” [8], it emerges that “with regard to the educational and performance objectives of a digital school, the results of the analysis suggest that it would be advisable to intensify initiatives to support the development of skills and of digital culture, in particular those aimed at refining the technical skills of teachers and students, those aimed at learning and deepening new pedagogical and methodologies, into more constructive ones and with which to improve learning processes, experiences and know-how” [9]. If the school of transmission appears therefore, and increasingly, also on the thrust of digital culture, in deep crisis, disoriented, in the polarity between innovation and adaptation, towards the digital natives, unprepared to promote a culture rather than a digital connectivity capable of educating digital citizens, it is necessary to go beyond digital, stop with technicalities and technologicisms, and go back to talking about teaching models, educational relationships. The complex and probably necessary process of renewal of the school we are experiencing, amplified by the pandemic, in fact requires us to make choices about values regarding the educational intention that we want to give to the technologies.

Surely, in the Italian context, we have excellent experiences regarding the use of digital technologies as tools capable of

promoting a new and more resilient cooperative pedagogy, also thanks to the Movimento di Cooperazione Educativa (Educational Cooperation Movement) [10] and, above all, also thanks to the constitution, inside the MCE, the national research group Cooperation and Digital Cultures, a group born precisely with “the shared idea of participating in the challenge to use digital technologies as tools for cooperation and other educational purposes, to research how to better use the potential of these means to develop individual and collective growth” [11]. In this regard, Lanfranco Genito of Bottega della Comunicazione e della Didattica [12], member of the national group MCE Cooperation and Digital Cultures, regarding the always and not the only tragic events that, together with the alarms that emerge from many parts about the effects of “digital” in our lives, and in our minds, it makes us realize that we are experiencing a very delicate moment of transition, highlighting how the operators of the MCE, also driven by moving forward looking backwards, have paid attention to these issues, supporting that today, being a citizen, knowing how to read and write, probably also means knowing how to make full use of digital technologies and, as always, the aim becomes to create the school of equal opportunities for each and every one in the best possible way. In particular, as it regards the delicate digital / minors’ relationship, “the MCE, with other associations, could promote a sort of decalogue-guide of behavior for educators, but above all begin to discuss the experiences made by many operators on the conscious use of the Net” [13].

Rheingold, as early as 2012, professed the importance of promoting digital education, essential to ensure that the network makes us ‘smart’ [14], especially through the dissemination of what he considered the 5 golden rules of digital literacy:

- 1) Disciplining attention: we are bombarded with thousands of information at every moment when we immerse ourselves in the web, and many times we get lost in them, so much so that already in 2005, the psychologist Barry Schwartz wrote a book entitled “The paradox of choice” where he illustrated the reasons why having too much information is equivalent to having none at all [15].

To overcome this problem, Rheingold suggests the need to learn to reduce the number of options on the table by simplifying the selection process and to consciously synchronize one’s attention habits with information tools through a personalized organization of their use and full control of resources.

- 2) Discovery of hoaxes: it is the ability to critically examine information in order to verify sources and validate knowledge. It involves the creation of your own PLN (Personal Learning Network) and is, therefore, an activity that cannot be carried out individually. It is an exercise in critical thinking that involves complex activities such as exploring, seeking, following, refining, and fine-tuning, nurturing, engaging, becoming interested, responding. Understood in this way, critical thinking lays both the foundations for collaboration and

content curation, but also defines the grammar of life online and on social media.

- 3) Participation: the web can become an instrument of democracy as long as we work on awareness of the potential of the internet and promote the development of active participation in the web.
- 4) Collaboration: understanding virtual communities as 'places' in which there is a tacit agreement of mutual collaboration and sharing of information.
- 5) Network-friendly intelligence: becoming "net smart", that is, able to expand one's intelligence with a careful use of the Internet.

In this sense, network intelligence comes to represent a new skill that involves an intelligent use of the web based on online social networks, on mutual trust, on an ethics that promotes collaboration such as to determine the formation of a social capital consisting of individual resources related and the ability to act collectively.

It is therefore necessary to overcome the gap between accessibility to the network guaranteed by mobile devices and the ability to effectively use this ease of access to contribute positively to the common good and promote, even utopically, with what Lévy calls "collective intelligence" [16], an intelligence that allows people to unite their intellectual forces, their imagination, their creativity, their knowledge, contributing to the creation of a large "collective brain", a "hyper cortex".

According to the French philosopher, today's technologies have led to a real social movement, a completely spontaneous phenomenon which, if not too conditioned by the market and capitalism, will promote culture and civilization. Only in this way will there be a movement with positive implications for all of humanity. And it is in this direction that we have chosen to bring, with respect to the importance of promoting a conscious use of the Net, a critical work experience in the Brazilian context.

2. The Narrative Time, the General and the Memories of Our Sad Future¹

I have always been fascinated by the question of time, how it manifests itself in our consciousness and how we tell our experiences anchored to our perception of this phenomenon. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 a.C.), better known as Saint Augustine, was one of the first in the Western world to address the issue in a more structured way. In the book IX of his *Confessions*, to the difficult question "What is time?", Augustine would have replied: "Who will be able to say it

quickly and clearly? Who will be able to grasp it even with the thought, to translate it into words? Yet what is more familiar in our discourses and clearer than the time? And yes, by talking about it we know well what we say, and we understand well what others say when he talks about it. So, what's the time? If you don't ask me, I know; but then if I had to say, I don't know anything about it" [17].

