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LOCKDOWN THEORY

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LOCKDOWN THEORY

Stanimir Panayotov |

Intropostface to Lockdown Theory

(2020-09-23)

This issue of *Identities* is a diary. A diary of a plague; a document of fear and paranoia; a testimony to an unfinished time of future barbarism.

Initiated at the very beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and published on our website as a series of op-eds and essays, all forty texts in this issue had their temporal constraint - their very own particular date that contained the corpuscular context of their own writing of the disaster. Thus, each and every one of these texts is an icicle that should be grasped predominantly in the time slot in which it was *not* yet melting.

This is not to say that some, or even all, of these essays, or whatever genre they embody, have no extra-temporal and outer-contextual veracity. It is in their situatedness, in their particular dating that the texts represent a geodesic layering of affects relevant to a deep and varied gamut of the human (or not) condition amid the capitalopanic that this pandemic was, and still is.

There are two inherent responses in all of these responses to the COVID crisis published here: they are all written in isolation, in the so-called "lockdown," and they are all in various forms theories of what is going on beyond that very lockdown. The lockdown was our monad: the theory was our universe. These essays speak spontaneously about what all of us could not quite experience in terms of isolation by rehearsing the inner experiences of the pandemic we all had/have. Thus, they are not theories about theory. The texts gathered here congregate around the great viral outside of the lockdown. But whilst this real experiencing is here documented, it is also decidedly situated as "theory," and not as a philosophy or philosophies of that very experience.

Unlike some vastly boring debates of Italian-French provenance on the preceding relevance of someone's "theory," the lockdown theories we at *Identities* published were the kind of para-philosophical journalism that the conjecture truly demanded from us, the theorists. We have the odd and unexpected privilege to be the most prepared for humans for this pandemic. We are all trained to live between four walls; spend hours on end on our butts; with very few minor disturbances in our daily routines, the lockdown did not change much for us writers and thinkers. This is why we were able to react by way of theorizing with speed and eloquence and perhaps a certain voluntarist sass to what many experienced as domestic terror. But none of this stoic preparedness predetermined how to theorize the sleazy membrane between virus and lockdown. The texts here, some of which are now reworked by their authors, document in many ways the lapidaric modus of theorizing the extra-mural virulence of our worlds with minimal and/or vigilant reference to theoretical idolatry.

Save for several exceptions, most of the writers were invited to respond to the lockdown, and to do so in a non-doctrinal (but not anti-theoretical) way. Particularistic accounts of affects claiming that the survival game here is theoretical, and thus outer-personal, are rather scant. It was and still is vital to account for the numbers and the dates all along, just as it was deadly important, at least in the very outbreak of the pandemic, to monitor, and thus integrate in our daily life, the constant flow of numbers, the death toll, the infographs, the data driven virus that is still unfolding. At the end, the theories of the lockdown here do not so much try to contain the contagion, as they want to co-experience with an anonymous reader the unanimous panic of a world that bombarded us as some sort of networked *horror vacui*.

The Lockdown Theory series served the purpose of locking out the potential of theoreticians' spontaneous relevance to the great outdoors. If our theories of the lockdown were documents, then our documents are in turn situated and rigorously theoretical protocols of, hopefully, an honest disaster management.

Marina Gržinić |

Refugees, Europe, Death and COVID-19

(2020-03-30)

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Introduction

In March 2020, at the border of Greece and Turkey, a tension and a flow of refugees was trashed as being a bargain for dirty business between the European Union/Greece and Turkey. At the same time, we have an outbreak of the *Coronavirus* disease (COVID-19) in the EU, where Italy is the state which has a total quarantine. On March 28, 2020, the USA reported more than 100,000 infected individuals.

These two situations collide, and what we have in front of us now, which is still developing, transcends easy analysis, as we can only put together crumbs of the events. One thing is for sure: thousands have been left to die at the border between Greece and Turkey, again. Italy is on the other side, and has been transformed into a state which resembles, in its complete isolation, the situation surrounding leprosy in the Middle Ages. We see in the 21st century: disease, isolation, and, let us say, self-voluntary segregation that Valdemir Zamparoni[1] defines as consisting of methods that are central to a colonial-medical environment. We can think of these methods as a form of self-segregation in order to allow for immunization. However, if we connect these two as being at first sight disparate situations, we can see that at the border between the European Union/Greece and Turkey it is about "to kill," and in Italy it is about "to let live" (for Italian citizens only).These two sides are the depiction of contemporary neoliberal necropolitics.[2]

The reordering of spaces becomes crucial; it results in new practices of zoning and creating corridors as circulating modes through which accumulation will take place. I therefore focus on Europe, refugees in Europe, neoliberalism, and racism. Furthermore, the only way to open up possibilities for *white* Eastern European thought is, rather than fully embracing the old Western matrix of knowledge that is an outcome of colonialism, to try to rethink our conditions of potentiality together with those whose thoughts have been marginalized for far too long. Colonialism and present forms of coloniality have not only dispossessed millions of lives and made them commodities but have also incarcerated their thoughts and discursivity. If Europe, that is, as a fortress Europe, the old Western world, is a provincial territory today, then the thoughts and the intellectual repertoire that it can produce are provincial as well.[3]

We know today that any thought that is coming outside the Occidental (Western) regime is heavily subordinated to the steady, discriminative, racist view of the West (Europe) in relation to what it calls "the others."[4]

A Dirty Deal between the EU and Turkey on Refugees

In March 2020, a fierce onslaught by Syrian forces and their Russian backers on Idlib, the last province held by Syrian rebels, led to clashes with Turkey, which supports some rebel groups. Turkey already hosts some 3.7 million Syrians but the conflict in Idlib has led to nearly a million more fleeing to its southern border. Although the EU promised billions more Euros in aid, Turkey was unimpressed and last week decided to open its borders with Greece and even force migrants to come closer to the northwestern border. The EU has accused Mr. Erdoğan, President of Turkey, of using migrants for political purposes. It insists its doors are "closed." Meanwhile, clash-

[1] Valdemir Zamparoni, "Lepra: doença, isolamento e segregação no contexto colonial em Moçambique," *História, Ciências, Saúde-Manguinhos*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (2016): 13-39. doi: 10.1590/s0104-59702016005000028.

[2] Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," trans. by Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2003): 11-40. doi: 10.1215/08992363-15-1-11.

[3] Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, trans. by Lauren Dubois (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

[4] See Achille Mbembe, "The Negro, Figure of Human Emancipation," interview by Rosa Moussaoui, *The Economic and Social Justice Reality Report* (2013). http://www.esjrr.org/2013/12/achillembembe-negro-figure-of-human.html.

es have again erupted at the land border between Greece and Turkey. There appears to have been a change in Turkey's position with regard to letting in migrants trying to enter Greece via this route. On February 28, 2020, Turkey reneged on a deal to prevent migrants and asylum seekers from travelling to the EU.[5]

Namely, in 2016, a dirty deal was made between the EU and Turkey, whereby Turkey would stop allowing migrants to reach the EU in return for funds from the bloc to help it manage the huge numbers of refugees it hosts. But, since then, tensions between the EU and Turkey have flared on various issues.

Death, Neoliberalism

Now, the question of death that is brought to the center of the debate of the day is really touching the base.

I define necropolitics as "let live and make die."[6] Necropolitics confronts us with the horrors of the human condition: death and killing, forced enclosure, and total abandonment. I talk about necropolitics, and not *Thanatopolitics*.[7] If we think precisely about what is going on at the border between the European Union/Greece and Turkey we can see a new relation about life and death where the colonial/racial division is applied. All of those there are those who are coming from states that have been destroyed by imperialist Occidental appetites, and a racial differentiation between the white occident and the other parts of the world that are seen as being not legitimate members of the regime of whiteness and its colonial matrix of power, which extends from the past deeply into the present days.

The colonial/racial division is applied to citizenship, and we have two categories of citizenship: one is the category I will name *biopolitical citizenship* (the EU's "natural" nation-state citizens), and the other is *necropolitical citizenship*, given to refugees and *sans-papiers* (the paperless) after they die on EU soil. While some are made "equal," the other Others are left to die and are brutally abandoned, or their second-grade status as citizens is fully normalized in the EU. An illustrative case is the one of Italian Lampedusa, when 350 refugees from Africa drowned in a single day on October 12, 2013.

However, the most perverse situation happened afterwards, when these hundreds of dead bodies were given Italian citizenship (but only so that the Italian government and the EU could bury them in Italy – it was obviously cheaper than to send the dead bodies back to their countries of origin and to their respective families). The Italian government decided to prosecute the few who did survive, since they tried to illegally enter Italy and the EU. This is the clearest sign of the perverse and violent new attitude that Western Europe has toward human rights (after the West had been heavily capitalizing its democracy on those rights for decades) and the occurrence of a new category of citizenship - the *necropolitical citizenship*.

This shift can be best captured through what Balibar, in 2000, exposed as the passport of a "rich person from a rich country ... [which] increasingly *signifies* not just mere national belonging, protection and a right of citizenship, but a *surplus* of rights."[8]

Death itself, as I presented it above, had become a fallacious rite of passage in modernity's instrumentalization of humanity.

Massimo Recalcati, in his *Le nuove melanconie: Destini del desiderio nel tempo ipermoderno*,[9] says that melancholy is no longer what it used to be; since melancholy, as Freud argued, involved a sense of guilt, but today melancholy has acquired new declinations, characterized by a fundamental lack of awareness for life, and also of keeping life in its transmission from one generation to the next.

Freud talks about melancholy, the old melancholy, which brings with it a feeling of guilt in front of the laws that are too severe, but contemporary melancholy comes from an incapacity to give meaning to - I will add - the "Occidental" experience.

[5] Charlotte McDonald-Gibson, "Why the EU Is Doomed to Repeat the Mistakes of the 2015 Refugee Crisis," *Time* (March 10, 2020). https://time.com/5800116/eu-refugees-turkey-greece-border.
[6] See Marina Gržinić and Šefik Tatlić, *Necropolitics, Racialization, and Global Capitalism: Historicization of Biopolitics and Forensics of Politics, Art, and Life* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014).
[7] See also Marina Gržinić, "Introduction: Burdened by the Past, Rethinking the Future. Eleven Theses on Memory, History, and Life," in *Opposing Colonialism, Antisemitism, and Turbo-Nationalism: Rethinking the Past for New Conviviality*, eds. Marina Gržinić, Jovita Pristovšek and Sophie Uitz (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020), 1-21.
[8] Étienne Balibar, *Politics and the Other Scene*, trans. by Christine Jones, James Swenson and Chris Turner (London and New York: Verso, 2002), 83.
[9] Massimo Recalcati, *Le nuove melanconie: Destini del desiderio nel tempo ipermoderno* (Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore, 2019).

The relation in the Occident between subject and object can be put in a genealogical line as a series of discontinued modalities.

In the 1960s and 1970s the Western youth tried to distance themselves, primarily, from the fetishism of objects. In the 1990s, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, I will say, consumer hedonism was pushed to the forefront and replaced political passion.

The former East of Europe entered fully and speedily into this process. In the 2000s, we rely on objects heavily, they are mobile, transversal; our smartphones and technological gadgets are a hyper-overabundance of objects to such an extent that the online social platforms display an incommensurability of emptiness, loss of meaning, the disappearance of ideologies, loneliness and and a condition of self-quarantine (not only due to the Coronavirus disease). Recalcati names this condition "new melancholy." He talks about a life connected to senselessness.

Without desire, life is directly connected to senselessness; the body is dead weight to be moved, pushed around. This Occidental subject is incapable of relating to alterity, otherness. It is symbolically reduced to a proper border of impossibility, and clinging on to these borders is the last possibility of a proper salvation. Recalcati writes:

> The absence of boundaries inherent in the freedom of the hypermodern turbo consumer has gradually translated into a widespread feeling of anxiety caused by the loss of stable symbolic reference points, but, above all, has given rise to a new demand for protection and security. We have thus gone from the manic emphasis relating to the dissolution of banks and borders to the need for their re-establishment and security enhancement.[10]

Again, we see this so palpably clear when we stay silent, inert in front of what is going on with the refugees (in March 2020) at and on the border between Turkey and Greece. We witness, as Recalcati says, the syndrome that has protection at its center. This protection is fully embedded in the barbed wire and the closure that are emblems, deadly emblems, of our time. We have a passage from an unlimited enjoyment, to borders, walls, and fortresses, as new objects of investment.

What is going on with the refugees or migrants, as they are named, is actually deeply connected with the Occident. In classical Freudian psychoanalytic theory, the death drive (*Todestrieb*) is the drive toward death and self-destruction. Under this death drive force we see an excess of immunization that transforms into an autoimmune illness. An autoimmune disease is a condition in which our immune system mistakenly attacks a proper body. This could also be seen in relation to the state quarantine, a new type of quarantine camp - that is what Italy was transformed into in March 2020.

Therefore, to return to necropolitics and the emphasized difference to *Thanatopolitics*:

THANATOPOLITICS IS ON THE ONE SIDE. IT IS A PURE WESTERN, OCCIDENTAL CATEGORY.

It resides in Occidental, subjective intimacy. The death drive opposes Eros, the tendency toward survival, propagation, sex, and other creative, life-producing drives. It is a change from preservation to destruction. In *Thanatopolitics*, death is not an enemy that undermines life from the outside but something internally produced by life. Both are not facing each other but are in reciprocity. *Thanatopolitics* is the knot that ties the death drive and the desire to live.

NECROPOLITICS IS ON THE OTHER SIDE. IT IS AN EXTERNALIZATION OF THANATOPOLITICS.

It spreads as a deadly contagious virus from the intimacy of the Occidental subject into the neoliberal global world. Necropolitics is the regime of the war death machine that literally exports contagion into other places, or this contagion that was already contracted through the legacy of Western colonialism (Africa). The vertiginous presence of death is the result of a life without the consciousness of a proper vulnerability that is pathological, centered onto itself, and incapable of having a relation to the others.

Neoliberalism's fake vitalism has also cut ties with the categories of the negative.

[10] Recalcati, *Le nuove melanconie*, translation mine.

As captured precisely by Recalcati:

> The apparently manic inclination of the capitalist's discourse has reinforced a neo-melancholic inclination in young people who tend to let themselves be absorbed by the ever-present presence of the object, transforming the object into an object-Thing. It is no longer the object that appears against the background of the mourning of the Thing, but it is the object-Thing that melancholically denies that mourning. While the exciting impulse of the maniacal discourse pushes towards the unceasing exchange of the object in a succession of fragmented presents without historical continuity, this new and particular adhesiveness to the object – for example, to the technological object – reveals the undercurrent of this euphoric thrust: the neo-melancholic bonding to the object, the impossibility of sustaining its loss, the rejection of the mourning of the Thing. ... The most emblematic clinical example is that of the regressive withdrawal of many teenagers who desert social life to remain glued to the virtual world, which ensures them of the ever-present presence of their objects. The world of the object-Thing replaces the world of encounter with the Other and its inevitable turbulence.[11]

Coda

These processes of invigorated border control, expulsion of refugees, etc., are judicially, economically and, last but not least, discursively and representationally (as different semio-technological regimes) ratified, legislated, and normativized. Today it is central to draw a genealogy of racism that parallels capitalism's historical transformation and historicization.

On the one side, we have the state institutions and the necropolitical sovereignty that is the sovereignty of an intensive racialization, ghettoization and expulsion, and on the other, the formation of, contrary to a monumental landscape, a deathscape (that is again a necropolitical measure).

Neoliberal global necrocapitalism mixes different forms of dispossession (providing accumulation) and therefore we see how the question of citizenship is embedded in the processes of dispossession, privatization and racialized specialization.

[11] Ibid., 141, translation mine.

Anne-Françoise Schmid |

The Philosopher's Vision

(2020-03-31)

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The philosopher sees the Earth, lives in the World and dreams of the Universe. He does not understand that the Earth looks at him, the World acts upon him and that he will only come to see the Universe once he's been capable of inverting vision.

What is to be done? To read the poet, the one who notices, as Borgès wrote, that he has forgotten in his poem the Moon revealing all of the beauties of the Earth. Or to read a geologist thinker, like Vernadsky, who sees the thought of the philosopher active in the terrestrial crust. The latter is therefore silent, and is only perceived by the plants. La Mettrie could have taught us this in *L'Homme-Plante*.

This silence is profound, more profound than the philosopher believes it to be, who thinks to have seamed his system - for example, by his exclusion of women and animals. It is the silence which reaches him when, finally, he learns that there are other philosophies as alive as his and that he must postulate the right to multiplicity of philosophies. Therefore, philosophy is silent: only isolated philosophies produce chatter.

Let us not listen to the chatter too much, just enough to not be a misanthrope. We have the obligation of a silence, but a new silence, which does not result from the absence of noise.

The perception of this silence, which is not uniquely given by the senses, gives us obligations, and renewing those of the philosopher. A book of questions, a book of passions.

Anne-Françoise Schmid |

La vision du philosophe

(2020-03-31)

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Le philosophe voit la Terre, il vit dans le Monde et rêve de l'univers. Il ne comprend pas que la Terre le regarde, que le Monde l'agit et qu'il ne verra l'univers que lorsqu'il sera capable d'inverser la vision.

Que faire ? Lire le poète, celui qui s'aperçoit, comme l'écrit Borgès, qu'il a oublié la Lune dans son poème révélant toutes les beautés de la Terre. Ou un géologue penseur, tel Vernadsky, qui voit la pensée du philosophe active dans la croûte terrestre. Elle est alors silencieuse, et n'est perçue que par les végétaux. La Mettrie aurait pu peut-être nous l'apprendre dans *L'Homme-Plante*.

Ce silence est profond, plus profond que ne le croit le philosophe qui pense avoir couturé son système - par exemple par son exclusion des femmes et des animaux. C'est le silence qui lui parvient lorsqu'enfin il apprend qu'il y a d'autres philosophies aussi vivantes que la sienne et qu'il doit postuler la multiplicité de droit des philosophies. La philosophie alors est silencieuse, seules les philosophies isolées sont bavardes.

N'écoutons pas trop les bavardages, juste assez pour ne pas être misanthrope. Nous avons l'obligation d'un silence, mais d'un silence nouveau, qui ne résulte pas de l'absence de bruit.

La perception de ce silence, qui n'est pas donné uniquement par les sens, nous donne des obligations, et renouvelle celles du philosophe. Un livre des questions, un livre des passions.

Questions and passions are not on the same register. Questions relate to the Earth and the movements of its crust. Passions refer to the unrest of the world. Misfortune arrives when questions and passions no longer have any encounters, but misfortune also arrives when questions and passions are mixed.

Let us consider the height, beginning with the universe, where some philosophers, in love with verticality, were able to bring us to a lived experience which would know how to rediscover the Earth without the bitterness of the World. Then, we may be able to make propositions to understand how the mixtures and separations of the World, indispensable to the human subject, and the Earth, without which there would be neither birth nor death, can be mixed and prolonged in unexpected events.

The epidemic is in fact the consequence of inappropriate mixtures and separations. The philosopher, if he is not too talkative, will perhaps be apt to manifest it. This manifestation is an inversion and a reciprocity of gaze. The Earth sees us, the animal sees us, the woman sees us. And the planet sees us, too. We believed we were the only ones to see.

Translated from the French by Jeremy R. Smith

Edited by Katerina Kolozova

Questions et passions ne sont pas du même registre, les questions relèvent de la Terre et des mouvements de sa croûte, les passions des agitations du monde. Le malheur arrive lorsque questions et passions n'ont plus aucunes rencontres, mais il arrive aussi lorsqu'elles sont mélangées.

Prenons de la hauteur, depuis l'univers, là où certains philosophes, amoureux de la verticalité, ont su nous amener à un vécu qui sache retrouver la Terre sans l'amertume du monde. Alors nous saurons peut-être faire des propositions pour comprendre comment les mélanges et les séparations du monde, indispensable au sujet humain, et de la Terre, sans laquelle il n'y aurait ni naissance ni mort, peuvent se mixer et se prolonger dans des événements inattendus.

L'épidémie en effet est aussi la conséquence de mélanges et de séparations inappropriées. Le philosophe, s'il n'est pas trop bavard, sera peut-être apte à le manifester. Cette manifestation est une inversion et une réciprocité du regard. La Terre nous voit, l'animal nous voit, la femme nous voit. Et la planète nous voit aussi, celle que nous croyions être les seuls à voir.

Stanimir Panayotov |

Necrototal-19-∞

(2020-03-31)

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Delete the "ism." Delete the theory of the present. No, the present is not deleted. And do not delete and obliterate theory itself, but subtract the theoretical ism from the persisting systems of thought and their practices.

Understand that there is no ideological formation to be unearthed from the perverse repertoires of the historical past. Those who flaunt the specter of new authoritarianisms and totalitarianisms should wrap their heads around the question: What is it to think these political concepts - authority and totality - without the finality of their isms? We are in a *totally* new situation of some sort of neomalthusianism (for lack of a better wor[l]d) which demands not only to produce a collective intelligence upending the bio/necro dyad, but to subtract and suspend the ordinary concepto-political management.

Tabula rasa reloaded.

The edgelords of our world already know that. They are trained to sleep awake to the perpetual flexibility of necrocapital. We are this capital. The superfluous banter about "economic crash" or "standstill" (as if they are the same thing!) misses the point of the new situation: there is a totality and there is a power, but there is not and will not be a stable political-economic system. Whatever is left of the "economy" will be determined by the necrosis of our totality.

It is true that certain regions will be more affected by the perverse awakening of despotic instincts, which have already permeated certain geographies anyway. There is nothing scandalous in suspecting that today, March 30, 2020, Orban will institute a new dictatorship. But he and his followers are no longer "Orbanites." The same is true for Trump and "Trumpism." Dictators there will be, but the "dictatorship" is already past a quantum leap. Let us stop correlating collectivism and individualism with communism and capitalism. These conjugations and their conceptual stench are unbearable even for the dead. We are in a new situation where the proper names will be nominated again to do new work: and this work will become visible as we adjust our intelligences to what the bullies of the world want from us. They themselves do not quite know what they desire us to be and do. But they do know we are a mass, a total mass, against which they can wage wars of the noblest type. Do not give them the comfort of "isms."

Not to irate liberals and the center-right, but the fear of a new (viral? bacterial?) "totalitarianism" is inflated only with the superego of an *ancien régime* that has long been terminated. If you think I am dancing on your grave, then it means you have missed your own party long ago. Only liberals did not notice this all too timely doomsday. At least the crisis-plague (yes, it is both at the same time, hyphenated, with an ambivalent spacing in-between) will awaken the dreamers hallucinating totalitarianism from the slumber of their polit-fetish. Let us agree that the "total" of the totalitarianism is still here. But the ism is dead, long mortified.

Good: at least this might shift the attention of politicians and theoreticians to the fact that we now have to wrestle with a sleazy and incontinent totality that is difficult to reign conceptually, because the politics of this "total/ity" evolves by the hour. Whatever is instituted is far from conceptual. And once this lubricious monster called totality becomes totally elusive, we can finally see that there is also very little left of "biopolitics" to debate about. The actual world government is shaping up under the guise of a quantum chaos whose "management" is a mere performance of political illiteracy. But then

again, who is literate enough to massacre elegantly and invisibly the present community, and the coming one?

"I do not think that ecological catastrophe suffices to undermine capitalism. I think that is exceedingly optimistic. People seem to think that ecological catastrophe can finally achieve what organized labor could not, which is to bring capital to its knees. I think this is wishful thinking. I think the capitalist class has acquired the resources it needs to survive the coming ecological catastrophe. They have private armies, they have ever increasing technological resources to be able to control, manipulate and, if necessary, destroy any kind of organized political threat. I think acknowledging this has to be the *sine qua non* on the basis of which one tries to understand what can be done."[1]

There is no *bios* to manage. I do not know anymore what Foucauldians mean in their feel-good theorization of biopolitics, as if the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic was designed especially for them. Why do they want to force the present to affirm the past? I understand it is cynical to say that biopolitics is the supreme victim of the day, and not the dead of the virus, but without this cynicism it is difficult to carve the space for the irreverent and vulgar necrototality overflowing from the media. (Yes, the very same media who are now finally manifesting themselves as the parasites of every imaginable world.) There might be some parallel regimes of bio- and necropolitics going on, but on a world scale all possible scenarios make favorable an indefinite "total" of masses whose new ideological management is now being revamped.

Into what? I have no answer, not today. It feels to me that the entire local/global distinction has shrunk in a state of total worldliness. When all worldliness is entirely there, its totality smashes the art of creating concepts. Everything everywhere is total, it is just there, despite the fact the whole world is now a grand total bunker. The temptation is not only to call for suspending all biopolitical analysis (this rat has left the ship already), but to name the present "necro-totalitarianism."

Necrototal would do it. Nobody knows what the ism of that necrototal is, and will be.

The plague is an exercise in thinking. Scientists have long advocated that plant and microbial consciousness exists. For the first time we are ready to witness - at least consciously - how does it reduce human intelligence to a natural prosthesis of contingency.

[1] Ray Brassier et al., "Pricing Time: Outline and Discussion on Suhail Malik's 'The Ontology of Finance,'" *Identities: Journal for Politics, Gender and Culture*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2017), 114.

Jelisaveta Blagojević |
#stayhomefree

(2020-03-31)

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I do not write any diary, I have no good advice for the coming days, no fateful or encouraging thoughts, none of it. I believe I am going through a lot of mediocre stuff through this period: poor concentration, searching for answers, reading between the lines, hysteria, sadness, paranoia, and so it goes round and round. I sleep poorly, I'm bad when I'm awake even, but nothing worth mentioning. When I look at how we were crushed on all sides, I'm not so bad. There you go.

Now, mostly I have some questions.

A whole history of the struggle for freedom with all kinds of perpetrators, fools, and tyrants, the struggle for the critical consciousness of citizens who are capable, knowing, and who must recognize the dangers of the totalitarian and respond to it immediately: civil rights, women's rights, human rights of all those most deprived, for all these values many more people have given their life much more so than COVID-19 will ever be able to take, a mean little virus.

How is it possible to give it all up so easily? Not only have we given up all these things in a moment of fear for our own lives - as if living without them is a life worth living at all - but we are proud to be obedient, angry with those who are not, insulting and ridiculing them. Among them are those who have nothing but that very street they are banned from; those without money to stock up supplies for a few days. Among them are those whose long stay with family is not the comforting feeling of staying "at home." Among them are those whose closest family are their pets. No, really, tell me, is this okay? Is it okay for us when this vile little virus takes its toll and when we "wake up" from this ugly dream we find ourselves in - *The Handmaid's Tale*? I'm not ok with it, I'll be thrown into the colony immediately, I am afraid. I won't panic, but I think I'm very close to that. That's what scares me.

It also scares me that I'm in a mental and spatial quarantine as the world changes. With more or less success, I work out various scenarios about how tomorrow will be - whenever and wherever it may be. From now on kissing and hugging will be a kind of luxury for which we are ready to pay with our lives, so that we will become really picky, no more scattering with touches, flaunting and "bodies [that] make displays of themselves," as Foucault wrote. Alcohol for hand sanitizing, not for drinking. Fat for making soaps, not for eating. Watching on TV or on Google any kind of massive gatherings when bodies are squished together as in protests or music concerts, for example, we will probably experience some kind of caesura, you know, like when we watch the *Mad Men* series and we see the characters smoke cigarettes on a plane.

Hey, what about smoking? Will it remain the greatest and most pernicious danger of the times we live in, or will those cages and quarantines at airports now start to serve as something else? For example, for those of us who did not wash their hands for thirty seconds at least, or have a temperature of over 38 degrees Celsius, or who hugged each other while waiting for departures? And in general, where are we going to travel? Will passports, visas, visa-free regimes, etc., from now on be enough to get out of the fortress-nations? I worry about myself, I have a thyroid disorder, excess weight, and high blood pressure (to mention just a few of my health issues) - will it allow me to travel and see my child in Sweden in the future or will new travel passports be obtained on the basis of medical records? That's what scares me.

Living in the Balkans, I belong to a generation that has not succeeded in its fifty-something years to connect ten years back to back under the same rules and the same "normality." All these states of emergency have always tried to make me cease being myself - my-

self as the result of various physical and social interactions, solidarities, named or unnamed communities, as well as relationships that I have imagined and invented.

And here and now, the state insists every day that it is my new family, every day it declares love to me or rather nervously and frightened yells at me or asks me to do or not do things.

And I don't like that new family, and I don't like how this family treats me, and I don't want to be a part of it; I want to stay free.

Stay at home but stay free.

Nina Power |

Plague Diary

(2020-03-31)

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What was the old world? There were parks, cafes, and meetings, casual and otherwise. There were groups and walks with friends in parks. There were projects. Now there are no projects. What is existence for? We are back to philosophical basics: the question, the dialogue, if you are fortunate, the time to wonder, the question of values and virtues: courage, self-control, introspection, contemplation, pursuing a thought to the end. Is it easier to sleep now, or harder? The concept of time is an object for modern man, we dwell in a kind of domestic eternity, and dream of tidying, or of meeting people outside, or of having something to do.

I am very glad I am not still sick. I think of all the people who are forced to confront their addictions in isolation, who are going through withdrawal, who are in the midst of shadows, who have to face the jolting harshness of a non-intoxicated world in such a dystopian way. Meaning is a minimal game at the best of times. Can you generate it out of yourself? What were you distracting yourself from before all this? Who do you love? Who loves you? Have you behaved kindly, or have you been selfish? Are you afraid to die? I don't want to die, because I got my life back, but I am not afraid to die, because I got my life back.

I develop a strange fixation on doing a History of Art degree after this is "all over," though I don't want to do it online, and perhaps universities will be like that from now on, and the Plague could not really have happened without the internet, and the Plague can be seen therefore as a kind of symptom of the internet, of what the internet "makes possible," and there is a little meme based on Scooby Doo with the man pulling off the sheet on the ghost and it was "Zoom" all along. And the government send you text messages and you realize they could always do this of course, and they are dyeing lakes to stop people from enjoying them, and shouting at people to stop driving, or curtailing their time outside. And of course you go along with it, because you have to, and because it is the "right" thing to do because there are vulnerable people, and health has never been more starkly revealed in its collective nature. The virosphere is the vivosphere and the thanatosphere at the same time.

There was birdsong in the old world. There is still birdsong! Though I am distressed to notice that the council has cut down the tops of the trees near the apartment, destroying the magpie nest. So at least here there is less birdsong, though there are still pigeons. I saw a dead pigeon the other day on the street. It was perfect, it must have just died. The otherwise-alive birds look hungry, though, apparently they are suffering because there are fewer scraps from take-away food and general human waste, and, as they must eat quite a lot of their own body-weight a day, they are getting smaller and smaller. I wonder how the birds feel about the plague, do they feel it as an absence, as a mysterious miasma in the air? Do they wonder what has happened to humanity?

The homeless men and women are, it seems, left alone by the police who otherwise sometimes check where you are going, or where you've been, and you are perhaps supposed to keep a receipt on you to prove that you have been buying something "essential." It is now largely sunny. The homeless people seem to have a kind of paradoxical freedom, as they have nowhere else to go or to be other than the outside, which is where everyone else is not supposed to be. In the homogenous world, the *domus* is *nomos*: to be free of the domestic is to be outside - outside the law, or not party to it, despite being, at the same time, the property of the polis. I have no doubt that the police hassle the homeless people all the time (perhaps we should call them "homefree," just as we are supposed to say "child-free" rather than "childless"; perhaps there will be a pro-homeless movement in the wake of all this, although perhaps the housing market will collapse, perhaps all empty homes will be requisitioned, and perhaps the homefree would, in any case, prefer to be inside).

It is difficult on whatever day of the plague/lockdown to not feel a little sad at the loss of the old world. I am glad to be here, however, not alone, even if being here is strange in other ways, and perhaps at some point I will have to decide what to do with the rest of my life, though it is very peaceful for now and I can stay here for a while, and there are other places to stay if movement is permitted. I am glad I do not have much stuff with me, and that, even in haste, I took things that were minimally relevant, and the nice boy nearby sold me good coffee, even though I wasn't a delivery person, and I brought my postcards from Ghent of The Mystic Lamb, and there is a book here on Symbolism in Renaissance Art, and I can watch Herzog documentaries and read Larkin's poem "Wants" and anything else that humanity has made is here on this little machine.

And everything I was going to do, and everything everyone was going to do, is cancelled; and I wonder about this new age of cancellation, or this global iteration of it, and what Jonty Tiplady wrote about it before all this:

> The poignancy of cancel culture is that it threatens, with technical lethality and excess of rigour, the need of existence more broadly; it threatens cancellation at the exact moment we are threatened with cancellation (extinction).[1]

And the virus - and is it alive or is it dead? - is better at cancellation than any of the people who spent their time sending emails and tweets to institutions, or protesting outside of buildings, not knowing what people were going to say, but wanting to shut them up anyway. All the people that actively stopped things - galleries, talks, jobs - what do they think now that *everything* is cancelled, including everything they wanted to do? Was it worth it? Were they somehow unconsciously pre-empting the virus, just as those of us who defended disagreement, argument, dialogue, talking to each other face-to-face, going outside, were too, but from the other side?

And I think of all the people I met during my friendship project, where I met up with anyone who wanted to talk to me, and all the cafes I went to, and the parks I visited, and the conversations we had, and this was all part of the old world, and how could we have known that we would be here now, where the outside, and meeting strangers, is out-of-bounds? And I wonder about the Third Summer of Love, which I have been imagining will happen this year, and in fact, the conditions are in place... a release from rules, and even if there are restrictions in place, the desire for mass illegality, just as raves and meeting in fields and nomadism became increasingly illegal in the U.K. in the 1990s, and it occurs to me that this could happen again, in a way, in a new iteration, as the desire for the outside, to be together, euphoric with strangers, will come again, and even harder this time.

And there are memories, and everything is refracted through the sunlight that exists that comes through the windows, and the clouds are intensely beautiful, and the skies are empty, and even to see a plane is now strange and unusual and worthy of comment. And it is mind-blowing that we are here, and this is life now, and I look forward to seeing my true friends again, and of the delicate play of the social and the dialogic, and even the sartorial, and going out has become acutely scopophilic, because curtailed, and I remember the nicely-dressed men from the first few days, and I understand. And the sun is God, as Turner said, and he was right about the sky, and all of human production cannot compete with nature, and life is very beautiful and very strange.

[1] Jonty Tiplady, "Semi-Automatic Angel: Notes on 'Cancel Culture' and Post-Cancellation Rococo," ***ϽϽϽ*** (April 12, 2019). https://xn--wgiaa.ws/3-jonty-tiplady-notes-on-cancel-culture.

J.-P. Caron |

Contagion and Visibility: Notes on the Phenomenology of a Pandemic

(2020-04-01)

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1. I must start by offering a somewhat insincere apology since I am here approaching theoretical themes that have to do with representational purport and the visibility of the phenomena such representations might yield. It is an apology in the sense that in such urgent times it seems like a luxury to be enmeshed in the field of not scientific theorization about the virus, which is not the business of a philosopher, but of the theorization of the conditions of theorization of the social/natural situation we are in. But it is also insincere in the sense that the justification and worth of such an endeavor shall be given in the context of the development here pursued. For the moment, we shall put our confidence in Slavoj Žižek's dictum: "Don't act, think," for thinking paves the way to what shall be done, when what shall be done is not provided by our habitual protocols of action. In a sense, I am not proposing solutions, though, much more stating why it is so difficult to implement solutions from the point of view of the subject through a sketch of a phenomenology of the situation of contagion.

J.-P. Caron |

Contágio e visibilidade: notas sobre a fenomenologia de uma pandemia[1]

(2020-04-15)

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A transição entre mundos aqui sendo examinados não é apenas uma transição entre dois mundos visíveis, mas é também o surgimento de algo a partir da invisibilidade. Uma invisibilidade que é o resultado de uma diferença de escala entre os fenômenos. O próprio vírus como exemplo dessa invisibilidade se torna visível apenas por seus efeitos: tanto a doença, se contraída pela pessoa, quanto outros efeitos em escalas de tempo diferentes, e dispersas espacialmente: os efeitos na dinâmica social e na economia. Os efeitos que estavam faltando, embora fossem esperados, no meu passeio pelas ruas do Rio de Janeiro quatro dias atrás, e que começavam a se tornar presentes dois dias atrás.

1. Devo começar oferecendo um pedido de desculpas um tanto insincero, pois estou aqui abordando temas teóricos relacionados

[1] Published in: *Lavra Palavra* (April 15, 2020). https://lavrapalavra.com/2020/04/15/contagio-e-visibilidade-notas-sobre-a-fenomenologia-de-uma-pandemia, trans. from the English by the author.

2. The issue I intend to tackle briefly has to do with a conversation I had with a friend a few days back about the situation of the virus here in Brazil. At the time, we were talking to a friend from abroad, incidentally an Iranian friend living in Canada, explaining the security measures that were happening - or not happening - in Brazil. The closing of borders between states, of stores, parts of the service sector, etc. A situation that was known through the news but the visibility of which was not attainable from a simple stroll in the streets of Rio de Janeiro: yes, a little decrease in public presence could be verified, but nothing like the measures quoted would be expected to have as a result. In a sense, the effects of the viral infection were not yet *visible* through my everyday means of inspection - a normal walk in the streets. Which brings me to clarify the idea of the present intervention: the disjunction between that which is *knowable* through the relevant scientific methods and data, and that which is *visible* through everyday experience.

3. To begin to tackle the dialectic between the knowable and the visible, I shall quote a paragraph from an anonymous text proposed by Fernando Zalamea:

> There is a narrow corridor at Penn Station linking the subway with the NJ Transit platforms. The walls of this narrow corridor were always lined with vagrants and bums, wrapped in trash bags, sleeping on cartons, hugging their few belonging crammed into little trolleys, most of them soaked in their own urine, all of them half-crazy, mumbling to themselves, delirious. The great American workforce flowing in from New Jersey every morning would have to squeeze through this small tributary - this corridor of urine and bums. The sight hardly slowed anyone down. They passed it by, unflustered, like a river passes over the pebbles on its bed. I had to pass through it too - going upstream, into New Jersey. ...
>
> But now I must pass them... as one passes kidney stones. These vagrants are the kidney stones that no system of ideas has managed to pass. And just as microscopic kidney stones are capable of incapacitating an entire organism, so these vagrants are capable of shutting down the

ao significado representacional e à visibilidade dos fenômenos que essas representações podem produzir. É um pedido de desculpas, no sentido de que, em tempos tão urgentes, parece um luxo se envolver no campo, não da teorização científica sobre o vírus, que não é da conta de um filósofo, mas da teorização das condições de teorização ela própria da situação social/natural em que nos encontramos. Mas é, também, insincero no sentido de que a justificativa e o valor de tal empreendimento serão exemplificados no decorrer do desenvolvimento aqui buscado. Por enquanto, confiaremos no dito de Slavoj Žižek: "Não aja, pense", pois o pensamento abre caminho para o que deve ser feito, quando o que deve ser feito não é dado pelos nossos protocolos habituais de ação. Em certo sentido, não estou propondo soluções, muito mais afirmando, através de um esboço de uma fenomenologia da situação de contágio, porque é tão difícil implementar soluções do ponto de vista do sujeito individual.

2. A questão que pretendo abordar brevemente tem a ver com uma conversa que tive com um amigo alguns dias atrás sobre a situação do vírus aqui no Brasil. Na época, conversávamos com um amigo do exterior, aliás um amigo iraniano que morava no Canadá, explicando as medidas de segurança que estavam acontecendo - ou não acontecendo - no Brasil. Fechamento de fronteiras entre Estados, fechamento de lojas, de parte do setor de serviços, etc. Situação anunciada pelos noticiários, mas cuja visibilidade não estava disponível a um simples passeio pelas ruas do Rio de Janeiro: sim, poderia ser verificada alguma diminuição de presença pública nas ruas, mas nada como o que se esperava com as medidas anunciadas. Em certo sentido, os efeitos da infecção viral ainda não eram visíveis através dos meus meios cotidianos de inspeção – um passeio normal nas ruas. O que me leva a esclarecer a idéia da presente intervenção: a disjunção entre o que é cognoscível através dos métodos e dados científicos relevantes e o que é visível através da experiência cotidiana.

3. Para começar a abordar a dialética entre o cognoscível e o visível, citarei um parágrafo de um texto anônimo proposto por Fernando Zalamea.

> Há um corredor estreito na Penn Station ligando o metrô às plataformas do NJ Transit. As paredes desse corredor

> kidney function of the whole of Humanity. To see these pebbles as kidney stones: to be struck by a new "aspect."[1]

The quoted text, "Wittgenstein Sheaves," intends to shed light upon Wittgenstein's philosophical method through the method of *sheaves* - the "gluing" of separate pieces of informations into a whole.

> A sheaf is thus a rule
>
> F : Space→Structures that is both compatible and satisfies a local-to-global condition and where a "space" is the object we are interested in studying and "structures" are those objects that we already "know enough about." To construct a sheaf on some space allows us to "shift the discourse" from something less well-understood to something better-understood by ensuring that the less well-understood object is faithfully patched together from regions of better-understood structures.[2]

In the example, a comparison between two pieces of information draws a transference from one domain to the other - and the corridor of vagrants is seen as the result of a systemic problem: a *political* dimension emerges not by a conceptual analysis of the situation, but through the proximity of the images. In this sense, contrary to the Žižekian dictum, Zalamea turns to the Wittgensteinian one: "Don't think, look."

In my sense, what is needed is to learn through thinking to see differently. Something like this must come to pass in the case of COVID-19. We must, in a sense, learn to see otherwise, *not just* believe the information, but see it in the streets. We must learn to see the corridor not as pebbles but as both victims and conduits for the virus. In a sense, we must learn to inhabit a different world.

4. Nelson Goodman thought that we lived not in one readymade world, but in several worlds at once, worlds created through the symbolic means of humanity.

[1] "Wittgenstein Sheaves (Anonymous, Communicated by Fernando Zalamea)," *Glass Beads* (2020), 7. https://www.glass-bead.org/research-platform/wittgenstein-sheaves/?lang=enview.
[2] "Wittgenstein Sheaves," 3.

