

Questioning the Hope in Science and Schooling

Critical Sociology

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DOI: 10.1177/0896920520973728

journals.sagepub.com/home/crs**António Pedro de Andrade Dores** 

ISCTE - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Portugal

Abstract

The succession of extraordinary traumatic events, such as the poles defrosting, the fires in Australia and Amazon, the COVID-19 pandemic, the financial global crises revival, the Black Lives Matter movement, seems to call for science (to solve problems) and schooling (to make time to the unemployed) for help.

Science and schooling are some of the big successes of post-modern culture and states. Given these successes, questions remain. Why do they not deliver hope? We are left to ponder (a) why these extreme events takes us by surprise; (b) why those who have been afforded the best education ever are so anxious, so frozen; (c) why is it that our best policies, science, and minds continue to fail us when it comes to solving the problems associated with the environment, this pandemic, capitalism, and racism; and (d) given the promise of science, why are we so in need of solutions?

Keywords

sociology, science, social sciences, wisdom, disasters, schooling

Introduction

Today, many of the most pertinent criticisms of the status quo end with the Platonic hope that technoscience and schooling will solve problems (Harari, 2016; Mouzelis, 1995). In the case of the pandemic, most governments, except for Trump, Bolsonaro, and politicians campaigning against science and in favor of religion, claimed (falsely) to be following recommendations by scientists and epidemiologists (Devlin and Boseley, 2020).

In today's world, each role is professionally assigned in a watertight manner to people who have specialized skills and those skills are also watertight among themselves (Peake, 1991). Scientists do science and they don't do politics. Politicians don't do science and they do politics (Weber, 2012a, 2012b). Therefore, unless there is a (possibly desirable) change in the status quo, political responsibilities lie with politicians, whether or not they are guided by the scientists' advice.

For correspondence:

António Pedro de Andrade Dores, ISCTE - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Av. Forças Armadas, Lisboa 1549-026, Portugal.

Email: apad@iscte-iul.pt

Several prominent politicians around the world have claimed (falsely) to follow scientists' recommendations. What happens when a country follows the advice of science? In Sweden, the law mandate a state scientific institution to lead the fight against pandemics. No political leadership engages in this healthcare matter. Sweden's strategy was unique. In all other countries, the fight against pandemic became the main political topic. without partisan intervention, has developed a strategy very different from other countries (Our mission, n.d.; Paterlini, 2020). According to the international assessment, Sweden has significantly worse outcomes as compared to other countries whose politicians led over science recommendations (Wheeldon, 2020).

When the end of the pandemic comes, the balance of positive and negative actions developed by the states will be better assessed. What we can already say is that the strategies and preventive policies for the problems we face, such as those proposed by the UN, are not being followed by the states (ICC-WHO, 2020). The concern of people with the recurrence of problems already known and before which they become victims aggravates the struggles for power and survival. State-sanctioned violence, considered taboo by many modernists (Hirschman, 1977; Joas, 2003), is still proving to be an inescapable dimension of daily life. Not only for marginalized populations but also for more and more layers of the population, previously, protected by states, protest without fear of state violence. New social and political alliances are being forged (Goodman, 2020).

The voices of social scientists have been particularly absent as we have grappled with ways to deal with this moment of crisis. Violence, for now, is treated as a police matter. Police are being used to quell the growing uproar and protest of the masses challenging state power. They are calling for not only new relationships with state power but also new ways to organize that power. If we are indeed going to solve these problems, we must recognize that they are structural, and as such will require structural solutions. This includes global warming, systemic racism, incessant poverty, cradle to prison pipelines, and so forth (Featherstone, 2009). As we will see below, we have also come to realize that these problems are global and require global solutions. The tight division of professional labor and the allegedly scientific rationality that accompanies it do not rise to the situation.

The fight against the advance of irrationality in politics must respond to people's anxieties. The reduction of science and rationality at the service of the division of labor that separate professions, which begins to be taught in schools to children and young people, has proved to be incapable of providing the appropriate political and social responses to face the problems (Ifpte21, 2020). Is there a transformative role for the social sciences at this juncture?