After presenting the difficulty of the undertaking, Augustine indicates the subjective perception of time as a prerogative exclusively of the human condition, since for God there would be no time, considering past, present and future as one:

"Whoever speaks like this, has not yet come to understand, oh wisdom of God, light of minds, has not come to understand, how things are done that are done for you and in you; and they claim to investigate your eternity! While their heart flutters between the notions of past and future between which things are in constant motion and are lost in vain. Who will be able to hold it, and stare at it, so that he has stopped for a moment, and for a moment perceives the splendours of the immobile eternity, comparing it with the times that never stop, and sees that there can be no comparison; sees that a long space of time cannot be long except for a long series of moments that pass away; and that in eternity nothing passes, everything is present? And that no time can be all present? See that every past is expelled from the future, and every future is only a follower of the past? And that one and the other are produced and flow from what is always present? Who will grab the heart of man so that he stops, and sees that the immobile eternity, not past, not future, has the future and the past? Could my hand be good for this? Could the hand of my word be able to succeed in such great a thing?" [17] (p. 293-294).

Perhaps, one of the most important indications of Augustine's text is that of pointing out a notion of time included in three interconnected dimensions: the present of past things, the present of present things and the present of future things. Indications taken up, among others, by George Herbert Mead in his theories "of the past" and of the "perspective of the present" [18]. As an applied linguist, I cannot fail to consider that our relationship with these temporal dimensions occurs mainly through discourse and, more particularly, through narrative discourse. When we perform our discursive performances [19], our perception of time is reduced or amplified, depending on factors such as our social context, what we are experiencing and what we want to convey at the moment of our discursive performance (pleasure, pain, joy, sadness, indifference, etc.), people's reaction, welcoming or not, towards it, our cognitive constructions that we access through what we call memory, the results we expect from our performance and the evaluations we make of the world and of the people around us. For all these and other issues, an objective understanding of time, even at the narrative level, would be, if not impossible, always elusive, and dependent on many factors.

Writers and poets have always highlighted the relativity of our perception of time long before the physicists. In his play

1 A shorter version of this section was published in the blog "Contxt: Aqui tudo é texto, com texto, contexto", a collaborative blog, developed by students and professors of the Center for Studies in Discourses and Society (NUDeS) within the Interdisciplinary Post Graduation Program of Applied Linguistics (PIPGLA) at the UFRJ, which seeks to reflect on the circulation of texts and discourses in society, as well as on the ideologies contained in them, underlining the influence of this flow of texts and speeches in the construction of social life (<https://contxt.letas.ufrj.br/o-tempo-narrativo-o-general-e-as-memorias-de-nossos-tristes-futuros/>).

As you like it, for example, William Shakespeare puts in the mouth of the character Rosalind (Act III, scene 2) that time is perceived in different ways by different people, in different situations:

“[...] By no means, sir. Time travels in divers paces with divers persons. I’ll tell you who time ambles withal, who time trots withal, who time gallops withal, and who he stands still withal” [20].

For lack of space, I will let each of you to search and read the rest of this delightful speech in which Rosalind reports situations and characters in which time flows differently. But I also recommend the reader, if it is of interest, to see, among other Shakespearean examples, how the relativity of time is a theme that runs through the entire play *Romeo and Juliet*, in which we can see, by the means of only one example, in scene V of Act III, the relativity of time when Juliet affirms:

“[...] For in a minute there are many days.

O, by this count I shall be much in years” [21].

We had to wait for the passage of the nineteenth to the twentieth century in order to have a physicist who established a theory that took time into account not as an absolute, but as something relative. This physicist was Albert Einstein (1879-1955) who, through his theory of relativity, shows that time is relative and independent of space. Explaining it here, in a very superficial way, Einstein’s theory shows us that time can be dilated according to the perspective and circumstances of those who undergo the experience of time. Einstein also worked out an equation to prove his theory, which, however, I will refrain from reproducing and explaining. I will only say that in this equation the time interval marked by a standing observer, the time interval marked by a moving observer, the speed of the moving body and the speed of light are taken into account, used as a paradigm of maximum speed possible. In the equation, the time interval marked by the standing observer will always be greater than that of the moving observer. In his famous twin paradigm, Einstein explains one of the effects of time dilation: if one of the brothers travels in space at a speed close to or even the same as that of light, when he returns to Earth, he will be younger than his brother who remained on our planet. However, the theory developed by Einstein poses a problem to what Augustine previously thought, by predicting a curved but still linear time.

