



The concept of “*aporophobia*” by Adela Cortina: reflections on the systemic aversion towards the poor and poverty¹

El concepto de *aporofobia* de Adela Cortina:
reflexiones sobre la aversión sistémica a los pobres y la pobreza

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Abstract: In 2017, the neologism “Aporophobia”, developed by the Spanish philosopher Adela Cortina, professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Valencia, was elected as the word of the year. Such a concept was developed by Cortina in order to highlight what she calls a systemic *rejection towards poverty and people without resources*. Our goal in this paper is to explain the concept of aporophobia and the argumentative premises used by the philosopher to validate it, as well as to use contemporary authors to reflect on the ways in which we can visualize and think such condition in our societies and contemporaneity.

Keywords:

Aporophobia, Adela Cortina, Poverty.

Resumen: En 2017, el neologismo “Aporofobia” desarrollado por la filósofa española Adela Cortina, profesora de Filosofía Moral en la Universidad de Valença fue elegida como la palabra del año. Este concepto fue desarrollado por Cortina para resaltar lo que ella llama un rechazo sistémico de la pobreza y las personas sin recursos. Nuestro objetivo en este trabajo es explicar el concepto de aporofobia, las premisas argumentativas de la filosofía para validarlo y realizar reflexiones sobre las formas contemporáneas sobre las formas en que podemos visualizar y pensar esta condición en nuestras sociedades y contemporaneidades.

Keywords

Aporofobia, Adela Cortina, Pobreza.

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0. Elementary Epigraphs for us to start with

Você deve notar que não tem mais tutu e dizer que não está preocupado
Você deve lutar pela xepa da feira e dizer que está recompensado
Você deve estampar sempre um ar de alegria e dizer: tudo tem melhorado
Você deve rezar pelo bem do patrão e esquecer que está desempregado
Você merece. Você merece. Tudo vai bem, tudo legal
Cerveja, samba e amanhã, seu Zé. Se acabarem teu carnaval?

[Gonzaguinha, *Comportamento Geral*, 1973]

Hoje, não tem boca pra se beijar. Não tem alma pra se lavar.
Não tem vida pra se viver, mas tem dinheiro pra se contar.

[Criolo, *Esquiva de Esgrima*, 2014]

- Ei, vocês de baixo, podem me ouvir?
- Não chame os de lá de baixo!
- Por que não?
- Por que elas estão abaixo. E os de cima não irão lhe responder
- Por quê?
- Porque estão acima, *óbvio*

[Goreng e Trimagasi, *O poço*, 2020]

Bem aventurados os ricos e milionários
pois eles receberão na terra as honras e glórias dos reinos dos céus

[P] Pereira, *Deuses de dois mundos*, 2015]

- Primeiro faça acreditar que o papel tem valor
- E depois?
- Deixe-os sem o papel
- Mas eles não vão simplesmente procurar outras formas de viver?
- Não se preocupe, quando começam a acreditar no papel esquecem o que eram antes dele.
- O que eles eram?
- Bichos Livres que sabiam viver sem papel, *óbvio*.

[Montrian e Micael, *Os sonhos de Deus*, 1023]

- Eles ficam se olhando... Uns para os outros... buscando formas de se usarem.
- Sim, lamentável... mas superaremos...
- Se não é o número de papeis que dá valor as coisas, o que realmente dá?
- Ora, a única coisa que importa caso não tenha nada depois daqui...
- Poder sobre os outros?
- Não seja estúpido, nós não somos simples animais.
- O que então?
- A única coisa que foi dada apenas a nós: a capacidade de criar e colecionar boas memórias

[Micael e Akahs, *Os sonhos de Deus*, 1502]

No momento em que paramos de lutar uns pelos outros,
neste momento, nós perdemos a nossa humanidade

[Jackson Curtis, *Adeus Atlântida*, 2012]

1. What would Jesus say?

In Candomblé³'s tradition, there is an interesting story about the divine assistance to the poor. It is said that a worker without possessions, who used to sell his workforce to the landowners, was recurrently unfairly dismissed. As with every dismissal the landowners “took possession of everything he built”, he then resorted to Ogum. After listening to the worker’s history, the Orisha of War and Iron commanded: *shred oil palm leaves and place them on your doors. Tonight, I will pass through the city. The houses where such leaf is not found shall not stand upright at sunrise* (PRANDI, 2001, p. 101, free translation).