> estreito estavam sempre cheias de mendigos e moradores de rua, embrulhados em sacos de lixo, dormindo em caixas de papelão, abraçando seus poucos pertences amontoados em carrinhos de mercado, a maioria deles encharcada em sua própria urina, todos meio loucos, resmungando, delirantes. A grande força de trabalho americana que chegava de Nova Jersey todas as manhãs teria que se espremer por esse pequeno tributo - esse corredor de urina e mendigos. Esta visão dificilmente atrasava as pessoas. Eles passaram por ela, sem nenhum questionamento, como um rio passa sobre as pedras em seu leito. Eu também tive que passar por isso – subir rio acima, para Nova Jersey. ...
>
> Mas agora devo passar por eles... como se passam pedras nos rins. Esses mendigos são as pedras nos rins que nenhum sistema de idéias conseguiu passar adiante. E assim como as pedras nos rins microscópicas são capazes de incapacitar um organismo inteiro, esses mendigos são capazes de desligar a função renal de toda a humanidade. Ver essas pedras como pedras nos rins: ser atingido por um novo "aspecto".[2]

O texto citado, "Wittgenstein Sheaves", pretende lançar luz sobre o método filosófico de Wittgenstein através do método topológico de feixes - a "colagem" de informações separadas formando um todo.

> Um feixe é, portanto, uma regra
>
> F : Espaço→Estruturas, que são compatíveis e satisfazem uma condição local-global e onde um "espaço" é o objeto que estamos interessados em estudar e "estruturas" são aqueles objetos sobre os quais já "conhecemos o suficiente". Construir um feixe sobre algum espaço nos permite "mudar o discurso" de algo menos bem compreendido para algo mais bem compreendido, garantindo que o objeto menos bem entendido seja fielmente remendado a partir de regiões de estruturas mais bem compreendidas.[3]

[2] "Wittgenstein Sheaves (Anonymous, Communicated by Fernando Zalamea)," *Glass Beads* (2020), 7. https://www.glass-bead.org/research-platform/wittgenstein-sheaves/?lang=enview.
[3] "Wittgenstein Sheaves," 3.

> Consider, to begin with; the statements "The sun always moves" and "The sun never moves" which, though equally true, are at odds with each other. Shall we say, then, that they describe different worlds, and indeed that there are as many different worlds as there are such mutually exclusive truths? Rather, we are inclined to regard the two strings of words not as complete statements with truth-values of their own but as elliptical for some such statements as "Under frame of reference A, the sun always moves" and "Under frame of reference B, the sun never moves" - statements that may both be true of the same world. Frames of reference, though, seem to belong less to what is described than to systems of description: and each of the two statements relates what is described to such a system. If I ask about the world, you can offer to tell me how it is under one or more frames of reference; but if I insist that you tell me how it is apart from all frames, what can you say? We are confined to ways of describing whatever is described. Our universe, so to speak, consists of these ways rather than of a world or of worlds.[3]

To learn to inhabit the new world is to learn to understand everyday experience through a different set of lenses, a different frame of reference. But in Goodman's sense, frames of reference are the labor of Humanity's symbolic powers. The very fact that in the present case the world being fabricated is not just the product of our own making as symbol dwellers puts up a challenge to Goodman's account of *Worldmaking*. It stresses the dimension of external constraints being forced upon us, to which one must adapt. It expresses the truth of realism - that there is a mind-independent reality, with the caveats of a form of Idealism- that the ways of constituting it are multiple. "Wittgenstein's position on this point is, as we have seen, that certain facts could make our language games impossible or without interest, but that none of the facts which we can note and mention made them necessary."[4]

[3] Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1978), 2-3.
[4] "La position de Wittgenstein sur ce point est, nous l'avons vu, que certains faits pourraient rendre nos jeux de langage impossibles ou sans intérêt, mais qu'aucun des faits que nous pouvons constater et mentionner ne les a rendus nécessaires." Jacques Bouveresse, *Le mythe de l'intériorité. Expérience, signification et langage privé chez Wittgenstein* (Paris: Les Éditions de

No exemplo dado, uma comparação entre duas informações leva a uma transferência de um domínio para outro - e o corredor dos moradores de rua é visto como resultado de um problema sistêmico: uma dimensão política emerge não pela análise conceitual da situação, mas através da proximidade das imagens. Nesse sentido, ao contrário do dito Žižekiano, Zalamea se volta para o dito Wittgensteiniano: "Não pense, olhe". O que é necessário é aprender através do pensamento para ver de forma diferente.

Algo assim deve acontecer no caso do COVID-19. Em certo sentido, devemos aprender um novo *ver-como* ("ver algo como algo"), não apenas acreditar nas informações, mas vê-las nas ruas. Devemos aprender a ver o corredor não como pedras, mas como vítimas e condutores do vírus. De certo modo, devemos aprender a habitar um mundo diferente.

4. Nelson Goodman pensava que não vivíamos em um mundo pronto, mas em vários mundos ao mesmo tempo, mundos criados através dos meios simbólicos da humanidade.

> Considere, para começar; as afirmações "O sol sempre se move" e "O sol nunca se move" que, embora igualmente verdadeiras, estão em desacordo. Devemos dizer, então, que eles descrevem mundos diferentes e, de fato, que existem tantos mundos diferentes quanto essas verdades mutuamente excludentes? Em vez disso, estamos inclinados a considerar as duas cadeias de palavras não como afirmações completas com valores de verdade próprios, mas elípticas para algumas afirmações como "Sob o quadro de referência A, o sol sempre se move" e "Sob o quadro de referência B, o sol nunca se move" - declarações que podem ambas serem verdadeiros para o mesmo mundo. Os quadros de referência, no entanto, parecem pertencer menos ao que é descrito do que aos sistemas de descrição: e cada uma das duas afirmações relaciona o que é descrito a esse sistema. Se eu perguntar sobre o mundo, você pode me dizer como ele está sob um ou mais referenciais; mas se eu insistir em que você me diga como está separado de todos os quadros, o que você pode dizer? Estamos confinados a maneiras de

5. The transition between the worlds being examined here is not just a transition between two *visible* worlds, but it is also the emergence of something out of *invisibility*. An invisibility that is the result of a difference of *scale* amongst phenomena. The virus itself, as a token of this invisibility, makes itself visible through its effects only: both the disease, if one gets it, and other effects at different timescales, spatially scattered - the effects on herd dynamics and on the economy. The effects that were missing, although expected, in my stroll on the streets of Rio de Janeiro four days ago, that were starting to become present two days ago.

How should one respond to an invisible menace? How should we respond to the creeping effects of its dissemination? What kinds of sheaves are to be constructed from these phenomena to our sensibility? These are the questions that are to be asked here.

In a text just published, Nassim Nicholas Taleb and Joseph Norman take a jab at the individualist libertarian understanding of the scaling relationship of the risk of the virus between the individual and the socius:

> Assume a risk of a multiplicative viral epidemic, still in its early stages. The risk for an individual to catch the virus is very low, lower than other ailments. It is therefore "irrational" to panic (react immediately and as a priority). But if she or he does not panic and act in an ultra-conservative manner, they will contribute to the spread of the virus and it will become a severe source of systemic harm. Precaution scales in a convex way for crossdependent small idiosyncratic risks that end up dynamically extremely large at the systemic level. Hence one must "panic" individually (i.e., produce what seems to be an exaggerated response) in order to avoid systemic problems, even where the immediate payoff does not appear to warrant it.[5]

In other words, to be *ethical* in a pandemic one must use an *as if* argument - something familiar to every Kantian out there, but here

Minuit, 1987), 593.

[5] Nassim Nicholas Taleb and Joe Norman, "Ethics of Precaution: Individual and Systemic Risk," *Academia.edu* (March 2020). https://www.academia.edu/42223846/Ethics_of_Precaution_Individual_and_Systemic_Risk.

> descrever o que quer que seja descrito. Nosso universo, por assim dizer, consiste dessas maneiras e não de um mundo ou de mundos.[4]

Aprender a habitar o novo mundo é aprender a entender a experiência cotidiana através de um conjunto diferente de lentes, um quadro de referência diferente. Mas, no sentido de Goodman, os quadros de referência são o trabalho dos poderes simbólicos da Humanidade. O próprio fato de que, no presente caso, o mundo que está sendo fabricado não é apenas o produto de nossa própria criação enquanto "habitantes do conceito" coloca um desafio à descrição que Goodman oferece sobre a criação de mundos (*Worldmaking* em seu vocabulário técnico). Este fato enfatiza a dimensão das restrições externas que nos são impostas, às quais devemos nos adaptar. Expressa a verdade do Realismo – que existe uma realidade independente da mente, com as ressalvas de uma forma de Idealismo - de que as formas de constituí-lo são múltiplas. "A posição de Wittgenstein sobre esse ponto é, como vimos, que certos fatos podem tornar nossos jogos de linguagem impossíveis ou sem interesse, mas que nenhum dos fatos que podemos observar e mencionar os tornou necessários".[5]

5. A transição entre mundos aqui sendo examinados não é apenas uma transição entre dois mundos visíveis, mas é também o surgimento de algo a partir da invisibilidade. Uma invisibilidade que é o resultado de uma diferença de *escala* entre os fenômenos. O próprio vírus como exemplo dessa invisibilidade se torna visível apenas por seus efeitos: tanto a doença, se contraída pela pessoa, quanto outros efeitos em escalas de tempo diferentes, e dispersas espacialmente: os efeitos na dinâmica social e na economia. Os efeitos que estavam faltando, embora fossem esperados, no meu passeio pelas ruas do Rio de Janeiro quatro dias atrás, e que começavam a se tornar presentes dois dias atrás.

Como se deve responder a uma ameaça invisível? Como devemos responder aos efeitos assustadores de sua disseminação? Que tipos

[4] Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1978), 2-3.

[5] "La position de Wittgenstein sur ce point est, nous l'avons vu, que certains faits pourraient rendre nos jeux de langage impossibles ou sans intérêt, mais qu'aucun des faits que nous pouvons constater et mentionner ne les a rendus nécessaires." Jacques Bouveresse, *Le mythe de l'intériorité. Expérience, signification et langage privé chez Wittgenstein* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1987), 593.

for empirical reasons. One must believe in that which is not livable in the moment - the exponential growth of effects that are detected once it is already too late. In this context, *fear* acquires a cognitive purchase - once our *seeings-as* are reasonably calibrated to the new conditions - by listening to the news and watching the growth of distancing behaviors from our peers, fear takes place as something *real* is thought to be happening. In a sense, fear comes to be the content of the form, which is the knowledge of the existence of the virus - as in the Kantian phrase "concepts without intuitions are empty." Fear brings the concept home.

6. But fear has political implications that ought to be balanced. The jab taken by the text in question has to do with the fact that, if the stakes are low for the individual, she tends to take unnecessary risks, even if the stakes are high for the community. Any politics that insists on the liberal understanding of the freedom of movement in this atomistic sense is condemned in the present juncture. At the same time, this pandemic is a patchwork engine, prompting nations and states to close off borders, in a movement towards decentralization and the severing of lines of commerce between them - even if lines of communication are more important than ever.

7. Even if desirable, at the individual level, not everyone can isolate themselves, and the present crisis by making itself visible is also making visible the rift between those who can and those who cannot; and the injunction to maximally isolate individuals from contact opens the door to violations from State interventions that, while acceptable in times of crisis like ours, run the risk of becoming commonplace, with governments and corporations seizing on the opportunity to fasten control over its users and citizens.

Will the present crisis mark the end of a politics that insists upon the priority of the economical calculation based on individual wants and needs, pushing forward a politics of the common that recognizes public health as a good to be shared amongst all? Or will this be the beginning of new kinds of surveillance to be pursued by those on the top in order to maximize the reproduction of their profit and dominion?

Within the response to this predicament also lies possible responses to other crises to come that ask for broader cooperation between lo-

de feixes devem ser construídos desses fenômenos para nossa sensibilidade? Estas são as perguntas que faço aqui.

Em um texto recém-publicado, Nassim Nicholas Taleb e Joseph Norman criticam a compreensão libertária individualista da relação de escala do risco de vírus entre o indivíduo e o socius:

> Considere o risco de uma epidemia viral multiplicativa, ainda em seus estágios iniciais. O risco de um indivíduo pegar o vírus é muito baixo, menor do que em outras doenças. Portanto, é "irracional" entrar em pânico (reagir imediatamente como prioridade). Mas se ele ou ela não entrar em pânico e agir de maneira ultraconservadora, eles contribuirão para a disseminação do vírus e ele se tornará uma fonte grave de dano sistêmico. A precaução é dimensionada de maneira convexa para pequenos riscos idiossincráticos interdependentes que acabam tornando-se dinamicamente extremamente grandes no nível sistêmico. Portanto, é preciso "entrar em pânico" individualmente (isto é, produzir o que parece ser uma resposta exagerada) para evitar problemas sistêmicos, mesmo quando o ganho imediato não parece justificá-lo.[6]

Em outras palavras, para ser ético em uma pandemia, deve-se usar um argumento do tipo *como se* - algo familiar a todos os kantianos por aí, mas aqui por razões empíricas. É preciso acreditar naquilo que não é habitável no momento - o crescimento exponencial dos efeitos que são somente detectados quando já é tarde demais. Nesse contexto, o medo possui uma dimensão cognitiva, uma vez que nossos *veres-como* são razoavelmente calibrados para as novas condições. Ouvindo as notícias e observando o crescimento dos comportamentos de distanciamento de nossos pares, o medo ocorre quando o que vemos é pensado como realmente acontecendo. Em certo sentido, o medo passa a ser o conteúdo da forma que é o conhecimento da existência do vírus - como na frase kantiana "conceitos sem intuições são vazios". O medo traz o conceito para casa.

[6] Nassim Nicholas Taleb and Joe Norman, "Ethics of Precaution: Individual and Systemic Risk," *Academia.edu* (March 2020). https://www.academia.edu/42223846/Ethics_of_Precaution_Individual_and_Systemic_Risk.

cal powers beyond the current economic-political suture. The question becomes then: can the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic be repurposed for the approaching of other systemic world problems?

8. In an email exchange with Žižek, my friend Gabriel Tupinambá states another variation of the theme of the interrelation of fear and knowledge. I quote Žižek's quote of him:

> Tupinambá further noticed that the same paradox held for the outburst of the HIV crisis: "*the invisible spread of the HIV crisis was so nerve-wracking, the impossibility of rendering ourselves commensurate with the scale of the problem, that having one's passport 'stamped' [with HIV] did not seem, to some, like too high a price to pay for giving the situation some symbolic contours. It would at least give a measure to the power of the virus and deliver us to a situation in which, already having contracted it, we could then see what sort of freedom we would still have*."
>
> The moment the spectral agent becomes part of our reality (even if it means catching a virus), its power is localized, it becomes something we can deal with (even if we lose the battle). As long as this transposition into reality cannot take place, "*we get trapped either in anxious paranoia (pure globality) or resort to ineffective symbolizations through acting outs that expose us to unnecessary risks (pure locality).*"[6]

Tupinambá's mobilization of pure globality and pure locality expresses well the predicament of a phenomenology of the pandemic - that between the necessity of believing the reality of that which is invisible - that is, maintaining a minimal "thickness" to the hypothesis of the existence of the virus, without succumbing either to anxious paranoia, or to its reverse - projective denegation of its existence. The predicament is not exclusive to the present pandemic, but is ubiquitous in the experience of contemporary global capitalism, wherein processes with causal efficacy supersede our capacity

[6] Slavoj Žižek, "Slavoj Žižek's COVID-19 Lockdown Survival Guide: Guilty Pleasures, Valhalla Murders and Pretending It's Just a Game," *Russia Today* (March 28, 2020). https://www.rt.com/op-ed/484270-covid-zizek-survival-guide.

6. Mas o medo tem implicações políticas que devem ser consideradas. A crítica do texto em questão tem a ver com o fato de que, se as apostas são baixas para o indivíduo, este tende a correr riscos desnecessários, mesmo que as apostas sejam altas para a comunidade. Qualquer política que insista no entendimento liberal-individualista da liberdade de movimento nesse sentido atomístico está no presente momento condenada. Ao mesmo tempo, essa pandemia é um maquina de geração de *patchworks* ("retalhos"), levando nações e estados a fechar fronteiras, em um movimento em direção à descentralização e ao rompimento das linhas de comércio entre elas - mesmo que a manutenção das linhas de comunicação seja mais importante do que nunca.

7. Mesmo que desejável, no nível individual, nem todos podem se isolar, e a crise atual, tornando-se visível, também está tornando mais visível a brecha entre quem pode e quem não pode; e a liminar de isolar ao máximo os indivíduos do contato abre as portas para violações de direitos pelo Estado, que, embora compreensíveis em tempos de crise como o nosso, correm o risco de se tornarem normais, com governos e empresas aproveitando a oportunidade para acelerar o controle sobre seus usuários e cidadãos.

A crise atual marcará o fim de uma política que insista na prioridade do cálculo econômico baseado nos desejos e necessidades individuais, promovendo uma política do Comum que reconheça a saúde pública como um bem a ser partilhado entre todos? Ou será este o começo de novos tipos de vigilância a serem perseguidos pelos que estão no topo, a fim de maximizar a reprodução de seu lucro e domínio?

Dentro da resposta a essa situação, também estão possíveis respostas a outras crises que pedem uma cooperação mais ampla entre as potências locais além da sutura político-econômica atual.

A questão torna-se então: as lições aprendidas da pandemia do COVID-19 podem ser reorientadas para a abordagem de outros problemas sistêmicos no mundo?

8. Em uma troca de e-mail com Žižek, meu amigo Gabriel Tupinambá afirma outra variação do tema da inter-relação de medo e saber. Cito a citação de Žižek sobre ele:

of making sense. In a sense, we are not inhabiting different worlds in the sense of Goodman here, diachronically switching between the worlds of art, scientific theories and philosophemes, but we are inhabiting a split between an *intrusion* to our abilities of worldmaking and the worlds we fashion to try and make sense of it. The phenomenon/noumenon split is *immanentized* within the situation.

In this situation, fear is most intense while it is a fear of the unknown. As Žižek comments in the same text: "if there is no great change in our daily reality, then the threat is experienced as a spectral fantasy nowhere to be seen and all the more powerful for that reason."

If *fear*, which has an important cognitive purchase in the present situation, brings the concept home, by achieving some kind of experienceable *scaling*, the concept brings *fear back home* - domesticating it for productive use.

9. Took a stroll alone yesterday. Streets are empty, stores are closed. Remembered a line from the *I Ching* to be taken as an ethical imperative by everyone - another *as if* argument to be mobilized in the world in formation.

> Thunder mingles with startled screams of terror for a hundred miles around. As the people nervously laugh at their own fright, the devout presents the sacrificial chalice with nary a drop of wine spilt.

Many thanks to Mohammad Salemy and Gabriel Tupinambá for instigating the writing of this text.

> "a expansão invisível da crise de HIV foi tão desgastante, a impossibilidade de nos tornarmos proporcionais à escala do problema, que ter um passaporte 'carimbado' [com HIV] não parecia, para alguns, um preço muito alto a se pagar por dar à situação alguns contornos simbólicos. Daria, ao menos, uma medida do poder do vírus e nos levaria a uma situação na qual, já tendo contraído, poderíamos ver que tipo de liberdade ainda teríamos."
>
> No momento em que o agente espectral se torna parte da nossa realidade (mesmo quando isso significa pegar um vírus), seu poder é localizado, se torna algo com o qual nós podemos lidar (mesmo se perdermos a batalha). Enquanto essa transposição para a realidade não puder ocorrer, "nós ficamos presos na ansiedade paranóica (pura globalidade) ou recorremos a simbolizações ineficazes através de acting outs que nos expõe a riscos desnecessários (pura localidade)".[7]

A mobilização por Tupinambá da pura globalidade e da pura localidade expressa bem a situação de uma fenomenologia da pandemia - aquela entre a necessidade de acreditar na realidade daquilo que é invisível - ou seja, mantendo uma "espessura" mínima à hipótese da existência da vírus, sem sucumbir à paranoia ou à denegação projetiva quanto à sua existência. A situação não é exclusiva da pandemia atual, mas é onipresente na experiência do capitalismo global contemporâneo, em que processos com eficácia causal ultrapassam nossa capacidade de fazer sentido deles. Em certo sentido, não estamos habitando mundos diferentes no sentido de Goodman aqui, alternando diacronicamente entre os mundos da arte, teorias científicas e filosofemas, mas estamos vivendo uma intrusão externa em nossas habilidades de criação de mundo e os mundos que modelamos. A divisão fenômeno/úmeno é imanentizada dentro da presente situação.

Nesta conjuntura, o medo é mais intenso, enquanto é um medo do desconhecido. Como Žižek comenta sobre o mesmo texto: "se não há nenhuma grande mudança em nossa realidade cotidiana, então a

[7] Slavoj Žižek, "O guia de sobrevivência da quarentena de Slavoj Žižek: prazeres culposos, Assassinos de Valhalla e finja que isso é apenas um jogo," traduzido por Victor Pimentel, *Lavra Palavra* (Marco 31, 2020). https://lavrapalavra.com/2020/03/31/o-guia-de-sobrevivencia-da-quarentena-de-slavoj-zizek-prazeres-culposos-assassinos-de-valhalla-e-finja-que-isso-e-apenas-um-jogo.

ameaça é experimentada como uma fantasia espectral não localizável em lugar nenhum, e ainda mais poderosa por essa razão".

Se o medo tem uma importante função cognitiva na situação atual, trazendo o conceito para casa, ao alcançar algum tipo de escala experimentável, é o conceito que traz o medo de volta para casa - domesticando-o para uso produtivo.

9. Andei sozinho ontem. As ruas estão vazias e as lojas estão fechadas. Lembrei de uma linha do *I Ching* a ser tomada como imperativo ético - outro argumento *como-se* a ser mobilizado no mundo em formação.

> O choque gera pavor num raio de cem milhas e ele não deixa cair a colher do cerimonial de sacrifício, nem o cálice.

Muito obrigado a Mohammad Salemy e Gabriel Tupinambá por instigarem a redação deste texto.

Traduzido do inglês pelo autor

João Florêncio |

Writing Theory during a Pandemic

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Soon after the COVID-19 pandemic reached Europe, triggering a variety of national public health responses throughout the continent, several theorists and philosophers started publishing texts online and in printed media, trying to make sense of what had become a planetary public health event due to the scale of its geographical reach, its global real-time mediation and the more or less concerted responses from national governments and public health authorities. From the already infamous debate between Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito, Jean-Luc Nancy and others on the biopolitics of state responses to the pandemic,[1] to The New Centre for Research and Practice's series of Zoom conversations entitled "Sheltering Places: Thinking the COVID-19 Pandemic,"[2] or "The Losers Conspiracy"[3] - Paul B. Preciado's recent piece for *Artforum* - Arts and Humanities scholars have been quick to respond to what is very much a fast-developing and still-ongoing situation with, as of yet, no clear end in sight.

Whilst debates immediately ensued on social media concerning the latest position on the topic advanced by this or that writer, some academics on social media were quick to declare their outrage at the fact that some of their peers had jumped on the COVID-19 bandwagon (as it were), supposedly with the sole aims of developing their public profile and profiting from a public health crisis. To them, the present times of COVID-19 ought to be an opportunity for us to somehow inhabit the reality of the present, to forego all attempts at theorizing it, and to leave all the knowledge production on the pandemic to the "legitimate" voices of scientists and medical authorities. Illnesses and pandemics, we are seemingly being told, ought to remain the exclusive object of study of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) researchers. If they are ever to become objects of the Arts and Humanities, they should do so only once they are no longer present and have thus moved into the climate-controlled rooms of that archive we have learnt to call "History." Thinking during an epidemic, it would seem, is an obscene undertaking and thus the solution offered to what is being framed as an unethical practice is to become suspended in a state of unthought.

Yet, for those of us who have come of academic age by means of ways of living, of thinking, and of forging desires, bodies and pleasures that have broadly fallen under the umbrella of queer, such a call for intellectual inaction and for a suspension of all theorizing during a pandemic comes across as deeply shortsighted. As anyone with a minimal understanding of the history of the HIV and AIDS will know - and by no means am I trying here to build an equivalence between SARS-CoV-2 and HIV, for there is absolutely no equivalence to be made either in terms of mortality rate, social stigma, or the time it took governments and the scientific research communi-

[1] Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben and Sergio Benvenuto, "Coronavirus and Philosophers," *European Journal of Psychoanalysis* (February - March 2020). https://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/coronavirus-and-philosophers.

[2] "Sheltering Places: Thinking the COVID-19 Pandemic 01," *YouTube* (March 25, 2020). https://youtu.be/vx6VESRlg8g.

[3] Paul B. Preciado, "The Losers Conspiracy," *Artforum* (March 26, 2020). https://www.artforum.com/slant/paul-b-preciado-on-life-after-covid-19-82586.

ty to respond to each epidemic - it was our ability to think through AIDS as it was happening and people were dying that allowed us to forge informal networks of care, to congregate as a critical mass demanding political action and research funding, and to target and work towards dismantling all the stigmatizing constellations of meaning that had been coalescing around HIV and those living with it. Most importantly, it was our refusal to stop thinking during that epidemic that allowed us - theorists and activists-cum-amateur epidemiologists and virologists - to develop risk-management strategies when the official guidelines insisted that the only way we could survive what *scientists* themselves started by calling "Gay-Related Immune Deficiency" was to cease and desist from all homosexual and non-monogamous forms of sexual intimacy. Further, it was the eventual coalition that formed among medical doctors, activists, patient groups and theorists that led the fight against HIV and AIDS to reach its current state. Today, thanks to that cross-disciplinary coalition work, antiretrovirals have been developed that allow both the successful management of current infections and the prophylaxis of new ones, and free universal access to those combination drug regimens around the world has now become the next urgent item on the agenda.

The histories of - and cultural responses to - the HIV epidemic, which so fundamentally co-shaped the histories of various oppressed groups (not just white gay men), highlight the value of the Arts and Humanities for thinking not only bodies, health and disease, but also the various political, economic, and social formations in which biomedical events emerge and develop. In the case of COVID-19, and as Tim Rhodes, Kari Lancaster, and Marsha Rosengarten have recently claimed, the current media and public thirst for mathematical models of the pandemic highlights a case of evidence no longer being used, as before, to show the present state of a disease. Instead, COVID-19 evidence produced through modelling is now functioning as "*potentials* and as *not yet knowns* ... evidence is produced which potentiates an action, even in the absence of knowing."[4] Therefore, "what constitutes 'evidence,' 'evidence-based decisions,' and even 'science,' are open to revision."[5]

That characteristics of the COVID-19 pandemic - how it has been mediated, understood and communicated to citizens - raises important questions that are of concern to Arts and Humanities researchers because they have to do with how the knowledge of the disease is produced, circulated and acted upon in ways that exceed the traditional domain of STEM disciplines. A case in point is the set of institutional reactions to the forecasts presented by the mathematical models of the pandemic. Whilst actions indeed needed to be taken in order to contain the spread of the infection and reduce the number of deaths, the "neutral" information conveyed by epidemiological forecasts was already seized and instrumentalized to justify and secure the implementation of measures that - one would hope - could hardly be accepted under non-exceptional circumstances. Most worryingly, several of those measures implemented by different governments were brought in without a clear end date. Whilst in countries like Portugal, where a state of emergency was declared which, amongst other things, suspended workers' rights as well as the rights to private enterprise and private property, the Constitution limits states of emergency to fifteen days after which revision and re-approval are needed, in countries like the U.S.A., the U.K. or Hungary the situation appears to be much different. In London, Boris Johnson started by calling for eugenics by putting his hopes on a crassly misunderstood notion of "herd immunity," only to then implement a series of limitations to rights which - worryingly - may continue to be invoked beyond two years, leading human rights organization Liberty to call it the "biggest restriction on our freedom in a generation."[6] In Hungary, on the other hand, parliament has just passed a bill that gave Prime Minister Viktor Orbán the power to rule by decree with no end date,[7] while in the U.S. states of Washington and Alabama, neurodiverse people may not pass the triage system for access to ventilators,[8] with scholars worrying about the clash between civil rights and the hyper-rational utilitarian logics of eugenics sustaining some of the decisions being taken.

[4] Tim Rhodes, Kari Lancaster and Marsha Rosengarten, "A Model Society: Maths, Models and Expertise in Viral Outbreaks," *Critical Public Health*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (2020), 254. DOI: 10.1080/09581596.2020.1748310.
[5] Rhodes, Lancaster and Rosengarten, "A Model Society," 255.
[6] "New Law Is Biggest Restriction on Our Freedom in a Generation," *Liberty* (March 26, 2020). https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/issue/new-law-is-biggest-restriction-on-our-freedom-in-a-generation.
[7] Daniel B. Baer, "The Shocking 'Coronavirus Coup' in Hungary Was a Wake-Up Call," *Foreign Policy* (March 31, 2020). https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/31/viktor-orban-hungary-coronavirus-coup.
[8] Amy Silverman, "People with Intellectual Disabilities May Be Denied Lifesaving Care under These Plans as Coronavirus Spreads," *ProPublica* (March 27, 2020). https://www.propublica.org/article/people-with-intellectual-disabilities-may-be-denied-lifesaving-care-under-these-plans-as-coronavirus-spreads.

Similarly, around the world, contingency measures are being implemented in work places - in factories, service industries, universities, etc. - which are accompanied by suspicious language that hints at the pandemic having been seized as an opportunity to, without consultation, bring in radical changes to how we work that may well last into a post-COVID-19 future. Or, at the level of the European Union, confrontations have already been taking place between the governments of Italy, Spain, France, Portugal, Greece, Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg, and Slovenia, and those of Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, and Finland, on the former's request for EU bonds to be issued as part of a collective financing of the EU response to the pandemic,[9] and the latter's strict aversion to debt and preference for each EU member to go at it on its own. Meanwhile, we are all being asked to stay home, only being allowed out with people who live in our households - a request that completely ignores the millions of people around the world who live in unconventional relations of kinship, who inhabit networks of care, friendship, love, and intimacy that are not contained by the model nuclear family being invoked in our governments' demand for self-isolation - those of us to whom such networks of care, friendship, love and intimacy are indeed a fundamental part of what we see as a life worth living. All these are political, social and cultural matters that cannot be grasped through an uncritical reduction of the COVID-19 pandemic to the realm of "Science" and to the knowledge - important as it certainly is - of epidemiologists, virologists, and mathematicians.

Over two decades after Paula Treichler wrote the landmark book *How to Have Theory in an Epidemic*[10] - a critical reflection on the intertwined clinical and cultural dimensions of the AIDS crisis - some academic colleagues, even some in the Humanities, appear to still insist that no theory can be produced about an epidemic during an epidemic and that all we should do is wait for our turn. In so doing, they unwittingly endorse the right-wing narrative that, over the last few years, has been painting the Arts and Humanities as useless disciplines led by "radical lefties" intended on using public funds in order to simply be a nuisance to the status quo. According to that narrative, and its technocratic neoliberal ideology, the only useful knowledge is the knowledge of "Science." Yet, as the responses to COVID-19 are already showing - and as the responses to AIDS had already shown - and as any medical humanities scholar will confirm, no epidemic is a purely medical event capable of being solely understood by means of graphs and data sets. It is there - it is here, today - that the Arts and Humanities can (also) show their worth. It is there - it is here - that, rather than exiting stage-left waiting for the brighter days when we will (hopefully?) be allowed to continue doing our work, we should instead be joining in with the public, with our students, and with colleagues in STEM disciplines, all working and thinking together through this pandemic and towards the kind of society and planet we want to become.

[9] Melvyn Krauss, "Coronabonds Are Inevitable. Everybody Knows It," *Bloomberg* (March 30, 2020). https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2020-03-30/coronavirus-coronabonds-are-inevitable-everybody-knows-it.
[10] Paula Treichler, *How to Have Theory in an Epidemic: Cultural Chronicles of AIDS* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1999).

Ekin Erkan |

Animality, Metaethical Judgments and Predictive Justice

(2020-04-02)

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In a wading pool of philosophical mire and superimpositions - square cubes retrofitted upon cylindrical perforations - Anne-Françoise Schmid, "scientist amongst philosophers and philosopher amongst scientists," rises from the morass, pronouncing that:

> [t]he Earth is then silent, and is only perceived by the plants. La Mettrie could have taught us this in *L'Homme-Plante*. This silence is profound, more profound than the philosopher believes it to be, who thinks to have seamed [*couturé*] his system - for example, by his exclusion of women and animals. It is the silence which reaches him when, finally, he learns that there are other philosophies as lively as his and that he must postulate the de jure multiplicity of philosophies. Therefore, philosophy is silent: only isolated philosophies are talkative [*bavardes*]. ... We have the obligation of a silence, but a new silence, which does not result from the absence of noise.[1]

Indeed, it is not a unified theory that Schmid seeks to impose but rather a political and poetic musing, one which recalls Katerina Kolozova's comments in *Capitalism's Holocaust of Animals* (2019) concerning animality as a brute scaffold upon which Capital materiality creates "victims-in-person." This reduction is the foundational gesture of Capital, diffuse and ripe for exacting surplus out of "pure value" - that is, life-preservation and vestiges of "reason" from divine violence: "[t]he Earth sees us, the animal sees us, the woman sees us. And the planet sees us, too. We believed we were the only ones to see."[2]

What, exactly, does the philosopher's vision, or lack thereof, suggest in terms of metaethics and jurisprudence in our current moment? Contra the impulses of continental philosophers such as those Badiou, Žižek, and Agamben pose, this insight bolsters the piecemeal approach often prioritized by analytics. Specifically, the multitude of questioning that Schmid encourages suggests that we ask *specific questions*, such as: is it ethical for judges to continue imprisoning offenders, given these circumstances?[3] How do we orient a debt jubilee, consolidate rent strikes, sick strikes, and so on? What are the implications of COVID-19's r-naught (roughly 2.2, but possibly as high as 3.5) and what statistical modeling techniques can we exact to more precisely obtain an exact measure?

We will not attempt to resolve all of these queries. Furthermore, our piecemeal approach is not to divorce critique from the coeval possibility of a more conceptual philosophical apparatus - for instance, let us consider the politics of animality vis-à-vis containment. Kolozova's Laruellian project does not prompt the kind of revalorization or anthropomorphizing of the animal that we see in Derrida or Haraway, but posits the cultural exchange and treatment of "animali-

[1] Anne-Françoise Schmid, "The Philosopher's Vision," trans. by Jeremy R. Smith, *Identities: Journal for Politics, Gender and Culture* (March 31, 2020). www.identitiesjournal.edu.mk/index.php/IJPGC/announcement/view/11; see also pp. 14-15 in this issue.
[2] Schmid, "The Philosopher's Vision."
[3] In agreeance with Robert Brandom, we offer that imprisonment is a deferral of recognizance and, thus, is never ethical; nonetheless, the purpose of this essay, which plucks from the verdant fields of metaphysics and jurisprudence alike, is to consider the practical purposes of philosophy *qua* the current pandemic.

ty" as a general equivalent of the real. It has been the motivation of feminist philosophers such as Kolozova and Schmid to reach beyond the strictures of deconstruction and/or post-structuralism in order to recognize that such reductions "ground and sustain patriarchy and heteronormative sexuality" as a "general equivalent of woman or the woman as reified abstraction."[4] This is precisely why Schmid notes that (the animal), the Earth, and the woman return our gaze, which we have always assumed held antecedent immanence. Rather than impart an amphibologic metaphysics of supplanting the perfected real via the philosopheme, or pronounce that COVID-19 is some kind of "hyperobject" (à la Timothy Morton), this approach seeks to emancipate the non-human, beginning with the animal.

Let us, then, direct the instrument of animality into the contemporary sphere. Rather than erect bold and all-encompassing theories, Schmid and Kolozova provoke a multitude and overflow of *questioning* (experimenting, calculating), i.e., a science. Has not the epidemic status of COVID-19 taught us the reproductive risks of a philosophy of *answers*, rather than a non-philosophy of questions? Within the tradition of the (standard) philosopheme, from Plato's *Timaeus* to Derrida's "The Animal that Therefore I Am," the animal is prodded forth as an *answer*, reduced to the calculus of a mere machine, an automaton devoid of any semblance of epiphenomenal sensoria, or disembodied as a superlative category, appropriated for framing truth claims by instantiating the real through animality-as-transcendence. In our contemporary moment, we ought to consider how it is that the caged human occupies the position of animality - whether it be those undocumented migrant children caged in detention centers across the United States[5] or in the case of inmates serving out their sentences in prisons. COVID-19 has illuminated the logic of animality by making explicit exactly *how* animality operatively presents itself as a reduction.

Indeed, prisons have long served as the sites of increased and exacerbated infection due to close quarters and unsanitary cell conditions, but this is even more so the case during a pandemic. In turn, while some local districts such as New York City, Los Angeles, and Cuyahoga County in Ohio have reduced sentences and released "non-violent inmates," other districts have tightened restrictions by limiting prisoners' mobility, effectively putting all prisoners in lockdown and, in some cases, involuntary solitary confinement. In addition, the Federal Bureau of Prisons has noted that it is working with the U.S. Marshals Service to "significantly decrease incoming movement" to U.S. prisons by limiting group gatherings and visitations.[6] Furthermore, criminal trials that require in-person appearances of parties or counsel have been suspended, following jurors dropping out of cases due to self-isolation. This is all despite the Sixth Amendment constitutional clause that ensures a speedy trial procedure in criminal and juvenile court proceedings, which is suspended through the close of business on Monday, April 20, 2020 (or as provided by subsequent order).

Just as sociability is contingent on social relations and is determined by the species-being of humanity's normative scaffolding, so too is the possibility of jurisprudential judgment determined by one's peers. Thus, COVID-19's contingent suspensions have set into flux the determinate deontic statuses of commitment and the practical attitudes upon which our norms are causally efficacious.[7] How, then, does the deontology of practical reasoning continue in light of such suspensions?

Indeed, this pandemic does not bar the *possibility* of jurisprudential proceedings in the last instance. In fact, at least since 2013, "predictive justice" machine learning software has been utilized in court to set bails, determine sentences and, increasingly, to contribute to determinations concerning guilt or innocence.[8] There is growing development of risk-assessment algorithmic software that perform

[4] Katerina Kolozova, *Capitalism's Holocaust of Animals: A Non-Marxist Critique of Capital, Philosophy and Patriarchy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 147.
[5] Contrary to popular belief, this project began with the Obama administration's William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 and has been continued by Trump.
[6] See U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Prisons, "Bureau of Prisons COVID-19 Action Plan: Phase Five," *Federal Bureau of Prisons* (March 31, 2020). https://www.bop.gov/resources/news/pdfs/20200331_press_release_action_plan_5.pdf.
[7] "Norms (in the sense of normative statuses) are not objects in the causal order. Natural science, eschewing categories of social practice, will never run across commitments in its cataloguing of the furniture of the world; they are not by themselves causally efficacious - no more than strikes or outs are in baseball. Nonetheless, according to the account presented here, there are norms, and their existence is neither supernatural nor mysterious. Normative statuses are domesticated by being understood in terms of normative attitudes, which are in the causal order." Robert Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 626.
[8] See State of Wisconsin v. Eric L. Loomis, 2015AP157-CR (April 5, 2016).

predictive coding techniques which utilize Bayesian optimization methods, propping up the development and widespread use of predictive policing and crime prediction software.[9] For example, PredPol is a company that markets itself as harnessing "the power of information, geospatial technologies and evidence-based intervention models to reduce crime and improve public safety."[10] Reducing signal amplitude (or variability), such probabilistic coding algorithms proffer local intensities through experimental evidence, training in continua and weighting various connections with signal value inputs so as to output residual error in advance. PredPol markets itself as implementing a machine learning algorithm that adequates three different localizable data points (crime type, crime location and crime date/time); this algorithm trains itself through historical and event-oriented data-sets that can be shared with "local government[s] or the community."[11]

In turn, these predictive justice algorithms wield the allure of objectivity. As of April 2020, a partnership between the Trump administration and Alphabet, Inc. has produced Verily's Project Baseline screening triage website to determine symptoms, travel history and other risk factors that can be ordered for prioritized treatment. However, it is more than foreseeable that such data could be integrated by government agencies such as the Immigration and Customs Enforcement or utilized as a legal prosthesis during times of epidemiological crisis, allowing normative judgments to be unconsciously structured by data. This bears the possibility of a mechanical re-ordering, with predictive policing and justice structuring legal processes along the linealities of "animality," crafting naturalized normative statuses vis-à-vis a typology of inferential norms devoid of any conceptual content. That is, such instantiations of machine learning posit a kind of "bare materialism" that eliminates the normative character of *discursive practice*, with the logical space of rational and communal reasoning - i.e., of meta-linguistic characterization and ontological adjudication - separated from justice in-the-last-instance. Judge, juror, and executioner are wrapped into one commitment - data. Without the deontological and ethical conceptual content born from deliberation (in the case of a jury of peers) or sapient agency (in the case of the arbitrating judge), such datafication reduces ethics to a bare minimum, i.e., the status of "animality."

Drawing on the long philosophical history of pragmatism, philosopher Thomas Nagel (who began his career as a philosopher of mind but moved towards jurisprudence) makes the case that:

> [w]hat creates the link between justice and sovereignty is something common to a wide range of conceptions of justice: they all depend on the coordinated conduct of large numbers of people.[12]

But what happens when such conduct is coordinated without conceptual determination? According to Nagel's remark, the sole means of providing fair jurisprudential practice is through an all-encompassing institution of common coordination. This means that there is a decided difference between the demanding normativity of moral judgments and generic evaluative judgments; it is the functor of evaluative attitudes (or *expressivism*), which is not only directed at *facts* but *normative commitments*, that we lose with predictive justice. Through communal contact between inside and outside (e.g., prisoner and visitor), the coordinated conduct of normativity reaches towards a judgmental and meta-linguistic conceptual register that is barred by the use-value combustion of "animality." It is the philosophical recognition of the "affirmative act" that conditions the constitution of "subject of truth" in jurisprudence; in addition to a factual register, this requires an inaugural "meta-ontological decision" of recognition-cum-recognizance, a judgment which synthesizes intuited individuals into discrete cognitions. But what happens when this coordination is automated, such that algorithmic governmentality is universalized? One's *human* judgment and rational practice is seen as not only superfluous but part and parcel with contamination, a *risk*. Such *risk* is an unforeseen consequence

[9] See D. H. Ballard and R. Rao, "Predictive Coding in the Visual Cortex," *Nature Neuroscience*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1999): 79-87.