We had to wait for the development of quantum physics to be able to see elaborated, within physics studies, theories that take into account the interdependence of what we call past, present and future. An example of this type of study was undertaken by the Italian theoretical physicist Carlo Rovelli of the *Centre de Physique Théorique* (at the city of Luminy) of the University of Aix-Marseille who, in his book “*L’ordine del tempo*” [22] (“*The order of time*”) shows that, in a quantum perspective, time and space are no longer perceived continuously, but, within the quantum cycle theory, for example, they are understood as elements without beginning or end, which are in constant interaction in what is described

by the physicist as a granular perspective, in which the differences between past, present and future disappear. Rovelli notes that these categories are not part of a broader perspective of how the universe works but are limited only to the microscopic world of human experience. In a broader perspective, there is no difference between cause and effect and time simply disappear. In this way we return to Augustine’s philosophical thought, now rooted in the theories of physics. An interesting thing to note about the theories of physics is that it all depends on the point of view. In the same way as Einstein does not eliminate Isaac Newton’s brilliant theories of mechanical physics, Rovelli’s theories do not eliminate Albert Einstein’s brilliant theories of physics of relativity, it all depends on the planes in which those theories apply.

Along this direction, the perspectives of Augustine’s time and the innovations of physicists in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries seem to reflect the paradigm changes (the so-called “turning points”) in discursive studies and, in particular, in narrative studies, starting from the reflections of Greeks philosophers up to the present day. To glimpse this parallelism, it is sufficient to think that narratives today also tend to be studied in a postmodern perspective, against the positivism established in the nineteenth century, through research that privileges subjectivity and experience [23] to the detriment of extremely objective and rational perceptions of narratives and of the identity performances they provide, although this does not at all mean neglecting the epistemological rigor of such studies [24].

From a perspective of contemporary understanding of the narrative, one takes into account, among other elements, how the narratives and the identity performances that are carried out with and through them develop within specific contexts [25]. Furthermore, the narrative structure is perceived more smoothly, often without easily identifiable openings and closings, as proposed, for example, by William Labov’s seminal investigations in his work with Joshua Waletzky [26] or in his book “*Language in the inner city*” (1972) [27]. The question of narrative time has also been challenged by perceptions arising from the works by Paul Ricœur in his collection of studies on time and narrative [28, 29, 30, 31], works that have influenced the perception of scholars such as Jerome Bruner and Elliot Mishler about the narrative time. Bruner [32], for example, drew attention to the value of the construction of narrative meaning, demonstrating that, in addition to the structure, the broader contexts point to meanings that are constructed locally in the narrative production. In other words, the meaning of the present is also constructed from perceptions brought about by what we commonly call the past, which, among other things, can indicate future actions and meanings. In his studies, Mishler [33] indicates that the experiential time of the narrative may be different from that which, apparently, is narrated and that the past is always narrated with our perspective of the present from a perspective that looks to the future of our experiences. Furthermore, we often reinterpret the past from the perspective of the present and what we want for our lives in

the future. For Mishler the past is not something set in stone, but the narrative allows us to reinterpret it, as well as provides us with the possibility of transforming the past in the light of our most recent experiences. And so, for example, we can reinterpret as abuse, racism, prejudice, fascism, betrayal and so on experiences that we have lived in the past, but which, without our perspective of the present, we would not have interpreted in this way, but which we have “left to go”, perhaps, as uncomfortable situations for which we had no name, or, simply, as something normal to existence, who knows, because we have naturalized the negative experience with the narratives of submission to which we have been subjected.

In my recent research on narrative [34] I tried, among other things, to understand how the narrative phenomenon can be constituted in a multimedia way, that is, through different media. In this perspective, a single narrative or multiple narratives can be fragmented into different contexts to form a larger narrative, or they can be removed from their initial contexts and acquire new meanings as they circulate across a given society through different media. In many cases, different discursive expressions carried out in different spaces (such as Internet platforms, for example) are amalgamated to form a coherent narrative. Even in these narrative configurations, the temporal question is present and the narratives which, apparently, aim to recapitulate the past, can speak much more about the present or point to possible futures.

To reflect a little more on the issue I propose a brief analysis of a narrative that has been built starting from 2018. I hypothesize that this narration takes shape and is built through different media, such as in posts made on the *Twitter* platform, in texts published on books and newspaper articles, published both in print and on the internet and in media such as radio and television news. For lack of space, I will focus only on the analysis of the discursive production of some media. In any case, I propose that these different speeches, published in different media, produce a narrative, addressing the same story, not canonical, which takes shape in different spaces by different people, with multiple objectives.

Eduardo Villas Bôas is a general officer of the Brazilian army who was promoted to commander on January 7, 2015, during the government of Dilma Rousseff, 36th president of Brazil and of the same party as former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, 35th president of Brazil. 2018 was a year of important elections for the country, elections where, in the first half of the year, there were, among other potential candidates, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and then the deputy Jair Bolsonaro. On April 3rd, 2018 [35], the day before the trial held at the Federal Supreme Court to which Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was subjected, General Villas Bôas announced the following message on his social network *Twitter* (The message will come translated into English under the picture of the “tweet”):