Transformed and Transformative Social Sciences

A Renaissance kind of intellectual thought and action, as opposed to today's hyperspecialization distance from main humanity problems, may inspire the social sciences to join the profound transformative social changes one needs (Marcuse, 1991a). Social unrest, global insecurities, and systemic problems may look as opportunities if we harness this new-old kind of transdisciplinary knowledge. But unless we question how the modern and mechanical division of labor and specialized knowledge benefits global hegemonies, we will continue to witness these problems (Harari, 2016; Marcuse, 1991b).

The social sciences are no different from other modern activity sectors trapped by the hyperspecialization of disciplines and knowledge (Lahire, 2012). In times of change in the way people relate to nature and to society, however, each sector will provide a unique perspective to our current problems (Latour, 2007).

As the SARS-CoV-2 vaccine case shows, while science may offer a potential solution, the hyperdisciplinary and corporate jungle competition may obscure citizens' and government's

decision-making processes. Hence, just as with environmental warming, global finances, systemic racism, sexism, and homophobia, we continue to falter and walk in darkness. Whenever science has the power to manage global technologies, on the margins of democracy, in complicity with state policies, gives full attention to the growth of wealth (Latour, 1992). Wealth does indeed continue to grow. At the same time, access to minimum survival resources is denied to dependent populations (*Hungry in a world of plenty: millions on the brink of famine*, n.d.) and, instead, priority is given to promoting wars (Max and Nagdy, 2013).

Humanities, the legal studies, philosophy, and environmental sciences have produced an important body of knowledge that helps us understand the interrelatedness of nations into what many refer to as the global community. Similarly, the physical sciences (to include biology, chemistry, physics, etc.) provide us with many clues as to how we can attack the current pandemic. It is imperative that we also investigate how the social sciences can work collaboratively with our contemporaries to formulate transformative structures and practices that can help us transcend the current moment. As we proceed, several questions will guide us. How can social sciences organize itself to transform and participate in the general transformation of societies? What are the social conditions that will facilitate such a transformation in the social sciences? Which allies in society can the social sciences count on? The social and political movements that emerged in the United States to denounce racism are yet another problem to compete with the need to transform society into a society that prevents diseases and ecological catastrophes or is it a reason more for people to converge in the participation in discussions on the future that we want to have in common?

The Pandemic

The pandemic has suspended global attention to ecological concerns raised by the young Greta Thunberg. Some accused her movement to cover up global financial problems that have not disarmed since 2008 (McDuff, 2019; McGrath, 2019). The Black Lives Matter movement, in turn, put concerns about the pandemic in perspective (Kim, 2020). In Europe, a particularly aggressive fire season is expected in the near future. In some countries, the second wave of the pandemic is already being felt. The international extreme right, around Donald Trump and Bolsonaro, struggles to confirm electoral mandates, reverse globalization, and forcibly repress all opposition to the continuation of Western supremacy. The unsustainability of the financial system continues to worsen beneath the attention focused on the need to respond to the health needs of the populations.

A world with professionalized social sciences, with more social research than ever, with more publications and risk studies than ever before, is systematically taken by surprise by what science has predicted—the effects of global warming, global pandemics. This world is also incapable of dealing with the imperial spirit and its daily practical consequences, such as commercial wars, racism, or police practices instigated and trained by the states. Social theory seconded this trend, using nationalist methods of analysis.

Scientific predictions exist. To be considered by state's, corporations', and people's planning, it is necessary to have more than simple existence and scientifically validation. Since the 1960s, scientists have known there is a high risk of global warming (History.com, 2017). The states have intentionally alienated themselves from this knowledge (Weart, 2020). They allowed and collaborated in covering up and relativizing that knowledge. They prefer to keep working the logic of economic growth producing more taxes and more wealth, under the control of the global network of states-corporations.