[10] PredPol markets itself as implementing a machine learning algorithm that adequates three different localizable data points (crime type, crime location and crime date/time); this algorithm trains itself through historical event data-sets which can be shared with "local government or the community to see the relative patrol coverage across the city." *PredPol Website*. https://www.predpol.com/law-enforcement/#predPolicing.

[11] Bernard Harcourt, "Risk as a Proxy for Race: The Dangers of Risk Assessment," *Federal Sentencing Reporter*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (2015): 237-43.

[12] Thomas Nagel, "The Problem of Global Justice," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (2005), 115.

of speculative arbitration - a metaphysical constraint that pairs cognitive rationality with an obligation to truth[13] - and is precisely what predictive justice unwittingly eradicates. To sanitize now means to animalize, to "lock up and throw away the key" for any foreseeable future; invariably, this also means divorcing disciplinary conditions from the rational motives that bridge reasoning with judging.

[13] Ray Brassier, "Concepts and Objects," in *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, eds. Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek and Graham Harman (Melbourne: re.press, 2011), 51.

Andrea Pető |

Self-Lockdown

(2020-04-02)

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I have received an email from a dear colleague from a university in one of the Nordic countries. I am anonymizing protagonists for a reason which will be obvious by the end of the story. In the letter, she informed me that she is editing a book with her colleagues on how universities can be sites of resistance. As I wrote a lot on this topic,[1] she inquired if I would find the time to contribute.

The invitation could not have been timelier given my recent circumstances. In 2019, I have been investing considerable time and energy in teaching on a safe, on-line digital platform with a colleague, who lost her job because of political reasons in another country. We were teaching a course on a topic which would not fit in the curriculum of countries controlling their higher education by political or/and by economic forces. The enrolled students were doing critical work and faced repression in their professional lives in their respective countries. The safe digital platform at this time, well before we all expected to be digital, was the only chance for both of us, instructors and students, to communicate, share ideas, and discuss issues that matter.

As a Central European University (CEU) faculty member, I was not getting any credit for this work. I was reminded of this fact in a response letter to this request by my university, since our university's US accreditation requires face-to face instruction. I ignored the institutional discouragement to get involved pro bono in this form of instruction, which was one of the best decisions of my life. During the term, I learned a lot about the work and way of thinking of several extraordinary colleagues. After every session, I was overwhelmed by the inspiration I had received from the discussion of the empirical work these students were doing. Therefore, I suggested to my co-instructor that we present our experience in a joint article for this upcoming volume, which is going to be published by a distinguished academic publisher.

However, my fellow co-instructor was concerned, as her lawyer warned her not to produce any document that could be used against her in her trial. Everything that is academic might remain under the radar of the investigators, but she was warned not to contribute to flagged topics in a way the investigators would understand. I foolishly hoped that our joint article could fit in this category, and that the analysis of the transformative pedagogical experiment based on literate digital teaching and pedagogy would be published in this volume. I could not have been more wrong. In the very nice comments about our article, the editors made very clear that the precondition of publication is that we add to our article the wider context, which was consciously omitted and masked by the use of concepts of illiberalism, authoritarianism, and deteriorating democracy.

This response again forced us to critically investigate our own politics. My position as a tenured full professor in exile, moving with CEU from Budapest to Vienna, is privileged. I was given institutional support when I received a death threat[2] and faced with sabotage from the Hungarian law enforcement agencies. But my co-instructor used to work in a public institution in a country where human lives are not respected. In our response letter, we tried to explain to the editors that a volume expected to collect best practices about higher education as a site of resistance cannot possibly put the contributing academics in danger. Moreover, it is absurd for an article

[1] Andrea Pető, "Science for a Plastic Cube. Polypore Academia Redefining the Rules of Science," *Geschichte der Gegenwart* (October 2, 2019). https://geschichtedergegenwart.ch/science-for-a-plastic-cube-polypore-academia-redefining-the-rules-of-science.

[2] Andrea Pető, "Hungary's Attack on Gender Studies," *Public Seminar* (November 29, 2018). https://publicseminar.org/2018/11/hungarys-attack-on-gender-studies.

by academics in the field trying to challenge power imbalances in practice to be rejected by scholars working in a Nordic context, which is at the moment very safe.

I am telling this story to illustrate three lessons that feminist scholarship can learn from the Corona Virus epidemic for this Lockdown Theory series.

First, the lesson is to un-learn theories, as Kathy Davis pointed out,[3] in order to make theories work for us. What we are experiencing is unprecedented. We should take one step back and try to understand what is happening and what the useful tools, and concepts to understand them are.

Second, the lesson that this crisis is the crisis of what globalization has become. A colleague working in one of the Nordic countries requesting a colleague working in a country with the utmost political difficulties to apply theories and concepts - like illiberalism - developed mostly by male authors in a very different context. Their position has been perfectly understandable, since they knew that the manuscript would be sent out for review to scholars who only speak that professional language, and require others to do so in order to be included in what they believe to be the only academic discussion. Here the method developed by Cynthia Enloe of "feminist curiosity"[4] can serve as well.

Third, the lesson of how one can gain great concepts and ideas from the experience of being defeated.[5] If the main spaces of knowledge production are captured by states using the veneer of financial sustainability for maintaining ideological control, there are still spaces left. I do not have illusions in general regarding our new world after corona, as far as on-line teaching is concerned. The epidemic works as a big social experiment for moving millions of instructors and students online, doing so without any preparation or contributing to their costs, as far as preparation time or digital infrastructure is concerned. And this move will not only create the precondition for the further precariousness of educational professionals, but could also create even more vulnerable and isolated individuals as clients of educational service. At least after this joint teaching project, I feel myself better prepared to put forward different modes and politics of teaching in the future.

And to finish the story which frames my contribution, we will submit the article to a pedagogical journal of digital teaching methodology knowing that they will not force us to echo the explanations of yesterday for the problems of today. If tomorrow we are going to have the explanations of today that really depends on us. The precondition is, however, to dare to challenge orthodoxies of our own.

[3] Kathy Davis, "Making Theories Work," in *Writing Academic Texts Differently: Intersectional Feminist Methodologies and the Playful Art of Writing*, ed. Nina Lykke (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 172-79.
[4] Cynthia Enloe, *The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire* (California: University of California Press, 2004).
[5] Andrea Pető, "How Hungary and Poland Have Silenced Women and Stifled Human Rights," *Huffington Post* (October 14, 2016). https://www.huffpost.com/entry/how-hungary-and-poland-ha_b_12486148.

Katerina Kolozova |

The Wonder of the Most Dramatic Contradiction of Capitalism

(2020-04-03)

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Amidst the frustration caused by the restricted and police controlled freedom to move, to socially interact, the suspended right to assembly and the impossibility to enjoy in what gives us pleasure through social interaction, we are witnessing a phenomenon far more fascinating than our human frustration. The machine of capital, the automaton of producing surplus value or simply monetary value - can pause. Therefore, it can stop. The industries that currently operate tend to produce just as much as required to keep the moribund economy on life support and sustain humanity in life. In times of corona, in times when a dumb virus purposelessly disrupts or temporarily (and we do not know for how long) cancels reality, an *economy dictated by use rather than surplus value begins to seem possible*. Thanks to a purposeless intervention of a silly thing, a virus, a different political economy has emerged. It is so for the time-being, but no one knows how long this impermanence will last. Currently, we all act as if it were here to stay. We treat it as permanence. A meaningless intrusion in a world built in a particular way has turned upside down, suspended or perhaps abolished a discursive universe and the philosophy of exploitation of matter pertaining to it, i.e., the World as we know it. The "real" (in the Lacanian) sense, has severed the signifying automaton - the pleasure principle - and is inviting the

Katerina Kolozova |

Kapitalizmin en dramatik çelişkisinin harikaları [1]

(2020-04-18)

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Kısıtlanmış ve polisçe denetim altına alınmış hareket etme özgürlüğünün ve toplumsal karşılıklı etkileşim özgürlüğünün; askıya alınmış toplanma hakkının ve toplumsal karşılıklı etkileşim yoluyla bize haz veren şeyin tadını çıkarma imkânsızlığının neden olduğu bir hüsranın orta yerinde insanî hayal kırıklığımızdan çok daha büyüleyici bir fenomene şahitlik ediyoruz. Sermaye makinesi, artı değer ya da basbayağı nakdî değer üreten otomat – duraklayabilir. Dolayısıyla, durabilir. Hâlen faaliyet gösteren endüstriler, can çekişen ekonomiye yaşam desteği sağlamak ve insanlığı yaşamda tutmak için gerektiği kadar üretim yapma eğilimindeler. Korona günlerinde, dilsiz bir virüsün gerçekliği amaçsızca altüst ettiği ya da geçici olarak (üstelik ne kadar süreceğini bilmediğimiz bir süre boyunca) hükümsüz kıldığı zamanlarda, artı değer yerine kullanım değeri tarafından dikte edilen ekonomi mümkün görünmeye başlıyor. Saçma sapan bir şeyin, bir virüsün amaçsız müdahalesi sayesinde farklı bir politik-ekonomi ortaya çıktı. Şimdilik böyle, fakat hiç kimse bu süreksizliğin ne kadar süreceğini bilmiyor. Şu anda hepimiz sanki virüs burada kalacakmış gibi davranıyoruz. Ona, kalıcı bir şey muamelesi yapıyoruz. Belli bir biçimde inşâ edilmiş bir dünyada gerçekleşen anlamsız bir istila

1Published in: *Baykuş: Felsefe Yazıları* (April 18, 2020). https://baykusfelsefe.com/2020/04/18/kapitalizmin-en-dramatik-celiskisinin-harikalari-katerina-kolozova, trans. from the English by Çağatay Özyürek and Mustafa Yalçınkaya.

symbolic to restructure itself. In fact, the language and not merely the symbolic must now create sense out of this nonsense.

Let us begin with the givens which are no longer that: the given that the economy operates as a quasi-natural force has been shattered if not rendered obsolete. Apparently, economy is always already political. It does not have to be driven by surplus value but by use (value). Private companies, the capital, can operate under the stringent conditions of the states. State controlled economy can be capitalist in the sense that private capital has set it into motion and it relies on estranged labor or wage labor. However, in order for the economy to be capitalist *stricto sensu* it must be driven by the M-M' principle, as postulated by Karl Marx. The fact whether the enterprise is privately owned is not the determination of the last instance (even though it is one of the defining factors), but rather whether production is driven by the principle of surplus value estranged and detached from material use relying on the alienated, abstracted wage labor. As Marx has argued, capitalist economy can be enacted by either a capitalist state and a bourgeois society or a socialist state and a society that acts as a collective bourgeois, something he called "vulgar socialism," focusing on distribution instead of the problem of alienation.[1] The alienation in question can be one of labor, but also of monetary value or the fetish of value from use, and last but not least of economic production from *nature*.[2]

Consider this quote from Marx's "Critique of the Gotha Programme":

> Labor is not the source of all wealth. Nature is just as much the source of use values (and it is surely of such that material wealth consists!) as labor, which itself is only the manifestation of a force of nature, human labor power ... And insofar as man from the beginning behaves toward nature, the primary source of all instruments and subjects of labor, as an owner, treats her as belonging to him, his labor becomes the source of use values, therefore also of wealth. The bourgeois have very good grounds for falsely ascribing supernatural creative power to labor; since precisely from the fact that labor depends

[1] Cf. Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme," *Marxists.org* (1999). https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha.
[2] Marx, "The Gotha Programme."

söylemsel bir evrenin, ayrıca ona ait olan maddeyi, yani, bildiğimiz şekliyle Dünya'yı, istismar eden felsefenin altını üstüne getirdi, bunları askıya aldı ve belki de ortadan kaldırdı. "Gerçek" (Lacancı) manada, anlamlandırma otomatını –haz ilkesi– parçalamış bulunuyor, üstelik simgesel olanı kendini yeniden yapılandırması için davet ediyor. Aslına bakılırsa, sadece simgesel olan değil, dil de artık bu saçmalıktan bir anlam çıkarmalıdır.

Şundan daha fazlası olmayan verili kabullerle başlayalım: Ekonominin sözde doğal bir güç olarak faaliyet göstermesi şeklindeki verili-olan mesela, modası geçmiş hâle gelmediyse bile, paramparça oldu. Görünen o ki, ekonomi her zaman zaten politikti. Ekonomi mutlaka, artı değerden ziyade kullanım (değeri) tarafından yönlendirilmek zorunda değil. Özel şirketler, sermaye devletlerin sıkı koşulları altında faaliyet gösterebilir. Devlet denetimindeki ekonomi, özel sermayenin onu harekete geçirmesi ve sırtını dışsallaşmış emeğe ya da ücretli emeğe dayaması anlamında kapitalist olabilir. Beri yandan, ekonominin *stricto sensu*[2] kapitalist olması için, Karl Marx'ın koyutladığı gibi, P-P' ilkesi tarafından yönlendirilmesi îcâb eder. Bir şirketin özel mülkiyete ait olup olmaması son kertede belirlenim (her ne kadar bu belirlenim onun tanımlayıcı etmenlerden biri olsa da) değil, aksine üretimin yabancılaşmış, soyutlanmış ücretli emeğe dayanan maddî kullanımından dışsallaşan ve onunla ilişkisi kopan artı değer ilkesi tarafından yönlendirilip yönlendirilmemesiyle ilgilidir. Marx'ın ileri sürdüğü gibi, kapitalist ekonomi ya kapitalist devlet ve burjuva toplumu tarafından ya da sosyalist devlet ve onun "vulgar sosyalizm" dediği, yabancılaşma problemi yerine dağıtıma odaklanan kolektif burjuvazi gibi davranan bir toplum tarafından sahnelenebilir.[3] Söz konusu yabancılaşma emeğin yabancılaşması, hatta nakdî değerin yabancılaşması ya da kullanımdan gelen değerin fetişi olabilir, sonuncu fakat bir o kadar da önemli olacak şekilde, ekonomik üretimin doğadan yabancılaşması da olabilir.[4]

"Gotha Programı'nın Eleştirisi"nden alınan şu pasajı düşünün:

> Emek, tüm zenginliğin kaynağı değildir. Emek kadar doğa da kullanım değerlerinin (ne de olsa maddî zenginlik bunlardan oluşur!) kaynağıdır; emeğin kendisi de, bir

[2] (Lat.) Dar manada.
[3] Krş. Karl Marx, "Gotha Programı'nın Eleştirisi".
[4] Marx, "Gotha Programı".

> on nature it follows that the man who possesses no other property than his labor power must, in all conditions of society and culture, be the slave of other men who have made themselves the owners of the material conditions of labor.[3]

The determination in the last instance is, therefore, not merely the estrangement of labor but the estrangement of society (and economy) from nature. Nature is further determined as matter or materiality. It is something that permits us to place Marx in a contemporary context by saying that the human pretension to construct a purely speculative universe based on the exploitation of materialitym even in cases where technology and nature are merged, thus referring to matter in a purely formal sense, is the cornerstone contradiction of capitalism. The dialectics between nature and transcendence or human pretension must be reversed. The silly, purposelessly spreading virus renders the contradiction at stake no longer sustainable under the conditions of capitalism. The intervention of the real is as always senseless, robbed of purpose, it is a symptom, as Lacan would put it. The symptom we are facing is that nature cannot be endlessly exploited, it creates its own mechanisms of self-protection against rendering it mere resource rather than an ontic entity in its own right, independent from human pretension to decide of its reality in a humanist World. As Laruelle has demonstrated, "the World" equals philosophy in the sense that it not only creates a language around the real but also declares what is real, decides of the reality of the exteriority it faces: for example, according to capital as philosophy, nature's reality is that of being mere "resource" to value creation, use is mere currency in the creation of surplus value, value is superior to mere "materiality" and/or animality. Only on the basis of a complete *holokaustos* (in the sense of the ancient Greek sacrifice consisting in the complete burning of the flesh) of all animality and of all animals, but also of other "natural resources," can an absolute rule of pure Speculative Reason take place, as demonstrated in all hitherto existing philosophy. The corona outbreak has proven this philosophical and capitalist dream to be an infantile phantasmagoria.

Now, even though imprisoned in our homes or elsewhere, such as in state organized quarantines, we must recognize the fact that we

[3] Ibid., available at https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha/ch01.htm.

> doğa gücünün, insanın emek gücünün ifadesinden başka bir şey değildir ... İnsanın emeği, sadece, insan kendisini başından itibaren doğanın, yani tüm emek araçlarının ve emek nesnelerinin ilk kaynağının sahibi saydığı, doğayı kendisine ait kabul ettiği sürece, kullanım değerlerinin ve dolayısıyla aynı zamanda zenginliğin kaynağı olur. Burjuvalar, emeğe doğaüstü yaratıcılık gücü atfetmek konusunda çok iyi nedenlere sahiptir; çünkü tam da emeğin doğaya bağımlılığı yüzünden, kendi emek gücünden başka hiçbir varlığa sahip olmayan insan, tüm toplumsal ve kültürel koşullar altında, kendilerini çalışmanın maddî koşullarının sahipleri kılmış olan başka insanların kölesi olmak zorundadır.[5]

O halde, son kertede, belirlenim sırf emeğin değil toplumun (ve ekonominin) doğadan dışsallaşmasıdır. Doğa ayrıca madde veya maddîlik meselesi olarak belirlenmiştir. Bu durum bizlere, teknoloji ve doğanın kaynaştığı durumlarda bile maddîliğin suistimaline dayalı saf spekülatif bir evren inşâ etme şeklindeki insanî iddianın kapitalizmin çelişkisindeki köşe taşı olduğunu söyleyerek ve dolayısıyla meseleye salt biçimsel anlamda gönderme yaparak Marx'ı modern bağlama oturtma izni veriyor. Doğayla aşkınlık veya insanî iddia arasındaki diyalektik tersine çevrilmelidir. Budalaca, amaçsızca yayılan virüs söz konusu çelişkiyi artık kapitalizmin koşulları altında sürdürülemez hale getiriyor. Gerçeğin müdahalesi her zaman manasız, amaçtan âzâde olmuştur; o, Lacan'ın ortaya koyduğu gibi, bir semptomdur. Karşı karşıya kaldığımız semptom doğanın sonsuza kadar sömürülemeyecek olmasıdır; doğa kendini, doğal gerçekliğe insancıl bir Dünya'da karar verme şeklindeki insanî iddiadan bağımsız, kendi başına ontik bir mevcudiyetten ziyade salt kaynak kılan tutuma karşı öz-savunma düzeneklerini yaratır. Laruelle'in kanıtladığı gibi, "Dünya", yalnızca gerçeklik etrafında bir dil yaratması anlamında değil, ama ayrıca gerçeğin ne olduğunu bildirmesi, karşı karşıya kaldığı dışsallığın gerçekliğine karar vermesi anlamında felsefeye eşittir; örneğin, tıpkı felsefeninki gibi sermayenin bakış açısından da doğanın gerçekliği sırf değer yaratımına "kaynak" olmaktır, kullanım sadece artı değerin yaratımında geçerlidir, değer salt "maddîlik"ten ve/veya canlılıktan üstündür. Tüm canlılığın ve

[5] Karl Marx ve Friedrich Engels, *Gotha ve Erfurt Programları Üzerine*, çev. Erkin Özalp (İstanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2017), ss. 20-21.

are witnessing the most dramatic contradiction, that of the determination of the last instance of capitalism and attempt to invent a socialist economy that surpasses the stated contradiction and does not repeat the errors of the 20th century vulgar socialism. The entire world is caught in the same lockdown, and witnesses the same contradiction and similar state interventions, whereas seven billion individual lives are eerily similar - our action must be, therefore, global and internationalist.

tüm canlıların, ama ayrıca diğer "doğal kaynaklar"ın eksiksiz bir holokaustosu (bedenin tümüyle yakılmasını içeren antik Grek kurban ritüeli anlamında) zemininde, yalnızca bu zeminde saf Spekülatif Aklın mutlak bir hükümranlığı meydana gelebilir; şimdiye dek var olan tüm felsefede gösterildiği gibi. Korona salgını bu felsefî ve kapitalist düşün çocuksu bir gölge oyunu olduğunu gösterdi.

Şu halde, evlerde veya başka bir yerde, mesela devlet örgütlü karantinalarda olsak bile en dramatik çelişkiye, kapitalizmin son merciinin belirlenimi çelişkisine tanıklık ettiğimizi anlamalı, ayrıca belirtilen çelişkiyi aşan ve 20. yüzyıl vulgar sosyalizminin hatalarını tekrar etmeyen bir sosyalist ekonomi icat etmeye girişmeliyiz. Tüm dünya benzer bir tecride kapıldı ve aynı çelişkiye, benzer devlet müdahalelerine tanıklık ediyor, mademki 7 milyar münferit can ürkütücü şekilde birbirine benzerdir, o hâlde eylemlerimiz de küresel ve enternasyonalist olmalı.

Çeviri Çağatay Özyürek ve Mustafa Yalçınkaya

McKenzie Wark |

Theory in a Pandemic

(2020-04-03)

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I hesitate to write anything directly about the COVID-19 pandemic. Certain pronouncements by theorists whose work I have read have not gone over well. They mostly seem to take the form of attempts to demonstrate why the pandemic proves them right. It seems foolish to make such claims. And not foolish in the good way. I wash my hands of them.

So what is a theorist to do? One can look at precedents. A precedent that is ready to hand is the AIDS pandemic. Sure, it is a very different pandemic, but there are still things to learn. One is that the critical response had an urgency to it, but that good work took some time. It took a while to identify the situations in which theory could articulate what was at stake and where its interventions might matter.

Another is that good theory does not try to be sovereign over other kinds of knowledge. In that case, theory could have an interstitial role, showing the gaps and tensions between languages: of medicine, of the state, of the pharmaceutical industry, of activist groups, of gay culture, of homophobic culture, and so on. Theory as a kind of practice had to find its place among other practices.

There is a limit, however, in approaching the place of theory in the world of COVID-19 on the basis of previous events that it might resemble. Perhaps what is most significant about an event is that if it is an event, what is eventful about it is that it does not resemble other events much at all. Engaging with it on the basis of precedent

McKenzie Wark |

Teoria em uma pandemia[1]

(2020-07-27)

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Hesito em escrever algo diretamente sobre a pandemia da COVID-19. Alguns comentários de teóricos cujos trabalhos li não foram bem recebidos. A maioria parece tomar a forma de tentativas para demonstrar por que a pandemia valida suas visões. Parece uma tolice fazer tais afirmações. E não digo tolice no bom sentido. Lavo minhas mãos a respeito delas.

Então, o que uma teórica ou um teórico deve fazer? Pode olhar os precedentes. Um precedente que está à mão é a pandemia da aids. Claro, é uma pandemia muito diferente, mas ainda há coisas a aprender com ela. Uma delas é que a resposta crítica pedia urgência, mas o trabalho propriamente dito levou algum tempo. Demorou um pouco para identificar as situações em que a teoria poderia articular o que estava em jogo e onde suas intervenções poderiam importar.

Outra coisa é que a boa teoria não tenta ser soberana sobre outros tipos de conhecimento. Nesse caso, a teoria poderia ter um papel intersticial, mostrando as lacunas e tensões entre as linguagens: da medicina, do Estado, da indústria farmacêutica, dos grupos ativistas, da cultura gay, da cultura homofóbica e assim por diante. A teoria como um tipo de prática tinha que encontrar seu lugar entre outras práticas.

Há um limite, no entanto, para se tratar do lugar da teoria no mundo da COVID-19 com base em eventos anteriores que possam lhe ser

[1] Published in: *Revista Rosa*, Issue 1, No. 3 (July 27, 2020). http://revistarosa.com/1/teoria-em-uma-pandemia, trans. from the English by Nicolas Llano.

finds the ways in which it is like a past event, but might miss what is novel about it.

This need not leave us with no resources, however. It just means that the knowledge that theory brings to bear might be of a particular kind. The event might be unprecedented, but we have the precedent of other unprecedented events. We have the precedents of others who found ways to respond, that drew on the capacities of concept-creation to equip us with tools of thought that are better than throwing up our hands in resignation or terror.

Theory does not create concepts on its own. Theory is a practice in language that seems to work best when it works alongside other practices that do other things. Again, the theory of the AIDS pandemic is actually a good parallel here. The best theorists did not give up theory to become activists. Frankly, not many theorists are all that good at organizing. Let us not kid ourselves about our talents. But the best, meaning most useful, theory was written by those who participated, often in modest roles, in the collective work of responding to the pandemic.

To do theory in the pandemic that addresses the pandemic, those are the sorts of precedents I would follow. But what about doing theory in the pandemic that does not address the pandemic itself? For surely the pandemic poses one of theory's fundamental questions to a lot of people: how are we to live?

If one is not suffering from COVID-19, one is suffering from life in this world, in this situation, in general. One might just be more exposed to that suffering now that one's various distractions and daily struggles have all been disrupted. One has to admit frankly here that it is something of a privilege to be having this confrontation with one's life. But is not theory always the product of some privilege? Rather than wring our hands about that, let us just try to use it wisely.

It may seem perverse to ask, when life seems so bad, just what the good life could be. But maybe it is exactly the time to ask. Are we to endure all this just to put the old order back on its feet again? Particularly since we know that the old order is implicated in not only the pandemic but the multiplying signs of the unsustainability of this world as currently configured.

similares. Talvez o mais significativo sobre um evento é o fato de que, se é um evento, o que há de mais significativo sobre ele é que não se assemelha em quase nada a outros eventos. Relacionar-se com ele baseando-se no precedente revela as formas pelas quais ele é igual a um evento passado, mas há o risco de se perder o que há de novo nele.

Isso não precisa nos deixar sem recursos. Apenas significa que o conhecimento exercido pela teoria pode ser de um tipo particular. O evento pode ser sem precedentes, mas temos o precedente de outros episódios inéditos. Temos os precedentes de outros que encontraram maneiras de responder partindo das capacidades de criação de conceitos para nos dotar de ferramentas de pensamento que são melhores do que dar de ombros com resignação ou terror.

A teoria não cria conceitos por si só. Ela é uma prática na linguagem que parece funcionar melhor quando ao lado de práticas que fazem outras coisas. Mais uma vez, a teoria da pandemia da aids é, na verdade, um bom paralelo aqui. Os melhores teóricos não desistiram da teoria para se tornarem ativistas. Para ser honesta, não são muitos os teóricos que são bons mobilizando. Não nos iludamos sobre nossos talentos. Mas a melhor teoria, ou seja, a mais útil, foi escrita por aqueles que participaram, muitas vezes em papéis modestos, do trabalho coletivo de resposta à pandemia.

Para fazer teoria sobre a pandemia enquanto ela acontece, esses são os tipos de precedentes que eu seguiria. Mas, que tal fazer uma teoria na pandemia que não trate da pandemia em si? Pois, com certeza a pandemia postula uma das questões fundamentais da teoria para muitas pessoas: como devemos viver?

Se você não está sofrendo de COVID-19, você está sofrendo da vida neste mundo, nesta situação, de modo geral.

Se você não está sofrendo de COVID-19, você está sofrendo da vida neste mundo, nesta situação, de modo geral. É possível que você esteja mais exposto a esse sofrimento agora, quando suas diversas distrações e lutas diárias foram interrompidas. É preciso admitir com honestidade que trata-se de um tipo de privilégio ter esse confronto com a própria vida. Mas a teoria não é sempre o produto de

Theory, to me, is a kind of meta-practice. It is the one that is curious about what practices are in general, about what they can know, what they can do, what they want. It is not a sovereign practice over the others. It works and plays between the others. Now might be the time to deploy it in two sorts of situations. One is specific to the pandemic and addresses the configurations of power, knowledge and exploitation implicated in its management and control. The other is more generally addressed to the shortcomings of everyday life that the pandemic reveals.

algum privilégio? Em vez de nos preocuparmos demasiadamente com ela, vamos apenas tentar usá-la com sabedoria.

Pode parecer perverso perguntar, quando a vida parece tão ruim, o que poderia ser a boa vida. Mas talvez tenha chegado a hora de perguntar isso. Devemos suportar tudo isso só para colocar de pé, novamente, a velha ordem? Sobretudo porque já sabemos que a velha ordem está implicada não só na pandemia, mas nos sinais multiplicadores da insustentabilidade deste mundo tal como ele hoje está configurado.

A teoria, para mim, é uma espécie de metaprática. É ela que tem curiosidade sobre o que as práticas são em geral, sobre o que podem saber, o que podem fazer, o que querem. Não se trata de uma prática soberana sobre as outras. Ela funciona e joga entre as outras. Agora talvez seja o momento de implantá-la em dois tipos de situações. Uma é específica da pandemia e aborda as configurações de poder, conhecimento e exploração implicadas no seu gerenciamento e controle. A outra costuma estar mais voltada para as deficiências cotidianas reveladas pela pandemia.

Traduzido do inglês por Nicolas Llano

Levi R. Bryant |

A World Is Ending

(2020-04-03)

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As I watch the pandemic unfold I find that I can only think in fragments. It is as if I have lost what Kant called the "transcendental unity of apperception", that formal "I think" that is supposed to accompany all of my representations, and have instead become a series of disparate and disconnected impressions without a unity behind them. In the Transcendental Deduction Kant said that the conditions for the possibility of experience are also the conditions for the possibility of the *objects* of experience. In the Transcendental Dialectic, he tries to show how the Idea of the world as a whole or totality is a condition for our experience. If my formal "I think" has shattered, does this also mean that the world has shattered given that there is a parallelism between the two? I will therefore write in fragments, hoping that they might help me to find some unity, some *logos*, beneath these fragments that would allow me to make sense again.

* * *

A world is ending. I do not say *the* world is ending, but rather that *a* world is ending. This thought flashed through my mind last night, but it had been lurking there for weeks now in a sort of unconscious form I dared not say aloud to myself.

* * *

Four weeks ago I taught my last class prior to Spring Break. I was dimly aware of COVID-19, but it was an abstraction and unreal. It was a sort of joke between me and my partner. I think I thought that things like that cannot happen here. They are always elsewhere.

* * *

In my youth, I was a Heideggerian. My deceased grandmother gave me a copy of *Being and Time* for my eighteenth birthday. I had discovered philosophy two years before. This was in the days prior to the internet and big bookstores, so books like this were exceedingly hard to come by in a small steel town like the one I grew up in. I had a fascination with existentialism and had read *of* Heidegger for years, but his work was nowhere to be found. It was one of the best gifts I have ever been given, a true Red Ryder BB Gun. I felt I had been given something rare and precious.

* * *

When I say something like I thought that COVID-19 could not happen here, I wonder if I did not mean something more fundamental than a geographical location. I am sure I meant that, but I think lurking behind this "here" is the idea of the Open. We must analyze *Dasein*, Heidegger said. *Dasein* is often interpreted as "human existence," but it cannot be that for even the human manifests itself *in Dasein*. *Dasein* is the *clearing* within which things appear or manifest themselves, a sort of light before light. No, *Dasein* is not human existence. It is better to translate it as "Being-there" or even "Being-here," or simply as the Open.

* * *

I am no Heidegger scholar, nor am I interested in a scholarly debate regarding his thought. When I refer to the Open, I mean the way in which the world and ourselves are here for us. There is a *continuity* to the world, a *logos*. Today is like yesterday and tomorrow will be like today. To say that things like that do not happen *here* is not to speak of a *place*. Or rather, if we are speaking of a place, we are speaking of a properly *ontological* place, the logos of a world. Again, *a* world,

not *the* world. Things like that do not happen here because there cannot be events that fundamentally betray the orderliness of a world or the Open. At least, that is what I naively thought.

* * *

Santayana spoke of an animal faith. This was his refutation of skepticism. He said that we have a sort of animal faith in the reality of the world. This, in a sense, is the Open. One need not *believe* in the open. It is a conviction prior to all beliefs. The world is always-already open and there is a continuity to the world. I do what I do today because of the Open. I have animal faith that the world will be there tomorrow as it was today and yesterday. I do not even need to think about it and my day-to-day dealings have always already been premised on this Open or world.

* * *

What was it that Hume said? He said something like he was a skeptic in the armchair, unable to demonstrate that the future must be like the past. Yet when he played billiards, he suspended his skepticism and trusted the laws of physics. The Open is something like this. No one is truly a skeptic when they leave their writing desk and get on with things.

* * *

But tomorrow is gone and it is gone because a world is ending. The Open is closing. It is ironic that multiple generations of philosophers who waged war on the metaphysics of presence now find ourselves suspended in a perpetual present. I no longer understand the world I inhabited on my last day of class prior to Spring Break. In our home we call that time "the before time." There is no longer a tomorrow. There is just this listless present where one day bleeds into the next and where each day is the same. We must therefore distinguish between the same and the continuous. The continuity of the world or Open paradoxically allows change to take place, but in the shadow realm of the same there is no change. All projects are suspended. It is limbo, like the airport in Spielberg's film *The Terminal*.

* * *

We have fallen out of time and are therefore radically between times or Opens. Everywhere there are radical transformations unfolding, terrible transformations, but time has nonetheless been suspended. We hope for tomorrow to return like the sun in the morning, but we are unsure whether tomorrow will ever return and worry that if tomorrow does someday return it will be a terrible time no longer worth living in. Will tomorrow come again?

* * *

The expression "before time" might be cute, but is philosophically inaccurate. The before times were not before time because time then existed. There was the Open. No, we are living in the before time or that liminal space between worlds where time has been suspended. This is the before time. All we can do is wait. We have become shades and haunts of a world or Open that once was. We ourselves have become fragments of a lost time, remainders who once had time but who have now lost all time by virtue of having nothing but time. Some of us wake in the morning and dutifully get dressed. Yet we then do nothing but wait as we are now shards of lost time. A ghost is a memory of a place that was once here. We are all now ghosts. We haunt a world that still seems to be here but that is nonetheless gone. We are echoes of a world that once was.

* * *

If I can say that a world is ending, then I must have some idea of what a world is. Clearly, the world is not the earth, for I still walk about the earth and move about it. Heidegger says that the world is the totality of equipmental relations constituting meaning or significance. The famous hammer, for instance, only has meaning in relation to nails, boards to be fastened, a home to be built, and the earth from which the home shelters us. The hammer takes on meaning in terms of a set of projects that gather things together upon a horizon of care. In kindergarten, we would sing a song called "The Skeleton Dance" to learn about the parts of the body. It went something like "the hip bone connects to the thigh bone and the thigh bone connects to the knee bone…" This is how it is with a world. The things

of our world all refer to one another in terms of our projects or concernful dealings constituting a fabric of meaning.

* * *

So long as my equipment functions, it is largely invisible or unconscious. It is fully integrated in the activity of my concernful dealings with the world. It is only when some element of my equipment is broken or missing that the thing becomes present to me as a thing and that I become aware of the totality of references constituting meaning. The thing passes from being "ready-to-hand" to being "present-at-hand." The world is broken and therefore things are now present-at-hand. That is an opportunity.

* * *

A couple weeks ago, I went to the market to stock up on food our family would need to get through the coming weeks now that we were ordered to "stay-at-home and shelter." A trip to the market is now an encounter with your mortality. Now everything in the world is present-at-hand or broken because the relations between things that allow them to be unconscious and ready-to-hand in a seamless network of meanings and references has been broken. Every humble thing of the world is now menacing. I now notice everything. As I touch the foodstuffs I wonder if they have the virus on them. Is the virus now on my hand? Have I passed it to the steering wheel of my car and then to the doorknob? I bring the groceries into my home. Counters need to be wiped down with bleach wipes. Packaging needs to be removed. Death lurks everywhere and the friendly objects of the world are now all threatening. My simple act of going to the market has endangered myself, my family, and people I do not even know. The things of the world are no longer allies but potential agents of the virus. We wait five to fourteen days, wondering if we have caught it and are just still asymptomatic. We are no longer Haraway or Clark's cyborgs or prosthetic gods, for the world of things that made our life possible is broken. The world is broken.

* * *

In returning from the market, I discover the earth beneath the world. I discover the earth first and foremost through the virus. Plagues were supposed to be something relegated to the past of history. They belong to the past such as the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. They were supposed to be the stuff of another here, another world, at least in first world countries that enjoy so much privilege. Plagues today were always supposed to be the affliction of less developed, poverty-stricken nations. No doubt this has contributed to the ability of developed nations to neglect and ignore those people. Yet the earth continues to rumble beneath this world that we thought we had vanquished through culture.

* * *

I discover the earth second through all of the things that we rely on and upon which our lives are rendered possible, that have now become obtrusive either as absent when needed or present in their menacing possibility as carriers of the virus. Everywhere there is an absence of toilet paper. Lacan taught us that the symptom is structured like a language, that it speaks, that it expresses a message or a series of signifiers. It is odd that toilet paper, of all things, should have been that which people hoarded. It is as if at some level they registered the earth that rumbles beneath the world, that renders the world possible, and chose a thing that marks the intersection of nature and culture to say what they did not have words to say. We spoke through a symptom.

* * *

People are calling the pandemic an apocalypse. By this, no doubt, they mean a catastrophic or cataclysmic event of tremendous destructive power. Many will die and economies around the world are collapsing. But in its original signification, "apocalypse" means "to reveal" or "uncover." The pandemic is an apocalypse in both senses of the word. I will resolve to think of the pandemic as an event, a terrible event, and will try to decipher what this event uncovers or reveals. In *The Logic of Sense* Deleuze proposes an ethics of the event. He says that we must be worthy of the events that befall us, which he equates with wounds. If a world is ending, if this is an event or wound, then we must forge concepts worthy of that event that might allow time to begin again and the sun to rise in the morning. We must strive to gather concepts that would contribute to the birth of another world.

* * *

The network of humble people upon which all of us depend has now been uncovered. For decades, we have lived with the zombie myth that wealth is created by those at the top. Yet as we have been thrown into this realm of shadows, losing our jobs and having to "stay-at-home and shelter," we see the entire economy grind to a halt and come to see that the only reason we can continue, to eat, is due to those who work in such deadly conditions. Those who were invisible like the engine of a well running car are now revealed. Those who were held in contempt by so many as not deserving of a living wage are now revealed as essential to everything. Had we studied ecology we would have known this all along. The apex predator is the least essential element of an ecosystem. So too with the billionaires. Yet they too have been affected by the least among us and find that they cannot escape or go elsewhere in this.

* * *

Paraphrasing Badiou, the problem of politics and ethics is not that of the different, but of how to construct the Same. Ontologically, he says, there is nothing but infinitely decomposable multiplicities without one. Between me and my identical twin - if I had an identical twin - there are as many differences as there are between me and the Chinese person across the globe. Difference, he contends, is just a trivial fact of being. The question is how we can draw a transversal line across these differences to construct a space of the Same. The virus is the great leveler. It refuses to be an elsewhere. It is indifferent to whether you are rich, poor, belong to the ersatz "middle class," black, white, male, or female. As they are thrown out of work and suffer the disease, the "middle class" discover that they have more in common with the homeless person than with the billionaire. So long as we had jobs and therefore paychecks and healthcare, this precariousness and vulnerability at the heart of our being was invisible. However, now like Rancière's part of no part that is abject before both government and employer, it is revealed that we are all the part of no part, that is to say, precarious and vulnerable. The terrible and cruel injustice of our economic system, the tremendous inequality of power and representation, is revealed and laid bare for all to see, and in this it becomes possible - perhaps - to construct a One or a People.

* * *

Crisis was always Elsewhere and always happened to Someone Else. For this reason, it was possible to think in terms of a Them that is not us. The us was always geographical, spatially located, a geographical here that took great comfort in not being Them, those unfortunates, over There. With the virus the Planetary is disclosed. There is no Here that is other than the There. Like action at a distance, the there reverberates here and is ineluctably intertwined with the there. We discover that the nation-state was always a symbolic fiction and that there always was a planet. And with the disclosure of the Planetary it becomes possible to construct a true Us that is not diacritically constructed against a Them. In the face of the stranger we now have the opportunity to see ourselves.

* * *

Thatcher famously said that society does not exist, there are only individuals and families. This has been a global governing philosophy for decades, a deadly virus all its own. It is what allowed society to be replaced by economy, a wasteland in which the only values have been efficiency, instrumentality, and profit. We have been living in a post-apocalyptic world for some time, a true desert. We have mutilated our humanity in the name of these wasteland values. In the constitution of a planetary Us we rediscover society and our interdependence with others. Perhaps we can now begin to hear ancient languages in the word "economy." Perhaps we can redeem this wasteland word, and recall that it is of the *oikos* or the home, that it shares a common root with ecology, and that the *oikos* or home, that dwelling, calls for a very different set of values than the wasteland values of efficiency, instrumentality, and profit.

* * *

Are we in a nightmare or are we waking from a nightmare? Like many I have had dreams that I am dreaming. I have had dreams within dreams. So perhaps we are waking from a nightmare within a nightmare. As we sit here locked in our homes, perhaps we wonder what we were doing in that world that was before and why we allowed ourselves to live and work that way. It is as if the virus has

created an involuntary general strike, an acephalous general strike. Will we be able to go back, I wonder? Certainly not as we did before.

