Sociological Teaching

How does Sociology teaching happen on the short video app TikTok? An analysis of the editions

Abstract

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Email: yana.martinez@furg.br Sociology teaching is not only carried out in formal classrooms, it also takes place in many other spaces. In this article, we intend to explore one of the places of informal teaching, which is the social network TikTok. As a way to delimit the phenomenon, we use the concept of liquidity formulated by Zigmund Bauman, which is characterized, in simple terms, as impermanence in relationships. Videos whose theme was Sociology in basic education were collected and these were analysed extensively (in their profile) and intensively (in their editing components). The results showed that it is possible to observe that the teaching of Sociology is punctual and that it is focused on the ENEM. The profile of the videos is of few editing resources in comparison to other videos on the platform. In this way, the teacher, with his performance on the platform, creates a "broth" in the Baumanian liquidity by referring to the content of longer duration in time (such as video classes or books).

Keywords: teaching sociology in Basic Education; TikTok; short video apps;

Introduction

Social networks and applications have helped create interaction within the immense database that is the Internet. The possibilities for communication between individuals are potentially infinite, and one of them is education. Among those interacting are teachers and students. The focus of this study is how the contents of the TikTok application bring the teaching of Sociology.

Why is it important to study this app? Well, other social networks or virtual learning environments allow access to Sociology classes that last many hours. In contrast, TikTok allocates videos of up to 3 minutes, which, in theory, is not enough time for a didactic elaboration. Even so, teachers produce videos for the platform. Therefore, the question arises: how does this teaching work in this space? Our focus was on Sociology classes, which deal directly with issues that affect the daily lives of students through their role as users. It is interesting for Sociology to be present in all spaces, including TikTok. Sociology in high school is taught mainly to young people. Therefore, it is interesting to analyse this space where young people are. The object becomes relevant.

We emphasize that the analysis was based on the video edits, and not on the raw material:

Reflection on video production and its forms of expression, relating to technological and everyday knowledge, offers subjects opportunities to overcome the challenges imposed by the technological world, acquiring knowledge about the different ways of editing educational videos (Rocha, 2018, p.6).

Thus, the editing we have access to occurs on a film, which is the raw material recorded by the teacher. The teacher stands in front of the camera and performs. Editing, then, will be the activity of modifying the images and sounds initially generated, cutting some segments of the video or adding visual effects not present in the original media.

The research problem, therefore, was: how is the teaching of Sociology at the secondary level reinterpreted by teachers for the social network TikTok? To this end, we studied videos searched for by the platform, selected according to the theoretical and methodological references presented below.

Theoretical framework: teaching Sociology, short video application and liquidity

This research is an empirical investigation into the teaching of Sociology brought to a short video application. However, to prevent the research from becoming too descriptive, we brought the concept of liquidity to help frame the phenomena and contribute to broader sociological theory. The first concept is that of

We seek to demonstrate that what makes school Sociology peculiar and specific is the historical-relational-dialectical perspective (or cognitive perspective) of social structures that it can awaken in students, and not just the denaturalization and estrangement of social phenomena. We will call this perspective "figurational perception of social reality". It is not that other disciplines in the Humanities do not seek to understand the relationships between social phenomena and their history, but this is one of the greatest concerns and contributions of Social Sciences today (Bodart, 2021, p. 149).

In this way, teaching outside the school environment becomes, in addition to reinforcement, a possibility of accessing the subject itself, and educational platforms and social networks are privileged *places for the first contact*.

Another important concept is that of a short video application, which will allow us to frame the phenomenon:

In these applications, the videos are made by the users themselves and are usually funny or quite entertaining. The videos last only a few seconds and can be edited easily. It is possible to add various effects, such as filters, audio, subtitles and many other features (Santana, 2021, n/p).

As we can see, users are the producers of the videos, and they are short in length – which makes editing easier, and can incorporate the aforementioned effects, an essential element for our investigation. Thus, a short video is heavily edited, as it only takes a few seconds to become attractive to the user. On the other hand, there are many videos available on the platform that are discontinued. This leads to the sociological concept of liquidity.