Through the same path, Jesus, patron of the religion which fundamentally sustains the Western culture, did not perceive wealth and possessions as the rules to value individuals, so much as it was the opposite. In fact, he preached detachment from material possessions as the path to Salvation. In Luke 18:24-25, it is mentioned (as) one of Jesus’ most famous lessons: “[...] How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! 25 Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” To walk among the poor, the helpless and the marginalized by society; to have a good relationship with the poor; the detachment from material possessions and to value the virtue of fair treatment towards others above earthly gains – all these can be considered the main tests of moral adequacy towards the Faith which guides the tradition.

In the acclaimed screenplay *Auto da Compadecida*⁴ (2000), Ariano Suassuna creates a fictional legend: “Sometimes, Jesus disguises himself as a beggar to test the goodness of men”. We shall therefore ask ourselves the following question for the purposes of this essay: in contemporaneity, if using the above criteria, which evaluation would Jesus make of the modern societies? Following the thought of Adela Cortina (2020), the answer to that would neither be positive, nor worthy of praise. According to the Spanish philosopher, the collectivities, especially the nationalist ones, have a systemic aversion towards poor people. She named this phenomenon as “Aporophobia”, derived from the Greek word *aporos* (ἀπορος), used to refer to those who lack resources.

2. Aporophobia: when xenophobes, racists and bigots say "welcome"

When analyzing the discrepancy in the treatment given to immigrants, depending on their purpose in the country of immigration, Cortina finds poverty as the determining factor for such systematic rejection by nationals. Understanding xenophobia and its selectivity for financial abundance is the first step towards grounding the concept of

³ Afro-diasporic religion developed in Brazil through syncretic practices between Roman Catholicism and traditional African religions among the Yorubá/Bantu regions, specifically the Ketu, Mina-Jeje and Congo-Angola nations and their Orishas.

⁴ Distributed at the United States under the name “A Dog’s Will”.

aporophobia and its proven relation to modern society. What the philosopher, *professor emerita* of Moral and Political Philosophy at the University of Valencia first shows us is the existence of two types of foreigners, two types of outsiders, two types of "others": those with an economic function and the ones without.

Angela Merkel loses votes in her country, including among her own supporters, precisely for having tried to show a kind face and for persisting in her fundamental attitude of humanity; England refuses to receive immigrants and bets on Brexit to close its doors; the number of voters and affiliates of nationalist parties prodigiously rises in France, Austria, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands; and Donald Trump won the elections, among other reasons, for his promise to deport Mexican immigrants and to build a wall on the Mexican border. Apparently, some votes cast for the US president came from former immigrants, already settled in their new homeland (CORTINA, 2020, p. 18, free translation).

This scenario of detachment and rejection of individuals from other territories is not only limited to the Global North. In Brazil we can highlight separatist movements such as *São Paulo Livre (SPL)*, which fights for the independence of that federative unit; and the "O Sul é Meu País" movement, which looks forward to unifying the southern states into an independent nation. I highlight these two movements for the centrality of the economic issues in their speeches. In the chart of principles of the movement "O Sul é Meu País", for example, despite listing eight motives according to which the public must support the organization – political,⁵ tributary,⁶ economic,⁷ geographic,⁸ social⁹ and even moral motives¹⁰ – seven of them, not considering the historical motives, are justified based on wealth, the public treasury and the supposed financial expenditure that comes from the union of all 26 federative units. Following this logic, the *São Paulo Livre* Movement (undated), under the aim for "less taxes and better application of public

⁵ The website says about this motive: "Tax terrorism, which penalizes the production and consumption chain, throwing free initiatives into marginality and promoting unemployment" (O SUL É MEU PAÍS, 2018, free translation).