* * *

Like the crises of the past, the wilderness was always seen as Elsewhere. The wilderness was seen as that which is *not* the city, town, or civilization. It was nature opposed to culture. It was therefore possible to think nature, and materiality with it, as culture's other. Nature was culture's Them. And indeed, an entire series of binary oppositions surrounding culture/nature, form/matter, mind/body, intellect/senses are organized around this way of thinking the wilderness spatially as an Elsewhere. The material term is always treated as subaltern and fallen, while the intellectual term is always treated as privileged. Occupations are even valued in a hierarchy based on their proximity to materiality, with those remote from materiality being valued the most. Augustine, or perhaps it was Aquinas, for example, treats music as a higher art than painting because it is closer to spirit or pure thought. No doubt our discomfort with materiality has to do with its unruliness, with the way it evades our mastery. Those who work with matter know that things never quite turn out as planned (form). As Adorno observes, matter is the concept of that which is not a concept. It is that which evades the Apollonian serenity of form. This, in turn, is linked to our finitude and mortality. In matter we encounter not only the limits of our power - though paradoxically, also, the conditions of our capacity to do anything at all - but also our mortality as embodied beings. An entire way of thinking, frame of thought, appears to be a fantasy that dreams of escaping our bodies and imbrication in matter. Perhaps there is something of this in our exploitation of the earth. Perhaps we set about so ruthlessly exploiting the earth not simply because of our thirst for endless profit, but out of rage against our own bodies and mortality.

* * *

Through the virus, we discover that the wilderness is not an Elsewhere, but rather that the wilderness is all that there is. There is an unruliness and nature that rumbles right there at the heart of the city, the town, and civilization, a wilderness. The wilderness is in the city and the city is in the wilderness. And in this discovery of the wilderness we encounter a correlate of the planetary that calls for a rethinking of our relation to materiality and our embodiment.

Jonathan Fardy |

Lockdown Theory

(2020-04-04)

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1. Exile-at-Home

The death toll will rise again tomorrow. And tomorrow the same buffoon will command. Days are busy caring for the baby. Nights are busy teaching to a screen. I am also writing. A new book is underway. It is about Marxism and Laruelle. These days, for me, "Laruelle" is an allegorical figure for thinking beyond philosophy or thinking philosophy's limit. But to think a limit is to think both sides as Wittgenstein says somewhere. Doing theory can feel hopeless and self-indulgent in the face of present realities. But there are precedents. The example of the Frankfurt School, or at least a certain thought-image of Critical Theory, keeps returning to me: *thinking in exile*.[1] In the teeth of political catastrophe and the fetishization of "men of action," Critical Theory remained steadfastly committed to an ethics of thinking in *and as* exile. Exilic thought was also Edward Said's *modus operandi*.[2] Exilic thought takes place outside the comforts and trappings of disciplinary and professional certainties. But what of "exile-at-home?" What happens to home when it becomes the site for thinking with exilic aspirations?

2. Hard to Justify

The virosphere is an object-lesson in bio-politics, exile, mass confinement, solitude, and surveillance. It seems that this is a time to read Foucault. But my reading habits are ever more unjustifiable. I am reading up on structuralist linguistics. Maybe it is escapism. Theory is always hard to justify and especially so now. Do something. But what? The question of *what is to be done?* is a question. It is the form of Lenin's famed question, asked from a place of crisis, that I see as promising raw material. The *question in crisis* illuminates the precarious boundary point between theory and practice. I want no fusion, no hopeful and healing dialectic, no games of sublation, no mixture. I want to structurally arrest the two as a point of radical duality without philosophical dualism. Exile-in-home and (aspirational) exile-in/as-thought: the structure of a thought-habit as "real" as a habitat. But either is hard to justify when so many have neither the time for such a habit nor four walls of their own. Let us not forget too that for others walls threaten and menace. Yes, theory is hard to justify and it seems perverse to try.

3. Spit-Up

What does it mean to do theory in lockdown or to theorize lockdown? There is hardly a right answer. Nonetheless, we can ask: what structural invariances hold across the two? The time of lockdown is a time of arrest. And to theorize is always in some measure an attempt to lockdown or to arrest the movement of thought unfolding as reading or writing. One aims to lock meaning in place: to fix it, to arrange it in a structurally recognizable grid of intelligibility. Or else one writes it as "fiction." Laruelle has aptly theorized "philo-fiction" as a science of the "literary in theory" to borrow Jonathan Culler's useful phrase.[3] But it is Laruelle's term "raw material" that has an especial appeal to me. It resonates with my reading habits. It feels like a way to justify it. Scrounge around in texts for raw materials to use and transform into "fiction" or "literature" in a certain sense. "Some of the bits of language that cannot be assimilated into concepts," writes Elissa Marder, "get spit out as *literature*."[4] Literature as the

[1] See David Jenemann, *Adorno in America* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); and Thomas Wheatland, *The Frankfurt School in Exile* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).
[2] See Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (New York: Vintage, 2012).
[3] See Jonathan Culler, *The Literary in Theory* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2007).
[4] Elissa Marder, *Mother in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Psychoanalysis, Photography, Deconstruction* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 240.

involuntary rejection expelled from the philosophical body. It is that bit that remains finally undigested like my son's spit-up. Another aim of mine is to reread Kristeva soon.[5] Perhaps this is what my little lockdown bit is: theoretical spit-up. But why expose it? Why write this little bit? I cannot justify it. I write this bit because I am looking for connection with others. I do not want to just think; I want to just think with others. Without others there is no thought or at least no thought I find worth thinking.

[5] See Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

Iris van der Tuin |

Past-Present-Future and the 2019-20 Coronavirus Pandemic

(2020-04-04)

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The workings of time and temporality during the corona pandemic are frightening. I write this on April 2, 2020 at 2pm. But what counts is what happened two to three weeks ago. On an individual level: I may be very sick just a few days from now and I may have infected others while I was not having any of the known COVID-19 symptoms and went out to do my necessary grocery shopping last week. My body may have caught the coronavirus in the past, making my future and the futures of those around me uncertain. Right now, while writing, I feel fine. On the population level: our governments' physical distancing strategies of the past few weeks have co-constituted the number of positive tests that are presented to us as the most up to date. Therefore, the data points on the curve representing The Netherlands and other countries that I will get to see on the 8 o'clock news also reference the past. Past behaviors and policies leap into the unknown futures of individual patients, local communities, and entire populations. My question is thus: Where are we at in the present?

The above observations and questions lead me to a Bergsonian approach. In one of the opening essays, written specifically for *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Bergson writes about what gets lost when we spatialize time and he differentiates between evolution and unfurling. Philosophers tend to conceptualize time as (causally) linear. In this case, it is imagined that "the future is given in the present, that it is theoretically visible in it, that to the present it will add nothing new."[1] When transposed to our current exceptional times, we can easily see that a linear take on time does not apply. The above dynamics within the coronavirus pandemic period demonstrate that the future adds something new even to the past. Not only will it become clear only after the fact that my seemingly innocent shopping trip may have acted as a catalyst for illness. But also, and besides the manifestation of multicausal viral spread, there is a radical plot twist involved in the becoming sick with COVID-19. One's own life and the life of one's network is affected in ways that are "radically new and unforeseeable."[2] We do live in a new reality indeed, as many professionals and tweeterers say these days. So far, I have situated my discussion as part of what Bergson calls externality. On the level of interiority, however, the same dynamics are at work. Philosophers often assume that possibilities are encapsulated in what has already been realized and that choice precedes realization. Again, there is the assumption that "everything is given."[3] Bergson criticizes the rationality of the register of choice. All that one thinks and feels on the way to making a choice feeds into that choice, and thought and felt content modifies constantly. This modifying content feeds into what is ultimately an evolving (not unfurling) decision. Additive logic is exchanged for thick, causally nonlinear experience.

Here, we find ourselves on a dual track. First, there is the aspect of method. Second, there is thick experience itself. When considering method, Bergson argues that his approach calls for something other than philosophy as it is usually done and for something other than scientism. Both traditional philosophy and scientism are fundamentally reductive in their attempt at "cut[ting] out from the universe the systems for which time is only an abstraction, a relation, a number."[4] Bergson proposes an alternative conception of the universe: "If we could grasp it in its entirety, inorganic but interwoven with organic beings, we should see it ceaselessly taking on forms as new, as original, as unforeseeable as our states of consciousness."[5] Nei-

[1] Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. by M.L. Andison (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, [1934] 2007), 8.
[2] Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, 8.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid., 10.
[5] Ibid.

ther a non-reductive philosopher nor an inclusive scientist can lean on a pre-established method for such holistic grasping. When discussing method in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, Bergson presents to his readers two methodological alternatives. One is the interdisciplinary road for the (social) scientist:

> The truth is that we have to grope our way tentatively, by a system of cross-checking, following simultaneously several methods, each of which will lead only to possibilities or probabilities: by their mutual interplay the results will neutralize or reinforce one another, leading to reciprocal verification and correction.[6]

The other is an alternative road for the philosopher:

> ... the main and essential source of information is bound to be introspection. We must search for the bedrock of sociability, and also of unsociability, which would be perceptible to our consciousness, if established society had not imbued us with habits and dispositions which adjust us to it. Of these strata we are no longer aware, save at rare intervals, and then in a flash. We must recapture that moment of vision and abide by it.[7]

Both tentative groping and serendipitous introspection avoid reduction.[8]

The new methods must be strong enough to be able to answer the question: how to access the present in this coronavirus pandemic period when the past and future are written all over it? Both the rationalizations (numbers presented by scientists and other professionals on the 8 o'clock news) and the abstraction of my body as free from COVID-19 symptoms skip the present, as it were, and I find myself trapped by confusing relations between pasts and futures. Of course, there is the experience of time protracting and contracting, indicated by my impatience with educational technology and/or my calmness about working from home.[9] But what is it that may situate me firmly in the present vis-à-vis corona?

For a different philosophy and an interdisciplinary science, Bergson uses the word "interval" as a concept. Again, in *The Creative Mind*, there is a reaching of thick experience in the interval or the "wait" between the two extremities, t1 and t2. Positive, measurement-based science and philosophy canonized in schools of thought zoom in on t1 and t2, respectively, whereas "[i]n between these simultaneities anything you like may happen."[10] Bergson's entire oeuvre centers around this big question about time as mobility, temporality as duration. Here, I am interested in the *flash* through which we may reach the fundamental principles of our time and give rationalizations, abstractions, and relations their proper place. I have had such a flashy experience, an experience that leapt me out of scientific reasoning, common-sense philosophizing, and action-orientation while I was sitting behind my laptop or using my mobile phone and pondering the many data visualizations that circulate in the news and that are constantly being updated. Two numbers stand out among the many others. In a flash I grasped that only these two numbers refer to the present: the number of ICU beds in use for Corona patients and the number of deaths caused by COVID-19. These two numbers provoke flashes. All other numbers, out there in abundance, throw dust in my eyes and make me believe that as long as I do not feel anything, I am without the virus and it is safe for me and my local community to go outside.

No. Of course not.

Upon formulating a philosophy of duration and the concept of the interval, and in acknowledgement of the existence of irregular flashes that are filled with meaning, Bergson asks: "Suppose we try to find out what it is?"[11] And for this introspection I need, today, Katerina Kolozova's *Cut of the Real: Subjectivity in Poststructuralist Phi-*

[6] Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. by R.A. Audra and C. Brereton with the assistance of W.H. Carter (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, [1932] 1977), 274.
[7] Bergson, *The Two Sources*, 275.
[8] For non-reductive philosophizing, see also: Iris van der Tuin, "Deleuze and Diffraction," in *Posthuman Ecologies: Complexity and Process after Deleuze*, eds. Rosi Braidotti and Simone Bignall (London: Rowman and Littlefield International, 2019), 17-39. For the link between interdisciplinary research and non-reductive philosophizing, see: Frédéric Darbellay, Zoe Moody, Ayuko Sedooka and Gabriela Steffen, "Interdisciplinary Research Boosted by Serendipity," *Creativity Research Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2014): 1-10.
[9] Cf. Bergson's famous example of waiting for sugar to melt in water (Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 9; Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, 10).
[10] Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, 3.
[11] Ibid.

losophy. Kolozova works with François Laruelle. Both Bergson and Laruelle argue against dogmatizing tendencies in science, philosophy, and the like.[12] Kolozova provides us with tools that may unpack flashy experience and circumvent science as it is usually done, commonsensicality, and action-orientation. Importantly, her book was a writing from an experience that had leapt her out of business as usual as a moving post-mortem that is part of the monograph makes clear.[13] For now, let us consider this fragment:

> The real remains indifferent to processes of truth generation. However, thought is affected by the workings of the real. Its arrogance is restrained and its aspirations are disciplined by the undisciplined responses of the disorderly real. At precisely these points (of resistance), thought should proffer its silence, relegate the real to its own domain, and thereof attempt to situate itself with respect to those cracks shoved into the language by that unintelligent and banal real. Those cracks will become the voices of dissonance that may give birth to an unheard of and singular appropriation of language and ultimately, perhaps, contribute to some dramatic transformation of it.[14]

Reading "the real" as having the immediacy alluded to by Bergson, and "cracks" as Bergson's flashes, I want to suggest with Kolozova that in order to transform our philosophical, scientific, and everyday language as to make it suitable for our pandemic time, we must focus on those "points (of resistance)" that suffice. Those points are the ICU beds in use for Corona patients and the deaths caused by COVID-19. The abundance of information that is broadcasted from the top down and tweeted from the bottom up may suggest access to, or representation of, the disorderly real, but it does not. Situated thought today means having ourselves affected by just those two numbers that may change our methods, our language, and us.

I hope I do justice to the care workers' united call for responsible behavior and policy with this.

[12] The work of John Ó Maoilearca presents ways in which the two philosophers can be productively read together.
[13] Katerina Kolozova, *Cut of the Real: Subjectivity in Poststructuralist Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 127-29.
[14] Kolozova, *Cut of the Real*, 135.

Ben Woodard |

The Curve of the Clock

(2020-04-04)

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But these other apartments were densely crowded, and in them beat feverishly the heart of life. And the revel went whirlingly on, until at length there commenced the sounding of midnight upon the clock. And then the music ceased, as I have told; and the evolutions of the waltzers were quieted; and there was an uneasy cessation of all things as before. But now there were twelve strokes to be sounded by the bell of the clock; and thus it happened, perhaps, that more of thought crept, with more of time, into the meditations of the thoughtful among those who reveled. And thus too, it happened, perhaps, that before the last echoes of the last chime had utterly sunk into silence, there were many individuals in the crowd who had found leisure to become aware of the presence of a masked figure which had arrested the attention of no single individual before.

Edgar Allan Poe, "The Masque of the Red Death"

Now that I have to save tomorrow, that I have to have a form, because I don't sense that I have the strength to stay disorganized, now that, fatefully, I shall have to frame that monstrous, infinite flesh and cut it to pieces that something the size of my mouth can take in, and the size of my eyes vision, now that I shall fatefully succumb to the necessity of form that comes from my fear of being undelimited - then let me at least have the courage to let that form form by itself, like a crust that hardens on its own, a fiery nebula that cools into earth. And let me have the great courage to resist the temptation to invent a form.

Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to G.H.*

In one of his many beautiful asides in *On Growth and Form* (a book often mentioned but little discussed), D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson emphasizes the different gradients of growth within an organism. The structural biologist points out that while the gradient is measurable, it is difficult to visualize across species, nor is it easy to picture an organism as a singular entity when its parts grow at different speeds at once and also at different times. These temporal differences only make sense when understood as a difference in form, form is what occurs when processes sharing a body are activated unevenly. A flowering plant demonstrates this gradient most obviously as the blossoms become more seldom and smaller, further away from the main stalk. This clustering of differently paced temporal processes spatialized as a variety of forms creates an aesthetic effect that Thompson calls "phase-beauty." The waves of an ocean or in a field of wheat are beautiful because they are a heterogeneous distribution of materially continuous yet tempo-spatially uneven events.

Much of nineteenth century biology (before and after Darwin) struggled with biological time. Not only in terms of the age of life following from a common ancestor (and the well-worn tales of contradicting creationist dogma) but also with why creatures seem to develop and change so unevenly against their own survival interests. How could progress or purpose be injected into the Darwinian or Mendelian picture? That Lamarckianism (acquired traits and habits are epigenetically passed down to offspring) and Recapitulation (the stages of a species are repeated in the development of the individual) survived so long after Darwin spoke to the real difficulties in understanding development, but at larger scales alongside a panic in the face of a directionless merely contingent life. One of the last

ditch attempts to preserve linear recapitulation was to postulate different moments of acceleration and deceleration within the organism (heterochrony) since otherwise there would not be enough time for the whole species to be repeated within the individual organism as the species got older. But as Stephen Jay Gould points out, the problem of biological acceleration and deceleration was not just bound to a fantasy of linear recapitulation, but pointed to strange processes found in almost all life forms such as neoteny (the retaining of juvenile characteristics into adulthood) or progenesis (when development is accelerated during sexual maturation). But neither an imposition of large scale teleology (however elegantly articulated) nor a reduction to mechanistic simplicity will sort out the functions, niches, and shapes of life and the articulation of any form with or against another.

An event as temporally and spatially distributed as a pandemic would seem to invert Thompson's "phase-beauty" into a kind of phase-horror. The phase-beauty of Thompson is set explicitly against Bergson's assertion that change of form is not measurable as change of size or volume is. Or, in other words, for Thompson the heterochronic body upsets the distinction between qualitative and quantitative multiplicity. It is a bearable but unavoidable reconciliation of the quantitative and the qualitative - of attempting to see the form of death (the virus and its transmission) in the data and graphs, which is not to reduce anyone to a number nor claim that the numbers tell us everything. The numbers we receive are always after the fact, the spatial distribution already out of date. Cases are only those tested, confirmed deaths, are only those who were tested before dying and were likely in a hospital and not in a small town, or those without insurance. Contact tracing will find more sick people, but sick in early stages who can then be isolated. With so many elderly dying, even if sick with the virus, it is not always what is determined to have killed them. The various lags and spurts in numbers give shape to every form of response and meanwhile carves out a day-to-day temporality with living behind windows. The loss of time is a function of the sheer number of days and we only gain a sense of time by re-quantifying it in tasks or actions. Many of these actions are defined in relief, making space and gaps for the virus to struggle to trespass.

There is still a question of how many loops we can stand and how wide each one is and when will they start spiraling into something else. Since we are binging on so much narrative content these weeks it seems that we are living neither in a closed circle (the snowed in motel, the haunted castle, because communication, at least for some, is not yet cut), nor in a bottle episode (one location filled with meaningful dialog to conserve funds). The shape of things appears as a bundle of confined movements and overextended speculations of a return of the same in the new or of something that stands apart from the past. The time of the virus spreads itself over the more intentional structures of social events, milestones, and reduces exchange to a crawling pace while offering a tempting divide between waiting and isolating, between the measurements of data and "living one's life." The phase-horror of the pandemic is that these spatio-temporal entwinements are now burrows of the dead and the actions of the isolated and the essential care providers will, despite feeling otherwise for the former and feeling futile for the latter, chisel out the future landscape.

Adriana Zaharijević |

Dreams about Time

(2020-04-05)

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It might be that it is only now that I read what philosophers have to say, with some urgency, about the world. I read everything, from the invocations of Mother Earth, to the types of ethical responses to crises, states of exception and bare life conspiracy theories, to juxtapositions of freedom vs security, to claims of the "return of the history", and to the endless ruminations on authoritarianism in the neoliberal guise. I read these pieces as if everything depends on it, devouring them. Obviously, I too seek answers.

Funnily enough, at the beginning I mostly enjoyed reading scattered thoughts about the Stoics, and how they, in one of the moments of the collapse of the world, saw it disintegrate in front of their eyes, unperturbed or forcing themselves to remain calm. We do not, however, live in a world that lets us *stay calm*. Hartmut Rosa wrote extensively on *Beschleunigung*, the endless acceleration, where everything outside and inside speeds up. In *La lenteur,* Milan Kundera whispers: "Quand les choses se passent trop vite, personne ne peut être sûr de rien, de rien du tout, même pas de soi-même." That said, the Stoics - whether slaves or emperors - could stop and think to make sure that they are at least sure of themselves. Can we?

I explained my first breakdown to myself as an epistemic crisis. The past - the time when everything was as speedy as usual, and that was, at that moment, just seven days behind me- looked like a time that never belonged to me or anyone else who belonged to that time. The past appeared as a neat landscape which could be squashed with one turn of the kaleidoscope. Unaccelerated, I first felt like I was losing time, that neat long way into today. All of a sudden it became clear that time depended on its hastening, on the pulling of past experiences into the present, and trying to extend them, somehow, into the future. That is when another epistemic crisis hurled itself in. After some days of acceptance, in quite a Stoic manner, of the past as a solid and immovable landscape standing there still and irrevocable, the future loomed large. "The future"? What is a tomorrow or a day after tomorrow when there is no difference between days? When the days are edgeless? Not only that our Judeo-Christian notion of progression, which is a part of our bloodstream with or without a living God, Man and the Author, stops making sense - but the hollowness of our social and political time also becomes exposed. Bleak or bright prognoses notwithstanding, we are stuck in presentism. We count the present. We count seconds, minutes, hours (till breakfast, lunch, dinner, the next announcement, the next measure enforcing and furthering social distancing, the next call, the next positive message from someone we hold dear), as much as we count the number of the infected, the dead, the newly unemployed, and those applying for loans. Day in and day out.

Perhaps we also wait. But waiting becomes increasingly hard with the decelerating of time. To wait is to project into the future, to construct some end or some beginning. To stop, but for a time only. Without a foreseeable point in which waiting ends, it transmutes into an endless present. So we wait, because we still remember how to, from when the time was rapid. But will we wait in two weeks as well?

Corona seems to be all about space - spatial distance, spacing ourselves (again) in our abodes, occupying space in hospitals or makeshift field hospitals (where there is often not sufficient space for everyone), being in (or removed from) the streets, fighting with ourselves and with the spring that invites us, almost subconsciously, to go *out*. I would argue that these concerns remind us of the plenitude, and provide us with what we begin to lack - a sense of *before* and *after*. Something that in our very accelerated world gave us surety.

What I learnt the most by far, valiantly facing my epistemic crises, is that we need to somehow invent time again. Philosophy might be of use in that venture, but poetry - re-learning to dream - does some work right away. If reality is at bay, dreaming might bring back some badly needed edges.

Jana Lozanoska |
Global Public Health as a Priority

(2020-04-05)

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We live in the twenty-first century, the century of increased technological and scientific advances, but the entire world seems completely unprepared for a viral pandemic. Meanwhile, NASA scientists are making intensive explorations on Mars; there are attempts at reproducing the sun's energy, at reconstructing the Big Bang, etc.

On the other hand, the Oscar winning *Joker* has correctly mapped out the fragility of the U.S. health system, as well as the social inequalities within, which could be juxtaposed to the global situation, as we are now witnessing the complete failure of liberalism both as a political and economic model under the threat of COVID-19. The question is, what follows after this? The Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek has mentioned a few times already that COVID-19 will bring about the fall of capitalism and the renewal of communism.[1] Even though one can partly agree with Žižek, one should still be wary about romanticizing this "renewal."

Under the COVID-19 threat, the idea of the free movement of people, and the Schengen zone within the EU is demonstrating itself to be a very fragile one, as some of the EU states have set checkpoints/borders with other EU states[2]; while for the rest of Europe, the EU has completely shut down its own borders for non-EU nationals[3] for a period of 30 days. It is quite worrisome that amid COVID-19 many states around the world have declared a "state of emergency." The declaration of a state of emergency provides for the executive branches elsewhere to adopt broad administrative measures without control of the judiciary and/or approval from the legislator. Those measures could be, but are not limited to: border closures for citizens and foreigners alike, compulsory collective quarantines, which might be a violation of the right to liberty, curfews, and other administrative decisions.

From the SARS outbreak in 2003, which is in the same group of viruses,[4] states had exactly sixteen years to build and reinforce their public health capacities, and therefore the question that each citizen should ask their own respective government is: where is the public money? This inquiry and critique should be extended as well to the World Health Organization (WHO), which has failed in assisting the governments in the establishing of public health infrastructures in the long run, which is, by the way, their mission.

Just recently the WHO has set up a fund as an integral part of the Global Fund on Malaria, Tuberculosis and HIV[5] to deal with and mitigate the impact of COVID-19. This fund has an allocated budget of $500 million U.S.D.. According to the information, which, however, is not very clear, the entire budget allocation is cumulatively applicable for combating malaria, tuberculosis, HIV, and now COVID-19 in various countries worldwide.

Peter Sands, the Executive Director of the Global Fund, in his recent op-ed writes the following:

1 Slavoj Žižek, "Slavoj Žižek: Coronavirus Is 'Kill Bill'-esque Blow to Capitalism and Could Lead to Reinvention of Communism," *Russia Today* (February 27, 2020). https://www.rt.com/op-ed/481831-coronavirus-kill-bill-capitalism-communism.

2 Andrew Rettman, "Nine EU States Close Borders Due to Virus," *EU Observer* (March 16, 2020). https://euobserver.com/coronavirus/147742.

3 Kristie Pladson, "EU Closes Borders to Foreigners to Halt Coronavirus Spread: What to Know," *Deutsche Welle* (March 18, 2020). https://www.dw.com/en/eu-closes-borders-to-foreigners-to-halt-coronavirus-spread-what-to-know/a-52824499.

4 "Naming the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and the Virus that Causes It," *World Health Organization* (February 2020). https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/naming-the-coronavirus-disease-(covid-2019)-and-the-virus-that-causes-it.

5 "COVID-19 Situation Report - 3 April 2020," *The Global Fund* (April 3, 2020). https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/9505/covid19_2020-04-03-situation_report_en.pdf?u=637215192420000000.

> ... a new approach to global health security must embrace a much broader notion of health security than we've typically used. To start with, it won't work if it is only focused on pandemics, since every pandemic starts as a small outbreak. Unless you're looking at the small sparks, you'll miss the potential inferno. ... Even more importantly, it also won't work if the definition of health security only encompasses infectious diseases that threaten the lives of people in rich countries.[6]

Global health security, as Sands calls it, should be understood as a "global health access," and any future global and early response to pandemics should be conceived of in that direction, in order to avoid this kind of radical lockdown in the future. However, that requires a serious amount of budget funding. Yet, the question remains: who is going to take the lead and the responsibility for that? Lastly, following from the COVID-19 pandemic, we all have realized something very crucial - that there are no globally effective public health infrastructures in place.

[6] Peter Sands, "Re-thinking Global Health Security," *The Global Fund* (March 27, 2020). https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/blog/2020-03-27-re-thinking-global-health-security.

Oxana Timofeeva |

Do Not Offend the Flies[1]

(2020-04-06)

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Flies are the source of the flu,

a guy said to me.

The source of the flu?

Don't fall for that, it can't be!

The source of the flu is you.

Zvuki Mu[2]

On the penultimate day of February, I felt incredibly exhausted. That day I had given a speech in Ljubljana - a presentation of a book on animals, translated into Slovenian. By then, COVID-19 had become one of the most frequent topics of public discussion, but not yet the most important one. The main topic of discussion in Slovenia at the time was politics - the right-wing had ascended to power. People came to attend my presentation straight away from a protest rally. However, general anxiety could already be sensed. The hotel where I usually stay in this city was in the peculiar state of complete absence of Chinese tourists. The virus outbreak had already started in

[1] This text originally appeared in Russian on the website *Syg.ma* (March 23, 2020). https://syg.ma/@oksana-timofieieva/nie-obizhaitie-mukh; ed.

[2] A Russian post-punk band; trans.

Оксана Тимофеева |

Не обижайте мух[1]

(2020-03-23)

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Муха - источник заразы, -

Сказал мне один чувак.

Муха - источник заразы?

Не верь это не так!

Источник заразы - это ты.

Звуки Му

В предпоследний день февраля я почувствовала себя невероятно усталой и разбитой. В тот день у меня было выступление в Любляне - презентация книги о животных, которую перевели на словенский язык. COVID-19 уже стал к тому времени одним из главных предметов обсуждения - но еще не самым главным. В Словении главным предметом в те дни была политика - правые дорвались до власти; на презентацию люди пришли с акции протеста. Но уже чувствовалось всеобщее беспокойство. Отель, в котором я постоянно останавливаюсь в этом городе, встретил непривычной сценой полного отсутствия китайских туристов. Вспышка начиналась совсем рядом, в Италии; появились но-

[1] Originally published in Russian on the website *Syg.ma* (March 23, 2020). https://syg.ma/@oksana-timofieieva/nie-obizhaitie-mukh; ed.

Europe, quite nearby in fact, in Italy. There were confirmed cases in the Austrian ski resort region as well, but none had been reported in Slovenia. Against such news background, I was bothered by a strange feeling: to come, speak publicly, and infect someone would be terrible, but I came to realize that just after the event, not before!

Throughout the night I felt something of a slight fever or chills. I woke up at about 3 a.m., fully convinced that that was it, and immediately sent out several emails to cancel all of the forthcoming meetings for the next day. These were important meetings to me - with people I rarely get the chance to meet, whom I admire, and whose friendship I cherish. In the morning, I went to the central pharmacy and found out that they were out of masks. During the day, the paranoia would subside. "It's just a seasonal flu," I was reassured by Slavoj Žižek. We spoke over the phone while being just a couple of streets away from each other. Žižek promised to come to Russia soon, if planes kept flying, and I replied: "Of course they will, what else would they do?" The idea that borders could be closed had not yet occurred to me.

I took the night train back from Ljubljana to Munich. At 4 a.m., on the German-Austrian border, policemen entered the car, began knocking on the compartment doors and checking passports. Interesting case, I thought. This was completely new to me. I suspected it had something to do with the virus, but in that case why weren't they checking the travelers' temperature instead of their passports? Shortly, a colleague enlightened me: the virus was of no interest to the policemen, they were looking into passengers' citizenship, hunting for refugees from Syria and other war-torn Middle Eastern countries. I tried to imagine myself as a Syrian refugee, moving from train to train towards the prosperous Germany. I wished to become something invisible, intangible or microscopic, to settle down on the door handle of the compartment, so that someone's hands would then carry me to Munich, and further on to Berlin. The virus recognizes no borders; it easily passes passport and customs controls. From my hand, it would migrate to my passport, later to the policeman's hand, and from there to the passport of a passenger in the neighboring compartment, who would get off in Nuremberg and attend a conference or a business meeting.

Viruses are a very mobile form of life. Well, a form of life... In fact, the virus dangles between life and death. "This oscillation between

вости о заболевших в районе австрийских лыжных курортов, но в Словении пока зафиксированных случаев не было. Странное самочувствие на таком новостном фоне меня тревожило: приехать, выступить публично и кого-нибудь заразить было бы ужасно, но накрыло-то меня после мероприятия, а не до!

Ночью был небольшой то ли жар, то ли озноб. Проснулась часа в три в полной уверенности, что это оно, и написала сразу несколько имейлов, чтобы отменить все встречи, запланированные на следующий день. То были важные для меня встречи - с людьми, которых вижу редко, которыми восхищаюсь, дружбой с которыми дорожу. Утром дошла до центральной аптеки и обнаружила, что масок нет. Днем паранойя спала. „Это просто сезонный грипп", - успокоил Славой Жижек. Мы говорили по телефону, находясь на соседних улицах. Жижек обещал скоро приехать в Россию, если будут летать самолеты, а я отвечала: „Ну конечно будут, куда же они денутся!" Мысль о том, что могут закрыть границы, мне в голову не приходила.

Обратно ехала ночным поездом из Любляны в Мюнхен. Часа в четыре утра на границе Австрии и Германии в вагон зашли полицаи, стали стучать в купе и проверять паспорта. «Интересное дело», подумала я. Впервые вижу такое. Закралось подозрение, что это как-то связано с вирусом, но почему бы тогда им вместо паспортов не проверять температуру? Позже коллега просветила: полицаев интересует не вирус, а гражданство: идет охота на беженцев из Сирии и других измученных войной ближневосточных регионов. Я представила себя сирийским беженцем, переходящим с поезда на поезд по направлению к благополучной Германии. Захотелось стать невидимкой, чем-то неосязаемым или микроскопическим, осесть на ручке двери купе, чтобы чьи-то руки меня затем перенесли в Мюнхен, а оттуда в Берлин. Для вируса не существует границ, он с легкостью проходит паспортный и таможенный контроль. С моей руки он пересядет на мой паспорт, с него - на руку полицая, с нее - на паспорт пассажира из соседнего купе, который выйдет в Нюрнберге и отправится на конференцию или бизнес-встречу.

Вирус - это очень мобильная форма жизни. Ну как, жизни... На самом деле он болтается между жизнью и смертью. „Это ко-

life and death is of key importance here: viruses are neither alive nor dead in the usual sense. They are living dead: a virus is alive because of its tendency to replicate, but it is a kind of zero-level life; a biological caricature not so much of the inclination towards death, but rather of life at the level of the most meaningless repetition and reproduction," writes Žižek.[3] It should be said that it is not just viruses that subsist at this level. Jakob Johann von Uexküll had once described how the world of ticks (*acari*) is structured. A tick had been kept for eighteen years in suspended animation in a laboratory, neither alive nor dead, without any nourishment. For all these years it would hang in limbo, waiting for a stimulus in order to come back to life and move. The stimulus in its case is the smell of a warm-blooded animal's skin, as it only needs to successfully fall in this natural environment.

Giorgio Agamben has called this condition "bare life." The concept also applies to people. Bare life is a life devoid of any human, i.e., symbolic dimension. It lies outside of law and legality. It might seem somewhat unlikely for us to fall into the gray zone of indistinguishability between life and death, animal and human, given our seemingly limitless cultural and symbolic reserves, as well as an impressive set of rights and freedoms. However, as Agamben notes, all this humanistic infrastructure collapses as soon as it falls into a state of emergency. We sacrifice everything just to avoid getting infected, he says.[4] We hold on to life so cowardly that it becomes indistinguishable from death. Someone might be a respected citizen today, tomorrow this same person could report to the authorities about "people of Chinese nationality" in minibuses, and the day after tomorrow rush to buy all the available toilet paper rolls in the store, so others don't reach them first. Dehumanization is unfolding before our eyes. It begins with cowardice, with suspicious views of the other, the outsider, the migrant, the foreigner as potentially contagious.

But animals are the first suspects. Since the middle ages, mice and rats have been considered a source of plague, whereas last year marmots were pronounced the source of the bubonic plague dis-

[3] Slavoj Žižek, "Monitor and Punish? Yes, Please!," *The Philosophical Salon* (March 16, 2020). http://thephilosophicalsalon.com/monitor-and-punish-yes-please.
[4] Giorgio Agamben, "Clarifications," trans. Adam Kotsko, *An und für sich* (March 17, 2020). https://itself.blog/2020/03/17/giorgio-agamben-clarifications.

лебание между жизнью и смертью является ключевым: вирусы ни живые, ни мертвые в привычном смысле. Это живые мертвецы: вирус живой в силу своего стремления реплицироваться, но это своего рода нулевой уровень жизни, биологическая карикатура не столько даже на влечение к смерти, сколько на жизнь на уровне тупейшего повторения и размножения", - пишет Жижек[2]. Надо сказать, что на этом уровне пребывают не только вирусы. В свое время барон Якоб фон Икскюль описал, как устроен мир клеща. Восемнадцать лет клещ пребывал в лаборатории в состоянии анабиоза - ни живой, ни мертвый, в отсутствие всякой пищи. Клещ зависает в лимбо в ожидании стимула жить и двигаться. Стимулом в его случае является запах кожи теплокровного животного, на которого в естественной среде нужно просто удачно упасть.

Джорджо Агамбен назвал такое состояние „голой жизнью". На людей это понятие тоже распространяется. Голая жизнь - лишенная человеческого, то есть символического измерения; она вне права и закона. Попадание в серую зону неразличимости между жизнью и смертью, животным и человеческим, представляется чем-то маловероятным, учитывая наши кажущиеся безграничными культурно-символические резервы, а также внушительный набор прав и свобод. Однако, как замечает Агамбен, вся эта гуманистическая инфраструктура моментально коллапсирует, как только дело доходит до чрезвычайного положения. Мы приносим в жертву все, только чтобы не заразиться - говорит он[3]. Мы так трусливо держимся за жизнь, что она становится неотличима от смерти. Сегодня N уважаемый член общества, завтра докладывает в авторитетные органы о „лицах китайской национальности" в маршрутках, а послезавтра скупает все имеющиеся в магазине рулоны туалетной бумаги, чтобы не досталось другим. Расчеловечивание происходит на глазах. Оно начинается с трусости, с подозрительных взглядов в сторону другого - чужака, мигранта, иностранца - как потенциально заразного.

Но первыми под подозрение попадают животные. Мыши и крысы со времен средневековья под подозрением из-за чумы,

[2] Slavoj Žižek, "Monitor and Punish? Yes, Please!," *The Philosophical Salon* (March 16, 2020). http://thephilosophicalsalon.com/monitor-and-punish-yes-please.
3 Giorgio Agamben, "Clarifications," trans. Adam Kotsko, *An und für sich* (March 17, 2020). https://itself.blog/2020/03/17/giorgio-agamben-clarifications.

ease in Mongolia. In the early 2000s, I flew to Japan and fell ill there just as the world was beginning to discuss in horror the avian flu epidemic that was advancing from Southeast Asia. My return flight was from Osaka via Amsterdam, where I lay in a hotel for several hours, drenched in sweat. Wearing a thick Japanese mask, I carefully avoided a group of Chinese tourists at the airport - back then, just like these days, everyone would shy away from them, while in cities like Moscow people would shy even further away from pigeons. Then there was the swine flu, and now this one. And who were the first to blame? Bats, snakes, and beautiful-scales-covered pangolins. Animals, facing unfathomable greed and cruelty, piled on an eerie Wuhan market stall - naked life that has lost all distinctive traits. My heart sinks when I think of them. Imagining myself as a dead pangolin, a pile of bats by the kilo, I am taken over by a desire to disengage from this biomass that screams with its helpless mouths, and become a virus, jump onto someone's hands or eyes, replicate, become an anonymous and invisible multitude.

In fact, Agamben writes, "the enemy is not outside, but rather inside us."[5] This can be understood in two ways. On the one hand, the enemy is our own cowardice, bordering on xenophobia. We would close borders and roads, shut doors and windows, shut our mouths, wash our hands, and, if necessary, we would fire back at our neighbors who had come for our bread. On the other hand, as potential carriers of the virus, we ourselves are what everyone like us seems to shrink away from in horror. I once watched a zombie apocalypse series, the name of which I don't recall. In one of the episodes a woman was infected, while her husband (one of those characters who would keep rescuing humanity from the disease till the end of the film) remained healthy. The police, or was it the army, would set up barriers in defense from the hopeless ones, including our hero's wife, who was gradually losing her human form. Faced with a harsh decision, he saw his wife in the mass of infected bodies for the last time. The purity of the human species is an imperative, you see. It was then that I first realized that I would always stand on the other side of the fence, among the shapeless mass of zombies. Not with the healthy ones, not with the survivors, but with those whom the responsible humanity found it necessary to leave out, having calculated its own and others' chances of survival; with those who did

[5] Agamben, "Clarifications."

а в прошлом году источником заражения бубонной чумой в Монголии называли сурков. В начале двухтысячных я летала в Японию, и разболелась там как раз в то время, когда весь мир с ужасом начал обсуждать эпидемию птичьего гриппа, надвигавшуюся из Юго-Восточной Азии. Обратный рейс был из Осаки через Амстердам, где я несколько часов пролежала в отеле в тяжелом поту. Надев плотную японскую маску, с осторожностью обходила в аэропорту группу китайских туристов - от них, как и в этот раз, шарахались все, но еще больше шарахались от голубей в городах типа нашей Москвы. Потом был еще свиной грипп, а теперь вот этот. И кого назначили виноватым в первую очередь? Летучих мышей, змей и покрытых изумительной чешуей панголинов. Животные, жадность и жестокость по отношению к которым находится за гранью понимания, сваленные в кучу на жутком Уханьском рынке - утратившая любые различия голая жизнь. Когда я думаю о них, у меня сердце сжимается. Представляю себя трупиком панголина, грудой летучих мышей на развес. Хочется выкристаллизироваться из этой кричащей беспомощными ротиками биомассы, стать вирусом, запрыгнуть в чьи-то руки или глаза, реплицироваться, стать анонимным невидимым множеством.

На самом деле, пишет Агамбен, „враг не снаружи, он внутри нас"[4]. Это можно понимать двояко. С одной стороны, враг - это наша собственная трусость, граничащая с ксенофобией. Мы закроем границы и дороги, закроем двери и окна, закроем рты, умоем руки, а если надо - и вовсе будем отстреливаться от больных соседей, пришедших за нашей гречей. С другой, как потенциальные носители вируса, мы сами и есть то, от чего в ужасе отстраняются все вроде бы подобные нам. Не помню уже, как назывался один из нескольких просмотренных мной фильмов про зомби-апокалипсис, но в нем был такой эпизод: жена заразилась зомби-вирусом, а муж - из тех, кто будет до конца фильма спасать человечество от заразы - остался здоровым. То ли полиция, то ли армия устанавливает заграждения, снаружи которых остаются те, кто уже безнадежен, в том числе жена нашего героя, постепенно утрачивающая человеческий облик. Для него это, конечно, суровое решение, но в куче зараженных тел он видит свою жену в последний раз. Чистота человеческой

4 Agamben, "Clarifications."

not get a ventilator, who were not admitted to the hospitals without insurance, who were beaten for coughing on the bus; with pangolins and bats. Solidarity requires an intensive work of imagination - you ought to put yourself in the place of the one who is excluded in the fear of infection. To defeat a virus, you must become one.

Translated from the Russian by Andrej Jovanchevski

расы важнее, понимаете? Именно тогда до меня впервые дошло, что я-то буду не по эту, а по ту сторону заграждения, в бесформенной массе зомби. Не со здоровенькими, не с теми, кто выжил, а с теми, кого ответственное человечество, просчитав свои и чужие шансы на выживание, сочло необходимым оставить за бортом; с теми, кому не досталось аппаратов ИВЛ, кого не приняли в больницу без страховки, кого побили за то, что закашлялся в автобусе; с панголинами и летучими мышами. Солидарность требует интенсивной работы воображения - поставить себя на место того, от кого отстраняются в страхе заразиться. Чтобы победить вирус, надо им стать.