The professionalization of scientists, which has enabled significant advances in technology in recent decades, turned science into an advisory department for states and corporations that use it as advertising or discard it, as they wish (Coser, 1956: 27; Lacey, 2012). State power is used to cover

up the need to respond to global warming, with the aim of maintaining political stability. States are pushing the worsening social inequalities and increasing the risks of morbidities and calamities, to protect the continuation of business freedom to explore nature and its resources, including human resources. A worldwide movement of young people, frightened by the consequences of this cover-up, spoke out against the irresponsibility of states, after dozens of years of the political cover-up of scientific knowledge about global warming (Beslik, 2019).

When news of the COVID-19 pandemic was heard, it was thought to be a Chinese problem. Despite the foreseeable risks, publicly mentioned by Bill Gates 5 years ago (Gates, 2015), business as usual continues. When an infectious outbreak occurred that caused health services to collapse in northern Italy, western states entered a state of alarm, but only in Europe. On America's side, it still seemed like someone else's problem.

Politically, the recent successive electoral victories of the extreme right, around the world, have translated into what, in fact, divides those who have recently become unlikely protagonists and the most experienced politicians of other ideologies. In the view of the evident and persistent risks of a collapse of the political-economic system, the ongoing transition from Washington D.C.'s headquarters of imperial power to Beijing (Morris, 2010), and the customary short-run tactic of being like the ostrich and putting your head under the sand, a part of the voters, frightened by the prospect of being on a plane without a flight crew, votes for whoever promises to keep the status quo by force, no matter what the cost.

In the face of the pandemic, far-right presidents distinguish themselves from others by insisting on keeping their heads under the sand. The others pretend to be attentive to people's problems: they impose widespread confinements on healthy people, as practiced in China, and announce aid to the millions of people who have been left without resources and are not expected to have them soon. In fact, the greatest protections and aid continue to be directed, as always, to investors, for example in the banking and the aviation sectors, who continue to see their assets and income grow even in times of health and ecological calamity. As experts say, inequalities have increased rapidly in recent months (The_Economist, 2020).

What should one do? Should the ones who get together to think what is happening maintain the "business as usual" perspective? Make an article where you gather rigorous data on aspects of what is going on, considering various points of view and various dimensions of social life, comparing the data between countries, regions, continents? What is the use of such a kind of exercise? Does it help others—for example, those who do bibliographic reviews—to compare national knowledge and extract from it what might interest those who need to make national and international decisions? Does it inform those who oversee what one knows about reality?

The natural sciences, with other investments and a different tradition than social sciences, can make holistic predictions about transformation risks, such as in climate or in rising sea levels or in public health or in forest maintenance practices. Many of these predictions prove to be correct and ignored by political power. Political power calls science not whole science. It calls science the part of science that is favorable to the current politics, in the natural sciences as well as in the social sciences (Weart, 2020).

Is it possible and desirable for scientists, including social scientists, in addition to serving the established powers, which is essential to maintain the financing of activities, to find a way to open space and time to think about science as a whole, as the founders of the social sciences—among the best known, Comte and Parsons—did propose? Is it possible to establish communication channels with people in order to avoid the political manipulation of scientific knowledge? If not, as is the case today, will it be possible to take advantage of the current civilization instability to reposition science with a view to a future with more capacity to train people capable of knowing better how to prevent the occurrence of emergency cases?

The Innovation

The acceleration of technological innovations, which have characterized the last decades, is now added to the acceleration of political and social innovations in which we are assisting. There is a change in the ecological, technological, and social environments.

There were historical times when it was believed that it would be the reason, the consensual will of the people, that would guide, forever, the action of institutions and organizations. In the 19th century, it was the consensus among entrepreneurs that led to the action of the states. In the early part of the 20th century, the promise of peace by favoring commercial interests was not fulfilled (Habermas, 1987): Europe lived the war in such a violent way that it was thought that it could never be repeated. Paradoxically, for some, it was the arms race that prevented a new world war: the mutual assured destruction (MAD) equilibrium.

After the Cold War, unrealistic, utopian, financial, speculative rationalist optimism became exuberant, with self-regulating globalization. Social movements have cooled that optimism. They resisted (DW.DE, 2019). Human rights NGOs, against corruption, against varied social discrimination, have followed women's movements against patriarchal violence and sexual abuse, including against children. Human rights were used as pretexts for war interventions, starting in Somalia, and pacifist movements ignored and treated as terrorists (The_Editors, n.d.).