⁶ The website says about this motive: "The abominable tax drain in the South region, always subjected to the poor distribution of the tax amount, which privileges some regions, discriminating against others, as well as the poor distribution of our tax effort that only contemplates the strengthening of clientelist political oligarchies in the North and Northeast, to the detriment of the own populations of those regions" (O SUL É MEU PAÍS, 2018, free translation).

⁷ The website says about this motive: "The South Region has all the necessary requirements to become one of the most prosperous nations [in the strictly economic sense] on the planet." (O SUL É MEU PAÍS, 2018, free translation).

⁸ The website says about this motive: "[...] a rational exploitation of this geography will bring us autonomy in the energy field, in the tourist industry, in agriculture, in livestock and in many other fields of economic activities" (O SUL É MEU PAÍS, 2018, free translation).

⁹ The website says about this motive: "The galloping growth of poverty in the southern population and its accentuated social degradation, with the proliferation of inhuman conditions, are factors that cause indignation, mainly because there is no prospect of reversing this chaotic situation within the scenario under the control of the Brazilian state" (O SUL É MEU PAÍS, 2018, free translation).

¹⁰ The website says about this motive: "The lack of serious and speedy investigation in the face of the constant and growing allegations of swindling, speculation, criminal conspiracy and unjust enrichment using the resources of the treasury, along with the impunity that graces the highest levels of the Brazilian pseudo-federative system" (O SUL É MEU PAÍS, 2018, free translation).

resources", names its basic discomfort as the fact that they pay more taxes to the Federation than they get back from it, being obligated to share their resources with the rest of the nation – which, according to them, is less wealthy.

Also, in our time and place, Vilmar Debona, Professor of Philosophy at the Federal University of Santa Catarina, when analyzing the one who currently holds the presidency of this country during the sanitary, economic and social crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, highlights the aporophobic dilemma of the government when choosing between the economy and human lives, knowing exactly which lives really are in obvious danger. In his first television interview after the pandemic reached Brazil, he said: “Are some going to die from the virus? Yes, they will die! Will it happen? It will, sorry! But this hysteria hurts the economy”. Therefore, what we actually see is “the daily impoliteness of the president [who] espouses his contempt for all citizens – but especially for the dispossessed” (DEBONA, 2020, free translation).

According to Cortina (2020, p. 26), the main problem, the substance of exclusion, is not race, ethnicity and/or the foreigner. The problem is poverty: “there are many racists and xenophobes, but almost all of them are aporophobes”. What we can see is that the common factor among the rejected is not necessarily the origin and/or their physical phenotypes - intersections that should not be discarded from social analysis. Actually, it is their social class and their utility, usually in an economical sense, for the territory in which they are located. We must not forget that the countries that refuse the hungry refugees, who arrive by ships or even swimming to the European beaches, or by pilgrimage to their borders, are also the same countries that wash, dry and polish the floors of international airports, repeating every day on their speakers, with extreme sympathy and cordiality: “bem-vindos”, “bienvenue”, “welcome”, “benvenuto” and “bienvenido”. Much rarer, almost non-existent, are those who, without any interest, welcome others into their homes out of sheer kindness.

Orientalists capable of buying soccer teams or bringing what, sometime ago, were called “petrodollars” are not repugnant, nor are soccer players of any ethnicity or race, who charge million-dollar amounts, and are decisive when it comes to winning the games. The triumphant gypsies in the world of flamenco do not annoy, nor do we reject foreign investors who set up automobile factories in our country which are capable of generating employment, leisure centers that give permission to smoke in their facilities, and many other privileges. And all this long etcetera of foreign contributions that increase GDP. (CORTINA, 2020, p. 25, free translation)¹¹.