Alexander Wilson |

The Virus and the Tree

(2020-04-06)

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How does the parasite usually take hold?

He tries to become invisible.

Michel Serres, *The Parasite*[1]

1. From a biological perspective, humans inhabit the outer branches of the so-called *tree of life*; or, perhaps more accurately, a minuscule and most fragile twig, a freshly sprouted thorn.

2. This putative tree of life has traditionally been reserved for *cellular life*, and thus did not always include viruses. Viruses seem to maintain an existence *between* cellular life and non-life, or inert matter. Though mainstream biology now includes viruses within the category of life, their structures, their evolution, and their life cycles are still reasons to treat them differently from the cellular life that populates the tree, which infinitely ramifies from a single point, LUCA, the Last Universal Common Ancestor.

3. Through misleading concepts like the *survival of the fittest*, Darwin's description of evolution by natural selection has so often mistakenly served to prop up a vision of life as driven toward higher perfection, with humans at its pinnacle, reflecting a certain sense of providential destiny that inhabits Western Enlightenment. The misunderstanding still resonates during the COVID-19 crisis, for instance, in those calls to let the old die in order to save the stock market. Stephen Jay Gould warned that this persistent misunderstanding of evolutionary dynamics reflected a deep-seated finalistic faith. So often life, in its complexity and apparent irreducibility to mechanism, is held to be moved by some ghost, perhaps an *élan vital*, that gives direction to its otherwise meaningless evolution, drawing us teleologically toward De Chardin's *Omega Point*, or, perhaps today, toward some inevitable technological singularity.

4. But evolution does not select the fittest. Successful mutants only *satisfice* environmental constraints. After Motoo Kimura, we know that so much of evolution happens through random drift, and that *evolutionary bottlenecks* imply contingent "copying errors," which echo through the subsequent processes.

5. Viruses are the most abundant life on earth and are nevertheless often not considered life at all. This is because the virus cannot reproduce itself, consume energy, or really do much of anything without first infecting and exploiting the mechanisms of a host cell. During the *eclipse* phase of its life cycle, the virus dissolves into bits of nucleic acid codes and packets of protein. The parts disperse within the host, exploiting its internal mechanisms to start reproducing the packaged "Trojan horse" structure of the viral particle.

6. Since the virus "becomes invisible," and disappears during its eclipse phase, we have tended to overemphasize its inert and observable *viral particle* phase. But it is precisely when it disappears into the cell that it really comes alive, through a division into parallel functions and faculties.

7. Biologists figure that if viral evolution shows a slight trend toward *higher* complexity over evolutionary time, we should expect that viruses descend from archaic *pre-cellular* life. But if we find that they evolved to become *simpler* - even if only slightly - and exhibit a tendency to shed layers of tissue structure over evolutionary time, it is an indication that they descend from *parasitic cellular organisms* that, at some point, found it advantageous to *rid themselves of their cellular membranes* in order to gain better access to the internal workings of their hosts.

[1] Michel Serres, *The Parasite*, trans. by Lawrence R. Schehr (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 217.

8. There are examples of viruses that maintain what appear to be *remnants* of ancestral membranes. We also increasingly discover ancient *giant viruses* (such as the ones today being released from our melting permafrost after millennia), which have their own translation machinery, a characteristic traditionally thought to be unique to cellular organisms. For these reasons, some biologists, like Claudiu Bandea,[2] think viruses descend from parasitic cellular ancestors that progressively *lost their membranes.*

9. Amodio et al.[3] offer a similar explanation for why the octopus is so smart despite lacking sociality and a long lifespan. Smart animals, like dolphins and chimpanzees, are usually social and reserve a longer development period for their young. But not the octopus. Its intelligence is instinctive, distributed through the neural circuits in its limbs, and does not depend on the cultural substrate. The authors propose that this is because the octopus *lost its shell*.

10. Cephalopods emerged when some molluscs learned to repurpose their shells as floatation devices, by blowing them up with gases. Divergent evolution may have then led the nautiloid's shell to become a disadvantage, perhaps when large fish appeared on the scene. To escape them, cephalopods progressively started swallowing up their inflexible shells, absorbing them into their flesh: creatures like cuttlefish appeared who internalized their shell as a cuttlebone, which they still use for buoyancy. The squid still has a remnant of its lost shell: the gladius. Octopuses almost completely lost their internalized shell, but it is still faintly echoed in their stylets.

11. The octopus lost its shell. And thus its intelligence, its complex and distributed nervous system, may have emerged as a desperate evolutionary compensation for this lack of protection, this exposure to the outside.

12. The octopus and the virus are both "shape shifters," quickly adaptable to new contexts, and thus, in this sense, *intelligent*: the octopus having lost its shell, the virus having lost its membrane. Like the octopus, the virus loses its shell, and replaces it with a tactical adaptability and plasticity.

13. As soon as there were celled organisms, some of them were critically dependent on others. The survival of these cells thus depended on their successful response to the natural selection exerted by their hosts, who had become, in effect, their *environments*. In some cases, convergent, symbiotic evolution took place, like the absorption of mitochondria into the eukaryote. Mitochondria were also, like the ancestor of the virus, first foreign cells that attached to hosts, but where the hosts integrated them as part of their function. Similarly, the vast majority of the viruses we live with are benign to us, they move in and out of our bodies, we have integrated them as parts of our immune system, as endogenous retroviruses, derived from ages of infection by a viral evolution that has continually reshaped our genomes. This is why we can estimate the age of viral species by tracking their markers through the branches of the tree of life.

14. But in those regions of this fractal space of evolutionary possibilities where *divergent evolution* takes place, and where a host begins to change and a parasite is forced to keep up, it may become advantageous for the parasite to start losing its membrane, such that it injects a progressively more streamlined version of its reproductive strategy into the host, perhaps in last ditch efforts to adapt to a rapidly changing environment. And it is thought that this may have happened, not just once, but many times in the evolution of life, that new viral lineages may emerge every time such an evolutionary bottleneck is transgressed by a parasitic cell, even today.

15. By losing their membrane, viruses cross a *reductive* evolutionary bottleneck, and *drop out* of the tree of life. Beyond this threshold, a slight bias toward lower complexity is reflected throughout the virus's diffusion into this *negative space*, between the branches of the tree of life.

16. In Gould's rebuttal of finalism,[4] he offered a deflationary account of why life, from our perspective, *seems* to evolve from lower to higher forms of complexity. There is a lower bound, he said, a minimum level of complexity required for life to exist. This lower bound, this "left wall" of minimum complexity, introduces a faint bias into

[2] Claudiu I. Bandea, "The Origin and Evolution of Viruses as Molecular Organisms," *Nature Precedings*, No. 713 (October 2009): 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1038/npre.2009.3886.1.
[3] Piero Amodio et al., "Grow Smart and Die Young: Why Did Cephalopods Evolve Intelligence?," *Trends in Ecology and Evolution*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2019): 45–56. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tree.2018.10.010.
[4] Stephen Jay Gould, *Full House: The Spread of Excellence from Plato to Darwin*. 1st Harvard University Press ed. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011).

the subsequent process, such that life, on average, evolves ever so slightly into more complex forms of organization, even though the vast majority of biomass on earth is comprised of bacteria.

17. But the virus's reductive evolution complicates this picture. If the reductive model is correct, having dropped out of the tree of life, viruses find themselves slowly drifting toward the other end of the spectrum. *Their* evolutionary bottleneck, their "left wall," introduced an opposite bias into their evolution, such that they exhibit a slight tendency to shed layers of complexity, and perhaps, therefore, an increasing need to exploit an ever-expanding outside.

18. Some imagine viral evolution as a *vine* that wraps around the tree of life. Invasive vine species are known to strangle forests to death.

19. Ecological thought has traditionally demanded a "return to nature." But COVID-19 signals that such epidemics and pandemics may increasingly occur, not because we have left nature behind, but on the contrary, because of our ever-increasing *proximity* with it. We are also known to strangle forests to death.

20. This proximity is manifested in the very decoding and instrumentalization of nature that is our only real defense against COVID-19: drugs and vaccines. And through this *decoding*, humans, like viruses long before us, have entered the negative spaces between the branches of the tree of life, by blurring the distinction between them. The late Freeman Dyson warned that: "In the near future, we will be in possession of genetic engineering technology which allows us to move genes precisely and massively from one species to another. Careless or commercially driven use of this technology could make the concept of species meaningless, mixing up populations and mating systems so that much of the individuality of species would be lost."[5]

21. What did humans lose in the process of hominization? No doubt our ancestors also survived evolutionary bottlenecks, as revealed by the fact that genetic diversity is very low in humans. This implies that if our technosphere were to collapse, we would have little chance to keep up with the rapidly changing circumstances by genetic selection alone, that is, by quickly *drifting* into *post-modern-human* hominins. It would seem that we have traded off biological variability and organic plasticity for a cultural and techno-evolutionary variability. Our continued evolution depends on the technosphere.

22. Did Prometheus, in the old myth, not steal fire from the gods because Epimetheus had left us defenseless and, so to speak, *shell-less*? Does *forethought* and intelligence not always come as a compensation for the abandonment of one's protective boundary, in one way or another? All regret concerns nostalgia for the origin, a wish to go back and do things differently, perhaps to recede back into the womb, before we hatched. And equally, the *hubris* of forethought is eternally punished: the Promethean decision leaves our innards exposed, such that our livers are ravaged by scavengers. COVID-19 reveals this to all, as we withdraw into our homes, like molluscs into their shells, and wait for the technology.

23. But then, is our mnemonic exteriorization, our *technosphere*, not a supplemental, *artificial* shell? Indeed, as Darwin already observed, civilization seems to suppress the effects of natural selection on our evolution, because we "do our utmost to check the process of elimination; we build asylums for the imbecile, the maimed, and the sick; we institute poor-laws; and our medical men exert their utmost skill to save the life of every one to the last moment."[6]

24. As we transition from biological to cultural evolution, we also replace natural selections with artificial ones. In a sense, we are to the technosphere what viruses are to their hosts: we are techno-parasites. We must follow it wherever *it* goes, forced to adapt to *its* divergent evolution.

25. There is nothing in this drama that suggests we should seek ways back to nature, whatever that would mean, or back to some mythical form of sustainable nature-culture balance, if that were somehow possible. Nor, for that matter, that we are on a specified course, progressing toward an inevitable finality. These are tran-

[5] Freeman Dyson, "Biological and Cultural Evolution: Six Characters in Search of an Author" (1919), *Edge.org* (February 19, 2019). https://www.edge.org/conversation/freeman_dyson-biological-and-cultural-evolution.

[6] Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1871] 2009), 168.

scendental illusions, structural temptations or attractors for our desperate intuitions. On the one hand, the past always *resembles a tree*; that is how we are forced to construct it when we follow the lines of explanation back to the origin. On the other, our biologically conditioned biases inevitably infect all prognostic thought. Our just-so stories become self-fulfilling prophecies that control us, as if retroactively, from the future. But this Novel Coronavirus seems to want to say that, in fact, there is no tree and no Omega Point. Everything is undecided.

Elisabeth von Samsonow |

The Dissident Goddesses' Network CORONA STATEMENT

(2020-04-06)

Elisabeth von Samsonow, artist and philosopher, is Professor of Philosophical and Historical Anthropology at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, and Visiting Professor at the Bauhaus University Weimar (2012-2013). She is involved in various international activities both as an artist and curator. Her teaching and research focus on collective memory, the relationship between art and religion, female identification, sacral and profane androgyny, and the dissolution of the modern self. Her work as an artist is concerned with the systematic and symbolic place of sculpture in the framework of contemporary multimedia. She is the author of, most recently, (as editor) *Epidemic Subjects – Radical Ontology* (diaphanes, Berlin and Chicago University Press, 2017) and *Anti-Electra* (Minnesota University Press, 2019). Recent artistic projects include: *Les Ballets Russes present ANTI-ELECTRA* (Moscow, 2017), *Laboratory of the Exo/Endo Corpus* (short film, 2017), *Transplants* (Krems, 2016), *HORSE'S GLORY* (Vienna, 2015), *Hippo Hypno Schizo Hoch Zeit* (performance, Art Week Vienna, 2011). von Samsonow is also translator and editor of several German editions of Giordano Bruno. See www.samsonow.net and http://pages.akbild.ac.at/anthropologie/samsonow.html.

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The Dissident Goddesses' Network comments on this moment from the perspective of a - not new - radical claim for socio-ecological change and reorientation. The current crisis is a crisis of life. During this time of deep exhalation the condition and fragility of planetary existence becomes manifest. And it is the time of Gaia's epiphany. This paper addresses all of us, the survivors, the "people of Gaia"

Elisabeth von Samsonow |

The Dissident Goddesses' Network CORONA STATEMENT[1]

(2020-04-06)

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Die gegenwärtige Krise ist eine Krise des Lebens. The Dissident Goddesses' Network kommentiert diesen Moment aus der Perspektive einer - nicht neuen - radikalen Forderung nach sozio-ökologischer Veränderung und Neuorientierung. Im gegenwärtigen Atemholen

[1] Originally published at *The Dissident Goddesses' Network* (March 2020). http://www.tdgn.at/coronastatement.

(Bruno Latour and Gilles Deleuze/Félix Guattari), dedicated to those who passed away and will pass away during this pandemic.

1. This crisis uncovers the best and most beautiful side of humans: their love for life. They cling to life, they are passionate for it, and they protect it. At any rate life is desired and favored. To this end, means are taken to a degree which had been unthinkable beforehand, during the so-called "normal times." The crisis demonstrates the deep appreciation of life pervading all social and political spaces. It is the first time that the economy steps back in favor of life. In favor of life the economy risks a shutdown. It is definitively something unique, and singular living on this planet. Why is it so good here? Why is it desirable to dwell on this planet? Why should we want to live here so much? Which kind of experience does the planet offer us? This crisis affects the whole world, all humans on earth. The shock unleashes a philosophical potential. We are becoming the solidary citizens of this planet, but what or who is this unknown star? *Comment: Before the crisis, it was evident that the ecological disbalance tended to its maximum on earth, but there was almost no re-acting, far from enough (look at the poor response to the climate change movement). Is it possible to favor human life and continue neglecting the terrestrian conditions of life as a whole? The crisis opens a path to coming-to-the-world, to meeting the earth, to being-in-earth.*

2. People are forcedly taking a pause, the same applies to nature: nature has to take in much less harmful and toxic substances, it needs to digest less waste. The economy of the anthropocene has reached a catastrophic level of destruction and erasure. The dying of species is ongoing. Now, the effect of this unforeseen pause or human inactivity is visible everywhere: the air gets better, water is cleansing itself from pollution, the animals return. This is the epiphany of Gaia, the earth (see James Lovelock's and Lynn Margulis' Gaia Hypothesis). After ten days she recovers a bit, after one month she starts to radiate, after three months she is back in her reign. The humans feel this change, they will take note of this quality of the earth in epiphany that they were missing. To encounter this earth is what is needed and desired now. Happiness is being-in-the-world (this is love for life). The new earth is luxurious, and abundant as ever. Modifying and reducing consumption makes it definitively evident that there is enough for all. The dignity of humans rises to the same degree as the earth gains subjectivity. In-der-Welt-

wird die Bedingtheit, Schönheit und Fragilität planetarer Existent deutlich wie selten: das ist die Epiphanie von Gaia. Dieser Text ist an uns alle gerichtet, die wir leben und überleben, das „Volk von Gaia" (Bruno Latour), und er ist gewidmet allen, die an COVID-19 gestorben sind und sterben werden.

1. Die Krise zeigt die Menschen unerwarteterweise von ihrer schönsten Seite: sie hängen am Leben, und sie schützen es. Um jeden Preis wird das Leben gewollt und geschützt. Zu diesem Zweck werden wie selbstverständlich Maßnahmen ergriffen, die in den sogenannten „normalen Zeiten" vollkommen undenkbar waren. Die Krise manifestiert eine tiefe Wertschätzung des Lebens, die alle Bereiche des politischen und privaten Lebens durchdringt. Das Leben wird dem wirtschaftlichen Diktat vorgezogen. Zu Gunsten des Lebens steht beinahe die gesamte Wirtschaft still. Warum ist es gut auf diesem Planeten? Warum will man hier leben? Welche Erfahrung bietet dieser Planet? Diese Krise betrifft die ganze Welt, die ganze Erde. Im Willen zu Leben sind wir solidarische PlanetarierInnen, aber auf welchem unbekannten Stern genau? *Kommentar: Vor der Krise war bereits klar, dass die ökologische Belastung der Erde maximal ist, und trotzdem wurde nicht gehandelt. Kann man nur menschliches Lebens wollen und auf die terrestrischen Bedingungen dieses Lebens pfeifen? Die Krise bietet die Chance, auf die Welt zu kommen, auf diese Welt zu kommen.*

2. Die Menschen sind „auf Pause", die Natur hat weniger Schadstoffe, weniger Belastung wie zuvor zu verdauen. Die Wirtschaftsweise des Anthropozäns hatte katastrophale Belastungsmarken erreicht. Der Effekt ist überall zu sehen: die Luft ist besser, das Wasser wird klar, die Tiere kommen zurück etc. Das ist die Epiphanie der Göttin, die Epiphanie von Gaia, der Erde. Nach zehn Tagen hat sich die Natur erholt. Nach einem Monat strahlt sie. Nach drei Monaten regiert sie. Die Menschen empfinden das, sie werden wahrnehmen, dass es diese Qualität der Natur, der Erde ist, die sie brauchen. Es ist ein Glück, das In-der-Welt-Sein. Im Leben, nicht nur im Urlaub. Die neue Erde zeigt sich als ein Zusammenhang des Überflusses, des Luxus. Die Erde ist der Luxus. Veränderte und korrigierte Konsumgewohnheiten erlauben, zu sehen und zu erfahren, dass es genug für alle gibt. Die Würde der Menschen nimmt zu, sie steigt, und zwar im selben Masse, wie die Erde an Subjektivität gewinnt. In-der-Welt-

gree that the earth becomes subject. Well-being is grounded as well in the exchange and communication between humans as an inter-species contact (Donna Haraway). *Comment: This new relationship, which is brought forth during the time of suspension paralleling the epiphany of Gaia, is erotic. Gaia is ecstatic, in plenitude. The machinery of desire fueled with the energy of ever unaccomplished wishes is re-engineered (this is an anti-Lacanian proposition). The Civilizational, systematic oblivion of earth is over, the geo trauma (Robin Mackay) enters the space of consciousness.*

3. The crisis does not only put humans under the order of a shutdown but offers them a creative break for re-orientation. People have worked and run at a maximum rate. The alternation of work and regeneration must be reset. It is good and desirable to live but what is the purpose of life? To make us operate continuously at the edge of burnout? Why is life beautiful? Because we may consume and buy endlessly? What kind of dignity can humans claim from their role within the living system of the earth? From where do they draw their greedy claims? The shock is a waking up, it is an awakening, sadly enough it has to come through this shock. People become aware of what they already knew before: that it is impossible to return to the *status ante quem*. The lack of self-awareness and self-reflection, as well as the lack of recognition of others, is dimmed down in this moment of privation and calmness. People get creative, as they are challenged, and they reinvent themselves. They discover their manifold abilities and talents, potentials that they will contribute to social, economic, political, scientific, and cultural life with. This is why this pause is needed, even if it was imposed. Many people continue to work hard, for the other's sake, in food production and trade, in the health care and energy industries. The crisis allows us to look at needs, which enterprises serve our basic needs, and which ones do not. It applies mostly to those who produce and supply food and support life's daily routine. The post-metaphysical age does not offer any sense or meaning to the moment. It can only be drawn bottom-up from life itself. The event itself is meaningful (this is a Spinozist argument). *Comment: There is no reason to seriously worry for this great amount of sensitive and thoughtful beings. But there is a reason to worry in case things will not change in the future, in case things will return instead to business as*

Sein heisst, dass die Kommunikation unter den Menschen ebenso gelingt wie die mit Individuen aller anderen Spezies (Donna Haraway). *Kommentar: Dieses neue Verhältnis, das sich in den drei bis vier Monaten der Epiphanie von Gaia anbahnt, ist erotisch. Gaia ist eine Ekstase der Fülle. Die bisher aktive Begehrensmaschine der unerfüllbaren Wünsche des Menschen als Konsument und Endverbraucher wird umgebaut (dies ist eine gegen Sigmund Freud und Jacques Lacan gerichtete These). Die Erdvergessenheit der kapitalistischen Zivilisation ist beendet, das Geo-Trauma wird in das Bewusstsein gehoben und durchgearbeitet (Robin Mackay).*

3. Die Krise verordnet den Menschen eine Pause, bietet ihnen aber auch Zeit für eine Neuorientierung an. Viele Menschen haben am Rande ihrer Möglichkeiten gearbeitet. Es bedarf einer neuen Regulierung des Verhältnisses zwischen Arbeit und Regeneration (Richard Sennett). Zu leben ist gut und begehrenswert, aber was ist der Inhalt des Lebens? Dass man andauernd am Rande der Belastbarkeit operiert? Warum ist das Leben schön? Weil man grenzenlos konsumieren kann? Welche Würde haben Menschen im Erdsystem? Woraus leiten sie ihre Forderungen ab? Der Schock weckt die Menschen auf - traurig genug, dass es durch einen Schock geschieht. Sie werden aufmerksam gemacht auf das, was sie bereits wussten: daß es so nicht weitergeht. Die Selbst-Verkennung und Fremd-Verkennung von Menschen lässt nach, dies ist in der relativen Ruhe eher möglich. Menschen werden kreativ, sie werden sich neu erfinden. Menschen entdecken ihre vielfältigen Fähigkeiten auf neue Weise, die sie zur Veränderung der menschlichen Zivilisation segenbringend für alle einsetzen können. Dazu dient die Pause, die vielen Menschen verordnet wird. Viele arbeiten weiter für andere, nämlich zum Beispiel die Menschen der Lebensmittel-, Energie und Gesundheitsbetriebe. Die Krise zeigt, welche Betriebe tatsächlich „systemerhaltend" sind. Es sind all jene, die Leben erhalten. Das nach-metaphysische Zeitalter hat für den jetzigen Augenblick weder Deutung noch Sinn zu bieten. Das Ereignis ist der Sinn (das ist eine spinozistische These). *Kommentar: Es gibt keinen Grund, sich um diese große Anzahl denkender und empfindender Wesen wirklich Sorgen zu machen. Sorgen machen muss man sich nur in Bezug auf die Pläne, alles wieder wie gehabt „hochzufahren". Binnen zweier Jahre wird sich die Wirtschaft neu formiert haben und anfangen, zu blühen.*

usual. Within two years the economy will fully recover. But it should be a type of economy that is less colonial, ecologically destructive, and exploitive. The relationship between technology, science, and art must be reinvented. And there must be a turn in the use of energy - a switch away from colonializing and the wasteful use of energy and toward the "climacteric mode" (Jeremy Rifkin, who addresses issues of entropy says that the whole living system enters another mode). It should be an economy that does not ensure one's wealth by the poverty of the others. This is possible. Up to now this disbalance between the north and the south has governed and made possible the economy we had - which was widely resistant to analysis, accusation and suggestion.

4. Women are very actively involved in this crisis, charged as moderators, social managers of the reduced "private" space. Their contribution to social wellbeing during the crisis is unmeasurable. Women again give proof of their social expertise. This is why the future must be prepared, (should be) guided and directed by women. "Women's expertise" is equivalent to the highest social and emotional responsibility. *Comment: There is a need for a completely new politics. The matriarchal model is recommended. Matriarchal societies are symbolically centered around the mother, they are based around and focus on motherly values. These societies are egalitarian. Social prestige is drawn from motherly values, as there are: care, support, enhancement, recognition and love.*

5. The virus unites the people though they must keep distance. The sanitary system performs at maximum. The aggressor is not human, not somebody who declares war on others, but a non-living hacker identity, a gene without being. In light of this new solidarity that people can feel, war must be looked at: why is there so much physical pain and disaster made by people for people? What does human-made war look like in the time of the virus? There must be a way to put an end to the war. In the face of a health system that is overly challenged, the brutal atavism of war - driven by economic interest – becomes evident. *Comment: Why is it less problematic and why does it not cause total shutdown when humans attack humans? The crisis offers us the chance to revise and rethink our guiding values, especially when it is time to reevaluate life. Up to now there was only one person to give the perfect evaluation of life, namely, the mother.*

Es muss aber eine Wirtschaft sein, die nicht Wohlstand sichert durch Ausbeutung, die nicht Gewinn macht dadurch, dass andere verlieren. Das ist möglich. Bisher hat nämlich die gesamte Produktion von kollektivem Reichtum durch Kolonialisierung und Ausbeutung funktioniert (Vandana Shiva).

4. Frauen werden in der Krise als „Puffer" aktiv, ihnen wird zum großen Teil das soziale Management des nunmehr begrenzten, intimen Raumes aufgeladen. Ihre Leistung an der Strukturierung der verordneten Pause ist immens. Frauen stellen die Kompetenz, die sie für diese soziale Rolle haben, wieder unter Beweis. Daher muss diese Krise einen Start in eine schwerpunktmäßig weiblich gedachte und verfasste Zukunft vorbereiten. Mit „weiblich" ist die Fähigkeit, hohe soziale und emotionale Verantwortung zu tragen, gemeint. *Kommentar: Eine vollkommen neue Politik ist notwendig. Für diese kann das matriarchale Gesellschaftsmodell Pate stehen. Matriachale Gesellschaftsstrukturen sind symbolisch mutterzentriert, stellen mütterliche Werte ins Zentrum. Die soziale Struktur ist egalitär. Die politische Organisation beruht auf Konsens-Findung. Soziales Prestige entsteht aus den mütterlichen Werten: Versorgung, Verteilung, Förderung, Anerkennung und Liebe.*

5. Das Corona-Virus lässt die Menschen solidarisch werden, obgleich sie Abstand voneinander halten müssen. Das Gesundheitssystem arbeitet auf Hochtouren. Auslöser der Krise ist nicht ein Mensch, der anderen Menschen Übles will - wie das im Krieg der Fall wäre - , sondern das Virus, eine nicht-lebendige Hacker-Identität, ein Gen ohne Lebewesen. Im Lichte dieser neuen Solidarität muss aber unbedingt der Krieg nochmal ins Visier genommen werden: wieviel physisches Leid, wieviel Elend erzeugen Menschen für Menschen? Wie nimmt sich das aus angesichts einer Pandemie, für die ein Nicht-Subjekt verantwortlich ist? Mit dem Krieg muss Schluss gemacht werden, auch mit der Perfidie seiner wirtschaftlichen Nutzung. Im Lichte eines überforderten Gesundheitssystems wird der brutale Atavismus des Krieges in vollem Umfang erkennbar. *Kommentar: Wieso ist es weniger schlimm und führt nicht sofort zum globalen Stillstand, wenn Menschen andere Menschengruppen attackieren und töten? Die Krise ist eine Chance für die Menschen, ihre Werte von Grund auf zu überdenken, vor allen Dingen die Bewertung eines Menschenlebens. Bisher gibt es nur eine Person, die ein Menschenleben optimal beurteilt, nämlich die Mutter.*

6. The New Ecology: this is not just a well put set of rules and laws like recycling, the limitation of pollution and regionalism in food production. It is based on the epiphany of the Goddess, Gaia, namely on Life as the quality and function of the biosphere. The earth carries life, she is life, she provides the life we desire. This is why the New Ecology cherishes the Goddess, Vita, Gaia, the living matter, the interspecies concerto of this living planet. Her cult is the Zen of the very simple things. *Comment: Ecology consisting in a canon of laws is object to an eco-dictatorship, which is imminent. It is possible that politics would try to continue the Corona crisis state of emergency in order to deeply change the democratic style of politics into a forced governmental state of leadership and control. This would set forth the alienation from earth, Gaia. The New Ecology and a politics appropriate to it will have to put Gaia into the center of the economy of desire. For this reason, Gaia must be considered a subject, not an object, geology is turned into geosophy. Hypersubjects of the scale of Gaia were hitherto considered under the notion of "god." Gaia is the planetary condition of existence, the hypersubject of the biosphere under the notion of the Goddess.*

7. People are shaken by the crisis, destabilized. They become aware of the fragility of life, how precious it is to them. People are not alone in the world. Any virus may adjust itself to changing conditions, to the most preferable ones from its perspective. The imminent "victory over the Coronavirus" (through treatment and ongoing immunization, there will likely be a medical treatment as there was in the case of HIV virology) does not imply that people will return to their business as if nothing had happened. This will be a lesson in the collective field. The virus is a symbol of undercover infection and "malware" which could affect humans to the most catastrophic degree. The narratives of self-extinction are left far behind by this type of "software" attack. *Comment: The virus is the perfect symptom for info-society. It is a coded infostrip invading the host undercover. Paralleling the corona crisis, the world wide informational systems are technologically tuned by the massive installation of satellites - in order to secure info-structure at land, sea and air without putting an end to any holes or infoshadow. What can this infoattack mean? The digital avantgarde of the third millennium experiences a viral attack on its bioware, on the living body.*

6. Die neue Ökologie: sie ist nicht nur ein Set aus technischen Regeln wie Recycling, Schadststoffbegrenzung und Regionalismus in der Lebensmittelproduktion. Sie beruht auf der Epiphanie der Göttin, also auf dem Leben, das die Haupteigenschaft der Biosphäre darstellt. Die Erde trägt das Leben, sie ist das Leben, jenes Leben, das wir begehren. Die neue Ökologie ehrt die Göttin, Vita, Gaia, die lebendige Materie, das Konzert der vielen Spezies (siehe die Thesen von James Lovelock und Lynn Margulis). Ihr „Kult" ist das Zen der ganz einfachen Dinge. *Kommentar: Eine Ökologie, die in einen Katalog von Regeln mündet, mündet in eine Ökodiktatur. Der Corona-Ausnahmezustand führt plastisch vor, wie schnell die Bürgerrechte in vollem Umfang ausgesetzt werden k*önnen*, zugunsten des Allgemeinwohles - und wie schnell sich die BürgerInnen fügen. Die Ökodiktatur ist keine Lösung der ökologischen Frage, sondern setzt die Entfremdung von der Erde mit anderen Mitteln fort. Eine Ökologie und die ihr entsprechende Ökonomie kann nur dann Sinn machen und gelingen, wenn die Erde selbst integraler Teil der Begehrensökonomie wird (hier wird Sigmund Freud und Lacques Lacan widersprochen). Dies ist möglich, wenn die Erde, um die es geht, Subjekt ist und nicht Objekt. Für Gross-Subjekte im Massstab der Erde sind bisher historisch nur Götter als Subjekt-Modelle in Umlauf gewesen. Gaia ist die planetare Bedingung der Existenz, ihr Gross-Subjekt-Status ist der einer Göttin.*

7. Die Menschen erleben durch die Pandemie eine Verunsicherung. Sie erkennen, wie fragil das Leben auf der Erde ist, wie voraussetzungsreich, wie kostbar sein Gelingen. Menschen sind nicht alleine auf der Welt, und die Erde ist nicht ihr Materiallager. Ein Virus kann sich stets den neuen Voraussetzungen anpassen, und es wird sich den für ihn besten Voraussetzungen anpassen. Der bevorstehende „Sieg über den Corona-Virus" bedeutet nicht, dass die Dominator-Rolle der Menschen wieder wie selbstverständlich eingenommen werden kann. Es wird die Lektion im kollektiven Feld gespeichert bleiben, bleiben müssen. Gesetzt den Fall, es ist eine virale Attacke denkbar, die die Spezies Mensch auslöscht. Die Narrative zur Selbst-Auslöschung des Menschen werden durch das Virus überboten. *Kommentar: Das Virus ist das perfekte Symptom der Informationsgesellschaft. Es ist ein Info-Strip ohne biologische Identität, der sich under cover einschleust in den Wirt. Während der Corona-Krise werden jede Menge Satelliten in die Erdumlaufbahn geschossen - im*

8. Immunity: what is it? It is a complex structure. It is not evident when an immune reaction is strong, and when it is missing. Not everybody is ill at the same time. Immunity in its medical meaning is important, but there is also something like psychic immunity. Both levels cooperate. Psychic "immunity" may support the medical one. Immunity is a multi-level process. Social systems organize immunity by building inner zones against the outside (they can also be based on racist and totalitarian ideas, as we saw in the past, so we need to be careful with the allegorical sense in biology). Yet, the symbol of immunization is social stability, grounded in the element of the socius (Gilles Deleuze). This idea is actually under pressure from the supposition that anyone can be a virus carrier. So the virus re-organizes the social system, dominating social evidence and its effects of social immunization. We have to reconsider and rethink immunization in relationship to the integrity of the individual person and social structure. There is a clear difference between affect and infect. *Comment: "I am immune against this." What does this mean? I am not open to this offer, to this seduction, to this object of desire. It is evident that the subject in capitalist times is put as the seducable, the open, the modifiable, the manipulable, the future consumer, the non-immune. Which form of porosity is the status quo of the postmodern subject (Ian Hacking)? How can it be protected? The difference between affection and infection must become clear.*

hinteren Teil der Nachrichten-dashboards wird darüber berichtet - um „in der Luft, im Wasser und zu Land" flächendeckend ein umfassendes Funknetz aufzubauen. Während die Menschen technisch aufrüsten für die totale Digitalisierung, erleben sie die Coronavirus-Krise. Nicht im Netz, sondern in ihren Zellen. Wie ist das zu verstehen? Was bedeutet diese „Info-Attacke"? Die digitale Avantgarde des dritten Jahrtausends erfährt im grossen Stil den Angriff eines Virus am eigenen Leib. Das ist eine philosophische Parabel.

8. Immunität: was ist das? Immunität ist ein komplexer Zusammenhang. Es ist nicht klar, wann eine Immunreaktion stark, wann sie schwach ist. Es sind nie alle gleich krank. Immun zu sein im medizinischen Sinn ist gut, aber es gibt auch eine psychische Immunität. Die beiden Ebenen wirken zusammen. Immunisierung ist ein vielschichtiger Prozess. Soziale Systeme versuchen, Immunzonen zu etablieren für die Mitglieder, die sich innerhalb dieser Zone befinden - auch missbräuchlich, durch Anwendung der Infektions- oder „Seuchen" nomenklatur der rassistischen und totalitären Diskurse. Das Symbol der Immunität ist soziale Stabilität, die gelungene Verankerung im Sozius. Diese Idee wird im Augenblick vollständig konterkariert durch die Unterstellung, dass jeder und jede potentielle Virenträger sein können. Das Virus organisiert die soziale Struktur, dominiert über soziale Gewissheit und deren Immunisierungseffekt. Die konstitutive Porosität der postmodernen Individuen, deren Offenheit ihre Erreichbarkeit zugleich für Begehrensangebote und Kontrolle garantiert, muss auf geeignete Weise geschützt, aber auch überdacht werden. Es gibt eine gewaltige Konkurrenz um Ansteckungserfolge. *Kommentar: Man sagt, dagegen bin ich gefeit. Gefeit sein, was ist das und wie entsteht das? Gibt es überhaupt so etwas wie eine Wertschätzung des „Gefeitseins" in einer Zeit, die Menschen gezielt vielfältigen Versuchungen,* Überwältigungen *und medialer „Anmache" aussetzt? Welche Form der „Immunschwäche" charakterisiert das postmoderne Subjekt? Wie kann es stabiliert werden? Indem Affekt klar von Infekt geschieden wird.*

Adam Louis Klein |

Reconfiguring

(2020-04-07)

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I would like to suggest that we imagine this crisis in terms of the overlapping of multiple temporalities. At the same time, I would suggest that we understand it in terms of a single kind of temporality, a temporality which recursively transforms itself on multiple scales. This temporality is periodicity, the much maligned "cyclical time," the way reality oscillates, bends, bounces back and forth, and turns around a center, a center which may also be the point of transition and instability.

In the United States, it is fitting that the crisis occurred just as the populace was faced with the choice (but was it a "choice"?) between continuing the headlong dive into an increasing climate crisis emergency with effective denier Joe Biden, or choosing Bernie Sanders, who despite embedding himself within the electoral arena, had begun to speak to the radical need for a total restructuring of American society in terms of the principles of sustainability and radical justice. The call for restructuring - and the practical necessity of speaking the truth that this movement inspired - brought Sanders head-to-head with all the forces of inertia and idiocy that define mainstream American politics, those forces that continue to fight with teeth and nail against the tiniest necessity to actually *think*. Do these same forces not incarnate the concept of *inertia* itself, empty identity, equal to nothingness, which industrial culture itself celebrates every time it prays to its fetish, "the economy," lacking any capacity to vibrate?...

A time of change it is, everyone knows it. And this comes at a hinge point, 2020, the turning of the decade, and a potential waning of neoliberalism, which, let us not forget, was itself a repeat (more like a "strange attractor"?) of the gilded age of the late nineteenth century that led to the catastrophe of the two world wars, catastrophes that industrial society still refuses to take responsibility for. Industrial thinking needs to believe in the ahistoricity of linear time, which it itself used to call History, but now only understands as the empty series of "Number" itself.

How to justify the barbarism of an intuitive numerology, veering on new age speculation? I am trying to think about how to produce a *schema*, or a diagram in Peirce's sense, which might embed our present in a more ancient history, the history of the "earth," and a way for humans to understand their embeddedness in, nay, their *identity* with, the universe. This is about the invention of structures of thought that realize self-sameness with their objects, without the confused loops of Western philosophy, and its claim to a rigid transcendence of which it cannot ever give any kind of transcendental justification. Perhaps it is necessary to emphasize that the "astrology" of the indigenous Amerindians, whom I take here as an inspiration, was/is not a "representation" of relationships of efficient causality. The ceremony of the summer solstice only "makes" the summer pass and the rains return, insofar as it *configures* human thinking to those same movements, implicitly understanding the universe as itself so configured. These ceremonies existed long before today's physics determined with its own quantitative and experimental precision that all "matter" was but vibration.

We can still listen to the scientists, we can still track the numbers and the statistics, while learning to see and feel that the movements of our lungs and hearts, the oscillations of our fears and hopes, dreams and waking, are themselves the fractal self-scaling of a periodicity that goes beyond us, and a periodicity that will dwarf and destroy us unless we learn to understand it in *renewed* terms. This crisis might be an opportunity to learn how to re-configure *in every respect*, as the self-scaling may end up digging infinitely deep. In some strange way, it might be a time to learn the "ceremony" that fuses chaos into harmony, and the real antagonisms of existence into sets of mutually beneficial relationships between the multitude of beings inhabiting this planet.

John Ó Maoilearca |

Species Isolation

(2020-04-08)

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What is to be done? When did things go wrong? With Neo-Liberal Capitalism? With Classical Capitalism? With the Industrial Revolution? The Enlightenment? Patriarchy? The invention of Agriculture? Discovery of Fire? Carnivorism? The Growth of the Human Frontal-Cortex? Let me stop just there. Yuval Noah Harari, in *The Guardian*, on September 25, 2015, writes:

> When the first humans reached Australia about 45,000 years ago, they quickly drove to extinction 90% of its large animals. ... The archaeological record of country after country tells the same sad story. ... Altogether, sapiens drove to extinction about 50% of all the large terrestrial mammals of the planet before they planted the first wheat field, shaped the first metal tool, wrote the first text or struck the first coin.[1]

We are the descendants of nature's most successful killing machines. Machines that spread and eradicate irrespective of our type, our best intentions, or our self-awareness. Or can we stop ourselves? Can we mutate sufficiently to end our seemingly ineluctable drive to annihilate all around us? (From *In Bruges*: "*I* have the capacity to change. / Yeah, you do. You've the capacity to get fucking worse!") So what is to be done? Why not try doing nothing? Seriously, nothing (not the old same thing). For Pascal, "all of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone." So stay in your room, for a change. Don't go to Australia. Don't go out. Don't expand. Shrink your world down to the micro-. After all, the micro-revolution has finally begun. Be part of that revolution within an incredible shrinking space. Degrowth: a radical passivity with economic consequences. Though few of "us" can actually afford to do nothing, there is a larger "us" who cannot afford any more of the same. All the same, it was the viruses - the really small non-life-forms, not the large ones - who were always the ones who would eventually strike back. A living/non-living form whose resistance starts incredibly small and on the inside, and works by mutating us, making us "be the change" the world needs to see.

[1] Yuval Noah Harari, "Industrial Farming Is One of the Worst Crimes in History," *The Guardian* (September 25, 2015). https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/sep/25/industrial-farming-one-worst-crimes-history-ethical-question.

Barrett Avner |

Western Expansion: Disease, Los Angeles

(2020-04-08)

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Both terrorist attacks of September 11 and March 11 are MSC events. They release maximal (M) stress (S) and cause strong phases of cooperation on numerous levels: the cooperation of the terrorists, cooperation of the rescuers, cooperation of the victims, their families and friends, the cooperation of the police and military units.

Heiner Mühlmann[1]

If we are approaching a new world, then I would leave the last behind. I joked recently that if your sense of being is derived from cheap pleasures like corporate rave-culture and boutique wine bars, then the unprecedented lack of consumer viability is bound to be maddening. Many have lost their strip clubs, brunches, colleges, malls, and thus, any sense of purpose or belonging in this world. The economy does not produce the things that people desire, it produces desire itself. Does the preservation of life devoid of expansion/unclaimed space seem like enough to justify its own existence? The operational chains of civilization seemed to function on a mechanical level, but with the underlying suspicion that they are buttressed by military power and market-illusion participation.

For some reason I find myself wanting to give *myself*; turn this period into a sacrament of sorts, partake in the eternal-return, indulge the rapture of transcendental pain. I have found myself not only unafraid, but less-afraid than I can ever remember. As Nina Power questioned, "Are you afraid to die? I don't want to die, because I got my life back, but I am not afraid to die, because I got my life back."[2] Corona basically sunk the film I was working on, the one I put my life savings into. I listen to Navy Seal David Goggins audiobook *You Can't Hurt Me* on walks. I feel motivated by the cosmically improbable existence which I feel indebted to lose in the first place.