In 2003, the lie in politics became a global strategy to justify the inexplicable war initiative. George W. Bush, the president who led the irrationality in politics, came to deny his support for Trump's 2020 elections, not recognizing what he started. This division of Trump's support base was one of the results of the popular reaction to the assassination of George Floyd by the police.

There are two ways to try to understand what is happening: a) to produce specialized professional reports and leaving to the professional politicians the responsibility of deciding what are the more rational options; b) to take advantage of each one citizen's responsibility, and engage in an open democratic discussion over how to deal with the pandemic. The end results are different: a) produces diktats; b) produces shared knowledge.

Each Historical Epoch Has the Theory It Deserves

There are now so many writers and books, blogs, and social networks, that it seems impossible to reach any agreement between so many heads with such different life experiences. It is therefore surprising that the result of so much cognitive activity is that there is no alternative speech (TINA). Finally, societies become protagonists of their own destinies: a cyclical social change may be taking place (Goodman, 2020). Instead of representing only the ruling classes, politicians find themselves in need of representing also the people who are agitated, anxious to find other ways of living different from those lives they have lived until then.

The TINA phenomenon has crystallized around the economy and finance. The most recent ecological movements, defending the health of populations facing the pandemic, and the worldwide anti-racists movements, are characterized by being holistic, instead of being professionals, specialized. An intervention by the Federal Reserve or by the European Central Bank, or an executive order or a government decree is not sufficient to reduce environmental risks, improve people's health, in nursing homes, and at work, to inhibit recurrent and unpunished abuses of power. It is necessary to solve the paradox of concerting institutional and popular actions in the same direction, cancelling and transforming the wants and desires of the elites and those people who are comfortable with those living in extremely uncomfortable situations, as those who mobilize on the streets (Lachmann, 2018).

Inter- and transdisciplinarity are insufficient for the social sciences to adapt to the new times that start now. The social sciences stopped their path from social philosophy till they become sciences as the hard sciences. They are comfortable somewhere between the humanities and the sciences. Social sciences did this by separating disciplines and subdisciplines from each other, in a watertight way. Specialized in becoming incommunicative to other knowledge, used for professional secrecy instead for cognitive purposes' dialogues, these social sciences are of little use to social movements that seek precisely the reverse of what today's social sciences offer (AAVV, 2020a): (a) the people need to better understand science, be it environmental, epidemiological, or emotional; (b) the people need to understand the general meaning of the paradoxical action that combines the environment, humanity, and social organization, instead of imagining a divine power of reason, against which nature would be bent.

Whom Should We Address?

When should we start considering history, to better understand what is happening? In the 2008 bankruptcy of the global financial system? In the response to the 2001 9/11 terrorist attacks? In 1989, at the Cold War victory euphoria by the capitulation of the opponent? In the victory of the Civil Rights movements, including the associated assassinations and political retaliation persecutions? In the decision to start the Marshall plan?

Any of these starts would be good if there was an audience with whom to talk. Unfortunately, the best-formed generation of all time has no memory of the major historical changes. Most people's greatest ambition is simply to live the day to day professionally—to give the required contribution to society and to receive the compensation, the social recognition counted in income that allows each one to live a safe and peaceful life. That is what European Social Survey (2016) shows, when in every state trust in the police comes first mostly in positive grounds and trust in political parties comes in negative grounds.

Today, most scholarly dialogues are mainly a discussion of what the essence of modern societies is. For economists, the most important is the financial crisis that still lingers. For strategists, it will be the clash of civilizations that will impose our destiny. For sociologists, it will be globalization that will shape our future. For race science experts, it will be abolitionism, segregation, the Jim Crow regime, the victory of formal recognition of civic rights, mass incarceration, which marks time. For politicians, it will be the creation of the Atlantic alliance and its current fragility that is relevant.