Liquidity is a category studied by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (1925-2017), who discusses the fragility of human bonds, whatever they may be, including relationships between friends, parents and children, work relationships, social networks, and romantic relationships. Thus, "love" or "passion" no longer make sense, they have become empty in a society that lives at high speed, with no time to reflect on oneself or one's relationship with others. However, we would like to use a summary of the idea, through commentators. We do so to take a more panoramic and operational look at the concept, since the commentator, by being focused on explaining the argument, can give up the evidence that supports it: These are reasons to consider 'fluidity ' or ' liquidity ' as fitting metaphors when we wish to grasp the nature of the present, in many ways novel, phase in the history of modernity (Bauman, 2006, p.2). The metaphor of liquidity

clarifies how human relations, economy and politics are configured in Liquid Modernity. The figure of speech is used to illustrate the intensification of values such as individualism, transience, anguish, instantaneity, ambivalence and, especially, consumerism, which has significant implications for effective relationships. Human bonds are characterized by vulnerability and ephemerality in a world constantly driven by the new and strongly influenced by consumerism. Long-lasting and deep bonds end up losing their meaning.

In this way, ephemerality is the search for the new. In liquid modernity, everything that is established can be dismantled, discredited, or replaced. Persistence in relationships would not, therefore, compensate for the advantages of opting for other relationships, which become frugal in comparison with the first (solid) modernity and tradition. Of course, YouTube, with its infinite collection of videos, could be considered more liquid concerning television (where one chooses the channel and not the program), which would be less liquid than the printed newspaper (which remains at home even after use), which is less liquid in relation to the printed book (which requires more time to read), and so on. Thus, the research will help to reflect on the liquidity of TikTok based on the videos analysed.

Methodology

This is a qualitative study that deals in depth with the teachers' videos. We carried out an analysis that was, to a certain extent, iconographic and textual, in an attempt to extract broader meanings from the material posted by the teachers.

First, we conduct an extensive analysis of the collected videos, focusing on four variables to determine trends (such as the academic background of *TikTokers*) and to help understand the collected videos as a product of social groups. The posts will be intensively analysed for their assessment based on evidence from the editing process.

First, we searched for the terms "Sociology" and "Sociology ENEM" within the TikTok environment, intending to delimit the phenomenon within the platform itself. From this, we selected a list of videos that would make up the sample analysed. We chose Brazilian TikTokers because of our prior knowledge of the country's legislation; we also excluded posts that referred to the teaching of Sociology at the higher education level. At another point, we accessed the teachers' profiles to ensure that the post was not an isolated phenomenon that could be biasing our data collection system. After all these procedures, we performed the final collection, which will be presented below. The intensive analysis was performed using the components in Table 1:

Evidence of editing	Descriptor	
$Subtitles^1$	These are the words that are contained in the channel	
	description and also in each video.	
Images	How are images produced with the filming? Are external images	
	inserted into it?	
Texts	In what ways are texts articulated with other audiovisual	
	elements?	
Framing	From what angle is the camera filming the teacher positioned?	

Table 1: evidence and descriptors.

Source: own authorship.

When we refer to editing as an analytical concept, the focus is not on the raw material filmed by the content producers, since we did not have access to it. The idea of editing is to find the composition of effects and the communication through audiovisual media. The aim is to attract viewers, who have many options. It is therefore necessary to keep in mind that this is a video competing in a liquid environment. Therefore, strategies are necessary to obtain engagement.

We analyse the images and sounds (focusing on the edits) following these parameters and then proceed to the inferences, allocated in the global considerations. However, before accessing the produced content, we need to know the micro-video application.

Contextualizing TikTok: what is the secret to its success?

Basically, TikTok offers a myriad of videos organized by *playlists* and the user first watches a sample of each video to choose whether to watch it in full or not. It is

¹ Adding captions to videos is crucial for several reasons. First, they ensure accessibility by allowing people with hearing impairments to consume the content. Second, they promote inclusivity by making the material understandable to people of different nationalities. Additionally, captions help to maintain viewers' engagement by ensuring that they do not miss important information and by reinforcing comprehension and retention of the material. They also increase the reach of the content by making it stand out in internet search engines and improve the user experience by conveying the impression of a well-crafted production. Finally, captions allow the video to be viewed in any environment without disturbing others and can contribute to business growth by making the content accessible to a global audience.

worth noting that TikTok was not the first micro-video app; at least there was Wine before it, which went bankrupt in 2017. TikTok was successful in Brazil during the pandemic, and its success would need to be investigated more carefully. But the app was developed :