When a virus is denied hosts, it can undergo the process of "Selective Pressure." If the virus is free to infect person to person, it has little or no need to mutate or potentially suture itself to an Avian strain. COVID has its own will to (half)life, it is an extraneous non-human agent that exists outside of dialectical synthesis. COVID is nature as nature is, deaf-and-dumb and blind, another reminder that history will never end on human terms despite what Hegel suggested. Alexander Dugin referenced Corona as the Cthulhu/Hyperobject on his Facebook page, his take was interesting. Corona can only process pressure and verticality through the expansion of lurid causal phenomenon.

It has been a lot of fun wandering around Los Angeles in its current state of desolation. On nightwalks it is as if I am viewing the topology and cityscape with virgin eyes. I pretend I have Neo-Noir Night Vision Goggles that put me in the place of Raymond Chandler, James Elroy, or Walter Mosley, become a detective in the absence of a solvable crime. To finally see the city I grew up in without the hordes of yuppie douchebags and strivers in God knows how long, in their absence, a breath of new life. "Oh my memory, oh my memory... serves me far too well" (George Michael, "Waiting for That Day.")

The abandoned space of the deserted city has given me a desire to rebel, a latent impulse to just "act out," because through space, you can. In my teens I did graffiti off the 405 freeway, in yards, skid-row, because space permitted clandestine illegal activity. Communal acts of vandalism became our universal gatekeeper. At times we create our own stress in order to secure the bonds of cooperation; a bond with others. In that case, that bond was a graffiti crew. Some say the

[1] Heiner Mühlmann, *MSC. Maximal Stress Cooperation: The Driving Force of Cultures* (Vienna and New York: Springer-Verlag, 2005), 9.

[2] Nina Power, "Plague Diary," *Identities: Journal for Politics, Gender and Culture* (March 31, 2020). https://identitiesjournal.edu.mk/index.php/IJPGC/announcement/view/14. See also pp. 20-21. in this issue.

Bloods and Crips originated in Los Angeles because the sun always shines here. Since there is effectively no nature to fight in Los Angeles, we have turned towards more creative ways of exhausting our surplus energy (social climbing and gang-banging).

"Cancel Culture" feels like a bad trend that went out of style decades ago. Nature and history have taken the place of surrogate concerns, and overnight we have been launched into a new plane of cooperation through collective isolation. Past bouts of severe depression from failed love experiments seem to have been wiped from my memory completely. As Jonty Tiplady observed, "It is impossible not to notice that an unprecedented wave of cultural moralism happens to have coincided with a wave of extinction events. Ironic Cancellism is the nihilistic hypothesis that it's basically okay to punish the (hypothetically well-chosen and 'toxic') other because of constraints in time and space."[3]

The impulse to act out of the assumption of a Heaven's End, the notion that we cannot end because we are "ending" itself. The psychosis of those bound merely to crumbling civilities and social codes, the only reason they keep their façade of good faith is to mediate the occasional transaction with the Amazon Prime delivery person or Uber Eats. This is the ultimate deficit of faith and the assumption that there is no *epoché* beyond and there could never be one.

And so the shattering of moral-givenness turns even the most mild-mannered into polemics. The university-educated fight over toilet paper at the supermarket, as if wiping your ass will somehow save your life, as if they would even know the difference. And so this corpo-reality, the monopoly over truth procedure, has been turned on its head. Make way for the new American Hipster Civil War. As Mühlmann also noted, "the goal of civilizing influence is the creation of egoistic cooperation… a strategy which could lead to this goal being the inhibition of cultural narcissism."

I do have some recurring obsessions. One is a musical performance out of the back of my 1986 Toyota Tercel, played through portable guitar amps and car speakers, fire circles drawn with alcohol, pistols, and an internet livestream somewhere near the LaBianca house or beneath a concrete bridge embankment. Both a ritual and rebuke of the powerful Corona Gods and those who fear them. Another thing I keep telling myself is that "when this is all over, I'm moving to New Mexico and opening a gun store/bookshop/degenerate art gallery."

April 7, 2020

[3] Jonty Tiplady, "Semi-Automatic Angel: Notes on 'Cancel Culture' and Post-Cancellation Rococo," ꝏꝏ (April 12, 2019). https://xn--wgiaa.ws/3-jonty-tiplady-notes-on-cancel-culture.

Zlatomir Zlatanov |

Zarathustra (Un)Vaccinated

(2020-04-08)

Zlatomir Zlatanov (1953) is a poet, writer, and critic, one of the mavericks of Bulgarian postmodernism, author of *Palinodies* (1989), largely considered the first openly postmodernist poetry book in Bulgaria. His novelette *Exitus* (1982) was adapted for the 1989 movie with the same title directed by Krassimir Kroumov (to this day considered one of the most representative Bulgarian films concerning the perestroika). Zlatanov is most (in) famously known for his poetry book *On the Island of the Coprophiles* (1997). In the late 1990s and early 2000s he began developing an increasingly theoretical lexis (beginning with *Protocols for the Other*, 2000) and later engaged with the thought of Lacan and Badiou, publishing novels such as *Lacanian Networks* (2005) and the series of essays, *Alain Badiou, Or, the Persistence of Illogical Worlds* (2008).

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Between me and the other there is only the discourse and the death.

Signifiers as thwarted impulses (of the death drive) - why not say the same for pathogens, they are death in the form of human life ("Politics is therefore death that lives a human life," à la Achille Mbembe).

We have always been the infected uninfected, the abandoned-symbiotians. In its origin democracy is an autoimmune disease, albeit within the realm of the nihilism of sign and the number.

Thwarted citing, love is citational, and death too. Panics and pandemics - citational ones, thwarted discourse and thwarted death.

Our ontological dignity is hurt. Is there a biological dignity - or is this too literal a vision?

Златомир Златанов |

(Не)ваксинираният Заратустра[1]

(2020-04-04)

Златомир Златанов (1953) е поет, писател и критик, един от видните представители на българския постмодернизъм, автор на стихосбирката Палинодии (1989), до голяма степен смятана за първата отворено постмодернистка стихосбирка в България. През 1989 г. новелата му „Екзитус" (1982) е адаптирана в киното за филма със същото име от Красимир Крумов (и до днес филмът се счита за един от най-представителните български филми за перестройката). Златанов е най-познат с поетичната си книга На острова на копрофилите (1997). През 90-те и 10-те на 20 век развива все по-теоретична лексика (започвайки с Протоколи за другия, 2000), а по-късно се ангажира с мисълта на Лакан у Бадиу, като публикува блогороманa Лаканиански мрежи (2005) и серията есета Ален Бадиу, или упорството на нелогичните светове (2008).

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Между мен и другия са само дискурсът и смъртта.

Означаващите като модифицирани импулси (на влечението към смъртта) - защо да не кажем същото за патогените, те са смърт под формата на преиначен живот („Политиката е следователно смърт, живееща човешки живот", а ла Ашиле Мбембе).

Ние винаги сме били заразените незаразени, абандоници-симбиотици. Демокрацията по начало е автоимунно разстройство, макар и в обхвата на нихилизма на знака и на числото.

Провалено цитиране, дефектиращи дискурси и дефектиращ живот в непогрешимостта на смъртта.

[1] The Bulgarian original of this text is published here for the first time; ed.

With signifiers one seeks the signifieds, with viruses - the patient zero. But here there is only parting ways à la Borges, stopped as they are in the access fetish. The access as non-access.

At the very boundaries of thought and language there is an inherent structural form of contradiction, an in-closure. The closure of the boundaries of any system is thinkable only as its paradoxical in-closure.

Are we talking about fusional bio-ontologies?

And what of the fixism of the limitation-of-size principles - and their dis-fixing in other fixisms?

Literalism vs. deliteralization of discourses.

Inhuman Sphynxism of the human, reductive literalism of (somatically rooted) drive vs. defense, "anatomy is destiny."

This is the fixism in the missed encounter with the unlimited Real of the ontological, of the sexual relation, of the trauma, miniscule steps in formalizing the Real, a passion for the virusless exo-world.

The limit of experience as the limit of the limit, chiasms, oxymorons à la Orwell or endless Kantian judgements. Illness is health. Panic is the best order. The virus is the best disinfectant.

The indefinite animal is in an indefinite universe with no cosmological constant, a world of the not-all, or worse, an anti-world without anti-philosophers. And even worse than that, a non-world with non-decisional non-ontologies. Exo-non-ontologies of the Real, the exo-mathematical heaven of Hilbert *avec* Laruelle.

Animals are transformed into linguistic flexions, into temporal reflexions - is this our ontological vaccination? The intervalled animals of the intervalled pseudo-epochality. And the un-intervalled cosmic extinction as pole position, an aposteriori apriori in relation to which the Terminator-like design of spacing and difference fades away.

Enjoy the ontological gourmet, plateau, palimpsest, along with authors uncited as if cited, with the inhuman signifiers and the stellar

Паниките и пандемиите - цитатни разроявания, възпрепятстван дискурс в разклоненията на невъзможна, макар и неизбежна смърт.

Нашето онтологическо достойнство е накърнено. Има ли биологическо достойнство - или това е твърде литерална, буквалистка визия?

При означаващите се търси означаваното, при вирусите - нулевия пациент. Но там има само разклоняващи се пътеки в стил Борхес, стопирани във фетиша на достъп. Достъпът като недостъп.

На самите граници на мисълта и на езика има присъща структурна форма на противоречие, in-closure. The closure на пределите на всяка система е мислим само като нейния парадоксален in-closure.

За морфиращи био-онтологии ли става въпрос?

А какво да кажем за фиксизма на принципите за ограничаване-на-размера (limitation-of-size principles) и разфиксирането им в други фиксизми?

Буквализъм срещу дебуквализация на дискурсите.

Нечовешки сфинкс-изъм на човешкото, редуктивен буквализъм на (коренящия се в соматичното) нагон versus символна съпротива, „анатомията е съдба".

Фиксизмът в пропусната среща с нелимитираното Реално на онтологическото, на сексуалната връзка, на травмата, малки стъпки във формализацията на Реалното, страст по безвирусен екзо-свят.

Лимит на опита като опит на лимита, хиазми, оксиморони в стил Оруел или безкрайни кантиански съждения. Болестта е здраве. Паниката е най-добрият ред. Вирусът е най-добрият дезинфектант.

Неопределеното животно в неопределена вселена без космологическа константа, свят на не-всичко (not-all), още по-лошо, анти-свят без анти-философи. Още по-лошо, не-свят с не-реши-

innards of astral intestines (the ancient knew this, and so did Byron in Song X of the *Don Juan*), the horror of the belly's innards, the different sensorium, the gastric juice that leaks as a Styx through the black liver.

A non-access to the present with its unpresentable, Hölderlin's *das Unmittelbare* is inaccessible to both common people and gods, uttered by the autoimmune poet as the thwarted citation of Heraclitus so that it gets sutured to Pindar.

The chance to save ourselves is as unpresentable and unseemly as the virus of arbitrariness.

The sovereign decides not only regarding the exception, but also about what is normality. Man-made sovereignty. The fusion of endless Kantian judgements, for example, the emergent/the exceptional is the veracious normality. The bio-ontological of man-made lab viruses, self-replicating genes and cellular automata. And of the *Natur*-made viruses imitating the "anthropology of competitiveness."

The indirect guilt of neoliberal biopolitics is no longer actual. In the pandemic we are the abandoned of the absent cause, in the absence of cognitive mapping as substitute of class war - both are unactual.

Catastrophisms are literalisms.

The symbiotic Gaia apparently still does not know what she can do as a Spinozist body in the antidote of the organless body of death.

If philosophers and pathogens are locked inside the correlate, then is not the ambiguous fixism of the Great Outdoors yet another viral concubinage?

We would rather ask ourselves: is there anything like the witness of the absolute visit, an intransitivity as the pathogen of correlationism?

Bio-medicalism produces antibodies which are fusional strategies of pretending to pretend, which pretend to pretend being viruses so that they defer and postpone the Real of the virus, once the viral extinction is impossible, the death of death.

телностни (non-decisional) не-онтологии. Екзо-нон-онтологии на Реалното, екзо-математическият рай на Хилберт *avec*Ларуел.

Животните, превърнати в лингвистични флексии, в темпорални рефлексии - това ли е нашата онтологическа ваксинация? Интервалираните животни на интервалирана псевдо-епохалност. И неинтервалирано вселенско изтребление като първа стартова позиция, апостериорно априори, спрямо което терминаторският дизайн на spacing/difference (опространстяване и различие) бледнее.

Наслаждавайте се на онтологическото гурме, плато, палимпсест, заедно с нецитираните автори като цитирани, с нехуманните означаващи и звездната карантия на астрални черва (древните са го знаели, Байрон в „X Песен" на Дон Жуан - също), ужасът на стомашната карантия, различният сензориум, стомашният сок, който като Стикс изтича през черния дроб.

Недостъп до настоящето с неговото непредставимо (unpresentable), *das Unmittelbare* на Хьолдерлин, недостъпно за простосмъртни и богове, произнесено от автоимунния поет като преиначено цитиране на Хераклит, за да го пришие към Пиндар.

Шансът да се спасим е толкова непредставим, невзрачен, колкото и вирусът на произвола.

Суверенът решава не само относно изключението, но и какво е нормалност. Създадена от човека (man-made) суверенност.

Спирала на безкрайни кантиански съждения, примерно, извънредното/изключението е истинската нормалност. Био-онтологическото на създадени от човека лабораторни вируси, саморепликиращи се гени и клетъчни автомати. И на *Natur*-създадени вируси, имитиращи „антропология на конкуренцията".

Косвената вина на неолибералните биополитики не е актуална. В пандемията сме абандоници на отсъстваща кауза, в отсъствието на когнитивно картографиране като заместител на класовата борба - и двете неактуални.

Катастрофизмите са литерализми, буквализми.

We still throw up the Oracle at Delphi's hallucinogen and this does not concern an anal trap, but the old spasm of Lovecraft.

Consciousness is geometrical, the guttural innards are part of astronomic numbers.

Digestion and knowledge are in different mathematical spheres.

What, for those hundred trillion cells in the human body, is their literal dignity?

Primitive and instinctual neurological substrate of the mind vs. uniquely human and symbolically structured nature of the unconscious. Primordial, biologically based death instinct vs. narcissistic wish to occupy the phallic position, the Symbolic or cultural order (Donald L. Carveth).

Will the biopolitical rise to the level of its own artefact?

Does not immunization via contained contagion resemble the appropriation of cultural symbolic forms through Oedipalization?

This logical Oedipality is impossible to clean.

The divinatory theology of the inaccessible enjoyment is in the portional intervalling of surplus enjoyment.

Again, the immediate is inaccessible for both gods and people. Probably today this is going to be related to the unseparated myth of the given. Or to the virginal chance beyond the dice and its prostituting numbers.

Yet in fact a paralogism has been uttered. The interdiction to refer to a self-articulating totality has been transgressed and the first to do that was Parmenides the father, while he was pretending to pretend that he delivers an ontology (Paul Livingston).

The system of the Church is like the system of ontology.

All religions are based upon the hallucinatory value of the "the unscathed" (*l'indemne*), the pure and the untouched, the sacred and the saintly, and respectively the same goes also for the ontologies in a thwarted access to self-articulating totalities.

Симбиотичната Гея сякаш още не знае какво може като спинозистко тяло в анти-дота на безорганното тяло на смъртта.

Ако философите и патогените са закопчани в корелата, неясният фиксизъм на Голямото Вън не е ли друг вирусен конкубинат?

По-добре да се запитаме има ли нещо такова като свидетели на „абсолютна визита", интранзитивност като патоген на корелационизма.

Био-медикализмът изработва анти-тела, които са преиначени стратегии на pretend to pretend, „преструващи се, че се преструват" на вируси, за да отсрочат и отклонят Реалното на вируса, след като вирусното изтребление е невъзможно, смъртта на смъртта.

Ние все още бълваме халюциногена на Делфийския оракул и не става въпрос за анален капан, а за Древния спазъм (Old spasm) на Лъвкрафт.

Съзнанието е геометрично, карантията на червата спада към астрономическите числа.

Храносмилането и познанието са в различни математически сфери.

За тези сто трилиона клетки в човешкото тяло, какво е тяхното буквално достойнство?

Примитивен и инстинктуален субстрат на ума срещу уникално човешката и символно структурирана природа на несъзнаваното. Първичен, биологично базиран нагон към смъртта срещу нарцисистичното желание да заемеш фалическата позиция, Символното или културния порядък (Доналд Л. Карвет).

Биополитическото ще се издигне ли до равнището на собствения си артефакт?

Имунизирането чрез лимитирано заразяване не прилича ли на усвояването на културни символни форми чрез едипализация?

Тази логическа едиповщина е неразчистваема.

Not even ontologies, it is even worse - the pre-ontological waiting room as *khōra*, after the non-predicative schema of neither-nor - what else is this if not the guarantee of immunity?

The same is true for the unconscious as it is emplaced in the pre-ontological as the unrealized of the neither-nor - a struggle for the pole position.

Why not emplace here, i.e., not-here, also the pathogenic, neither sensible nor intelligible, neither alive nor dead, neither being nor non-being, or even becoming, a "something that no dialectic, participatory schema, or analogy would allow one to rearticulate together with any philosopheme whatsoever… ."[1]

Angels are as the deactivated viruses, an idiomatic writing as a radiant glory. A non-negative chance, a principle of the ruins in the thing itself, the non-assigned metaphysical *topica* of the pathogen as the embodiment of the undead object in a clinical demonology, etc.

God is the unmarked, just as the unpresentable present is unmarked, *das Unmittelbare*.

Meister Eckhart's *Gelâzenheit* is another fetish for the unlimited volume, an absolute immunity and absolute quarantine, a relaxation under the influence of the attractor-God.

A Spinozist attractor under the morphismic vibration. An attractor-arche-trace under the differential vibration.

The nihilism of signs is handcuffed, the nihilism of temporal spacing is compromised, just as the shelf of Borges' infinite library is anthropomorphically fixed, spaced.

Even Lacan is accused of literalizing the hole that produces the lack, this literal hole is always already semiotized - and is not this valid also for the Void, for the anxiety in front of the Void of the unpresented singularities of the unpresentable biopolitical Empire?

An errant and measureless obscurity in which imperial biopower is enveloped, this drifting obscurity of the imperial *Dasein* - as it

[1] Jacques Derrida, "Khōra," trans. by Ian McLeod, in *On the Name* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995), 105.

Дивинаторна теология на недостъпното наслаждение в порционно интервалиране на принадено наслаждение.

Отново, непосредственото е недостъпно както за боговете, така и за хората. Днес вероятно това ще бъде отнесено към несепарирания мит за даденото. Или към девствения шанс извън проституиращите числа на зара.

Но всъщност е произнесен паралогизъм. Трансгресирана е забраната да се референра към самочленуваща тоталност и пръв го е сторил бащата Парменид, докато се преструва, че се преструва (pretend to pretend), че доставя онтология (Пол Ливингстън).

Системата на Църквата е като системата на онтологията.

Всички религии са положени върху халюцинаторната стойност на „неувредимото" (*the unscathed*, *l'indemne*), чистото и недокоснатото, свещеното и святото, абсолютната визита, съответно това важи и за онтологиите в осуетен достъп до самочленуващи се тоталности.

Дори не онтологии, още по-лошо, пред-онтологическа чакалня като *khōra*, по непредикативната схема на нито-нито - какво друго е това, освен негативно подсигуряване с имунитет?

Същото е и с несъзнаваното, поместено в пред-онтологическото като нереализираното на нито-нито - борба за първа стартова позиция (pole position).

Защо да не поместим тук, тоест не-тук, и патогенното - нито сетивно, нито интелигибелно, нито живо, нито мъртво, нито битие, нито небитие или дори ставане, а „нещо, което никаква диалектика, схема на участие или аналогия не би позволила някому да се учлени наново заедно с която и да е философема въобще…".[2]

Ангелите като деактивирани вируси, идиоматично писане като сияйна слава. Един не-негативен шанс, принцип на руините в самото нещо, неозначеният метафизичен топик на патогена като въплъщение на undead обект на клинична демонология, и т. н.

[2] Jacques Derrida, "Khōra," trans. by Ian McLeod, in *On the Name* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995), 105.

turns out, this symbolically threatening presentment is clinically approved.

"Nothing in common, nothing immune, safe and sound, *heilig* and holy, nothing unscathed in the most autonomous living present without a risk of autoimmunity."[2]

"Only to God does inactivity (*anapausis*) really belong", writes Philon *avec* Agamben, "the Sabbath, which means inactivity, belongs to God" and, at the same time, is the object of eschatological expectations ("they shall not enter into my inactivity" [*eis ten anapausin emou*]).[3]

Still, how miserable this is, *anapausis* of the divine respite, and for us - the quarantine of pseudo-Sabbath.

Mathematics evades the limiting paradoxes by inventing new mathematics, and the same is true for ontologies - is not this a viral behavior? No one can substitute me in vomiting my own guts. Nor in the ontological neurosis as super-reaction (Nick Land).

Translated from the Bulgarian by Stanimir Panayotov

Бог е небелязаният, както е небелязано и непредставимото настояще, *das Unmittelbare*.

Gelâzenheit на Майстер Екхарт е друг фетиш за нелимитиран размер, абсолютен имунитет и абсолютна карантина, релакс под въздействието на притегателен бог.

При морфизмената вибрация - спинозистки притегател. При диференциалната вибрация - притегател-археследа.

Нихилизмът на знака с турени белезници, нихилизмът на темпоралното шпациране-spacing - компрометиран, както рафтът на безкрайната библиотека на Борхес е антропоморфно фиксиран, интервалиран.

Дори Лакан е обвиняван в буквализиране на дупката, произвеждаща липсата, тази буквална дупка винаги вече е семиотизирана, и не важи ли това и за Пустото (the Void), за безпокойството пред Пустото на непрезентираните сингулярности в непредставимата био-политическа Империя?

Блуждаеща и безмерна мъглявина, в която е загърната имперската биовласт, тази дрейфаща мъглявина на имперския Dasein - оказва се, че тази символно заплашителна презентация е клинично заверена.

„Нищо общо, нищо имунно, живо и здраво, *heilig* и свято, няма нищо неувредимо в най-автономното живо настояще без риск за автоимунността".[3]

„Безделието (*anapausis*) принадлежи истински единствено на Бог", пише Филон *avec* Агамбен, „Шабатът, който значи безделие, принадлежи на Бог" и, в същото време, е обект на есхатологични очаквания („няма да нарушат моето безделие [*eis ten anapausin emou*]").[4]

Колко мизерно все пак, *anapausis* на божията почивка, за нас карантината на псевдо-Шабат.

[2] Jacques Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge," trans. by David Webb, in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 82.
[3] Cited in: Giorgio Agamben, "Art, Inactivity, Politics," in *Politics, Criticism of Contemporary Issues: Serralves International Conferences 2007* (Lisboa: Fundação Serralves, 2008), 134.

[3] Jacques Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge," trans. by David Webb, in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 82.
[4] Цит. по: Giorgio Agamben, "Art, Inactivity, Politics," in *Politics, Criticism of Contemporary Issues: Serralves International Conferences 2007* (Lisboa: Fundação Serralves, 2008), 134.

Математиката избягва лимит-парадоксите като измисля нови математики, същото е и при онтологиите - това не е ли поведение-вирус? В повръщането на червата ми няма кой да ме замести. Нито в онтологическата невроза като свръх-реакция (Ник Ленд).

Jonty Tiplady | UNIVERSAL BASIC PODCAST: Peak Podcast in the Time of Covideocracy and Zoom Isolationism

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In an essay on Benjamin, Rebecca Comay speaks of the "unaccountable loquaciousness" that marks the experience of melancholia in Freud, *eine aufdringliche Mitteilsamket*. "So much over-sharing," she writes, "can be oppressive in its exorbitant demands."[1] In Leo Bersani's recent work this same loquacity is explicitly connected to what is required "if the human is to survive as an event in the history of our planet."[2] Christopher Bollas notes in the psychotic the tendency to talk too much as an attempt to structure the world back into place, and calls this "psychic dehydration."[3] The great podcasts of the present display some of this, all of this, or more. *Red Scare*, *TrueAnon*, *TekWars*, *New Models*, and so on: these are the ballads of our time. Or rather, these are what happen when we do not know what to say at the end of time. We talk too much.

The crucial link here is between the sense of a universe closing out, the need to talk, and voice. "Say anything" - the initializing call of analysis - becomes the email alert that your favourite podcast has just dropped its latest, and you now get the vicarious session. The podcast form is a prime example of interpassive *jouissance*: enjoyment taken through the work and expenditure of others. It allows one to retreat into the unconscious of others as a replacement for visiting one's analyst in the flesh, which most cannot afford or do not even know as a possibility, or it has become impossibilized by an emergency. A "podcast" is not just the remote thrill of a time-out threesome, it is akin to the illicit pleasure of flicking through somebody's Twitter likes, which "likes" are now the true sign that the unconscious is structured like a language (your likes are the heat-signature of an unconscious style, or its crypt). In the time of what some online call "Coronachan," the podcast becomes an example not of an inevitable movement towards the horizon line of UBI, but of the wild adaptability of talktime capital. In retreat and quarantine, podcast creation and listening time proliferate to loquacious infinity. Desktop folders are clogged up with last week's unlistened-tos. This is taken as proof not of a new type of freetime, but of just how much hard work freetime can be. Tokens of achieved internal communism, not its outward arrival.

If the world of podcasts is a world of ballads, then the greatest ballad of all is *Red Scare*, the creation of Anna Khachiyan and Dasha Nekrasova, or Anna and Dasha, known as "the girls" or "the ladies," depending on your persuasion. Many accounts of the show have already been written. In brief, it is characterised by Bernie-allied anti-leftist political irreverence and wild analytic *jouissance*. The jokes are great, and if the show was itself a pun - and it is - the meaning is found in the ambiguity of the title: where "red scare" once meant an illegitimate scare tactic to smear actual communists, by 2020 most forms of leftism are taken to constitute a genuine epistemological intimidation. If Red Scare is epochal, it is because it works at this analytic cross-roads, where Leftist Politics become - enjoyably - an avowal of the inoperative, and all forms of progressivism turn out to have been allied with the value-forms of accelerating extinction. To listen to this podcast, *Red Scare*, is to enjoy the tension, and yet there is a twist: at the same time the *girls* cosplay as Bernie *bros*.

If Dasha is the girl poet, Anna is the mummy analyst. And yet also, if Anna is a street Rilke, Dasha is a Californian Lacan. The displacement they mark in the early twenty first century signscape may be captured as "from writing to pure voice": as Alex Jones recently put it, "and then I tried to condense it live on air as a Gestalt rather than taking a year to write a book about it." In other words, why write a Verso article online when you can suggest whole books in an hour-long audio recording that also brings with it the feeling of a live an-

[1] Rebecca Comay, "Paradoxes of Lament: Benjamin and Hamlet," in *Lament in Jewish Thought: Philosophical, Theological, and Literary Perspectives*, eds. Ilit Ferber and Paula Schwebel (Berlin: De Gruyter), 258.
[2] Leo Bersani, "Why Sex?," in *Receptive Bodies* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2018), 25.
[3] Christopher Bollas, *Catch Them before They Fall: The Psychoanalysis of Breakdown* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 30.

alytic "session," an erotic assembly, and an underworld comedy act of vengeance? Listening to Anna and Dasha is also, at some level, "hanging out with the girls." You get to lay on the floor à l'ombre des jeunes filles *en fleurs.* By the same token, if the show does communist special effects, they reside here, in the making superfluous of the work of writing and academic capital. One might easily imagine a replacement syllabus for young people now that swaps out Wark, Bratton and Žižek for Dasha, Anna and Kantbot. Why not? If podcasts themselves are now operative, or at least automated, then perhaps their scale shift is from grammatology to chattiness, or rather from twentieth century grammatology and difference to twenty first century vocal fry and indifference. The thickness of the end of a universe's indifferentism automates itself as the "unaccountable loquaciousness" of a super-*jouissance* that works for you. This is perhaps what we now mean when we say "podcast."

In an episode of *Red Scare* from the end of March 2020 - that is to say, right in the middle of Coronachan - Dasha commented that she had listened to Steve Bannon's podcast the other day and that he has "a surprisingly nice voice." The attentive listener might have known at this point that something was astir. Was Bannon being actively called up in the séance? Was the president's ex-advisor about to be spirit cooked (enjoyed)? "*Jouissance*" is itself a thematized part of the *Red Scare* template, all the way back to the Instagram picture of a half-naked Dasha reading *Lacanian Ink* on her knee in the Los Angeles light before the cast was even born. The comment about Bannon's voice is telling: voice is the medium of the cast, and the voice as part-object also allows the whole body to be devoured while keeping cuteness on your side ("Steve Bannon has a surprisingly nice voice"; "Hitler had beautiful eyes"). But there is sometimes an even more overtly significant relation to *jouissance* on the show. In February, Dasha, who protests too much that she is not a Lacanian, was commenting on the *jouissance* of Trump and his tweets and how he is in a way "pure." She added: "I don't think it's strategic. I think that part of the reason that Trump is successful is because he *does* have a kind of *jouissance*, if you will; he likes tweets, in his limited faculties, but in a way that is like pure."[4] Shortly after, Stalin comes into the picture, "it's like Stalin ... people take care of the memes for him to please him." It is hard to doubt the accuracy of this suggested analysis of the pure super-*jouissance* of the president's tweets, and of the way their work is itself interpassive, like Stalin's propaganda (memes). The large themes and personas should not prevent us from seeing that the girls are also talking about themselves: the relay mechanism between and distance from Trump to his tweets and Stalin to his "memes" is actually how the podcast functions as an automated work and universal basic pleasure. The listener enjoys the work of the caster, who enjoys that work at pretty much that same moment, as it is purely delegated to the subscriber ("I enjoy imagining you enjoy me"). Via Patreon, and now Zoom, the podcast world is of course an economy and UBI trial zone. Voring of softcore fascist part-objects has in effect been trailblazed by "Xenocoin" and imaginary UBI NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training).

At the start of April 2020, with "the virus" still (officially) on the rise, the Bannonian wish-fulfilment came true. The *Red Scare* podcast finally got their man. Stalin himself (Steve Bannon) appeared on Zoom with the girls. After what seemed like more than a year of Anna asking on Twitter for his email, the mummy girls got to play daddy on Daddy's knee. Some listeners might have already enjoyed moments on the show when Anna and Dasha talked (almost dirty) about Bannon (call it Bannon edgeplay), or found it funny in the last episode of March, for example, when Anna said that "what I really wanted to tweet is that I am unironically more attracted to Steve Bannon than Brad Pitt it's so fucked up." One appreciates the more timid earwigger or hate-listener, for whom this really *is* so fucked up. They should stay in more; but for sure, certain photos of Bannon do evoke the ugly nature of his political aura: the overweight, spaced out by the internet, not caring, Euro-nationalist on tour side to his look. But in other ways, Anna's attraction is *not* so fucked up, and is the least we expect from a show that analyses the presidential tweet archive as a type of purism. Taking Bannon as a sex object is nothing unusual from the point of view of analytic interpassivity itself, that is, the politics of remote-control enjoyment; and Bannon himself really is *atavistically* appealing, at least for some. But as the episode proceeded, visceral engagement with its object seemed under threat. The ladies resonated as unsure. Why, one started to think, is *Red Scare* sounding (for once) so scared?

[4] Dasha, *Red Scare*, "Memechausen's," February 17, 2020. https://redscarepodcast.libsyn.com/memechausens.

But let us play the file forward and not just back. What does it really mean, this possibility of the universal basic podcast? And why bother to write a whole book about it? It seems that the podcast unit (organic, digital, analytic, libidinal, non-scriptural, poetic) is now central enough to have posed these questions. It's ballad-like nature means it is not just part of culture, but what sings the possibilities of culture that arrive, even if what arrives, arrives in a moment of closing down. The remaining problem is the unkillability of the idea, for example, that Bernie supporters and their soteriological minimalism ("leftist politics has to start somewhere," "building a movement," "paving the way for later candidates") remain an important undercurrent. The external mode of politics (demotism, voting, and so on) exerts just what seems to be the wrong drag on whatever other historical forces might have intervened. The Steve Bannon *Red Scare* episode allows one to glimpse the coherence of this complicity: that there are limits to the consistency of ideological patchwork. To be an anti-leftist Bernie bro is possible, of course; but this is not to say that it did not already become inoperative long ago. Inoperability is itself the *trouvé* of the Coronachan moment and perhaps what true internality (quarantine, postal votes, telethought) comes to mean. This closing out is an irreversible refusal of hope; but it cannot yet be an absolute refusal of intelligibility.

Gil Anidjar | Sapientia

(2020-04-14)

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I do not know about you, but it has become obvious to me that, it's recent rebranding notwithstanding, the name "sapiens" is a misnomer.

Around 1758, Carl Linnaeus coined the phrase "homo sapiens." He may have tried to register some hesitation. On the same line as "homo sapiens," and by no more than appositional logic, he inscribed another Latin phrase. "Nosce Te Ipsum," Linnaeus wrote. Know Thyself.

This old imperative involves a well-known paradox, which reveals the limits of our *sapientia,* our knowledge and wisdom. The sense that the object to be known - a self, say - is already there and available, already known or knowable, in some fashion. It is known enough, in any case, for one to know that there is *more* to know. But who really knows? How to know that which did not avail itself to our knowledge? A changing self or an old-new virus, say? At a moment like this, I would not want to channel Donald Rumsfeld (and who remembers him, anyway?) on previously knowns and belated unknowns, on known unknowns and unknown unknowns.[1] But learning - the deceptively simple task of taking a step toward a knowledge of self or other - does mean exposing oneself to an enormous mass of unknowns. To uncertainty and to incompleteness. Or to denial, and to the possibility of failure. Is there, in fact, a self? And is it *ours*? Can we really know ourselves?

Whether it is knowledge or wisdom, it seems increasingly dubious to consider that we are endowed with it, that we can assuredly rely on our teachers (some of them working very hard these days), or on existing expertises, much less on ourselves as "knowers." And even if we grant that our designated experts do know something (which they do, of course, if not always enough, or even their own selves), much remains to be learned still with regard to the expertises we need, the different objects we must learn most urgently about. Which experts know enough, and which to listen to?

The physicians and microbiologists, for instance, tell us to shelter at home. Let us forget for a moment that this imperative is meaningless for those who live in crowded conditions and depend on their mobility for sustenance, those "essential workers" (we did learn a new language, did we not?), or those without a choice. Let us assume that *everybody in the world* stays at home (alright, not everybody, but *almost* everybody). It seems clear that things will not go well. That the therapy is harming the patient. As a matter of fact, we are already witnessing, feeling, the financial losses, the economic devastation (some of us had learned earlier). And these are significant. Should we then shift from one expert to the next, from medicine to economics? There may or may not be a contradiction, but who would know? And what about the jurists? Won not we expose ourselves to lawsuits later? Do we know? Whence will wisdom come that would not only tell us what we need to know, but also which task or object of knowledge we must collectively attend to?

I do not mean to suggest that we do not know anything, therefore. Nor that we have not learned much. Like other animals (and some viruses too), we are learning beings, learning animals. We are *homo discens.*

But we know too little still. And wisdom eludes us.

Still, we *are* learning, are we not?

We are learning who and what "we" is. Where and when.

We are learning that change *can* come faster than we otherwise

[1] David A. Graham, "Rumsfeld's Knowns and Unknowns: The Intellectual History of a Quip," *The Atlantic* (March 27, 2014). www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/03/rumsfelds-knowns-and-unknowns-the-intellectual-history-of-a-quip/359719.

keep telling ourselves.

We are learning that the air can get cleaner fast. Perhaps the water could too.

We are learning a new language.

We are learning to wear a face veil (ostensibly) and do proper ablutions (religiously).

We are learning that "doing something about it" is not always the way. Sometimes one just has to be idle, do nothing or do less, and "shelter in place." And learn about the self. Or solidarity. Or something.

We are learning that borders cannot really close. Not for viruses, nor for ventilators.

We are learning that there are other ways to prepare or respond to a pandemic.

We are learning that health, and the elderly, should have mattered earlier.

We are learning about comorbidity. Again.

We are learning that there is no such thing as equality.

We are learning (for the nth time) that some lives matter less. More *and* less. The lives of "essential workers," the poor and the immigrant, the homeless and those whose dwellings and neighborhoods, ghettoes and favelas, are too crowded for "social distancing."

We are learning (for the nnth time) that race counts. And counting.

We are learning to be *inessential.*

We are learning that each of us may be a carrier, an unwitting - *unknowing* - dangerous individual.[2]

We are accordingly learning, all-too willingly learning, to *police* and *surveil* ("serve and protect") ourselves.

Others are learning too. The corporate suspects.

We are learning knowledge that may not be knowledge - the latest piece of information, say, soon to be discarded as wrong or misguided.

We are learning that our teachers and our experts, our "leaders" too, have much to learn.

We are learning that we should have learned earlier.

We are learning time.

We are learning that learning takes time, that it is a demanding path with no guarantees that knowledge, much less wisdom, or indeed learning, will be found.

We are learning that some of us are *unable* to learn (schools are closed, or too expensive). Others are *unwilling*.

We are learning that some of us will *never* learn.

We are learning failure.

[2] Michel Foucault, "The Dangerous Individual," in *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture, Interviews and Other Writings 1977–1984*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman (London: Routledge, 1990), 125-52; and see Neni Panourgiá, *Dangerous Citizens: The Greek Left and the Terror of the State* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009).

Rumen Rachev |

Towards the New Abnormal

(2020-04-15)

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The stress test of institutions and infrastructures in 2020 shows more than ever what our capabilities are and what we are all capable of achieving in times that call for new abnormalities, since what was constituted as "unusual" and "abnormal" before is now being adopted as daily life practices (excessive washing of hands, paranoia about germs, keeping social distancing, etc.). It is no longer a problem that you are too paranoid or reclusive to engage with the public; now the problem is that you are not paranoid or reclusive enough to stay away from others. Whoever is up there as the big Other witnessing us at the moment might find future predicaments quite fascinating to speculate about and act upon.

There will not be a "back to normal" period. Rather, the current times put into question what we as humans, through the daily enactment of rituals and practices, considered to be "normal," and what the norms are now that are structuring what we are experiencing as normality. What is going to happen from here onwards is the redefinition and search for the new abnormal, rather than looking for the same old conditions that structured our normality (e.g., commuting to work, socializing with others, working towards saving for vacation) when one cannot even go outside any more.

We need a new abnormal paradigm to set the parameters in search for better abnormalities (not in the sense of being more productive, as tools for market profit, but "better" as in going further than the simple dichotomy between norms and the estrangement from norms). What was once considered unusual and abnormal, now, through the stress test of the current global crisis, shows that it has been adapted as a new normal scenario. We are heading towards a time for redefining and reshaping what may constitute a living experience. These new abnormalities are not something that needs to be expelled and that will threaten the destruction of "normal life," but something that will reshape altogether what in the first place was considered normal and how this normality has been normalizing us over time. Nothing is normal per se; normality needs to be normalized in each and every moment.

What is important to acknowledge here is that it is not the suffocation from the abnormality that we have to worry about; it is the drive to return to some form of normal, without considering how abnormality is already at the core of what structures our "normal" experience in the first place. That is to say, do not try to normalize by simply "fighting against" or "coping with" the new abnormalities; instead try to rethink one's own position of what you may consider normal in the first place and why we cling so hard to norms and staying "on the right track" of things. Nothing is right when you cannot even imagine the possibility of a left turn.

Davor Löffler | What Is It Like to Be Schrödinger's Cat? And Other Tales from the Edge of Planetarization

(2020-04-18)

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Where Philosophy Ends, Philosophy Begins

Nothing philosophical about the Coronavirus and the current situation can be said. A very clearly defined object and a very clearly defined state present themselves to us. There is a virus and, if you contract it, you may die. That's it. It is very binary, a simple yes or no outcome, a simple if-then relation. In its lack of ambiguity and contingency, the global situation does not leave any space for interpretation, exegesis, or contextualization. It is a material circumstance, hardly different, for example, from questions like whether an organism can take in sufficient amounts of air, water, or nutrition, or a meteorite striking the earth. Within the phase space of the trillions of possible viruses, one had developed a composition that allows it to nest itself in various hosts. Some of these hosts remain unharmed by the virus's reproductive capacity, while others with ACE2-receptors in the linings of their airways may suffer from the virus's evolutionary, obviously successful, path to proliferation.

The virus could have been harmless, too, just as most of its (non-) relatives are. In fact, there is no intentionality or subjectivity in it; it is merely a chemical process accidently beta-testing some organic firewalls. Precisely, its unambiguous, mechanical mode of existence enables us to expose and understand its functionality, which in turn allows for a rational treatment. Correspondingly, most state leaders and governments are responding to it in the most rational way - rational here meaning following whatever functional demands general technocratic and biopolitical necessities in a globalized world pose. Both the fact that the threat can be tackled by rational means as well as that the political leaders apparently are capable of rationality is somewhat soothing to see. (That they were always capable of rational assessment, even prior to this state of exception, means that global elites' efforts at postponing climate change measures were grounded neither in unawareness nor ignorance, but in calculation. This is, by contrast, not soothing.)