The poverty to which Cortina refers should not be understood only as a financial need. Such a need becomes more evident and central in the discussion because we are located in a capitalist economic system in which exchanges, possessions and monetary valuations play a determining role in possibilities and impossibilities to act freely,

¹¹ Han (2015, p. 03), when making a brief note about Esposito's theory on the predictability of newspaper headlines, provides us with a sagacious comment that follows Cortina's view on this issue: “Today, even the so-called immigrant is not an immunological *Other*, not a foreigner in the strong sense, who poses a real danger or of whom one is afraid. Immigrants and refugees are more likely to be perceived as burdens than as threats”.

autonomously and safely. Sartre, for example, a philosopher who accepted man's condemnation to existential freedom, in his writing “Avoir faim, c'est déjà vouloir être libre”¹², which follows his Marxist thought, assumes the limits and impossibilities of those who lack resources in making themselves free in capitalist societies, since “freedom as it exists in bourgeois democracies is a sham, and those who enjoy the abstract rights they provide us do so because they already have concrete rights; that is, they have economic power.” (SARTRE, 2020, p. 221, free translation).¹³

We must, therefore, accept that poverty “is the lack of the necessary means to survive, but not only that, [...], poverty is the lack of freedom, the impossibility of carrying out the plans of life that a person has reasons to value” (CORTINA, 2020, p. 49, free translation). Cortina's concept should be mainly seen as our attacks on “resourceless” communities, systematically increasing exclusion. It is the impossibility to contribute to the system of exchange of gains in social relations that defines the victims of aporophobia: those who are considered expendable since they usually do not have resources. In short, they are unwanted due to the belief that: “if they have nothing to offer us, they can only be here to take”. In other words, there is the impossibility of understanding the other as a subject, as those who “usually lack resources [...] cannot offer anything or seem unable to do so” (CORTINA, 2020, p. 26, free translation). Cortina is very assertive in telling us that in any group systematically oppressed

[...] social poverty is what will turn them into a focus of contempt, because the discourse against any skin color, any race, any ethnicity, any religion or any ideology is not applauded in societies – instead, it is the discourses against the skin color, the race, the ethnicity or the ideology of those who are in situation of vulnerability. (CORTINA, 2020, p. 69, free translation).

3. For us, a concept: what is poverty?

Many of the stories of the future involve something like 'Big Brother,' but I think that's a twentieth-century view of tyranny. The tyranny happening now is taking new disguises – the tyranny of the twenty-first century is called 'democracy. (CUARÓN *apud* ZIZEK, 2008, p. 28)¹⁴.

We admire geniuses, we love them, but they discourage us. They are great concentrations of intellect and emotion, we feel that they have soaked up all the available power, monopolizing it and leaving none for us. We feel that if we cannot be as they, we can be nothing. Beside them we are so plain, so hopelessly threadbare. How they glitter, and with what an imperious way they seem

¹²“To feel hunger is already wanting to be free”.

¹³ It is common to think that Sartrean thought is only limited to existential and ontological issues, probably because these are evidenced in his most popular manifesto, *Existentialism Is a humanism*, and in his main work, *Being and Nothingness*. An example of this is the publication by Santos and Sampaio (2020, p. 361), who, by claiming freedom in Sartre as something “completely [different] from the freedom we find in Angela Davis”, accuse the philosopher of thinking of such a phenomenon outside the sphere of *social praxis*. Despite this, we can confirm that, after his phenomenological studies, Sartre added the importance of the discussion of social freedom/practice to his philosophy, mainly for his conception of intellectual engagement, becoming one of the main 20th century critics to bourgeois ideology. This perception is visible in publications in which the ideas formally structured in *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960) circulate.

¹⁴ ZIZEK, Slavoj. *Violence*. New York: Picador, 2008.

to deal with circumstances, even when they are wrong. Lacking their patents of nobility, we might as well quit. This is what democracy has done to us, alas – told us that genius is available to anyone, that the grace of ultimate prestige may be had by anyone, that we may all be princes and potentates, or saints and visionaries and holy martyrs of the heart and mind. And then when it turns out that we are no such thing, it permits us to think that we aren't much of anything at all (TRILLING, 1952).