Among some of the emerging social networks, we find TikTok, launched in 2016 for the Chinese market under the name *Douyin* and in 2017 for the international market as TikTok. This application allows you to create short videos of 15 to 60 seconds, with easy and quick editing, and a multitude of effects and sounds. However, the essential peculiarity of this platform is the use of AL technology (Artificial intelligence, by its acronym in English) by which its algorithm ²quickly and efficiently filters the preferences of users, according to their interactions (Vintimilla-León; Torres-Toukoumidis, 2021, p.17)

Therefore, we can see that the shorter duration of videos makes it easier for non-expert users to edit them. Finally, video consumption is facilitated by artificial intelligence ³, which allows users to more easily access the videos they prefer. These elements resulted in the success of the application :

TikTok is one of the most popular applications in the world: hundreds of millions of users, many of them children and teenagers, use it to upload, watch and browse lip-sync videos and memes. TikTok, developed by ByteDance, a Chinese company, allows users to upload up to 60-second lip-synched videos with a variety of creative and interactive features. It is the fastest-growing app and is ranked the seventh most downloaded app of the past decade. However, this app has a darker side. TikTok users are sharing calls for violence against people of colour and Jews, as well as creating and sharing neo-Nazi propaganda. Technically, according to the company's Terms of Service, TikTok does not allow people under 13 years of age to use its platform, but many of its users in videos are clearly younger (Weimann; Masri, 2020, p.1).

The information presented in the previous paragraph shows a great deal of media dispersion: there are many *downloads* and many accesses, so much so that there is even criminal advertising – which surely circulates because of the media's reach. The time to enjoy a video is very short, which leads users to search for others and forces content creators to look for resources to capture users' attention.

² A social media algorithm is a set of rules and calculations used to determine what content is displayed to users, based on their behavior, preferences and interactions.

³ Artificial intelligence is the ability of computer systems to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, and problem-solving.

Extensive analysis of the profile of selected videos

In this section, we will evaluate the profile of the videos, trying to trace some trends within the occurrences. They are the first results that a user finds when searching for the subject on TikTok. We will organize the data by variables, but we will not perform correlation tests or graphical analysis of the results due to the low number of occurrences, in order to avoid statistical illusion. The survey was a summary, the data from which will be evaluated below.

First, we will analyse table 2:

Teacher's name	Video URL Analyzed	Focus	Do you have another social network?	Training
Gabriela Goncalves	https://www.tiktok.com/@gga brielagoncalves/video/701789 9543836560645?lang=pt-BR	Organization	Instagram ⁴	Bachelor's Degree in Social Communic ation and Journalism
Renato Palmeira	https://www.tiktok.com/@ren ato_palmeira/video/6915473 442930167046?lang=pt-BR	Mentor	Instagram ⁵	Medicine
Gabriel Corttezi	https://www.tiktok.com/@gab rielcorttezi/video/700978177 4591053062?lang=pt-BR	Researcher	Instagram	Bachelor's Degree in Social Sciences
Simplify (Debora Andrade)	https://www.tiktok.com/@des complica/video/69959401184 77556997?lang=pt-BR	Preparatory Course	Instagram ⁶	Professor of some undetermi ned degree
Erickson Americo	https://www.tiktok.com/@eric ksonaamerico/video/6886878 322282728705?is_copy_url=1 &is_from_webapp=v1⟨= pt-BR	Professor Writing	Youtube ⁷	Nursing student ⁸
Charles Douglas	https://www.tiktok.com/@prof. charlesdouglas/video/6899144	History/Phil osophy	Urlebard ⁹	Not found

Table 2: Teacher, URL, and Teacher Focus

 $^{{}^4\,}https://www.instagram.com/ggabrielagoncalvesf/$

 $^{^5\,}https://www.instagram.com/renato_palmeira/$

⁶https://www.instagram.com/prof_debyandrade/

 $^{^7}https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCLcT0dSwsSlEkJ5UX-ag8Q$

⁸ http://lattes.cnpq.br/5118076079319711

⁹ https://urlebird.com/user/prof.charlesdouglas/

	323980446978?is_copy_url=1 &is_from_webapp=v1&q=Soci ologia&t=1644492454585	Teacher		
Lovely	https://www.tiktok.com/@isa belas.studies/video/69019752 43984817409	Study mentor	Instagram ¹⁰	Not found
Leticia Almeida	https://www.tiktok.com/@sou a.le/video/697964577289576 7813	Social Science Student	Not found	Not found
Bat Marks	https://www.tiktok.com/@mo rcego_marcos_/video/702926 9139080367365	Social Science Student	Instagram ¹¹	Undergrad uate in Social Sciences

Source: own authorship.