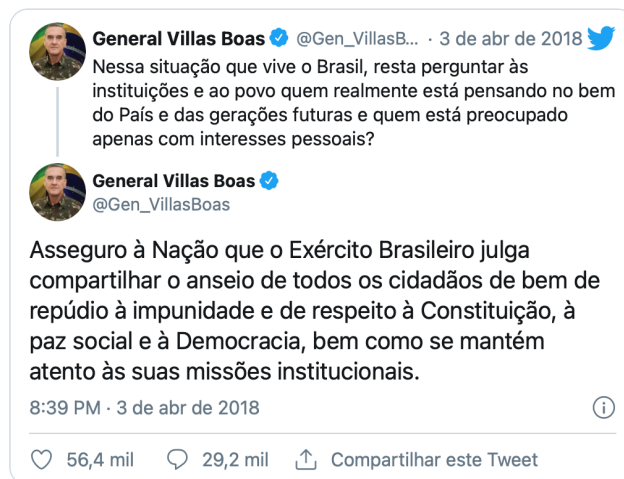


Figure 1. General Villas Boas, 3rd April 2018.

General Villas Boas, 3rd April 2018:

“In this situation that the country is experiencing, it is left to ask the institutions and the people who is really thinking about the good of the country and future generations and who is only concerned with personal interests”.

“I assure the Nation that the Brazilian army believes it shares the desire of all good citizens for of repudiation of impunity and respect for the Constitution, social peace and Democracy, as well as remaining attentive to its institutional missions”.

At that time, the message was understood by many segments of society [35] as a pressure from the Brazilian armed forces for the STF (Supreme Federal Court) to condemn the former president who, as a result, could not stand as a candidate in that elections year. However, since it was posted on the general’s personal page, even though it was suspected of having the support of the substantial part of the army, it could not be read as an institutional message, but only as a personal demonstration. The post had the support of some generals and the then candidate Jair Bolsonaro, as shown by a verification report made on the news platform UOL (2018) by Luis Kawaguti [36], which reports on *Twitter* the message of a general who, in addition to being in agreement with Villas Boas, indicates that they are ready, as an army, to use weapons:

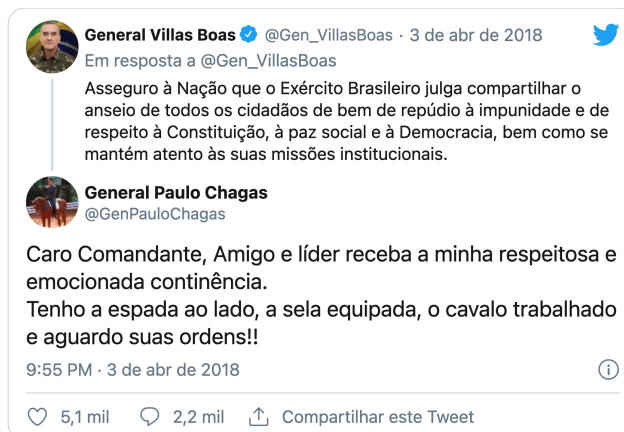


Figure 2. General Paulo Chagas: 3rd April 2018.

General Paulo Chagas: 3rd April, 2018:

"Dear commander, friend, and leader, receive my respectful and emotional salute.

I have the sword at my side, the saddle equipped, the horse worked, and I wait for your orders!!"

And, to follow, the same article reports the post by Jair Bolsonaro himself, who enthusiastically supports the general's demonstration:

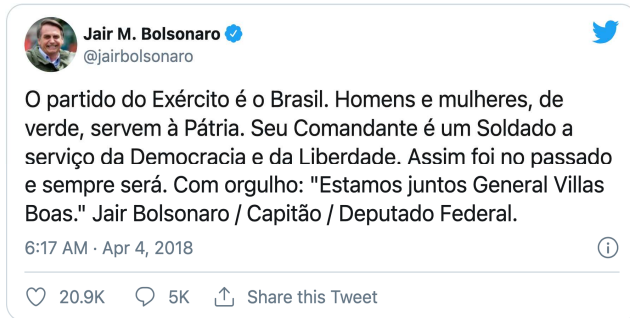


Figure 3. *Jair M. Bolsonaro, 4th April 2018.*

Jair M. Bolsonaro, 4th April 2018:

"The Army's party is Brazil. Men and women, in green, serve the Fatherland. Its Commander is a Soldier in the service of Democracy and Freedom. So, it was in the past and it always will be. With pride: "We are together General Villas Boas". Jair Bolsonaro / Captain / Federal Deputy".

It is important to note the 'evasive' detachment of General Villas Boas, who makes no direct mention of the former president or his impending judgment. Thus, as already underlined by Bruner [32] with regard to narrative construction, only the knowledge of the socio-interactive macro context allows us to build a broader construction of the meanings of the post. By avoiding being direct, the general avoids being framed in any punishment, such as that provided for by the federal decree of August 2002, signed by the then President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, which, in point 57 of the decree, limits the expression of political opinions by the military. The above posts can be understood as components of a "pressure" narrative against the Supreme Court by some people who, although linked in a different way to the armed forces, do not represent an institutional voice. The point, however, is that we can consider, from the perspective I propose, that this narrative does not end in 2018.