In the face of global warming, the pandemic, the intensification of popular reactions to the exhaustion of the western empire, the empire defeated by its own strategy of capitalist globalization, experts have little or nothing to say that it can be useful. What is at stake is precisely what the intensification of modernity at the global level prevents from seeing. It is no essence, moral or economic, that can change the world. It will be the whole world that will change the world (Atkins, 1999; Grue, 2019; Pope Francis, 2015; Schofield, 2018).

The necessary responses to the current situation are not technical and specialized, financial, epidemiological, or partisan. The answers one needs are holistic and paradoxical, capable of both appeasing environmental and pandemic risks and bringing peaceful freedom to everyday life, without sacrifice.

We don't need demagogy, like that of ex-President Sarkozy who responded to the 2008 crisis by saying that capitalism would be re-founded, anticipating the launch of *The Economist's* liberal manifesto, in celebration of its 175 years of publication (Scholz, 2018). History is not driven by conspirators, although there are professional conspirators. Many professional historians reproduce documented or not winners' narcissistic self-praise, reinforcing the feeling they were or are personally predestined.

The current French president, Macron, also known as little Napoleon, has faced the movement of the *Gilets Jaunes*, yellow jackets, permanently, since October 2018 (Balu, 2019). The isolated professional politician in his palace, with his specialized ministers and media, against those who understood that there will be no rest in their lives if they are away from access to the media and the respect of the powerful. In 2017, the presidential alternative to Macron, in France, was the National Front and Ms. Le Pen, the racist and extreme right nationalist. In 2020, the *Gilets Jaunes*' effect on local elections elevated ecologists to electoral victory, along with historic abstention. Paradoxically, hope manifests itself at the same time as hopelessness.

The 2008 crisis revealed, in Europe, the fragility of political alliances between socialists and Christian Democrats who have governed it since the end of World War II. European solidarity was dismantled by the German nationalist response to the subprime crisis, using Greece as a scapegoat (Varoufakis, 2017). More and more people no longer feel represented in political parties, although they will increasingly organize themselves to participate in politics.

The year 2019 showed humanity's inability to cope with its problems. The fires in the Amazon and Australia, the popular uprisings all over the world, Hong Kong, India, Chile, Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Spain, France, Czech Republic, Russia, Malta, Algeria, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Sudan, and other places, with the most varied pretexts, show generalized anxiety. It does not compare with other historical times. However, the media reduces events to disturbances of the public order, more or less spectacular and persistent, to then trivialize and lose interest in the depth problems that generate social unrest (Dores, 2013).

Hardly any of these movements have the intellectual and media power to express the existential meaning of innovative practices, and of helping to raise awareness and discuss what can be taken advantage of. Education and professional sciences separate practical knowledge from creative knowledge, knowledge from wisdom, democracy from freedom. Freedom of expression is thus a dead letter for protesters: foolish words fall on deaf ears (AAVV, 2020b). They are understood by societies as marginals to claim to be integrated by the states in the game that gives access to the resources of survival.

If they persist in organizing themselves and manifesting themselves, it is because, despite not knowing how to express constructively what they want to do with their lives, due to the lack of resources to do so, they deeply feel the impossibility of continuing to live as before. They do not claim the satisfaction of professional interests. They want to live differently. They do not want a more comfortable place in the distribution of income. They want something else that they cannot say what it is, now. The elites, through schools and sciences, are organized to prevent them from being able to think about it.

Racism

Since Seattle 1999, the summits of international organizations have been systematically denounced by protesters (Abedi, 2017); the World Economic Forum began to be denounced by the World Social Forum, starting in 2001 (AAVV, 2018); the media and politics devalues these political initiatives as meaningless turmoil. Opposition to the status quo gradually organized forms of horizontal and intersectional organization of global thought and action. In Paris 2005, and in London 2011, habitual and routine small riots reached spectacular proportions and spread to several other places. That same year, 2011, the Moroccan repression in Western Sahara, a country that continues under illegal and colonial occupation, made clear the existence of the organizational capacity of the national anti-colonial movement. In Tunisia, a replica of the same kind of organized presence on the public space was used to denounce police repression against street vendors, led by young people with school certificates without job opportunities, such as Bouazizi, who sacrificed himself

in public. These events triggered the series of revolts in several Arab countries. The Arab Spring began. It failed to transform the political situation in North Africa, or in the world. The Indignados, in Europe, and Occupy Wall Street, in the United States, followed their example, but with the same lack of practical holistic results.