In a more general trend, we can see that the teaching of Sociology is no longer linked to teachers trained in Sociology and is linked to preparatory teaching for the ENEM, linking with other teachers – in this case, Sociology appears as ENEM content. It is important to note that this is a trend that is already occurring in the classroom, as there are few teachers trained in the area of teaching in it (BODART, SILVA, 2016).

Another issue is that, based on a preliminary analysis of publications on TikTok, it is clear that in this space, undergraduate students in social sciences are focused on research and teaching – it is worth noting that many foreign *TikTokers were found* addressing scientific research in greater depth (especially in Spanish). This would generate more interest, at least on this social network. Regarding other professors, how is the mobilization of Sociology occurring?

Intensive analysis of video edits

In this section, we will perform an empirical analysis of the collected videos, focusing on qualitative data. In this section, we will watch each of them and apply the editing criteria proposed in the methodology. We will start with Figure 1:

¹⁰ https://www.instagram.com/izabella.studies/

¹¹https://www.instagram.com/morcego_marcos_/



Figure 1: Video 1.

Source:

 $\underline{https://www.tiktok.com/@ggabrielagoncalves/video/7017899543836560645?lang=pt-BR}{}$

The first thing that stands out is the Google narration, not Gabriela's voice narrating, which produces a normal image. This is one of the only editing elements applied to the video, along with the camera zoom. Furthermore, the list of contents is written on a sheet of notebook paper, in human handwriting, not typed. The technical characteristics of the video media, here, favour the composition: the user can pause the playback and read the exposed text, without the detriment of following a synchronous in-person class.

Figure 2 shows a face:

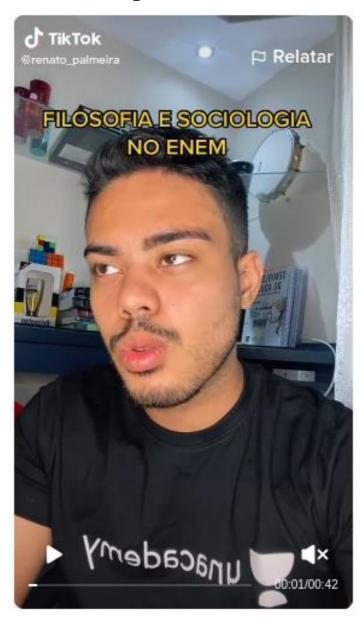


Figure 2: Video 2.

Source: https://www.tiktok.com/@renato_palmeira/video/6915473442930167046?lang=pt-BR

Here you can already see a background scene (which is not a *chroma key* or a notebook, as in the previous video). Editing occurs by placing a sign, with the application of *zoom*. An interesting effect is that the surface of the video becomes a board/slate, on which teachers can write and communicate – which, in comparison with the other videos, has shown itself to be a trend adopted in other productions.

The next figure is 3:

Objeto de análise	A história da transformação da natureza pela ação do ser humano. Além do trabalho e propriedade privada.
Método	Produção da vida material para suprir as necessidades. Materialismo histórico-dialético.
Relação entre indivíduo e sociedade	Relações de produção da vida na sociedade de classes, desenvolvimento das relações sociais. O indivíduo cumprindo seu papel no trabalho seja para suprir necessidades ou de forças exteriores a ele. Relações sociais de produção.

Figure 3: Video 3.

Source: https://www.tiktok.com/@gabrielcorttezi/video/7009781774591053062?lang=pt-BR

This was the closest video we found on YouTube, of a lecture using slides (the teacher used *Chrome key*), and the slideshow scheme. We did not detect any extra effects, as the camera remained fixed. More than in the other videos, the content producer also makes notes on the video screen, which makes it eminently visual, and the writing deepens what is said, and can be stopped.