Since Deleuze, we have a more focused understanding of the job of the philosopher as a professional worker of concepts. This leads us to the important question: what is the concept of poverty? Following Tortosa (2002) and Sachs (2009), Adela shows us how difficult it is to establish a well-defined material concept of poverty. In the same way that Frutuoso and Viana (2021) tell us that “whoever invented hunger are those who eat”, the same logic follows for poverty: perhaps those who invented it are those who don't find themselves in it, which creates an ideal of life that all individuals kill themselves in order to achieve it. Goreng has already told us, at the opening of *The Platform* (2020), filmed by the Hispanic director Galder Gaztelu-Urrutia: “there are three types of people, those above, those below and those who fall”, because the conditions of possibility to social ascension (climbing) are clearly as easy to achieve as the miracle of predicting rain. Anyone looking at history should be able to contemplate the evolution of our comforts over time and realize that they do not take us to any place of social plenitude. Any class C proletarian has, with the exception of huge castles and the flattery of subjects, living conditions comparable to those of the European nobility and bourgeoisie of the fifteenth century. Piped water? An absurd luxury. Water treatment? A priceless wealth; a renowned market, where we have at our disposal a variety of more than 10 kinds of food? Congratulations, we are better than most representatives of our species who have lived until today.

This leads us to realize that our reality and our conceptions of poverty and wealth are never defined by *a priori* formulas or by real determinations of what really matters: life. Everything we understand as poverty is never a relation of the subject to itself. That is, it is not an empirically real concept, it is not an object from which we can extract categories, but a distance between the dominant (rich) and the dominated (poor). As Zizek (2014, p. 37) reminds us: “the division between First and Third World [seems to be much more related to the] lines of opposition between a long and satisfying life, filled with material and cultural abundance and the dedication of life to a transcendent cause” than to the possibility of being satisfactorily sustained in their community. In this sense, if we were to observe a tribe in the forest that spends its days hunting in order to maintain themselves, without the dozens of psychic problems caused by Western capitalism, we would still probably call it poor, since the badge that shows affiliation to a large institution, the car of the year and a million-dollar apartment are all worthier than inner peace. In other words, poverty is a comparative concept, and values depend only on how free the individual is to act in capital's game.

Until the development of bourgeois societies, wealth was in the fortunate being born with the nobility's divine blood – and before such human delirium existed, poverty

was found in the inability and/or lack of skills to achieve, generally through force, the truly important elements for the finite human existence: a shelter, safety, food, a partner to pass the genes on... However, there is an element, a concept that Cortina points us out as an a priori criterion, independent to experience, to understand what the *áporoi* (*ἄποροι*) are in any place of time and space: they are those whose possibilities of carrying out activities available in their collectivity are restricted by certain metaphysical-social barriers.

The “monetary metrics” to assess degrees of poverty has received much criticism. In principle, basic needs cannot be satisfied with the same goods in different contexts, because it is not the same thing to survive in the North Pole and in a tropical country, nor does money have the same value in developed societies and in those where prevails the informal economy. Taking contexts into consideration is essential for defining any kind of poverty – hence the fact that we speak of a “clinical economy” and a “hermeneutic economy”. On the other hand, monetary metrics ends up resorting to commodities necessary to satisfy basic needs, reaching a kind of commodity fetishism, when the important thing is to see if poverty is being alleviated by commodities. Thirdly, these metrics do not take into account interpersonal comparisons, it just serves the big numbers.

[...] In her turn, Amartya Sen proposed an exactly precise characterization of poverty: poverty is, after all, lack of freedom.

Evidently, extreme poverty consists in the lack of necessary means for survival, and in these extreme cases “first is first”. Following the established tradition of the Theory of Needs, the first step is to meet the basic needs, it is to free oneself from needing [...] a broader concept of poverty which supposes a lack of freedom, the impossibility of carrying out life’s projects that one has reasons to value, it is the lack of the basic skills necessary to take charge of oneself’ life, which has undesirable consequences for those who suffer from it, such as not being able to be an agent of their own life, but just a patient subject in the natural or social lottery, at the mercy of their own luck, unable to pursue happiness in the way they would like to choose.