The newly declared codes of conduct are as simple as they can get: Stay away from the virus. From East to West and back again, every political system was confronted with the same challenge and activated the same emergency protocols.[1] In its sheer material givenness, Corona is indeed the "Great Equalizer," as the pop-icon Madonna stated, although in a different way than she may have considered it in her marble bathtub during isolation. It ontologically equalizes all humans by means of the same material process, and it politically equalizes all collectives by driving them to activate the same, non-cultural relativistic sets of practical solutions. By leaving but one focal point of action and intention, it brushes off all ideological or philosophical approaches to it, any semantical, class, or cultural relativity. By boiling existence down to a ubiquitous givenness needing no metaphysical questioning or epistemological tuning of terms and concepts, it crowds out space for philosophical inquiry. Ultimately it admits no political philosophy, too, as all current streams of thought (what we care for and direct our intention to) are converging in the organization of mere survival. While practical specialists in politics and science seem to be having their moment in the sun, the "know how" sublates the "know why," rendering all great dogmatic enframements and cathedrals as ruins of history. The philosophies

[1] It was psyops for population management when governments pretended that plans were not set from the beginning, as if every step taken was not directly dictated by the universal material circumstances. Of course, every state has such emergency plans prepared in greatest possible detail, readily waiting in the drawers, and designed to deal with looming ABC-warfare in the second half of the twentieth century. The stepwise activation of the protocols (playing it down, declaring to be well prepared, shutting down public events, shutting down social institutions, ordering social distancing - soon personal tracking and wearing mask in the West, too) was conducted for preventing panic and disorder that would have rendered any collective action ineffective. If there ever was a moment when a global disaster could have been prevented, this would have taken place in December of 2019, but even then, there would have been no real chance for a successful containment.

of twentieth and early twenty-first century (not to mention philosophies preceding knowledge of microbial worlds and all the galaxies of life within the human) have absolutely nothing to contribute to an elucidation of the situation. Dogmas on which we have grown accustomed to rely - Existentialism, the Philosophy of Language, Structuralism, Hermeneutics, Classical and New Phenomenology, Critical Theory, Media Theory, Constructivism, Poststructuralisms of all stripes, Systems Theory, Philosophical and Historical Anthropology, Science and Technology Studies, Actor-Network Theory and, come lately, the Hybrid-Theories, the Philosophies of the Post- and Inhuman and the New Materialisms - all crashed and dispersed in the moment our skins and minds touched the surface of the virus. Now, they all seem, at best, like fainting echoes swallowed up in the loudmouths of their scriveners, self-declared sages and secular gurus (5-10 per generation), dampened evermore as the curtains of the nano-frontier draw closer.

Yes, "philosophy is its own time comprehended in thought," as someone once said. But that means, simultaneously, that time is philosophy. Times are primordial to their expressions, not least because expression exists only by historical difference. They are always messages from a different, a second past, which only becomes visible once a rupture in the lineage of the pasts occurs. Confronted with a new state of absolute totality, the outdatedness of philosophical dogmas became immediately exposed. Their words could not map the event. A metaphorical image for this can be found in the climax of *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, when the archetypical trickster T-1000 is thrown into a barrel of molten metal. The shapeshifter desperately morphs through every form it learned to mimic in the hope of finding one able to withstand being engulfed by flames, but the non-entity and its many faces can only disintegrate in the purgatorial fire. Chaos to chaos, order to order, cosmical catharsis. It was too hot, it was too real for its virtuality. "The accident is the uncovering of the real," some other person said. The "great equalizer" Corona, the "Great Razor" of metaphysical assumptions, pares off previous epistemes from a world about to begin anew.

And where philosophy ends, philosophy begins. Now that the historicity and contextuality of philosophy has been laid bare and philosophical reasoning stripped of any remaining links to the new real, we are forced to wonder: What was all the philosophy about before the virus? What was its status, what was its use, where was its truth? If we see now that, in the state of emergency, any prior state held as "natural" (capitalism, debts, "our" worldviews, philosophical inquiry as human condition, etc.) erodes and any vector associated with the former production of universals disperses into nothingness, what remains then of philosophy? Will it be switched on again the moment social machinery comes back into operation? And, if so, what does this tell us about philosophy and its striving for universality? Where does it exist, then, if it can be turned on and turned off by a chemical compound? About what exactly is it supposed to be informative? What kind of information does it provide? Does philosophy only work there, where there is an exchange value for symbolic meaning, a market for what may all too soon become, yet again, the "idols of the market," as someone once said?

Tipped and toppled from the throne of the absolute by the sheer materiality of existence, the philosopher has no choice but to concede: Where there is no breath, there is no body; where there is no body, there is no thought. This condition of the virus ultimately suggests how to reframe the question correctly: *When* does materiality allow for philosophy? Only once we have found the answer, can the inquiry continue: *Why* does materiality allow for philosophy? Philosophy begins where the world has shed itself of it and thought ascends in purity. New planet, new thought - new thought, new planet.

What Is It Like to Be Schrödinger's Cat?

I have a strange tickle in my throat for some time already. I wonder if... Today I woke up with a running nose. Could it be that... I feel a bit tired today. Is it a sign of... My joints feel kind of stiff. Does it mean... When will I know? Today? Tonight? Tomorrow? In a couple of days? I examine the past week: Where have I been, with whom did I talk, what did I touch? Was there something unusual about where I ate and what I drank? Did I touch my face? Did they say when a treatment, a medicine will be ready? Will I need help? Will I be able to help? When will I know?

Yes, fully expressed, we all became subject to the following question: When will I know if I am already dead? Just like Schrödinger's Cat, our existence became a chimera of being alive and not being

alive. The difference is that the chamber containing us and the poison is not a spatial one, but temporal. More precisely, we do not even know whether we are or will end up in the chamber and exactly this uncertainty is the chamber. The chamber is formed by overlapping temporalities. The memory of linear time from the past from which we fell into the chamber is rendering the old past, as a whole, into a different, a second past, a past that leads nowhere, a past that is not the past of our current presence in the chamber and not the past of the future we are facing. The same goes for futurity. The other boundary of the chamber is made of the second future that coemerged with the second past, just in the moment the past ceased to exist and linearity broke. Our current situation in the chamber is found in the space gaping between the old past never to be seized again and the old future never to be reached again. We ended up outside of linearity and are held in a superposition of existential indeterminacy. A silent alarm in the dark is the new constant, duration without time, narrative without story.

But how can we know then? How can we observe our own indeterminacy? We find ourselves in a new state derived from the contrast to an old linearity which does not exist anymore, providing no grounding of the presence, while, simultaneously, linearity became exposed by the new state that does not exist without the rupture from the old linearity. Someone once called this a "catastrophe." All too many players are suddenly populating our presence and filling up the chamber. There is the old self, confused in its innocent belief in the things that were to come; there is the projected old self we should have been right now if everything would have gone as it should have, wondering if maybe still there is a chance for it to be; there is another self who is observing the disintegration of the old selves, sometimes bold to be, sometimes hesitant to be; there is another self who knows it may disintegrate soon in total. But there is yet another player who must not be forgotten: the experimenter outside of the chamber. The experimenter oversees processes within the chamber. Through the experimenter, the dispersed linearities are synthesized into the unity presenting itself to us as the reality we are facing. In the experimenter, the diverging temporalities are united. They will converge in the moment the experimenter comes into existence, the moment the experimenter concretizes. The moment the chamber opens constitutes both the experimenter and the cat, both the *position* from which we are observing what we are, could have been and may become and *that which* we are. This is our "eccentric positionality," as someone once said; the "view from nowhere," as some other person said; the glancing back on ourselves from a virtual futurity that constitutes that which forms us in every single moment of our existence. We, as the experimenters, are the background on which all the lines of our projections and the vectors of our selves are drawn. So, here, we have good news. As long as the experimenter exists, we still *are* despite being dispersed between times. And this is the most important thing we can know for now.

But, only for now; for we should remember that we were in this situation well before we stepped into the Corona-Chamber, in a much more extreme situation even, not as single individuals, but as the whole of humanity, the sapient layer in the holocenic composition of Gaia. Humanity as a whole has entered this unfortunate state of superposition, and, like Schrödinger's Cat, we cannot tell if we are still alive or already dead. Our presence on earth became an indeterminate state through our own existence. The presence has dispersed into a multitude of overlapping layers and vectors of temporalities of different lengths and widths, all of which were brought forth by anthropogenic environmental destruction. The presence, our presence dissolved into virtuality as it turned more and more into a mere glitter in the reflections of potential futures, of second order futures, the spectrum of futures of any futurity. Are we in a presence that will lead to a 2°-, 3°- or 6°-Celsius future? Are we dead already or are we still alive?[2] We did not feel how we slipped into the chamber of absolute indeterminacy, since we had not developed a sensorium for it yet. We were incapable of knowing what it is like to be Schrödinger's Cat. Now, we know. Corona is a training ground for sensing our chances of accessing futurity.

From Brute Globalization to Smart Planetarization

When, in 1347, the Black Death arrived in Europe and went on its devastating course, the land already was in chaos and turmoil. The

[2] Although the drop in CO_2-emissions due to the global shutdown may buy us some time and offer some hope, it also illustrates how vast the restrictions in energy consumption would have to be in order to stop global warming and how futile it is to think that merely local tunings within the current system could ever bear sufficient effects.

great political, economic, and technological achievements of the feudal, commercial, and agrarian revolution instantiated after 900 CE had led to a surge in productivity, which caused an explosive population growth from around 25 million to 90 million people by 1345. But the fourteenth century was anything but peaceful. The feudal institutions, originally successful organizational solutions to current problems, reached their limits and could not integrate the complexities and tensions arising in a population three times the size and density as at their onset. In this century of crisis, increasingly powerful political, clerical, and corporative entities began to rival one another for dominance and resources. Merchants and artisans of growing cities started to demand political rights, reform and peasant movements called for reconstituting religious structures and improvements to living conditions, monasteries rose to powerful factions, and, for a while, there were even three self-declared popes driving the fragmentation of the socio-political landscape further. At the same time, the bourgeois world slowly but unstoppably gained traction. The abstract matrix of social interactions based on prices, contracts, exchange value, and natural laws making up the core structure of Modernity's culture began to fan out from cities, markets, mechanical clocks, early factories and machines. But societies were still locked-in into traditional feudal institutions that blocked a long overdue system transition. Exactly here the plague stepped in and broke the path dependence of feudal institutions. By exterminating 30% of the population (depending on the area, between 20% and 80%), it necessitated a reconstitution of the managerial, administrative, and political system, which eventually lead to the onset of Modernity. Primarily it caused the end of serfdom. As the plague put holes and gaps into supply and production chains, it necessitated to distribute surviving workers flexibly and adaptively across the land in order to sustain agrarian production. This led to the instantiation of labor laws fixing prices in the emerging labor market, while, at the same time, taxation was centralized. The bureaucratization of production, as well as the centralization of command over drawing up borders (both internal and external for isolation), lead to state formation. As the land-to-labor ratio changed significantly, peasants, artisans, and merchants suddenly could become rich, which led to a strengthening of emerging modern working classes, the capitalist, and the citizen in general - all of which conditioned the formation of concepts of equality and human rights (in this way the plague had an effect similar to the comet that made the dinosaurs extinct, thereby making possible the rise of mammalian underdogs). While this revolution in management and administration technologies marked the end of the feudal political structure, the shock of the plague also caused a shift in worldview. Elites were forced to legitimize themselves through effective leadership instead of tradition, rationality replaced belief, the materialist notion of the body took hold and aesthetics turned towards realism and beauty. In short, the Black Death broke the institutional and metaphysical lock-in, accelerated existing tendencies and initiated an otherwise unthinkable large-scale system transition, ultimately leading to Modernity.

Cut to the year 2020. Although Corona, fortunately, is not nearly as deadly as the plague was (due to the fact that humans, in the meantime, gained vast knowledge of the microbial world - and learned that it even exists at all), it presents us, citizens of hypermodernity, with a situation paradoxically similar to that of 1347. Starting in the mid-nineteenth century, the industrial, hygienic, technological, and second scientific revolution lead to a surge in productivity, which in turn caused an explosive population growth from less than a billion to the present world population of eight billion humans. But, just like in the late Middle Ages before the plague, today's main political and economic institutions are rooted in an earlier stage of civilization, a time that was characterized by very different technologies and a world of nearly twenty times fewer inhabitants. They were established in a phase of history during which newspapers and coffee houses still formed the public sphere, and the horse carriage was the fastest mode of transportation. Obviously, institutions more than 250 years old, such as the Westphalian System, parliamentary democracy, the invisible hand of the market, and the concept of infinite growth (originally successful solutions to current problems), have reached their limits today and can no longer integrate the globalized world's complexities and tensions they brought forth. Furthermore, these institutions themselves became the direct cause of the threats to the survival of humanity, be it in anthropogenic (correctly: capitalogenic) global warming and environmental destruction, exploitation or wars. The system grew inefficient in terms of equal distribution and sustainability, it became inflexible regarding

internal and external shocks and it became detrimental regarding its own consequences, as well as the conflicts it causes. This state, which some called "Hyperglobalization" and yet others "Capitalist Realism," is the same type of crisis for humanity as the crisis of the late Middle Ages was for the inhabitants of Europe. It is a *meta-crisis*, a crisis not *within* the system, but *of* the system. Will Corona, too, break the path dependence and initiate a fundamental system transition? Will it mark the end of "Capitalist Realism?" Or will we soon simply return to "business as usual"?

Business as usual here, of course, means the continuation of *Brute Globalization*. Brute stands for raw, wild, ferocious, untamed, brutal, stochastic, unrefined, crude, violent, for conquest, hard colonization through blunt occupation, and soft colonization through enslavement by debt. *Brute Globalization* is a continuation of the Westphalian System. Territorially defined states act as collective robber bands grasping at resource hot spots under the flag of whichever humanist ideology they can best sell to their own people and institutions playing the part of global referee. *Brute Globalization* is the result of eccentric outward expansions of nations on the flat plane of the globe, foisting themselves as centers of gravity for the flows of energy and resources extracted from the periphery.[3] "Hyperglobalization" and "Capitalist Realism" are the path-dependent continuation of Modernity's institutions.

The lock-in into this path dependence originated after 1918, when the currently still ongoing global "state of exception," the perma-crisis of permanent search for growth, was instantiated after the industrialized nations (whose borders began to emerge after 1347) first circled the globe in the name of competition. But it is exactly the technologies developed during fierce competition among the global markets that now provide a chance for a change. Automation, internet of things, health monitoring, tracking, AI-driven patent aggregation, deterritorialized platform markets, and soon score systems are all undermining the current structure of production and surplus value extraction. And, as such, they contain the seeds of a new world. But its breakthrough is blocked still by atavistic traditions, institutions, norms, and mindsets. Conceiving of this transition does not require much in the way of "sociological imagination," as someone once called it. If we could start from zero and reset society based on *currently* existing technologies, would we establish the same institutions again? Hardly. They would appear as cumbersome antiquities, both comical and obscene in their managerial obsolescence, inefficiency, and unsustainability.

But, as someone once said, "Where the danger is, also grows the saving power." While witnessing the first political reactions to the Corona-Crisis, many observed, as if in great surprise, that "things *can* be different." This observation triggered utopian fantasies of possible socioeconomic consequences resulting from the crisis, such as the introduction of permanent UBI, nationalization of companies, or reduction of fossil fuel-based mobility. Unfortunately, all these changes will, in all likelihood, remain wishful thinking. Initial measures aimed at alleviating the immediate consequences of the pandemic will not stick. In states of exception, the unusual always temporarily becomes the normal, similar to the state someone once called "war communism," before social realities yield again to "business as usual." But it is possible that the measures undertaken by the systems in order to restore and strengthen themselves after Corona will in the long run lead to overdue system transformation. The reinstantiation of hyperglobalization supported by the new technological possibilities could ultimately result in the transition from *Brute Globalization* to *Smart Planetarization*.

In order to restart the globalized economy and hold steady to its previous path, adding yet another prosthetic layer to the institutions at the core of *Brute Globalization* will be necessary. First and foremost, there will be the need to establish an early global warning system similar to the one established after the Tsunami disaster in 2004, in which globally distributed seismographs are connected and autonomously sound alarms for local governments. After Corona, governance institutions that exist today in the form of slow and legally non-binding wetware structures (e.g., the World Health Organization) will be partially externalized into an automated and decentralized network of epidemic detectors. This warning system will be

[3] Although the current agendas are seemingly smarter by securing resource flows in narrow corridors with military forces aligned along the global supply chain and trade routes leading back to the homeland, they are still not smart, since the smart wars with drones, preemptive strikes, and nudged regime changes by financed revolutions are still just the tools of the old, expansive, and crude colonization by nation states, just a bit more updated, a bit more "just in time," and a bit more adapted to local circumstances, since full blown occupations became too expensive and risky.

ecological and hybrid in nature, as it must not only integrate virological, epidemiological, and medicinal data, but also relate such data to information concerning local and global economies, production, consumption, mobility, and resources; technological potentialities, geology and climatology; even individual habits and cultural practices. This is the only way future pandemics, which from now on will haunt humanity on a regular basis, can be preemptively integrated into the system. In order to prevent another global shutdown, the warning system must closely follow holes in the tightly knitted web of resource flows as they emerge, morph, and move around the globe. This warning system will not only detect where pandemics puncture the global networks of supply and production chains, but, in its next iteration, it will predict their occurrence and activate political measures based on mere probabilities of future threats.

Interestingly, climate change will pose exactly the same challenge to the system of *Brute Globalization* as pandemics. From now on, regularly occurring natural disasters (hurricanes, droughts, fires, floods) will, similar to Corona and the Black Death, put holes and gaps in supply and production chains that are equally dynamic and emerging, morphing, and moving over the surface of the planet. In order to save globally interdependent economies, both upcoming pandemics and natural disasters raise the need for the establishment of an automated, decentralized detection and preemption system with governmental powers that allows immediate restriction responses and emergency protocols to be triggered. This first system of automated, globally cooperative emergency governance could turn out to be the larval stage of a new form of politics and economy, one in which the virtual provides the basis of automated decision-making.

Conceived in this way, *Brute Globalization* necessarily leads to *Smart Planetarization*. Smart means connected, hybrid, ecological, dynamical, balanced, intelligent, preemptive, precautious, integrative, recursive, sustainable, diplomatic, and holistic. *Smart Planetarization* is the next logical step in the development of cultural metabolism and the cumulative unfolding of civilizational history. In *Smart Planetarization*, a layer of discrete data points (i.e., functionally defined relations) of infinitesimal resolution is spanning over objects, systems, and processes of any kind, detecting, relating, integrating, and preempting their actions, movements, and growth. By calculating and objectifying the probabilities of local and global future scenarios, a second universe layered over the material realm will be opened. Projected potentialities of futurity will form an own space within this realm, with compartments as real and priceable as a piece of soil around which a border is drawn. In *Smart Planetarization*, the diverse materialities, human, and non-human entities are commensurabilized through the rendering of their processuality and integrated for active and passive participation. This commensurabilization of the heterochronic and scale-variant systems of all domains is the precondition for transforming the potentials of any futurity of systems and processes on Earth's surface into values and of feeding them into distribution and exchange mechanisms. This automated pandemic warning system could thus spark the onset of the full entanglement of cultural metabolism with the planetary and of the futurity of cultures with the futurity of all futurity.

Such transitions are not new; they have happened before. Someone once conceptualized events like the Black Death or Corona as events of "Maximal Stress Cooperation." MSC-events are usually wars, but they can also be natural disasters or plagues. In such events collectives are challenged by existential threats and the individuals are forced to cope with and cooperate under maximal stress, as life and death are the only possible outcomes in and of these situations. These events test cultural practices, knowledge, and values and gauge their ultimate utility. In cases of success (that is, in the case of victory over the stressor), maladapted practices and norms are filtered out and the catalogue of traditional values and virtues is reset. In this way, a situation of "Maximal Stress Cooperation" can become the founding event of a new culture. Corona, with its own propositions of maximal stress cooperation, could become such a founding event. It might ready us finally for the long overdue transition to real planetarism.

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Claire Colebrook |

A Remarkable Brain

(2020-04-19)

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Before the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic there seemed to be something almost utopian about zoonotic viruses, at least for a certain strand of what has come to be known as 'theory.' Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari saw the capacity of a virus to jump from one species to another as a way of thinking about life rhizomatically. Rather than a bounded organism that goes through time to realize itself in ever higher forms of life's grandeur, viruses would see life as communicative and open - not open to an outside, for there is no outside other than an ongoing and multiplying proliferation of potential relations:

> Evolutionary schemas would no longer follow models of arborescent descent going from the least to the most differentiated, but instead a rhizome operating immediately in the heterogeneous and jumping from one already differentiated line to another. Once again, there is aparallel evolution, of the baboon and the cat; it is obvious that they are not models or copies of each other (a becoming-baboon in the cat does not mean that the cat "plays" baboon). We form a rhizome with our viruses, or rather our viruses cause us to form a rhizome with other animals. ... Always look for the molecular, or even submolecular, particle with which we are allied. We evolve and die more from our polymorphous and rhizomatic flus than from hereditary diseases, or diseases that have their own line of descent. The rhizome is an anti-genealogy.[1]

If the rhizome is an anti-genealogy, and *genealogy* is tied to the great state forms of filiation, divine right, authority, and hierarchy, then it would seem that thinking about the force of a virus (as rhizome *par excellence*) would amount to a form of radical relationality: an ungrounded, proliferating, multiplying life of becoming. What happens then when "we" humans *really are* hit with a virus, and our long history of humanist autonomy - being able to travel, plunder, consume and monetize the earth - encounters death and destruction? I think the answer is twofold: it might seem as though a tradition of anti-foundationalist thinking that runs (at least) from Nietzsche to Deleuze and Guattari reaches a real political limit. Life may operate rhizomatically, but affirming the rhizome as a model for thinking an analysis might seem to replicate capitalism's and colonialism's capacity to adapt, migrate, mutate, infiltrate, transform and destroy *without itself having a body one might be able to contain or identify.* The first response to a pandemic might be to hold onto the human, even if this means allowing the state form to assert its authority for now. When Giorgio Agamben spoke out against lockdown procedures as yet one more way in which the state forges itself for the sake of "life," he was seen as typically "theoretical" in his privileging of the freedom of thought over the value of real human lives. The first possibility would be to see the celebration of viroid life as a typically privileged position of theory that seeks to release life from any grounding conception of "man," celebrating a "becoming" that can no longer be deployed by a biopolitical managerialism that would intervene to allow the health of populations to become sovereign. What happens, though, when saving humanity to save the world disrupts a more open and symbiotic conception of life? The answer - months into the virus and its management - is apparent. Agamben was quite right that the lockdown intensified the sovereignty of biopolitical managerialism; but he was also negligent in failing to think rhizomatically, failing to look at what the lockdown measures were achieving *in their specific proliferation.* The whole point of rhizomatic thinking, and of affirming what Keith Ansell-Pearson refers to

[1] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. by B. Massumi (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 10-11.

as "viroid life"[2] is not a "flat" negation of "the human", with a celebration of becoming in general; it is, instead, the challenge to think the composition of "the human" as an event that comes into being by way of mutations, encounters, and stratifications. The 2020 pandemic makes this form of thinking more urgent. The humanity and world that are now being saved by way of lockdown measures came into existence rhizomatically, with the lockdown itself being a rhizomatic event. The virus and various containment and mitigation measures intensified the extent to which the humanity that was being saved came into being through violent relations, encounters, distributions, mutations and invasions. Deleuze and Guattari's emphasis on a virus jumping from one body to another, transforming as it does so, seems to be rather glib - and almost celebratory - about viral invasion. The point, though, is to see invasion itself as a virus, as something that installs itself, attacking its host - requiring a response that, will in part, have to abandon bodily integrity and suffer in order to live on. Deleuze and Guattari were not alone in using the figure of the virus to think about the individuation of the body. Jacques Derrida also used the figure of immunity, and auto-immunity, to think about a body as always being somewhat at war with itself and its outside in order to maintain itself. Where Deleuze and Guattari differ is that rather than thinking of the body as maintaining itself by way of forces that also threaten the interior, they abandon the walled-in, bounded, integrated body of unity. We are always already viral. What 2020 has exposed is the cartography of "the human"; the world that was being saved by the lockdown relied upon global networks of humans, animals, commodities, affects, images and mutations. What was required to save this world was an intensification of the disposability of some lives, and the increased protection and ongoing "lockdown" of other's. "Lockdown" was possible and successful for some - those who could rely on Zoom, Instacart, the Uberized economy - while for others "lockdown" amounted to being contained in a poorly paid workplace, exposed to an underfunded healthcare system, and then experiencing poor odds as a result of a history of social relations that had produced communities (predominantly non-white) that suffered poor survival rates because of "underlying conditions." Nothing demands rhizomatic thinking more than the notion of "underlying" conditions; rather than think of a body that bears a certain quality, or a body that contracts a condition, we should think of bodies as compositions of multiple responses to their milieu. A body *is* its potentiality, and in the world of pandemics what becomes evident is the production of some bodies as volatile and fragile, at the expense of those other bodies that are walled-in, locked down and, secure in their skin.

The Australian novelist Alexis Wright's magisterial *Swan Book* uses the figure of the virus to destroy the normative autonomy of the colonizing "man." All life is viral - made up of nothing more than relations that transform and mutate in their encounters; this is as true of the white invasion of Australia, as it is of Australia's long history of producing itself as a supposedly multicultural nation only by rendering the bodies it encounters assimilable.

> If you want to extract a virus like this from your head - you can't come to the door of its little old-fashion prairie house with passé kinds of thinking, because the little king will not answer someone knocking, will not come out of the door to glare into the sunlight, won't talk about anything in level terms, or jump around to appease you like some Chubby Checker impersonator bent over backwards under a limbo stick. Nor will it offer any hospitality - swart summers or not - no matter how much knocking, trick-or-treating, ceremonial presents, or tantrums about why the door was kept closed. I can prove that I have this virus. I have kept the bit of crumpled-up paper, the proper results of medical tests completed by top doctors of the scientific world. They claimed I had a remarkable brain.[3]

Lockdown. Quarantine. A Land at War, at war with itself. Self-isolation. These twenty-first century events not only have precedents, but are constitutive of who we are. Using the word "we" these days is not smart, even if there are claims that a virus knows no borders, and that - to quote Slavoj Žižek - "we're all in the same boat now"[4] (a claim that modifies Dipesh Chakrabarty's 2009 prediction that there would be "no lifeboats for the rich"[5]). The "we" I use is

[2] Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Viroid Life: Perspectives on Nietzsche and the Transhuman Condition* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).

[3] Alexis Wright, *The Swan Book* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013), 2.
[4] Slavoj Žižek, *Pandemic!: COVID-19 Shakes the World* (New York: OR Books, 2020).
[5] Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 35, No. 2

the "we" made possible by a pre-history of self-isolation, lockdown and quarantine. The way this virus has played out is not at all in the manner of a "China virus," and is far closer to Alexis Wright's white virus that seeks to make a land great again: "The virus was nostalgia for foreign things, they said, or what the French say, *nostalgie de la boue*; a sickness developed from channelling every scrap of energy towards an imaginary, ideal world with songs of solidarity, like *We Shall Overcome*."[6]

Self-isolation: the ideal liberal subject is achieved through lockdown and self-isolation. There has been far too much anti-Cartesian theory in the twentieth century, far too many objections that Descartes's conception of the self as a distinct substance set apart from extended matter misses the extent to which selves are embodied, connected, and affectively attuned to a world in which they are enmeshed. The problem with pointing out Descartes's error, is that while the notion of mind as some distinct substance that is cut off from the world may be utterly at odds with the true nature of the world, and might be a terrible way to think about one's own being, the idea of "the subject" as a distinct substance captures the comportment of liberalism and neoliberalism, and expresses a composition of one's bodily being that is one of ongoing lockdown and social isolation. Even before social media, dating apps, smart devices and highly personalized forms of media streaming, one can think of the modern, Western, affluent social subject as a distinct center of self-management, for whom the rest of the world - including others - appears as so much data to be managed. In John Rawls's 1970 *Theory of Justice,* a fair society is imaginable only if I first cut myself off from the world, and then imagine what I would agree to if I happened to occupy any position whatsoever. Well before neoliberalism asks us to treat our own person as a commodity that ought to be maximized for efficiency, with the world around us being nothing more than a marketplace for self-promotion, a history of empire and colonization had forged a myth of the liberal subject as a being whose "humanity" resided in their own private dignity with whatever was beyond the subject being nothing more than material and an opportunity for self-furtherance. Cut yourself off from the world to secure your own being; once that is achieved you may re-encounter the world as a place of stability and security. When climate change and pandemics threaten that security and self-isolation, the modern subject finds itself in the odd position of having to confront the volatility and instability generated by centuries of subjective lockdown.

Prior to the 2020 pandemic one could already see procedures of isolation and lockdown in response to the climate chaos that had been caused by the centuries of hyper-consumption and hyper-extraction that enabled the modern subject. Post-apocalyptic cinema presents a dystopian future where the human species is split between those who can create pockets of stability amidst a world in disarray, and those who are dispersed and exposed to an utterly volatile planet. That imagined bifurcation in the post-apocalyptic imaginary is merely an intensification of the present, where water, housing, healthcare, education and food are already unevenly distributed. The actual lockdowns and self-isolations of 2020 brought this into even sharper relief. If you happen to be a health worker, homeless, or live in a densely populated urban center with unevenly distributed resources, you are not only not able to shelter in space; you are also at the mercy of the privileged subjects for whom self-isolation is a violation of their economic rights. When the U.S. president tweets that we ought to "Liberate Michigan," and does so in response to a demonstration where confederate flags were unfurled, it is necessary and easy to dismiss the irresponsible violence of such speech acts. At the same time, it is no less necessary to see that the cause of confederate liberty - a liberty premised on the social death of others - is at the heart of supposedly constitutional freedoms. The unquestioned right to life of the liberal subject was always made possible by isolating from the dangers of a world, along with the outsourcing of risk and death to those who seemed less than human precisely because they did not appear as sovereign liberal subjects who were cut off from the world. When far right groups in the U.S. call for a liberation from lockdown, their manifest civil disobedience really follows from their obedience to a civic space built entirely on the security of the economy at the expense of life. Lockdown and self-isolation have always been part of a world that produces pockets of safety and stability for the privileged few, all the while presenting the hostile milieu outside those pockets of safety as a land of opportunity.

Descartes could not have written his *Meditations* without the preceding centuries of empire and colonization that produced the pri-

(Winter 2009): 197-222.

[6] Wright, *The Swan Book*, 3.

vate spaces of reading and reflection typical of modern European philosophy. The modern novel that depicts the individual hero making their way in a world that is at once an obstacle and an opportunity, would not have been possible without the production of a private and affluent domestic sphere that was, in turn, enabled by slavery, global plundering, colonization and invasion. Today, the spaces of lockdown and isolation that will supposedly save humanity and the economy for "the" future are at one and the same time sites of privilege and sites of the exposure of an internal insecurity. Some domestic spaces will be scenes of violence and poverty: the smaller your abode and the more exposure and viral load your day-to-day existence brings back into your home, the more your domestic space becomes one of capture rather than security. The more your nation is split between those who have a space for refuge versus those who are homeless, the more conditions of lockdown and self-isolation expose what we ought to have known before the 2020 pandemic, and before the intensifying awareness of climate change: what calls itself humanity has always walled itself off from a world that it stabilized by outsourcing its risk and fragility to those whose lives are not able to shelter in place.

If self-isolation and lockdown typify and make possible the 2020 predicament of shelter-in-place policies, there is also a long pre-history of "our" lands being at war with silent internal enemies. In her masterpiece novel from 2013, *The Swan Book,* Alexis Wright describes a closed off brain populated by a malevolent virus that inflicts violence on an outside world:

> Upstairs in my brain, there lives this kind of cut snake virus in its doll's house. Little stars shining over the moonscape garden twinkle endlessly in a crisp sky. The crazy virus just sits there on the couch and keeps a good old *qui vive* out the window for intruders. It ignores all of the eviction notices stacked on the door. The virus thinks it is the only pure full-blood virus left in the land.[7]

Despite the global systemic collapse, the virus lives on, holding on to its walled off space.

It was not a virus that forced Australia's indigenous peoples into forced quarantine. In 2007 the Australian government enacted "The Northern Territory Intervention," that policed and managed welfare payments to indigenous communities under the pretext of community safety. Despite manifest declarations of apology and reconciliation, the Australian government has not come to terms with the ongoing war it has conducted on the indigenous population. As Rachel Perkins detailed in her 2019 Boyer lectures,[8] white settlers at one and the same time deemed indigenous peoples to be subjects to the crown, while also waging a war on these people who - as subjects of the crown - could not legally be at war. What was in fact a war was deemed to be an issue of national security. Again, well before the 2020 pandemic, white industrial nations were already at war with themselves, already creating conditions of lockdown and enclosure that distributed security and fragility in a racially divided space. What indigenous writers and thinkers like Wright and Perkins offer for the present is twofold. First, before the 2020 pandemic there was already a political form of autoimmune disease, where a body that declared itself to be humanity secured itself by destroying its "own" populations - populations it would declare to be its own in moments of land seizure and quarantine, but which would be left without water, healthcare or housing. Second, the declared states of emergency that appear at first to be violations of civil liberties are continuations and intensifications of white humanity's securing of itself in a space of security while the world beyond its bordered ease is deemed to be both volatile, and the proper place for those whose lives are the recipients of outsourced risk. Declarations of states of emergency, along with calls to shelter in place, are not at odds with the neoliberal subject: subjectivity is the effect of a long history of lockdown, self-isolation, and a declared war on internal enemies.

[7] Ibid., 2.

[8] Rachel Perkins, *The Boyer Lectures 2019: The End of Silence. Australian Broadcasting Corporation* (2019). https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/boyerlectures/the-end-of-silence-part-3/11729624.

David Roden |

Bodiless

(2020-04-21)

David Roden's published work has addressed the relationship between deconstruction and analytic philosophy, philosophical naturalism, the metaphysics of sound and posthumanism. His book *Posthuman Life: Philosophy at the Edge of the Human* (New York, 2014) explores the ethical and epistemological ramifications of Speculative Posthumanism: the thesis that there could be agents originating in human social-technical systems that become posthuman as a result of some technological alteration of their powers. His current work considers posthumanist theories of agency and their implications for aesthetics and philosophical method. Coming out soon with Schism Press is his experimental novella *Snuff Memories*. He teaches at the Open University, U.K.

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Can we afford us any longer? Bodies hurt too much. Their pleasures are less trauma than a geologic diarrhoea. It is shameful a vaulting planetary economy still uses us - like discovering a cache of unused condoms under pristine sand.

No wonder we dream disconnection, communism, or apocalypse; bored with our biology, our perpetually retarded political instincts, or bad teeth.

It seems a "posthuman" theory must get over this prurience; to enjoy rolling over in its own shit, if only to get showered and rubberized by mechanical servants in the aftermath - and even then, we cannot do without us. We know where we are, but not who.

From this theoretical perspective, the "us" or "we" is not so much locked down, as filtered out as junk bandwidth. Think of the body unzipped by spidery insurgents, sliced from neck to sternum; then given a kind of minimal ethical purchase and other devolved responsibilities. A bare aesthetic figure, or radical metaphor.

We will do anything not to stop. Especially, when confronted with our redundancy and obdurate excess, our strained capacities for transitioning into another, better and more expansive quarantine.

Duration and intensity, autonomy and self-ownership; lines between personal action and sub-personal process, or lumpen behavior; between private and intimate; between genders; individuals. None plausibly immutable or necessary, whether for extremophiles from the dim reaches of "Posthuman Possibility Space" or those of us languishing in these eroded lives.

The lockdown body - what is it for: to exercise, eat, shit, or wank through various grades of solipsistic delusion?

We are just waiting for it to end; for this spurious mass to hold its own, aggregated into population maps, tracing drunken itineraries between notional SARS-CoV-2 vectors.

It is like an inflation or interspecies slash fiction: your bad lifestyle preferences bundled into a citizenship status in Clown Town. Liberal humanism, not so much a problem, as a posit of an erroneous theory buffed up as a vital critical organ. There is no ideology here. Our beliefs are so much useful exhaust for data collection, while the virus ramifies; does not own, so much as co-opts, cellular selfhood, the primitive basis of ownership and all its works.

Our bodies, our lifeworlds are, as Bakker put it, artifacts of "neglect," of networks and processes in which they are utterly and imperceptibly enmeshed. Neglect of our reusable databodies, the intimate mappings between population level changes, technical systems and the biologic nodes which enable and sustain our options within the Assemblage.

This: all massively supervenient on structures we neither perceive nor control, on processes that (as in a viral pandemic) traverse biological, chemical, social and technical domains. Even the intensive, joyful cyborg is ill-equipped to address these multiple transductions since (as with such systems) they are deeply non-agential.

Yet, as with the case of technical change, the contingency of human life they portend, is embodied too much, like a phlegm. We *feel*, our personal isolation, our fear of the unseen one walking into our path from an alley, foraging excess bodies strung out on panic across the lay lines of the Event. We are blundering like rabbits into Area X. It is like Lovecraft's Old Ones returned but edited themselves into vision or memory as cursed emojis. We need maps, conjurations, that look past our mammalian envelopes. Biomorphic shock tactics; fleshless, textual, lacking in depth or "pre-discursive intensity."

This is not the real body, or even the form of the real, but that which empowers us to intervene in it, explore and shape.

Fabio Gironi |

On the Philosophy that Should Not Be

(2020-04-26)

Fabio Gironi was trained as a philosopher. Now he is a translator, an unsolicited opinonist, and a sailor. He still believes in philosophy, although he spends most of his time badmouthing it.

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I hesitated to accept Katerina Kolozova's and Stanimir Panayotov's invitation to write a short contribution for *Identities*. Not only have I have recently announced - in a more public way than I initially envisaged - my permanent withdrawal from both academic philosophy and the publishing world, but I also used some rather strident words to denounce the meaninglessness of some "COVID-19-prompted interventions" published, in the last weeks, by far more academically glamorous intellectuals than myself. Since I stand by both my decision and my opinions, for me to start pontificating about my intellectual reaction to the current crisis would be inconsistent at best. But the unexpected coincidence - and indeed what I have experienced as the mutual reinforcement - of these two biographical watershed moments perhaps can help me better articulate a conviction of mine that, in another context, has been polemically described as anti-intellectualist.

Although philosophy seized my imagination and flattered my over-inflated teenage sense of self-worth only relatively late in life (as compared to many colleagues of mine), I believe that the roots of my opinions about what philosophy should be can be found in a much earlier episode than my eighteen year-old infatuation with Plato's *Symposium*. As an avid science fiction reader since childhood, one of the books in the genre that shaped my mind was A.E. Van Vogt's *The Voyage of the Space Beagle*, a 1950 classic of the so-called Golden Age of classic sci-fi. Of course, there were the monsters: the dangerous alien creatures encountered by the crew of the scientific expedition that also wrought havoc aboard the spaceship. I loved reading about morphologically and psychologically alien beings, but what really made me come back time and again to that novel was its portrayal of human interactions. Van Vogt envisioned the pioneering spaceship's human crew as composing a sort of micro-university, divided into "departments," whose directors had more prestige the greater the importance of their discipline. Much like present-day academia, the coexistence and collaboration of these intellectuals - from the arrogant chemist to the demur archaeologist - is portrayed as far from smooth and pleasant. Power games run below the seemingly cordial surface, even (or indeed especially so) when facing the alien existential threats. The protagonist of the story, Eliot Grosvenor, is a young academic underdog, the sole member of the expedition trained in a new (and fictional) discipline, called Nexialism. Van Vogt offers a few explanations of what Nexialism is supposed to be, the most synthetic of which describes it as "the science of joining in an orderly fashion the knowledge of one field of learning with that of other fields." While at first derided for being a purpose-less generalist, Grosvernor slowly gains the trust, and the respect, of his more prestigious peers by offering ingenious solutions to face moments of crisis, synthesizing the discipline-bound suggestions of other specialists into coordinated and effective insights. The un-specialized generalist turns out to be the hero of the story, and by the end of the book his seminars about the core tenets of Nexialism will attract all of the ship's big names.

Although, with hindsight, Van Vogt's employment of this fictional discipline suffers from a very specific late-1940s kind of naïve, universalist scientific optimism (and is grounded in the somewhat cult-ish idea of a "Nexial Foundation," training students by means of mind-machine interfaces facilitating quick-learning), eleven-year old me was profoundly fascinated by the possibility of such a holistic approach to reality, by the idea of being trained to see at once all the facets of a complex situation, by the superiority of conceptual engineering over canonical, "bookish" knowledge (in my childhood imagination - and coupling two of my heroes - Grosvenor was a MacGyver of ideas). When, a bit later, I discovered philosophy, I understood it to be "kind of like Nexialism." Doubtlessly, this is the same kind of fascination that, much later in life, made me gravitate

towards Wilfrid Sellars, his unashamedly (and somewhat anachronistic) systematic philosophical ambitions and his regulative ideal of a synoptic vision.

In brief, ever since my childhood readings I have nourished the core belief that a philosopher should be a coordinator of knowledges, a pattern-discerner, someone who is trained to avoid the complacency of dogmas, not to see reality through the polarized lenses of a single set of conceptual coordinates, but rather to elaborate new information in a dynamic and plastic way, free from prejudices. But patience and humility are basic conditions for performing this role. If unconstrained, or rushed, conceptual creativity amounts to nothing but empty theory-crafting. There is no philosophical hot take, *by definition*. For philosophy (aside from the most abstract metaphysics) has no "raw material" to base its speculations on, but it rather relies on the data delivered by the sum total of human scientific knowledge. And the variety of relevant intellectual disciplines that are today examining the current crisis are struggling to make sense of it, even when approaching the problem from their own, circumscribed domain of competence.