In figure 4, the pattern is similar, but not identical:



Figure 4: Video 4

Source: https://www.tiktok.com/@descomplica/video/6995940118477556997?lang=pt-BR

There are transcriptions of the teacher's speeches with subtitles, which, in theory, would increase the accessibility of the video for non-Portuguese-speaking listeners. Apart from this detail, the raw material is almost "all" in the publication: it is the image of the teacher explaining, without any kind of extra effect. Perhaps the promise of a quick explanation of controversy was the biggest attraction of the video, an evident investment in the script instead of the other editing elements.

Figure 5 is not the most edited:

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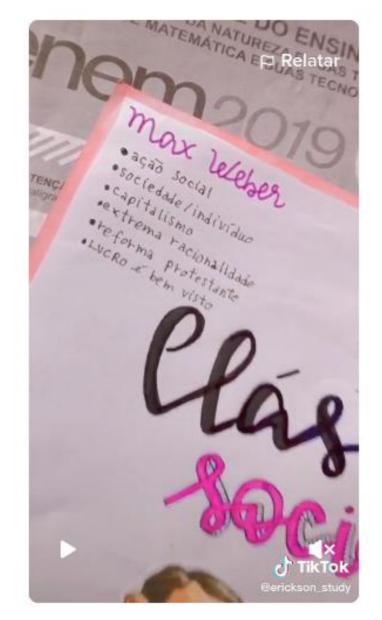


Figure 5: Video 5.

Source:

 $\label{eq:https://www.tiktok.com/@ericksonaamerico/video/6886878322282728705?is_copy_url=1\&is_from_webapp=v1\&lang=pt-BR$

In this video, we can see that a sheet of paper was filmed. The author is sure that the user knows that he should pause the video to read his list of categories since he only presents it and does not make contact with the content at any time. Another non-editable element is the placement of a notebook with ENEM questions behind the board.

In figure 6, the images are more dynamic:



Figure 6: Video 6.

Source:

 $\label{eq:linear} https://www.tiktok.com/@prof.charlesdouglas/video/6899144323980446978?is_copy_url=1 & is_from_webapp=v1&q=Sociologia&t=1644492454585 \\$

This was the video that best adapted, in our opinion, to TikTok's features. After all, there is the use of a *chroma key* ¹², which allows the articulation of many images in sequence, which accompany the speech and converge the two symbolic elements.

¹² Chroma key is a video editing technique that allows you to replace a uniformly colored background, usually green or blue, with another scene or image, creating the illusion of a different environment.

In addition, there is a transcription of the speech in subtitles, which also allows greater circulation of the video among different users.

Another video, the one in figure 7, uses the following message:



Figure 7: Video 7.



This video is the only one that features background music. However, it is a film of the notebook seen from above, probably on a bedspread. The way the video was planned and executed highlights a certain relationship between TikTok and reading as an important means of communication, as producers prioritize it when they want to add depth to their content. Writing conveys a lot of information, which shows that the app encourages reading.

Is this articulation of the application with writing reflected in figure number 8?



Figure 8: Video 8.

Source: https://www.tiktok.com/@soua.le/video/6979645772895767813

In this video, we can see some characteristics, such as the camera not moving, in addition to the lack of other audiovisual effects. The screen receives written information, like a blackboard, but the focus is not basically on education, but on professional training (which ends up creating a connection with high school, even if unintentionally). Figure 9 presents similar considerations, although from an eminently more critical perspective:



Figure 9: Video 9.

Source: https://www.tiktok.com/@morcego_marcos_/video/7029269139080367365

You can tell that the content producer is responding to a post, as it appears in the video. This is a technical feature that belongs to the style of the application itself, which places the message on the screen as a contextualizing mechanism. There are no edits beyond this, which are inserted by the platform itself. In the content, we can see that Marcos is showing his vision as a student, which also brings him back to professional education. This helps to understand a certain tendency of social science students to present the course to interested parties.

After analysing the individual videos, we can assess the data in an articulated manner, also producing a transition to the theoretical level. This connection will occur in the subsequent section, that of global considerations.