There is no doubt that poverty introduces negative discrimination among people in capacities as basic as organizing their own lives and seeking happiness, because only a part of humankind has the means to do so. (CORTINA, 2020, p. 150-152, free translation).

In our society, as it is the piece of paper called *money* which allows us access to places, goods and experiences of social value, those who lack such an element already become subservient to others, since the other members of society will not want to relate themselves to whom has nothing to offer. Unfortunately, the Kantian dream of seeing the other as an *end in itself* is not possible in bourgeois societies; if so, even with all the time available that certain people have, they would not spend it in front of electronic device screens; instead, they would look for ways to help those in need. Nevertheless, as most individuals also have nothing, we can expect little from this situation.

4. A remark about biology

What is the brain? Among the different possibilities of answer, we can understand it as “a machine that responds mechanically to a stimulus/environment”. Where then could we find the supposed natural origin of an aversion to the *aporoi*? Although the brain

is taken often as an “active autonomous system in constant social interaction”, we must understand, as Cortina (2020, p. 80, free translation) suggests, that the brain does not operate in moral neutrality with regard to its judgments, as it inevitably carries out evaluations “to allow the survival” of the body in which it inhabits.

Apparently, *the evolution by natural selection gave origin to this evaluative character of the brain, since without the ability to evaluate stimuli, we would be unable of learning and remembering.* We learn and remember because the stimuli are presented to us in terms of negative and positive values, which we take into consideration when deciding. This is why values play a central role in decision-making and do so on at least two levels: as a basic biological structure or as a feature of our advanced moral reasoning. In both cases, values are ingrained in our brain, so it is not odd that this organ has been described as a *narrative organ*, sponsor of its own neural accounts. Curiously, *the brain is more of a story processor than a logical processor.* For this reason, stories attract our attention much more than reasoning. It is inadequate the idea that the brain is a machine that works as a mechanism incapable of evaluating. (CORTINA, 2020, p. 81, our italics, free translation).

Sooner in this year, at one of the *Gramática Política* meetings, a study group coordinated by Professor Márcio Rodrigues Pereira, when I commented on the importance of this concept regarding current discussions, one of our debate colleagues pointed out that we need to pay attention to how this concept will be accepted among scholars, since Professor Cortina makes use of biological arguments. According to this colleague, using arguments derived from biology can lead us to certain *determinisms*. Considering that I saw and I see a vast agreement to such an argument, I would like to offer some remarks on that. It is important to remember that we, human beings, the apex of cognitive evolution and the ones with greater possibilities of spiritual and cultural experiences, are, underneath it all, just animals. An animal that, thanks to the idleness provided by the current social system, had available the possibility for thinking about things beyond our survival on occasion.

Engels (2004), in the first chapters of *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (a book from 1884), in the light of the researches of the scientist and historian of primitive societies Lewis Henry Morgan, uses the study of the stages of the species, known as savagery, barbarism and civilization stages, to affirm that all domain and evolution of the technique followed, mainly, the most basic needs of the biological bodies who developed them: food, protection and the survival of their own. According to Harari (2015, 415) in his *best seller Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, our victory over the other *Homo* species that emerged in the world is mainly the result of “a revolution in *Sapiens*’ cognitive abilities”, and as informed by Engels (2004, p. 39), in lower savagery stage, that is, at the moment of lower cultural skills, “the formation of articulate speech was the main achievement [...]”.

The most commonly believed theory argues that accidental genetic mutations changed the inner wiring of the brains of *Sapiens*, enabling them to think in unprecedented ways and to communicate using an altogether new type of language. We might call it the Tree of Knowledge mutation. Why did it occur in *Sapiens* DNA rather than in that of Neanderthals? It was a matter of pure chance, as far as we can tell. (HARARI, 2015, location 420).