In this regard, in a book published in February 2021 organized by Celso de Castro [37] which reports a 13-hour interview with General Villas Boas, the latter states that the post published on April 3, 2021, was written by a group consisting of military personnel, group that had the support of military personnel of the high command of the Brazilian Armed Forces [37]. Here are some excerpts from the book:

"We were aware that we were really reaching the limit of the Army's institutional responsibility [...] also because the content was discussed in detail by all of us [...] the military commanders of the area [...]. The 'draft' prepared by my staff and by the members of the High Command residing in Brasilia.

[...]. Having received the suggestions, we prepared the final text, [...] the note was sent at 8:20 pm on April 3, 2018. [...]. Logically, we wanted the repercussion to be immediate, but we were surprised, yes, when it was broadcast shortly after by the *Jornal Nacional* [37].

As you can see, the general confesses that he and other generals have collectively articulated a text with the aim of putting pressure on the TSF (Brazilian Supreme Court), which, in 2018, was published as a personal message. In response to what was published in the book, Supreme Court Minister Edson Fachin issued a note that was partially reproduced in a report by Aguirre Talento, published in the newspaper *O Globo*, on February 16, 2021:

"In the face of the statements published and attributed to the military authority and as a speaker in the STF of HC152752, I note that any form or method of prejudicial pressure on the judiciary is intolerable and unacceptable. The declaration of this intention, if confirmed, is very serious and contrary to the constitutional order. And the Federal Supreme Court is responsible for the protection of the Constitution" [38].

Fachin's note clarifies that the general's attitude constitutes a very serious act which, according to his words, even violates the institutional order. The minister's words are supported by point XLIV of Article 5 of the Brazilian Constitution, which states that "the action of armed groups, civil or military, against the constitutional order and the democratic state is an unspeakable and imprescriptible crime". The general's action can also fall on what are characterized as "crimes against democratic institutions", which can involve insurrection, coup and conspiracy as expressed in articles 365, 366 and 367 of the Brazilian penal code. It can also be classified among the crimes of injury to the "representative and democratic regime" defined in the Law on National Security and, also, in the crimes of "armed insurrection against the powers of the state" specified in the Law on crimes against the state and political order and social [39].

Here I return to the question of time. The revelations of Villas Boas in Celso de Castro's book allow us to read the narrative that began to take shape with the *Twitter*'s posts of April 3, 2018. We now know that the text was not simply written by one person, but that it was constructed by a military team with a high power of institutional interference, but which, in order not to be qualified as proof of a crime, was signed by a single military officer who published it on his private social network. Thus, with our perspective of the present, we transform our perception of the past and we realize that the pressure on the Supreme Court may have led to choices that are surely affecting our present and that will lead us to a totally different future from the one in which it would have led to the election of another candidate, other than the current president. Through the narrative constructed by this discursive 'plot', it is also possible to suppose that support for Jair Bolsonaro may already have been present within institutions such as the armed forces months before the elections and even before his candidacy was made official.

Pressão de militares sobre STF é 'intolerável e inaceitável', diz Fachin

Ministro criticou relato do general Villas Bôas sobre tuíte publicado na véspera do julgamento de habeas corpus de Lula

AGUIRRE TALENTO
stalent@oglobo.com.br
BRASILIA

O ministro do Supremo Tribunal Federal (STF) Edson Fachin afirmou, em nota divulgada ontem, que a pressão de militares sobre o Poder Judiciário é "intolerável e inaceitável". A manifestação do magistrado foi em resposta ao relato em livro do general Villas Bôas, ex-comandante do Exército, que contou os bastidores sobre a elaboração e publicação de uma manifestação do general nas redes sociais no dia do julgamento de um habeas corpus do ex-presidente Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, em 2018.

Em 3 de abril de 2018, véspera do julgamento do habeas corpus, Villas Bôas escreveu no Twitter: "Nessa

situação que vive o Brasil, resta perguntar às instituições e ao povo quem realmente está pensando no bem do país e das gerações futuras e quem está preocupado apenas com interesses pessoais?". A declaração foi vista como uma pressão sobre os ministros para manter Lula preso.

Fachin era o relator do habeas corpus de Lula, que buscava impedir preventivamente que o Tribunal Regional Federal da 4ª Região (TRF-4) determinasse sua prisão. Fachin negou o pedido da defesa do ex-presidente e entendeu que o TRF-4 poderia, sim, determinar o cumprimento da pena após o julgamento do recurso em segunda instância.

Na ocasião, coube ao mi-

nistro Celso de Mello, decano do corte que se aposentou no fim do ano passado, dar a resposta institucional a Villas Bôas.

—O respeito indeclinável à Constituição e às leis da República representa o limite intransponível a que se deve submeter os agentes do Estado, quaisquer que sejam os estamentos a que eles pertencem — disse Celso, durante o julgamento.

"GUARDA DA CONSTITUIÇÃO"

Ontem foi a primeira vez que Fachin se manifestou sobre o episódio: "Diante de afirmações publicadas e atribuídas à autoridade militar e na condição de relator no STF do HC 152752, anoto ser intolerável e inaceitável qualquer forma ou modo



Reação. Edson Fachin disse que ação do Exército, que ajudou a elaborar publicação para pressionar o STF, é gravíssima

de pressão injurídica sobre o Poder Judiciário. A declaração de tal intuito, se confirmado, é gravíssima e atenta contra a ordem constitucional. E ao Supremo Tribunal Federal compete a guarda da Constituição", afirmou o ministro.