Global Considerations

The analysis of the videos allowed us, at first, to detect similarities and, at another time, differences between them. Regarding the second, we can observe, also taking into account the videos watched in the exploratory fieldwork, some "ideal types" of content, or at least "subgenres":

* Lists: lists of something related to the didactic content of high school Sociology are presented. It is worth noting that lists are very common content in the digital age;

* **Pro-Socratic:** some videos are ironic and only seek to produce some kind of social questioning, which evidently cannot be developed much due to the length of the media, as the focus ends up being on iconoclasm. We use the corruption " pro-Socratic " in the sense that maieutics is unconsciously used ¹³as a teaching tool, although there is no space within TikTok for good synchronous interaction, as occurred on the Athenian streets.

* School routine: many videos were found that parody the routine of classes in schools, which brings the idea of a certain backstage being presented to the general public, with the teachers' point of view and;

* **Content:** some teachers present sociological content within 1 minute (we also found videos lasting 2 minutes), but in video-class format, we only found one record.

After these differences, we can draw some similarities between the materials, looking for major trends that can be used for analysis by future researchers. It is worth noting that, unlike YouTube or Facebook, no more than one explicit video lesson was found (at most, videos talking about video lessons).

¹³Maieutics is the method used by Socrates to, through questions and conceptual definitions, "give birth" to the individual's knowledge, remembering that Socrates starts from the theory of reminiscence, which states that all human beings know all human knowledge, but forget it. before birth.

Another trend is the elimination of metadata ¹⁴, compared to YouTube, for example. Subtitles are replaced by *hashtags* ¹⁵. The text box also replaces the video title. In this case, the video is self-contained and can move more easily between different social networks. This makes it more the property of the producer than of the platform, allowing it to be fed to multiple networks. We could call this process a certain " demetadatadization " of videos.

Thus, the app is seen as a showcase for the teacher (who becomes an *influencer*), and not for the content specifically, which serves more to create a digital footprint). It is a sample of larger and more in-depth content or a way to bring students closer together. We assume that this is more viable because editing videos on TikTok, even though teachers do not use very complex editing resources, is less laborious than on longer video platforms like YouTube.

As for the edits, we can also notice some gradations in terms of adaptation to digital language. This means that either there is an image construction that "purifies" the usual language of TikTok to adapt it to education or there is a lack of technical knowledge of these resources on the part of the teachers. Therefore, in general, we can see that the surface of the video becomes the teacher's blackboard, and when there is more proximity to digital language, the image accompanies the speech of the content producer.

After clarifying these elements, we can conclude with a direct answer to the initial research problem. Sociology teaching is specific and focused on the ENEM, using a few editing resources and following some trends of the application (such as the increasing elimination of metadata). In this way, the teacher creates a "broth" in Baumanian liquidity by referring to content of greater duration in time (such as video classes or books). In other words, TikTok currently serves as a kind of "electronic" business card for the teacher and fails to fulfil the primary function of the application, the immersion of the user through artificial intelligence. Therefore, shortly, we do

¹⁴ Metadata is information that describes and provides context about other data, making it easier to organize, search, and manage.

¹⁵ Hashtags are words or phrases preceded by the symbol "#", used on social networks to categorize and facilitate the search for content related to a specific topic.

not believe that there will be "educational TikTokers" like there are *edutubers*. – as studied by Lopes (2021) on YouTube.

Final Considerations

This article discussed the teaching of Sociology on TikTok, focusing on teachers who post short videos (up to 3 minutes) about sociological programmatic content. We analysed 9 videos on the app and concluded that teachers use fewer editing resources and produce lures for other social networks, using Sociology as a kind of "portfolio". We can conclude the text with some reflections.

The first is a methodological issue, which has to do with the analysis of "microvideos". Here, field exploration (in which it is necessary to come into contact with part of the field data) is almost synonymous with fieldwork, because the videos are very fast. Of course, there remains an in-depth look at the videos, but there has already been a first contact, which makes the research experience somewhat different from the usual one when we are surprised by the data *during* the foray into the field or the documents. Another issue that changes is that of peer review: the evaluation of 20 videos can last a little over 20 minutes, which allows a reviewer to have viable access to the "corpus" analysed by a researcher. This results in more consideration of the material and enriches the editorial process.

Another issue is a greater appreciation of TikTok's communication model, which is very little based on dialogue and more on a certain pro-Socraticism. In this case, there is not even any fluidity in communication, there is a kind of attempt at an "epistemological knockout" – something that does not work, because it is not possible to shame someone who does not feel ashamed, because coercion cannot be outsourced.

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Accepted in: june 2024