In other words, all beauty of our culture is just the result of a bunch of *animals* wanting to survive and to eradicate the most immediate hardships, commonly by eradicating other animals that threaten and violently dominate those they can exploit; and, if I may say so, our scene hasn't changed much since then. In fact, it is truly comical to observe that almost everything that has been called as *the progress of society* in the history of technologies until this day commonly refers only to a more sophisticated way of looking at a problem. To put it another way, we find new words, new angles and new ways (increasingly more complex) to analyze the ailments of the species, but, like children who try to play adults, we never manage to get over with them.

In our days, considered by many to be the apex of *Homo* primates, *sapiens* has not yet managed to deal with the real problems of humankind, which are: hunger, protection and survival of its own. Unless, of course, we come to understand by *humankind* strictly the group of those who have *money* (a pile of carbon cells of strictly symbolic value, which we cannot eat or, empirically, use for much more than making a common sheet of paper), the possession of which gives its user powers similar to those of incarnated gods. An "instrument of symbolic exchange and a mass hysteria" – this is the meaning given to money. It is an illness for which, unfortunately, there is no longer any possibility of cure; as Deleuze and Guattari (2004, p. 38) put so well, "there is only desire and the social, nothing else". Such a phrase is very enlightening albeit shortsighted: when using the additive conjunction "and" they make us suppose that one thing (desire) is different from another (social), when, in fact, *the social as we know is just an entanglement of desires*. And, as we well know: desires are not something that can be easily "turned back".

After we have destroyed too many rivers in the name of asphalt; burned down several forests in the name of monoculture; exterminated countless species in the name of our unscrupulous lack of compassion; and our completely unjustifiable pride, all we really have left is a piece of paper to force individuals (who do not have it) to strive for it, and become slaves to those who have it. In fact, it is expected that God does not exist, for if He glimpsed the human frailty that so many people commit in His Name, He would abandon all His creation.

I brought all these arguments so that we don't mischaracterize the biological arguments made by the Cortina, which were based on neurology and social psychology studies, as if poverty was not related to the lack of money at some point in our capitalist system, and as if such a resource was not intimately linked to the *body's basic survival*. Having understood that money (or better said, *capital*), whether monetary or symbolic,¹⁵

¹⁵ For a better understanding of what *symbolic capital* is, it is advisable to follow the work of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. In capitalism, it is capital that moves the system and, as Bourdieu (2010) reminds us, capitalism is not limited to an understanding of material exchanges, but also includes symbolic exchanges. However, there are few times (as rare as four-leaf clovers) when we come across possibilities of social consecration disconnected from the agents of financial capital that allow their proper scenarios. Leonídio (2017, p. 29) provides us with a good synthesis of what capital is in Bourdieu: it is a "set of resources that an agent can make available in the search for trophies inserted in the game space" (free

is the means by which the *animals*, in this entanglement of desires we call *social field*, can exercise in practice the metaphysical element of freedom in our system, it is also necessary to understand that in the phenomenal manifestations of this freedom, we find – before all the luxuries of the fortunate – daily survival through the maintenance of the most basic goods of human survival. No minimally rational person will agree to spend their life traveling in Emirates Airlines' executive class as a reward for living in a permanent fasting.

5. Last Considerations: an aporia – education or revolution?

Apophobia is a systemic condition, that is, it is not a misfortune or an isolated event. It's not a mistake we're not aware of it. To hate *poverty representations* is a part of the society in which we are inserted. Cortina, like the good neo-Kantian that she is, and consequently a believer in the possibility of an Enlightened humankind, believes that education aimed at the ethical teaching of a new generation is our best chance to correct this system. That is, through teaching “clear messages that our societies reject aporophobic behaviors and bet on actions that empower the poor” (CORTINA, 2020, p. 113, free translation), we will find a solution to this problem. Apparently,

In order to produce this shift towards egalitarian ideals, it is necessary to have education in the family, school, media and in public life as a whole. But it is also necessary to build the kinds of institutions and organizations that are moving towards this direction, because not only will they be fair, which is what corresponds to them, but they will help build people with fair characters. Institutions and organizations perform more or less correct tasks, but at the same time they educate with their mere existence and action, they influence the shaping of the brain and the personal and social character (CORTINA, 2020, p. 148, free translation).