Em sua nota, Fachin ainda fez referência ao editorial do GLOBO de domingo passado, que alertou a necessidade de uma campanha eleitoral de 2022 ser feita com lisura e que o resultado das

urnas seja garantido.

Fachin também cita o artigo 142 da Constituição, que descreve o papel das Forças Armadas: "As Forças Armadas, constituídas pela Marinha, pelo Exército e pela Aeronáutica, são instituições nacionais permanentes e regulares, organizadas com base na hierarquia e na disciplina, sob a autoridade suprema do Presidente da República, e destinam-se à defesa da Pátria, à garantia dos poderes constitucionais e,

por iniciativa de qualquer destes, da lei e da ordem".

O ministro continua: "Frustrou-se o golpe desferido nos Estados Unidos da América do Norte contra o Capitólio pela postura exemplar das Forças Armadas dentro da legalidade constitucional. A grandeza da tarefa, o sadio orgulho na preservação da ordem democrática e do respeito à Constituição não toleram violações ao Estado de Direito democrático".

Figure 4. Fachin at O Globo Newspaper on 16th, February 2021.

The narrative ends again with a response to the message from magistrate Edson Fachin published in the Newspaper *O Globo* on 16th February 2021, a response that General Villas Bôas posted on his *Twitter* page:



Figure 5. General Villas Boas, 16th April 2021.

General Villas Boas, 16th April 2021:
"Three years late"

The perhaps ironic phrase of Villas Bôas, "three years later", is loaded with multiple meanings that cross different socio-spatial and temporal perspectives that I will not be able to explain here, but the most immediate impression is to assume that his deed is passed as an error, and, at the same time, has passed into the statute of limitations. As if three years, or any length of time, were enough to prescribe an act of treason to the country. However, if his deed is shown to be a criminal act, it should not "expire". This reflection, of course, does not deal with issues involving Brazilian jurisprudence and, therefore, this is not the place to conduct an investigation into how the Brazilian judicial system acts and should act, but, taking into account the speech of Minister of the Brazilian Supreme Court, Edson Fachin, reported above, it is possible to understand that, if we were in a society where the laws were really applied and respected, the general and all the others involved in the processing of the "communications" of April 3rd, 2018, should be, at the very least, seriously investigated and, if justice deems it appropriate, be tried for the crime of treason against the country. But, due to the 'current situation', this prospect seems to be very unlikely, given that the knowledge of these facts has not generated major manifestations in Brazilian society in general. Furthermore, institutions, such as the National Congress, avoid the issue and have not been able to ascertain whether there are relevant reasons to investigate the issue.

To conclude, for now, I think it is important to underline how the analysis reported here is part of a concept of narrative analysis that is still developing and that tries to account mainly for the construction of narratives from the intersection, from

the amalgamation would be better to say, of various types of discourse produced, consumed, and shared in different contexts that take on the form and dimensions of narrative discourse. In a sense, this model, albeit only on an experiential level, subverts the Labovian formulation of the narrative as a single well-structured discursive unit with the aim of recapitulating the past [27]. If we look at the discursive elements of the narrative object of this analysis we can consider that this narration includes important elements of the Labovian conception, such as orientation (the 2018 pre-electoral context in Brazil), characters and actions (government agents who, in line with principle, they could not express themselves politically, but they do so to pressure the TSF to arrest the then main presidential candidate in order, perhaps, to support a candidate who best suits their political perspectives, pressured in an elusive way, not to be sentenced, which, three years later, comes out of one of the agents, who admits the action not of one, but of a group: understandable that these agents should be judged for such pressures, since such an attitude could be understood today as a federal crime), some assessments (at the moment it is difficult for the people involved to be punished, the action of general can be considered a betrayal to the country and to the political spheres, the narration reports elements and characters that very much reflect the Shakespearean tragedies such as, for example, *Richard III*, a work in which there is no lack of cunning machinations, betrayals, arrests without proof of political enemies, the rise to power of thugs obsessed with keeping themselves and their family in power, etc.), the general produces, or wants to produce the impression of a prescription of his act together with his supporters, and no concrete action is possible to contest it. We can argue that the narrative presented here can be considered multi-vocal, organized in different ways, by different people and that its construction is susceptible to articulated analysis from different perspectives.

I will skip here a discussion that leads to a final, definitive evaluation of the reported analysis. What is important and pertinent for me to underline is that the violence, hierarchies, racism and fascist ways of leading the country in which we live did not originate with the military. In fact, they are part of the very foundations of Brazil. On the other hand, it is undeniable that the military cooperated in different times and ways for the establishment of a state of violence in the country, both after the coup, which established the Republic in 1889, passing through the massacre of Canudos, in 1897, the military dictatorship between 1964 and 1985 and in the other coups they fomented or supported throughout the history of Brazil.