The political distrust of protesters on potential leaders, due to the failure of the opposition of real socialism to imperialism, is the main organizational problem, that the use of new electronic means of communication momentarily and punctually overcome. Rare examples of some stability in forms of joint action in opposition to the states are the Zapatistas (since 1994) and the political-military organization of Kurdish women “Yekityia Star” (since 2005). They joined the first peoples who, throughout America, secularly maintain forms of conviviality under fierce genocidal attacks from modernizing states.

National states are not opposed to globalization. On the contrary, during the era of globalization, national states have continued to have their strong influence (Farazmand, 1999) and power, namely military, police, and private security (Mediacenter, 2020). The states have never lost their centrality in the games of power and, at the same time, they are increasingly sensitive to the interests of the largest multinationals in whom, ideologically, the states have been returning the responsibility of guiding the production, and distribution systems of services and goods, as in the 19th century.

In 2019, some of the aforementioned riots forced states to whom they addressed their claims to consider their existence. In other cases, states and the media pretend they don't know their presence and voices.

In 2020, riots are repeated in the United States, as in 2014, against the institutional racism that makes African Americans preferential targets for police killings. Perhaps not by chance, the American police were created in the same year that the ban on slavery occurred in that country. In 2020, however, the dynamics of the protests have been significantly stronger—all capital cities have protested, and many European cities have recognized and stand against the same problem. The consequences of the pandemic have a disproportionate impact on discriminated people and communities, both in terms of health and in terms of income. The United States presidential elections showed Trump explicit intention of maintaining and aggravating discriminatory policies. Biden, the front runner in this election, denies such intentions. Organizing protests against police systematic behavior, and preparing election day, are two of the strategies to continue unification of all social movements that are engaged in stopping the life risk of common people and in living in another way.

The attacks on the urban statuary apologizing for colonialism reveal the clarification of the movements that on both sides of the Atlantic elevate the concept of anti-racism to the historical level, rescuing it from its psychological limits. Racism is not a defect in the character of racist people: it is a historical characteristic of modern societies, which must be overcome politically. The anti-imperialist struggle that has been interrupted for half a century, since the national independence of the territories colonized by European countries, is now resuming. In times of globalization, when the seat of the empire is in conflictual transition between Washington D.C. and Beijing, when electronic control of people's lives is critical, as shown by the situation of Manning, Assange, and Snowden cases, when the system of Chinese social credit, under the guise of a pandemic, serves as a model of intervention by western states to control populations, protests against the continuation of slavery by other means are heard again.

Conclusion

The successive extreme events that overlap and steal our attention from one side to the other are not independent of each other. They all stem from the same environment that was created by humanity and that should not surprise us if we had a wise relationship with the sciences. Although

this is hard for us to believe, there is much in common between these very different events: the humanity that watches them is the same; and humanity is in transformation.

Schools and universities prepare professionals for working life by ensuring that they have the necessary qualifications to help solve the multitude of problems facing our modern world. With the pandemic, the social devaluation of the role of health professionals became clear. Union and professional struggles have been replaced by the altruistic sacrifices of these professionals, the ones most affected by the pandemic because they have concentrated on themselves the responsibility of taking care of the most seriously ill cases. The evidence of the sacrifice to which health professionals were and continue to be subject, in a pandemic and outside it, was worth several spontaneous public expressions of respect and thanks. Such manifestations of profound cultural and social significance were followed in words by the politicians, without any suitable actions. Political appreciation, in terms of disposable income, remains reserved for the most direct servants of the elites, for those who guarantee the maximum return on investment with profits, and unavailable to those who care for people and societies.