I particularly cannot say whether such an alternative, despite its good intentions, is truly practical, since as we can see in the history of the wars between the dominant and the dominated, a *spontaneous solidarity* has never been developed in the narrative of humanity; that is, all the conditions for the advancement and the progress of life quality and social power of the lower strata were only conquered by the strength and pressure of these same strata. Since the nobility was not happy to give space to the bourgeois, the bourgeois were not happy to give rights to the workers; similarly, slaveholders did not celebrate the abolition of slavery and, as far as I remember, it was not men who came together to expand women's rights. So why the hell should we expect that, in capitalism, the dominant would provide space for the dominated? Perhaps we should give more credit to the Haitians and the French, modern nationalities which have undoubtedly better understood what is the struggle for self-freedom. Freire (1987, p. 47) has already told us that “Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift. It must be pursued constantly and responsibly. [...] No one has the freedom to be free: on the contrary, they fight for it

translation). That is, it is about a synonym for power, which is not limited to economic assets, but it also encompasses sociocultural elements that reproduce and promote social mobility in a stratified society.

precisely because they don't have it”. After all, as Timothy Cavendish also reminds us in *Cloud Atlas* (2012): “Freedom, the fatuous jingle of our civilization. But only those of us deprived of it have an inkling of what it really is”.

The ingenuity of thinkers like Cortina, a clear result of the geographic and social location in which they find themselves, is the belief that metaphysical ideas can solve extremely physical problems. The real problem concerning aporophobia is not just the aversion of one group towards another nor are the ills caused by the aporophobes' monopoly on the resources. Poverty is a problem that cannot wait until we educate the next generation; and as we well know each other, educating people is the last thing we know how to do. Such positioning may resemble what Žizek (2008, pp. 18-19) calls by *liberal communism*: “liberal communists really love humanitarian crises, which bring out the best in them!”. And where can we find the materialization of such a concept? In all those who try to superlative measures of solidarity that make use of the same system that causes the problem they want to solve. “The same philanthropists who give millions for AIDS or education in tolerance have ruined the lives of thousands through financial speculation and thus created the conditions for the rise of the very intolerance that is being fought.” (ŽIZEK, 2008, p. 37).

The point is: contemporary minority phobias have specific and centralized time, discourse and power. The value of Cortina's concept is its universality, as it points to the ethical disgrace of the pillar of society: money, from its socio-historical amplitude to the biological predispositions pointed out by neuroscience, according to which “the brain is naturally egocentric [and] the fear of the foreigner is completely natural”¹⁶ (CORTINA, 2020, p. 84-85, free translation). It would be a clear disadvantage to the fight and organizations that manifest themselves against aporophobia if we generalized all forms of systemic oppression under that concept – without a doubt, as Cortina herself expresses: for a better understanding of specific phenomena, it is necessary to have specific names and specific observations. Despite this, the concept of aporophobia is perhaps one of the most important ones to start the investigation, precisely because it fits into all oppressions directed at minority groups – the groups of those without resources, the *aporai*.¹⁷

¹⁶ By “foreigner” we can refer to the *Other*, specifically the one we do not consider part of our group, the one who can harm us – and let's face it, the greatest fear of all human beings nowadays is finding their bank account empty.

¹⁷ This would be the case of aporophobia, of the aversion or the rejection towards the poor, because it seems that poverty is unpleasant, that the poor have problems and that they somehow contaminate. I'm not just referring to economic poverty, but to those who are helpless and without support in a bad situation, who are the object of criticism, threats, contempt or provocations because they lack power, whether in politics, in companies, at university, at school, in the factory or anywhere else, hence the Matthew Effect works in all of them: “For to every one who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away.” (Matthew 25:29, RSV). In each case, the poor are the powerless at this time and in this place. It is against them that aversion and rejection speeches, including hateful ones, are directed, allowing those who are well situated to stay where they are, always followed by their lackeys. (CORTINA, 2020, p. 64)

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