My latest book in prose, which paradoxically I titled "*Memórias de um triste futuro*" (*Memories of a sad future*) [40], is made up of short narratives that intertwine giving shape to a broader novel that deals with some aspects of the rawness of the dictatorial regime that lasted in Brazil between 1964 and 1985. The stories reported in the novel show how, in many ways, that past is not over yet. We remain, in our day, prisoners of the same violent mentality that characterized the

military period and we continue to want to reproduce the type of hierarchical society which that regime imposed in. In the novel, the narratives speak of how the past and the present are deeply connected, shaping the society we live in. Similarly, to the narrative analysed here which indicates the continuity of our sad future until we are able to break the paradigms of violence and the fascist modes of organization that are at the centre of our collectivity. In this sense, violence is a loop in the space-time of Brazilian society, which leads to our past, our present and our future, as postulated by the theory of quantum physics [22], a loop of which, it seems we are not getting rid of yet.

3. Concluding Reflections: Digital Literacy for an Education to Freedom

The analysis reported from the Brazilian context highlights the importance of a vision of social emancipation where action and reflection are intimately connected and translate, in education, into the promotion of a "praxis" that is not limited to "orientations of a technical nature-cognitive, but to critically delve into the practical aspirations that take on a wider meaning, thinking and creating alternatives to the single, homologating and at the same time dispersive thought of neoliberalism. Practice needs theory to be reflexive and oriented. The theory needs practice in order not to alienate itself in a detached abstractionism. Praxis: action and reflection for the purpose of transformation" [41].

If "The main question we ask ourselves is how to think and propose an open, social, democratic education capable of problematizing social issues and issues in times of commodification" [41], the answer to this question cannot fail to translate into educational practices such as to promote a critical look especially with respect to the digital world, promoting educational and training experiences that go in the already reported Rheingoldian direction of the "network that makes us intelligent" [14].

Wanting to dwell, by way of example only, on the first of the five rules of digital literacy described by Rheingold, *infotention*, i.e. the importance of promoting mental skills in filtering content and focusing one's attention in order to consciously 'synchronize' habits of attention with information tools, it can be clearly seen how the pervasive use of technology often does not always presuppose a critical use of these tools and how "a central feature of mental life, attention, is increasingly experienced in disjointed way because of the ways in which it is constantly solicited by technologies" [42].

In this regard, Berardi, in his controversial book "Precarious Rhapsody" offers a pessimistic diagnosis of the evolution of psychic, emotional and sensorial life under capitalism, due to the way in which the acceleration and intensification of the transmission of information is leading to an overload of the senses and an experience of the present time that is increasingly fragmented and discontinuous. This evolution is described by the author as a mutation of the power

of capitalism, which seeks to directly influence the sphere of psychic life, with different consequences depending on the economic and social position of people [43].

Berardi, examining the broader context of psychotechnology, uses the definition “political economy of attention” to describe the way in which the capital operates directly on the psyche through the colonization of the psycho-sphere, addressing lived experience and the formation of subjectivities: capitalism, through the constant solicitation of attention due to a considerable range of media, technological tools and marketing strategies, is connected to the brain and the nervous system, so, to understand the crisis of the new economy, it is necessary to start from psychic experience of the processing of virtual stimuli. “The ‘mediascape’ is the universe of transmitters that send signals to our brain according to the most varied formats. The info-sphere is the interface between the multimedia system and the mind that receives the signals, while the mental ecosphere is that immaterial sphere in which semiotic flows interact with the receptors of the minds scattered around the planet. The mind is the universe of receptors that are not naturally limited to receiving but to elaborate, create and, in turn, to set in motion new transmission processes and cause the continuous evolution of the ‘mediascape’” [43]. The evolution of the activation of the information-sphere more and more complex and with increasingly powerful, fast and diversified information distribution networks has led to a “crisis” due to the asymmetrical structuring of the info-sphere, the “interface” between the media system and the mind that receives the signals, since the “universe of neuronal receptors in the human brain of real people made of flesh, fragile and sensitive organs, is not formatted to the same standard as the system of digital transmitter” [43].

The consequence of this is panic, depression, attention disorder, hyperactivity, loneliness, existential misery, anxiety and so on. For Berardi, this series of pathological symptoms is a function of the accelerated digital and machinic time of contemporary life in which subjectivity is becoming increasingly dispersed. “Human beings, including children and young people, experience information overload as their attention is relentlessly solicited from multiple sources. This “careful stress”, with a constant appeal to attention, reduces the time allowed for affectivity, sensitivity and thought. Therefore, it becomes more and more difficult to access the simple experience of being an embodied subject with its very organicity and its rhythms of existence. Narrowing the gap between stimulus and response creates the kind of being who does not reflect and cannot reflect, whose experience is thinned, and who reacts rather than act. It is not a question of a technophobic vision but of showing the potential implications of the interface between the human organism and emerging information technologies, especially because they lead to reflections of particular interest, especially in the educational field” [42].