Can social sciences, schools, and sciences expect to see their situation valued, in terms of investments and more favorable working conditions, in the aftermath of the pandemic? If medicine, whose practical results are now even more evident to people, should not expect major improvements in their situation, what realistically will be the hope of the social sciences, schools, and sciences, internally divided and in mutual competitive contradiction, to benefit from better working conditions? Will, the social sciences, be allowed to resume the path that distances them from social philosophy, and will they eventually make them worthy of a place in the pantheon of sciences at the disposal of the construction of a preventive, caring society?

The evolution of the social sciences and sciences will, of course, depend on the educational and scientific policies that will be implemented soon. The sciences and policies that have been practiced since the 1930s have reduced the use of available knowledge to care for the health and well-being of the population. The disorientation in conducting action under the pandemic is not just a result of the practices sparked by political currents that hate science. It is knowledge itself that has been controlled to serve the secular project of Western elites to exploit the Earth, including their human resources. The prevention of global warming, as well as that of pandemics, or fires, or melting, is not organized because it does not immediately serve economic growth, the global increase in wealth.

A national social analysis of the consequences of the pandemic eludes two decisive aspects of social analysis: (a) the global character of the pandemic and the ongoing processes of social transformation; and (b) the pandemic as a global consequence of the social practices induced by a modern organization system.

The pandemic resulted from the transmission to globalized humans of a particularly harmless virus, quickly transported worldwide. If human life were organized differently, if human life was not subject to strong monocultural trends, in agriculture, entertainment, communication channels, science, sport, food, metropolitan organization, transport, especially by air, and so on, without the globalization typical culture, surely the impact of the pandemic would be different. Just as an earthquake, or a tsunami, has very different consequences depending on the way in which human life is built in each affected area, including access to good information, a pandemic will have very different effects depending on the type of society it encounters.

The international and imperial struggle to determine the ranking of countries about the consequences of the pandemic reveals the nationalism that even the most favorable countries to globalization cannot do without. It also reveals that it is nationalist policies, not science (internationalist by definition), that drives people's actions. The study of the relationships of the World Health Organization and the different states regarding the guarantees of return on investments made by

pharmaceutical companies will produce evidence soon. The trade war between the United States and China, the war to find out which of the superpowers will do better in the pandemic, is very visible. The alleged human unity against nature in the war against the virus is the continuation of national and imperialist competition. One can fear a continuation of an apocalyptic dimension sequence of disasters unless profound changes interrupt it.

The pandemic, or any other extreme event, will always be a reason for people's instinctual unity. The use of this unity to divide and rule, to continue exploitation and plunder, is an old imperial strategy. In modern times, powerful states put into practice.

People, frightened, expect states to behave as their defenders and protectors. They do not ask for accountability, either from the state, or from science, or from professionals, due to the lack of prediction of what was already known to happen.

We have lived for decades supporting states emerging from the Cold War to reorganize war scenarios that, at the same time, create more opportunities for exploration of the Earth—such as the extraction of raw materials—and the submission of people—especially through the construction of metropolises that concentrate people, economic activities, and pollution. The science that serves these purposes refused to follow holistic recommendations, such as those of Comte or Humboldt, considered outdated. It chose sterile ideological moralism, based on the opposition of Hobbes and Rousseau on what the human essence is. Instead of a global village, what the information society brought us was the choice between Panglossian optimism, of Platonic or insular inspiration, like Thomas More's, and dystopian, Dante or Orwellian pessimism, updated by Yuval Noah Harari.

There is, of course, no human essence. There is human nature, that is, an anchoring of humanity in the experience of life, on Earth, to whose destiny we are necessarily closely linked. The understanding of the world will also evolve and transform with the transformation of humanity. Everything indicates that it will not be humanity, this time, to lead humanity's destinies. The Anthropocene is the paradoxical era in which the plans for the exploration of the Earth reach, at the same time, the paroxysm and its limits. What humanity will probably do is to readjust to the new reality, and, in this process of transformation, one will be able to learn that to dominate human life ask to respect the life of others, that is, the environment that welcomed life in general. Will humanity be able to transform itself like this? What will be the role of science in this transformation? What institutions can create ideal conditions for science to be conducted wisely?

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

António Pedro de Andrade Dores  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5482-6196>

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