In this regard, Hayles distinguishes between hyper-attention and deep attention: “hyper-reading, which includes skimming, scanning, fragmentation of juxtaposed texts is a strategic

response to an information-intensive environment and is correlated with hyper-attention, a cognitive modality that has a low threshold for boredom, flexibly alternates between different information flows and prefers a high level of stimulation” [44]. Deep attention, on the other hand, can maintain a single focus and has a high threshold for boredom. It is not a type of reading that is preferable to another. In fact, hyper-attention is useful in those information-intensive environments in which many children and students find themselves immersed from birth. However, “deep attention is a precious social achievement that has taken centuries even millennia to be cultivated” [44] and the ever-faster response times encouraged by activities that promote hyperattention generate a dispersed and distracted subjectivity among a thousand e-mails, social media, games and surfing the web, so it is increasingly difficult to simply “pay attention”.

“If attention is understood within the context of the attention economy, particularly in relation to the objects of our attention, and if the marketing mechanisms are designed to solicit and capture attention, and the ability to sustain attention is destroyed through the constant short-circuit that prevents memorization, which in turn precludes the awareness and concentration necessary for the elaboration and integration of the Experience into our lived experience, the attention deficit would therefore not seem simply a psychological disorder, but a characteristic of contemporary life in cases in which, and by now they are the majority, the organism develops in an environment saturated with information” [42].

It would seem desirable, along this direction, a critical and also creative educational work, which opens the gaze to the multidisciplinary and transversality of scientific research, such as the use of mindfulness practices deriving from contemplative practices of oriental origin [45], addressed educational work, but not only, especially of young people, in order to provide techniques capable of allowing the management and critical use of the digitization in which we are immersed, promoting the transformation of the McLuhanian “medium” of the Internet from a formidable distraction mechanism to a gym to be able to manage the better one’s attention and as an elective vehicle to experience the possibility of being in the present, even at a distance. Therefore, digital natives should improve their multitasking experiences rather than continuous partial attention in their use of technologies, developing greater self-control and self-regulation skills, especially under the influence of cognitive overload [45].

Perhaps, according to Rosen [46], we will get used to what William James [47] called “acquired carelessness”, such as the “din of a foundry or factory”. For the younger multitasking generation, the great electronic noise will only be an expected part of daily life and moving from youthful distraction to adulthood will only happen largely through discipline and personal mastery, illustrative for James of growth itself: “The ability to voluntarily bring back wandering attention, over and over again”, he wrote, “is the very root of judgment, character and will”.

Neuroscience and anecdotal evidence have therefore shown

us that this state of constant intentional self-distraction could be profoundly prejudicial to individual and cultural well-being. When people do their work only in the “crevices of their wandering mind”, with crumbs of rationed attention distinguishing among many competing tasks, their culture may gain in information, but it will surely be weakened in wisdom [46].

Beyond the importance of cultivating and promoting the “discipline of attention” to manage and not suffer the enormous amount of input that comes to us from the web, it seems of even more fundamental importance to promote a critical competence to the readings that are proposed to us, considering above all that today the process of education and reading is at the centre of immense political controversies.

If in fact, on the one hand, the Internet has provided access, which is difficult for most people, and the possibility of reading texts, also allowing the creation of collaboration networks that were difficult to implement before the advent of the web, due to the difficulties caused by distances. among people’s living places, on the other hand, far-right groups have used this possibility to spread their xenophobic ideas and, companies like Cambridge Analytica, use it to “algorithmize” people’s lives, which implies giving them access only to readings that can convince them in the defence of separatist policies, such as that of BREXIT (which is a project aimed at the disintegration of Europe), or of ideas and politicians such as those of the far right who, in most cases, promote programs of social and economic ‘salvation’ based on Nazi-fascist policies, and which led to the election of far-right representatives, for example, in the USA, in 2016 and in Brazil, in 2018. In this context of tension, the Internet allows radical groups linked to the far right to mobilize campaigns to attack, in various ways, democratic states and all those who have secured themselves within democratic states, as LGBTIQ + groups, blacks and ethnic groups, rights outside the sphere of power. These are campaigns always conducted through hate speech, racist and misogynist, contrary to any kind of equality between all human beings [48].

In this world of tension, in which the act of reading involves choices that affect the reality of our life, the role of teachers and educators is invested with enormous responsibility, since, more than ever, it is important to be committed to an education in freedom, for autonomy and for the construction of truly democratic societies, in which the benefits and responsibilities of the democratic rule of law can be shared by all people regardless of colour, origin, religion, sex, etc.

“It is clear that the problem of freedom in society cannot be imagined exclusively as a problem that can be solved by education, except when education itself declines into one of its noblest and most important dimensions, that is, in a political key” [49], and that there puts us in a position to “know what to want to know that you can want it” [49].

We conclude (for now) with the hope that our reflections can contribute to the development of a process for cultivating wisdom and democratic education aiming for social justice to everyone and everywhere our words arrive.

Authors’ Contribution

This article happens to be the result of a fruitful work between the two authors. Specifically, Mariarosaria De Simone wrote its first and the most part of third section and William Soares dos Santos wrote its second section and a part of the third’s.

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- [10] http://moodle.mce-fimem.it/pluginfile.php/2997/mod_resource/content/0/Il%20MCE%20ed%20il%20PNSD.pdf
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