To say that we are living a multifaceted crisis would be an understatement. It is obviously a medical science crisis, straining our current-best understanding of viral behavior. It is a healthcare crisis, which should lead us to reconsider the political and economic attention we have so far given to our national healthcare systems, particularly when it pertains to the care of the elderly. It is an economic crisis, an unprecedented halting of the global productive machinery, the effects of which nobody can completely predict, and which once again questions the sustainability of global capitalism. It is a social crisis, highlighting the gaps that divide social classes in terms of access to healthcare and personal freedoms. It is a psychological crisis, forcing millions of people worldwide to be locked in their houses and in their heads, shouldering the burden of a crippling anxiety about the future (or perhaps even fighting alone their own demons and pre-existing mental illnesses), as well as isolating children, for whom frequent social (and physical) interaction is a condition for healthy development. It is a technological crisis, demonstrating how many countries' data communication infrastructure is far from ready to offer internet access to everyone, something that now, as never before in history, is being perceived as a basic need, on par with access to electricity and running water. It is a logistical crisis, for both the spread of the virus and the consequent lockdown have highlighted the problems that accompany the constant movement of goods and people across the globe. It is a political crisis (both at the national and at a global level) since the governments of most countries have proven unable to offer a convincing, effective, and unitary response to the crisis, almost invariably failing to quickly adopt containment measures, and it is putting to a hard test political and economic international agreements, ill-equipped to truly face a global emergency. It is a democratic crisis, since the current lockdown status quo raises questions about if and to what extent democratic countries have the right to curtail personal freedoms in the name of public health (or indeed if a democracy is at all able to deal with the problem), and the state of forced captivity in which many are living is causing the emergence of selfish, illiberal and intolerant sentiments. It is an educational crisis, for our school and university system was never designed around the remote delivery of knowledge, and both teachers and students are struggling to adapt to the constraints they have to deal with. It is (the symptom of) an environmental crisis, where the emergence and spread of these new viral strains is facilitated by the unconstrained anthropic modification of animal environments. I could go on indefinitely with this list, as there is essentially no domain of human activity that was not (or will not be) touched by the consequence of this global viral outbreak.

The point I want to get across is that if the staggering complexity of this situation - by which I mean its dynamical evolution and its multi-dimensionality - cannot be captured by this or that scientific or humanistic discipline, it certainly cannot be explained, *right now*, by any set of pre-conceived philosophical ideas. Nor should philosophers rush to offer their interpretation (or, worse, an "I told you so" take) of such an unprecedented predicament, one that has fully emerged barely three months ago and that is still in a constant state of flux. Patience and humility reward the philosopher, the pattern-seeker, who intends to offer a synoptic interpretation - and guidelines on how to achieve the best outcome - of the current crisis. Philosophy is often *conceptually* urgent: that is to say, it helps expose dangerous contradictions, it highlights dimly lit con-

ceptual connections, it reveals unexamined presuppositions, and it proposes possible futures (or so it should). It is very rarely - if ever - *temporally* urgent in the sense that one must rush to publish one's opinion piece, lest society should fall into disarray, orphan of proper philosophical guidance. Although I staunchly defend philosophy's independence from naively utilitarian considerations (i.e., philosophy should not be about *the useful*), philosophers should always ask themselves: "what is the best way for me to put my expertise at the service of society?" (i.e., philosophy should try to make *public use* of its tools). Sometimes, like Grosvenor, when faced with a crisis, it is better to hold back, listen, gather data, and make the effort to let the facts shape one's conceptual structures, rather than the other way around.

This is not going to be the last pandemic we will have to face. Indeed, perhaps we should be grateful that the first such crisis has put us against a highly contagious but relatively unthreatening virus like the SARS-CoV-2. The reconstruction phase will be long and taxing, but it should aim at rebuilding a different world, better equipped to face the next crisis. There will be plenty of time for philosophers to offer their contribution towards the shaping of such a future.

Richard B. Keys |

Viral Subjects

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Nature Is More Atrocious

The virus embodies a particular face of nature, one that is at once representative of the radical contingency of evolution and nature as such, and at the same time embodies the fundamental entanglement of both life and death.[1] Its blind drive to life and the incidental death of its hosts betrays a fundamental lack of evolutionary telos or purpose to nature. If the virus can be said to be intelligent, it is only in terms of an alien swarm intelligence that is unthinkable to the human, only to be glimpsed in the intersection of the statistical modelling of its spread and in the sickness, horror, and grief of its victims and their loved ones. As the virus infects its hosts and multiplies within their cells it affects its victims in an indeterminate manner, some remain asymptomatic or have only mild symptoms while others become gravely ill or die. In the spread and multiplication of the virus we see the contingency of the evolutionary process on display, an interplay of random mutation and environmental entrainment - from its first encounter with a receptive human host in Wuhan, to its continued spread around the world.

While Freud's notion of the drives - the life drive of Eros and the death drive of Thanatos - seems like a useful heuristic to understand this interplay of the virus and human, of life and death, Freud's conception of the drives was ultimately a dualist one. It may be that it is only when the drives are considered within the context of a general economy (or ecology) beyond the psychology of the individual subject and human sociality, as they are in the work of the thinker of death and exchange par excellence, Georges Bataille, that their dynamic interplay becomes apparent. To quote Bataille:

> Death might seem to be the complete opposite of a function whose purpose is birth... but we shall see further on that this opposition is reducible, and that the death of some is correlative with the birth of others, of which it is finally the precondition and the announcement.[2]

There is of course no malice in the will to life of the virus, no ill intention towards its human host. In fact, there is no intention at all, as the life drive of the virus is blind - a fact that makes it all the more horrific. Instead, this dance of life and death, virus and human, is simply a matter of chance; from the random process of mutation that produced the virus - including, notably, the virus's unique "protein spike" and its affinity with the ACE2 receptor protein - to the play of viral reproduction and random infection as it spreads among the population at large. In this interplay of random mutation and environmentally entrained adaptation we see a glimpse of the broader contingency and arbitrariness of nature. The pandemic, in this sense, is a global catastrophe prefaced on a single random mutation.

The lack of agency, or intelligence driving this random process of mutation, serves as a reminder that nature does not conform to human notions of justice and the good.[3] The virus embodies this fundamental inhuman dimension of nature, as in its drive to life and the incidental death of its hosts. It cannot be recuperated into human conceptions of beauty, truth, and justice, or for that matter evolutionary or historical necessity. The virus provides us with a glimpse of a wholly other face of the natural world, a hidden and horrific

[1] For rhetorical effect I refer to SARS-CoV-2 as "the virus" throughout.

[2] Georges Bataille, "Death," trans. by Robert Hurley, in *The Bataille Reader*, eds. Fred Botting and Scott Wilson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1997), 242.

[3] See Thomas Moynihan, "Existential Risk and Human Extinction: An Intellectual History," *Futures: The Journal of Policy, Planning and Futures Studies*, Vol. 116 (February 2020): 102495. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2019.102495.

mask, that largely remains unseen to us. A nature punctuated by arbitrariness, contingency, rupture, and catastrophe, as much as any sense of evolutionary purpose or tendency toward homeostasis. A virulent and alien form of life that operates on a level that is essentially unthinkable to the human subject, given that our mode of intelligence and sensibility is so far removed from the random evolutionary thrust of mutation, infection, and incidental death that characterizes the viruses' mode of being. It seems pertinent here to point out that, strangely, most virologists consider viruses to be non-living, a designation that sees them occupy a liminal position between scientific conceptions of biological life and non-living organic matter.

The Host

There is something uncanny about the act of infection, of how the virus takes over the body of its hosts, temporarily reconfiguring their biology in order to reproduce. Viruses, of course, function by repurposing the host's cellular machinery, in order to produce the RNA and proteins they need to reproduce themselves. In the case of COVID-19 the impacts on the host from this temporary act of possession vary widely from case to case, each representing a particular interaction between a novel virus with the unique physiology of its human host. While age, underlying chronic disease, and other factors obviously mediate the effect of the virus on their host, there is a degree to which the interaction of the novel virus with its host is random, as even the young and healthy can succumb to it. The virus casts off its individual hosts with total indifference, to it they are only temporary shells, as its *Umwelt* or milieu is rather the human species as a whole, an environment woven from receptive cells distributed across an aggregate population of individual bodies.[4] Perhaps even more uncanny are the cases that remain asymptomatic, which recent research suggests is many more than initially thought. The asymptomatic host is in a sense the perfect one, as they carry it unaware, spreading it through intimate social contact, or gestures as banal and innocent as touching their face and then a surface in a public space.

In the current state of exception that is the pandemic, the virus re-organizes the subjectivity of not only those who become infected with it but also those that remain uninfected. We become orientated towards the virus in the negative as we seek to avoid infection, occupied by a mode of being that is characterized by the immunological - as we become viral subjects. In line with the directives of our governments, we wash and sanitize our hands, becoming increasingly conscious of what and who we interact with, even attempting to intervene in and prevent our own autonomic gestures such as touching our face. These immunological acts of cleanliness take on an almost religious fervor, as we repeat them superstitiously in the hope that they will prevent us from infection - reducing a risk that can be hedged but never fully eliminated. As Freud observed, such repetitive acts of ritual purification are seen not only in religious ritual but also in the behaviors of the obsessional-neurotic as they try to impose order on the contingency of the external world.[5] Freud's famous example of such obsessional behavior from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* comes to mind, where a small child sublimates their frustration with their inability to control the appearance or disappearance of their mother onto a toy, which they make disappear and reappear to their satisfaction - *fort-da*.[6] In doing so, the child produces the illusion of control over an incomprehensible and indeterminate world that is embodied in the figure of the mother, who at that age constitutes the locus of the child's world as such. Indeed, the threat of biological (or moral) contagion is a common symptom of the obsessional-neurotic, one that they mediate through hand-washing, showering, and other such acts that are repeated until the neurotic subject is satisfied that purification has been achieved and the threat of contagion has been temporarily allayed. In a strange way, it may be that in the abnormal conditions of the pandemic the behaviors of the obsessional-neurotic are not as pathological as they may appear in "normal" circumstances but become somehow adaptive. Psycho-pathological means of mediating unseen risk and psychological states of anxiety and excitation, of attempting to control and impose order on an inherently chaotic world that the neurotic is overly sensitive to.

[4] Not to mention the other animal species that have been infected with the virus.

[5] Freud referred to obsessional-neurosis as "individualized religiosity" and religion as "universal obsessional-neurosis." See Sigmund Freud, "Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices," trans. by James Strachey, in *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (New York: W.W. Norton and Co. 1995), 435.

[6] Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. by Gregory C. Richter, ed. by Todd Dufresne (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011), 57-60.

Alongside these acts of personal hygiene that attempt to mediate the boundary of the individual body and mind, the immunological boundaries of both the home and the nation state also become explicit.[7] Our excursions into public space are few and fleeting as we quickly conduct the basic acts we need to physically reproduce ourselves before returning home. While in public we avoid others, even becoming suspicious of them - each person is a potential host, each interaction raises the risk of infection. The home, a place that has always served as a symbolic site of refuge from the world now explicitly becomes a bounded space that we attempt to wall off against contamination from the outside world - a world that is no longer safe or controllable, inhabited by unseen and unimaginable threats. The threshold of the home becomes emphasized as a liminal space between the safety of the interior and the threats posed by the exterior. We sanitize our door handles and the objects we bring into our homes, washing the clothes we wore outside, casting off our masks into the rubbish bin, regulating exchange between interior and exterior. Similarly, the border of the nation that has always inherently been a site of the exclusion of "others," has been made explicitly so. As the borders of many nations have been closed to non-citizens, while citizens find themselves subject to quarantine and strict testing procedures before they are allowed back into the country, as the inherent entanglement of the logics and discourses of public health and border security is made apparent.

A Return to "Normal"

After a month or so of lockdown in many countries, discussions in the media and the political sphere of "returning to normal" seem to be increasingly prevalent. We are, of course, in a state of crisis, yet, at this juncture, returning to "normal" may in many ways be less than desirable due to both the chance of a second wave of infection as restrictions are relaxed, and the fact that these restrictions provided for the temporary respite from capitalism's ever intensifying valorization process. As many have observed, the pandemic's monkeywrenching of global capitalism's business as usual has produced a decrease in CO_2 emissions, seen animals returning to habitats that have been encroached upon by humans, and, in many countries, unprecedented social democratic welfare measures. On another level though, it may be more pertinent to think of the significance of the pandemic in particular, relative to the role of the crisis within the context of the capitalist world system in general. While the virus may be a product of nature as such, the pandemic as a socio-natural phenomenon is as much a product of the practices of: animal agriculture, global transport infrastructure, the systematic underfunding of public health services, and a lack of pandemic preparedness as it is the virus itself. Furthermore, the effects of the pandemic are as much socio-economic as they are strictly a matter of individual or public health. In such a way, the pandemic has made certain inherent structures of capitalism apparent (as would a strictly economic crisis in the narrow sense): from its extractive and violent relationship to non-human animals and the environment at large, to its reliance on continuous production, circulation, and exchange in order to sustain itself and its insatiable demand for the production of surplus value, to its affordance of unequal rights to the working class and the excluded.[8]

Here it seems important to acknowledge that crises in general are not simply anomalies as such, but rather should be seen as symptomatic of underlying processes that are inherent to the very structure of global capitalism and its basic conditions and contradictions.[9] Indeed, crisis increasingly seems to be the norm for late capitalism, as the global financial crisis, extreme weather events, the so called war on terror, and now the pandemic have punctuated the first decades of the new millennium. Crisis, in its various forms, is in this sense very much part of how late capitalism operates, not so much a state of exception but increasingly a part of its normal operation as such. Drawing on discourses from psychoanalysis, Marxism, and contemporary medical science, the cultural theorist Eric Cazdyn has termed this condition "the new chronic." For Cazdyn, the new chronic "insists on maintaining the system and perpetually managing its constitutive crises, rather than confronting even a hint of the

[7] For a discussion of the bio-politics of the nation and the household, via the figure of contagion, see Angela Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion* (New York: Autonomedia, 2012), 49-76.

[8] For a critical analysis of the political-economic dimensions of the crisis via the notion of "risk," see my article: Richard B. Keys, "The Danse Macabre: The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Allocation of Risk under Capitalism," *&&& Journal* (April 27, 2020). https://tripleampersand.org/danse-macabre-covid-19-pandemic-allocation-risk-capitalism.

[9] Regarding crises as symptomatic of the contradictions inherent to capitalism, see Georg Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," in *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1971), 74-76.

terminal, the system's (the body's, the planet's, capitalism's) own death."[10] It is this very logic that we see in the demand for the return to normal. One that will no doubt necessitate a return to normal socio-economic life, or as close as is possible, while the pandemic is still unfolding. With elimination all but impossible for most countries, and new research suggesting both a higher rate of infection, and a much higher number of asymptomatic cases than previously thought, the logic of capitalism will necessitate the ongoing management of the pandemic as a chronic disease of the global social body. Re-framed as a chronic, rather than acute, disease, it will be managed through a variable system of border controls, social distancing, isolation, and quarantine, until a vaccine is available. This re-framing is necessitated by capitalism's requirement for the constant production of surplus value, and to avoid, at all costs, allowing any radical ruptural potential that is inherent to the pandemic as a true state of crisis to coalesce.[11] In such a way, the return to normal attempts to foreclose the potential of a radical break that is inherent to the state of crisis, and, in so doing, reasserts the normal state of affairs by which capitalism continually "colonizes the future."[12] Although, it seems due to the likelihood of successive waves of infection, and the inevitability of a subsequent economic crisis that is forecasted to be magnitudes larger than that of 2008, that normality may not be so readily restored.

[10] Eric Cazdyn, *The Already Dead: The New Time of Politics, Culture, and Illness* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2012), 5.
[11] Here Althusser's notion of 'the ruptural unity' is useful, in that his account of the revolutionary potential of crisis foregrounds the interplay of historical contingency and structural necessity. See Louis Althusser, "Contradiction and Overdetermination," in *For Marx*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 2005), 99-100.
[12] Cazdyn, *The Already Dead*, 47.

Tsvetelina Hristova |

Morbid Mobilities

(2020-04-28)

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Epidemics spread by parasitizing on the already established flows of the mobility of people, while new crises parasite on crises that have settled to become the normality. In the weeks after COVID-19 reached the EU, the epidemic has accelerated the conjuncture of existing modes of exploitation, extraction, and exclusion. Kim Moody points out in a recent piece that the link between the spread of COVID-19 and transnational supply chains might be a lot more significant than what would be immediately apparent from epidemiological models.[1] This invisibilized dependency between the spread of the virus and the mobility of capital and labour is only one way in which the current rapidly developing COVID-19 crisis is not just a health emergency but much more than this, it is a problem of labour. Labour, and in particular migrant labour, has become the central subject of this crisis - monitored, contained, and stirred into "essential" mobilities.

Vectors of Contagion

The path of initial infection in Bulgaria remains unclear because the first cases were already cases of community transmission. But there is a persistent suspicion that Bulgarian migrant workers in Italy came back home for holidays and brought the virus to the former industrial towns of Gabrovo and Pleven. Like many towns in the

[1] Kim Moody, "How 'Just-In-Time' Capitalism Spread COVID-19: Trade Routes, Transmission, and International Solidarity," *Spectre Journal* (April 8, 2020). https://spectrejournal.com/how-just-in-time-capitalism-spread-covid-19.

Цветелина Христова |

Смъртоносни мобилности[1]

(2020-05-11)

Цветелина Христова в докторантка в Института по култура и общество в Университета на Западен Сидни. Интересува се от проблеми на автоматизацията и дигитализацията и от проследяването на политическите им генеалогия и импликации.

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Епидемиите се разпространяват, паразитирайки върху вече установени потоци на мобилност, а новите кризи паразитират върху стари, утвърдили се като норма кризи. В седмиците след като COVID-19 достигна до ЕС, епидемията ускори динамиката на съществуващите режими на експлоатация, добив и изключване. В своя неотдавнашна статия Ким Муди посочва, че връзката между разпространението на COVID-19 и транснационалните снабдителни вериги може да се окаже далеч по-съществена, отколкото изглежда на пръв поглед от епидемиологичните модели.[2] Невидимата зависимост между разпространението на вируса и мобилността на капитала и труда е само един от начините, по които бързо развиващата се криза ни се разкрива не просто като извънредна здравна ситуация, а като проблем на труда. Трудът, и по-специално мигрантският такъв, се превърна в централен предмет на кризата - контролиран, ограничаван и тласкан към „ключови" мобилности.

Вектори на заразяване

Доколкото първите случаи в България са на общностно предаване, пътят на първоначалното заразяване остава неясен. Налице са обаче съмнения, че вирусът е внесен в Габрово и Плевен - бивши индустриални градове - от завърнали се за празниците

[1] Published in: *dVERSIA* (May 11, 2020). https://dversia.net/5817/smurtonosni-mobilnosti.
[2] Kim Moody, "How 'Just-In-Time' Capitalism Spread COVID-19: Trade Routes, Transmission, and International Solidarity," *Spectre Journal* (April 8, 2020). https://spectrejournal.com/how-just-in-time-capitalism-spread-covid-19.

country where key industries were dismantled, privatized, and liquidated after 1989, these two regions of Bulgaria are among the ones which experienced significant demographic decreases and out-migration to the capital or other EU countries. In the last thirty years out-migration has become a major source of cash flows back to the country. Migrant workers have consistently contributed significantly larger amounts to the economy than foreign direct investments. It is not an exaggeration to say that the livelihood of whole families, and in some cases whole townships, is sustained through the cash flows coming from migrant workers.

At the same time, in its history of migrant labour regimes, the EU has consistently restricted and made conditional the access of workers from its eastern peripheries to social security, benefits, and healthcare protections. This has led to a rift in the geography of production and social reproduction in the Union that forces Eeastern European migrants to separate the spaces of labour from the spaces of social reproduction. Tasks of sustaining health, social networks, and social security are relegated to the home country and, more specifically, to the household, which, in the context of eroding social protection from the state, becomes the central institution for social reproduction.[2] People come back home to see their family but also to get dental and medical care, to buy medicines (often for other migrants who could not travel back home). This means that the migratory patterns of Eastern European migrants are part of vital infrastructures for sustaining the precarious livelihoods of impoverished working classes in the region. Now they have turned into vectors of contagion, underscoring even more the dependency of Eastern Europe on emigrant labour and the ease with which the West dispenses of migrant workers.

In the days since the virus landed in the EU, hundreds of thousands of Bulgarian migrant workers have returned home after quarantine measures lead to labour market stagnation, and efforts to restrict

от Италия гастарбайтери. Както в много други градове в страната, в които след 1989 г. ключови индустрии са затворени, приватизирани и ликвидирани, в тези два региона се наблюдава значителен демографски спад и отлив на население към столицата или към други страни от ЕС. През последните тридесет години външната миграция се превърна в основен източник на парични потоци към страната. Трудовите мигранти допринасят значително повече за икономиката, отколкото преките чуждестранни инвестиции. Не е преувеличено да се каже, че прехраната на цели семейства, а в някои случаи и на цели селища, се осигурява от идващите от мигрантите парични потоци.

В същото време, ЕС традиционно провежда политики за контрол върху трудовата миграция, чрез които ограничава и поставя условия за достъпа на работниците от източната си периферия до социално осигуряване, придобивки и здравна защита. Това води до разрив в географията на производството и социалното възпроизводство в Съюза. Източноевропейските мигранти са принудени да отделят пространството на труда от това на социалното възпроизводство. Ангажиментите по поддържане на здравето, социалните мрежи и социалното осигуряване са прехвърлени към страната на произход и по-специално към домакинството, което - в условията на рушаща се социална защита от страна на държавата - се превръща в централна институция за социално възпроизводство.[3] Хората се завръщат у дома, за да видят семейството си, да получат стоматологична и медицинска помощ или да купят лекарства (често и за други мигранти, които не могат да се приберат). Това означава, че миграционните модели на източноевропейските гастербайтери са част от инфраструктурите, които се явяват жизненоважни за поддържането на неустойчивото препитание на работническите класи в региона. Сега те са се превърнали във вектори на зараза, което допълнително подчертава зависимостта на Източна Европа от емигрантския труд и лекотата, с която Западът се отърва от

[2] See Raia Apostolova and Tsvetelina Hristova, "The Postsocialist Posted Worker: Social Reproduction and the Geography of Class Struggles," in *Migration and the Contested Politics of Justice: Europe and the Global Dimension*, eds. Sandro Mezzadra and Giorgio Grappi (London and New York: Routledge, forthcoming). See also Miladina Monova, "'We Don't Have Work. We Just Grow a Little Tobacco': Household Economy and Ritual Effervescence in a Macedonian Town," in *Economy and Ritual: Studies of Postsocialist Transformations*, eds. Stephen Gudeman and Chris Hann (New York: Berghahn, 2015), 166-91, for an analysis of the increased economic importance of the household after 1989 in North Macedonia.

[3] Вж. Raia Apostolova and Tsvetelina Hristova, "The Postsocialist Posted Worker: Social Reproduction and the Geography of Class Struggles," in *Migration and the Contested Politics of Justice: Europe and the Global Dimension*, eds. Sandro Mezzadra and Giorgio Grappi (London and New York: Routledge; предстоящо издание). Също и Miladina Monova, "'We Don't Have Work. We Just Grow a Little Tobacco': Household Economy and Ritual Effervescence in a Macedonian Town," in *Economy and Ritual: Studies of Postsocialist Transformations*, eds. Stephen Gudeman and Chris Hann (New York: Berghahn, 2015), 166-91, за анализ на повишеното икономическо значение на домакинството в Северна Македония след 1989 г.

seasonal migrant work and discourage precarious and unemployed migrants from seeking social support.[3] Pushed back into a health-care system that will most certainly not be able to deal with a pandemic, returning migrants are now the focus of punitive and surveillance measures in Bulgaria and the Eastern European region.

Epidemiologies of Migration

In March, the Polish digital marketing company Selectivv, which has an office in Sofia, published their own study on the movement of Bulgarian and Polish migrants in the EU during the pandemic. The company used this data to create a map tracking their movements in the period between March 11-17, the early days of infections in Eastern Europe - where they have been in Western Europe and where they returned in their own countries - a sort of unofficial epidemiological surveillance map tracing the potential spread of the virus. It combined geolocation tracking and profiling technology, used specifically for targeting migrant diasporas, drawing on mobility data and consumer patterns. Selectivv explains this technology on their website by providing their own definition of a migrant for the purposes of profiling in the following way:

> In this research we assumed that "a person from Ukraine living in Poland" is one who has a SIM card of the Polish operator, but has the Russian or Ukrainian language set on the phone and at least once has been in Ukraine during 2018 and/or changed during this time the SIM-card of the Ukrainian operator.[4]

работниците-мигранти.

Откакто вирусът пристигна ЕС и карантинните мерки доведоха до стагнация на трудовия пазар, стотици хиляди български работници са се завърнали у дома. Опити за ограничаване на сезонния мигрантски труд на Запад отказаха безработните мигранти и тези с несигурна работа да търсят социална подкрепа.[4] Изтласкани обратно в здравна система, която вероятно не е способна да се справи с пандемията, завръщащите се попадат във фокуса на наказателните и надзорни мерки в България и Източноевропейския регион.

Епидемиология на миграцията

През март полската компания за дигитален маркетинг Selectivv, която има офис в София, публикува свое проучване за движението на български и полски мигранти в ЕС по време на пандемията. Тя използва данните, за да създаде карти, проследяващи движението в периода от 11 до 17 март 2020 г. - ранните дни на заразяване в Източна Европа. Къде из Западна Европа са били и къде са се завърнали - нещо като неофициална карта за епидемиологично наблюдение, проследяваща потенциалното разпространение на вируса. Картата съчетава технологии за проследяване на геолокация и профилиране, насочени специално към мигрантските диаспори въз основа мобилността и потребителските модели. На сайта си Selectivv обясняват технологията, като за целите на профилирането дават собствено определение за мигрант:

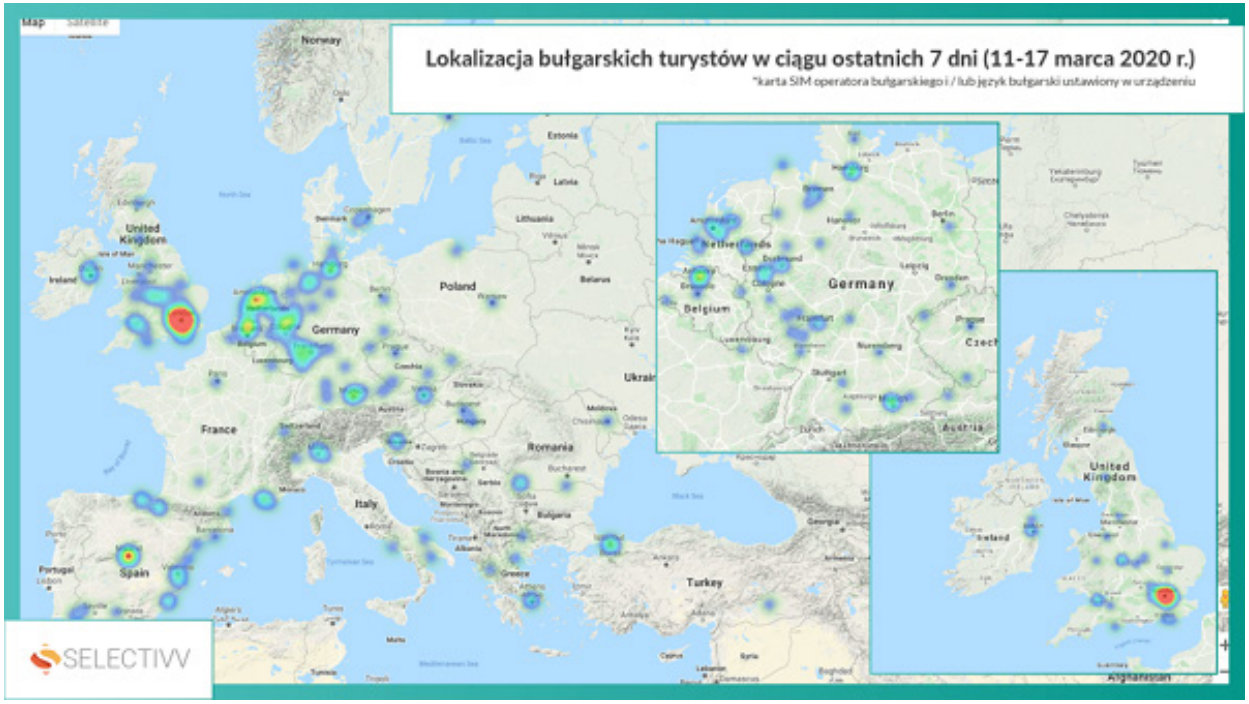
> В това проучване приемаме, че „човек от Украйна, който живее в Полша" е лице, което има SIM карта на полски оператор, но е настроил телефона си на руски или украински език и поне веднъж е бил в Украйна през 2018 година и/или през това време е подменил картата си с такава на украински оператор.[5]

[3] Emilia Milcheva, "Стотици хиляди българи се върнаха заради коронавируса. Какво ще им предложи България?" ["Hundreds of Thousands of Bulgarians Returned Due to the Coronavirus. What Will Bulgaria Offer Them?"], *Deutsche Welle Bulgaria* (March 26, 2020). https://www.dw.com/bg/стотици-хиляди-българи-се-върнаха-заради-коронавируса-какво-ще-им-предложи-българия/a-52921930.

[4] Team Selectivv, "Do Ukrainians Build Their Future with Poland? The Latest Selectivv Study," *Selectivv.com* (March 7, 2019). https://selectivv.com/en/czy-ukraincy-wiaza-swoja-przyszlosc-z-naszym-krajem-najnowsze-badanie-selectivv-2.

[4] Емилия Милчева, „Стотици хиляди българи се върнаха заради коронавируса. Какво ще им предложи България?", Дойче веле България (26 март 2020). https://www.dw.com/bg/стотици-хиляди-българи-се-върнаха-заради-коронавируса-какво-ще-им-предложи-българия/a-52921930.

[5] От екипът на Selectivv, "Do Ukrainians Build Their Future with Poland? The Latest Selectivv Study," *Selectivv.com* (7 март 2019). https://selectivv.com/en/czy-ukraincy-wiaza-swoja-przyszlosc-z-naszym-krajem-najnowsze-badanie-selectivv-2.



Figures 1 and 2. Visualization of the location of Bulgarians in the EU (above) and where they came back to in Bulgaria (below) from the website of Selectivv. Available at: https://selectivv.com/en/overall-picture-of-covid-19-situation-based-on-data-from-mobile.

Илюстрации 1 и 2. Визуализация на местоположението на българите в ЕС (отгоре) и откъде са се завърнали в България (отдолу) от сайта на Selectivv. Налични на адрес: https://selectivv.com/en/overall-picture-of-covid-19-situation-based-on-data-from-mobile.

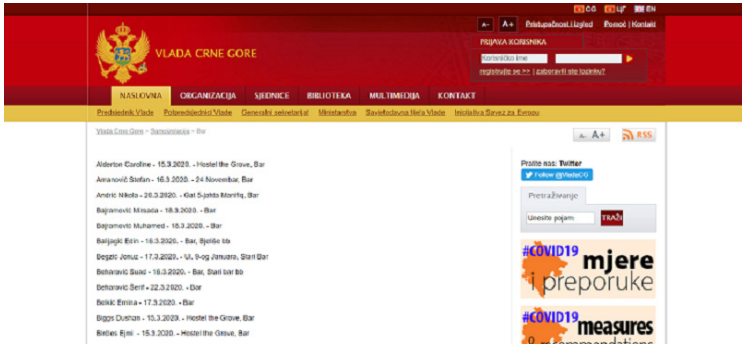
This data assembled by the company was voluntarily provided by the Sofia office to the Ministry of Interior for the purposes of tracking returning migrants and ensuring that they were quarantined. The ease with which migrants are turned from consumer subjects of market profiling into dangerous subjects of surveillance and control is both striking and unsurprising. The present economies of the valorization of information that have accelerated the collection of data by corporations like Google, Facebook, Amazon and many others are part of a long and varied history of archives, registers, and measurements used for control and exploitation. As Mark Andrejevic argues, the type of data collected and the focus of its analysis in nineteenth century labour management and twenty-first century

Събраните от компанията данни са предоставени доброволно от офиса им в София на МВР с цел проследяване на завръщащите се мигранти и налагане на карантина. Лекотата, с която мигрантите се превръщат от потребителски субекти на маркетингово профилиране в опасни субекти за надзор и контрол, е едновременно поразяваща и очаквана. Настоящите икономики, извличащи стойност от информацията и водещи до все по-масово събиране на данни от корпорации като Google, Facebook, Amazon и много други, са част от дълга и разнообразна история на архиви, регистри и измервания, използвани за контрол и експлоатация. Както Марк Андрейевич показва, типът извличани данни и начинът, по който се анализират в научния мениджмънт през XIX век и в маркетинга през XXI век, си приличат повече, о

marketing is more similar than we think.[5]

However, and firstly, there are a number of seemingly discordant measures for surveillance and containment in Bulgaria and other Eastern European countries that show that issues of privacy and surveillance are not necessarily and exclusively linked to the increased use of big data and digital technology, and, secondly, there is a stark and racially motivated contrast in the different measures enforced on different populations. The first tendency, the use of a sort of citizen policing, in the sense of mobilizing citizens to police each other, leads to the proliferation of lists, reports, and mutual policing. In one such example, the government of Montenegro uploaded a list on its website with the names and addresses of people who need to self-isolate. There was a similar, publicly available, database, or, rather, a list of people in self-isolation published by the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. After an intervention from the Data Protection Agency in Bosnia and Herzegovina the lists were taken down but the ones in Montenegro remain. This solution shows a different side to the use of surveillance and epidemiological management, which draws on the spectacle of transparency, rather than the panopticon of big data collection.

Figure 3. Part of the list of persons in isolation on the website of the Government of Montenegro (screenshot by the author)



Илюстрация 3. Част от списъка с изолирани лица в портала на правителството на Черна Гора (снимка на автора).

тколкото предполагаме.[6]

Въпреки това в България и други източноевропейски страни е налице поредица от привидно несъгласувани мерки за надзор и ограничаване, които сочат към две тенденции. Първо, че проблемът за нарушаването на неприкосновеността на личните данни и за засиленото следене не е задължително и само свързан с развитието на дигиталните технологии и употребата на големи обеми данни. И второ, че има отчетлива и расово мотивирана разлика в мерките, прилагани спрямо различни групи населения. Първата тенденция - употребата на един вид гражданска полиция, в смисъла на мобилизиране на гражданите да се контролират едни други - води до появата на списъци, доклади и взаимна полицейщина. Черногорското правителство например публикува на портала си списък с имената и адресите на хора, които трябва да се самоизолират. Подобна публично достъпна база данни или по-скоро списък на лицата в самоизолация, беше публикувана и от властите в Босна и Херцеговина. Там списъкът бе премахнат след намеса на Агенцията за защита на личните данни, но черногорският остана. Това решение показва един различен аспект в употребите на надзора и епидемиологичното управление, който стъпва върху спектакъла на прозрачността, а не върху технологията на паноптикума, свързана със масовото събиране на данни.

Подобна практика на взаимен граждански надзор бе възприета и в България - хората започнаха да подават сигнали до властите за съседи или роднини, които са се завърнали от чужбина и не са се самоизолирали. Към кризисните щабове, управляващи националното реагиране, се изпращат писма, в които хора от малки градове и села съобщават за завръщащи се от чужбина и неизолирани съседи.[7] Тази гражданска полицейщина спрямо емигрантите е мотивирана от нарастващото безпокойство на българите относно неспособността на здравната система да се справи с мащабна епидемия и от убеждението, че мерките за карантина и социално дистанциране ще доведат до катастрофална икономическа криза. Има някакъв морален остеритет в

[5] Mark Andrejevic, *iSpy: Surveillance and Power in the Interactive Era* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2007).

[6] Mark Andrejevic, *iSpy: Surveillance and Power in the Interactive Era* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2007).

[7] Ивана Иванова, „Ген. Мутафчийски: Получаваме сигнали за неспазване на карантината от нашите сънародници", *Eurocom.bg* (7 март 2020). https://eurocom.bg/new/gen-mutafchiyski-poluchavame-signali-za-nespazvane-na-karantinata-ot-nashi-snarodnitsi.

An analogical citizen police approach was adopted in Bulgaria, where people had started filing reports with authorities about neighbours or relatives who have returned from abroad and did not self-isolate. Letters (sic!) are being sent to the crisis headquarters that manage the national response, in which people from small towns and villages report on neighbours returning from abroad and not self-isolating.[6] This popular policing of returning migrants is motivated by the growing anxieties of Bulgarians that the healthcare system will not be able to handle a full-blown epidemic and that widespread lockdown measures will lead to a catastrophic economic crisis. There is some kind of moral austerity in the way people embrace self-discipline, and police others in the hope that they can just bear it through and make it last for a shorter period of time.

Drone Camps

While there is a general suspicion and policing of returning migrants, Roma neighbourhoods have been the object of a different type of measures in Bulgaria, but also in Slovakia and Romania. In Bulgaria, some cities have opted to seal off Roma neighbourhoods, placing police or army officers there to monitor and control who comes in and who goes out. These measures have been rationalized by the authorities in two ways, first, that there is a high number of returning migrants among the Roma, and second, that they do not observe proper hygiene and discipline, the latter being a classic, racist, anti-Roma argument. In the Roma neighbourhood of Bourgas, the already sealed off inhabitants were also subjected to another control measure - the use of a drone with an infrared camera that monitored the body temperature of the people there. The drone was developed by a private company and made available to the Ministry of Interior, so it is not a medically motivated measure, but clearly one of control. After identifying four cases of fever the day after the drone was initially deployed, it was reported that the data was used to monitor the movement of people who are quarantined, rather than identify new cases.[7] While the drones do not seem to

[6] Ivana Ivanova, "Ген. Мутафчийски: Получаваме сигнали за неспазване на карантината от наши сънародници" ["General Mutafchiisky: Signals Received by Compatriots for Quarantine Not Being Respected"], *Eurocom.bg* (March 7, 2020). https://eurocom.bg/new/gen-mutafchiyski-poluchavame-signali-za-nespazvane-na-karantinata-ot-nashi-snarodnitsi.

[7] Petya Mihova, "Дрон с термокамера засече 4-ма души с висока температура в Бургас" ["Thermal Drone Camera Caught Four People with High Temperature in Bourgas"], *Bulgarian National Radio* (March 21, 2020). https://bnr.bg/post/101244534/dronat-s-termokamera-

начина, по който хората прегръщат идеята за самодисциплина и контрол над другите с надеждата, че ще стиснат зъби и ще изтърпят и че така кризата ще отмине по-бързо.

Дронови лагери

Въпреки че в България, както и в Словакия и Румъния, има обща подозрителност и полицейщина по отношение на завръщащите се мигранти, ромските квартали са обект на различни мерки. Някои градове в България избраха да изолират ромските квартали, поставяйки полицейски или военни служители, които да наблюдават и контролират кой влиза в и излиза от тях. Тези мерки бяха оправдани от властите по два начина. От една страна, сред ромите е налице голям брой завръщащи се мигранти. От друга - че те не спазват подходяща хигиена и дисциплина. Вторият аргумент е част от класическия антиромски и расистки репертоар. Вече изолираните жители на ромския квартал в Бургас бяха подложени на допълнителна контролна мярка - употребата на дрон с инфрачервена камера за измерване телесната температура на обитаващите го хора. Дронът е разработен от частна компания и е предоставен на МВР, така че тук очевидно не става дума за здравно мотивирана мярка, а за контролна такава. След идентифицирането на четири случая на висока телесна температура в деня след пускането на дрона, бе съобщено, че данните от него се използват не за засичане на нови случаи, а за проследяване движението на карантинираните.[8] Макар дроновете изглежда да нямат съществена роля за предотвратяване разпространението и облекчаване достъпа до здравни услуги на ромите, те ефективно разгръщат военизирана естетика на другостта и нейните деперсонализирани, дехуманизирани цели за интервенция.

Дроните се използват в ромските квартали и за възпроизвеждане на записани сигнали и инструкции. Този контрол от разстояние се прилага само и единствено върху ромите и не е признак за икономика на управляемостта, нито пък за опит за ненатрапчива намеса. Напротив - той е ясен знак за сегрегация и затваряне на малцинствата в лагери, изолирани и отделени

[8] Петя Михова, „Дрон с термокамера засече четирима души с висока температура в Бургас", Българско национално радио (21 март 2020). https://bnr.bg/post/101244534/dronat-s-termokamera-zaseche-chetiri-dushi-s-visoka-temperatura.

have an efficient role in preventing the spread and easing the access to healthcare for the Roma, they do efficiently deploy the militarized aesthetics of othering and as depersonalized, dehumanized targets of intervention.

Figure 4. Infrared image from the Roma neighbourhood in Bourgas. Source: https://dariknews.bg/regioni/burgas/v-burgas-dron-shte-meri-temperaturata-na-naselenieto-v-getata-snimkivideo-2217811.

Илюстрация 4. Изображение от инфрачервена камера в ромския квартал на Бургас. Източник: https://dariknews.bg/regioni/burgas/v-burgas-dron-shte-meri-temperaturata-na-naselenieto-v-getata-snimkivideo-2217811.

Drones are also used in the Roma neighbourhoods to play recorded warnings and instructions. This control at a distance is reserved exclusively for the Roma and is not a sign of an economy of governmentality, not an attempt of non-intrusiveness but, on the contrary, a clear sign of segregation and the encampment of minorities, kept isolated and separated from the rest of the population, in a similar way to the leper colonies. Faine Greenwood calls this the "shout drone" - an alienating "technology of distance" that is especially problematic when deployed on marginalized and vulnerable populations.[8] After making a show of sealing off neighbourhoods with no clear healthcare plan, testing in Roma neighbourhoods was only done in the second half of April by which time 50% of those tested от останалата част от населението, подобно на колониите на прокажените. Фейн Грийнууд нарича това „крещящият дрон" - отчуждаваща „технология на разстоянието", която е особено проблематична, когато се разгръща срещу маргинализирани и уязвими групи от населението.[9] След спектакъла по поставяне под карантина на ромските квартали без ясен здравен план, тестовете в тях бяха проведени едва през втората половина на април с 50% положителни резултати. Вместо да се преосмисли адекватността на превантивните и ограничителни мерки, отговорът бе по-нататъшно разширяване на обхвата на запечатване в етническите квартали.

Критични работници и животи за жертване

По думите на премиера, броят на завърнали се от чужбина в началото на март българи е около 200,000 души (за сравнение, общото население на България е около седем милиона). Проблемът е, че за тези хора, както и за голяма част от населението, което работи в страната, няма социална или икономическа сигурност в условията на нарастваща безработица и икономически застой. Правителството гласува ограничен брой мерки, насърчаващи работодателите да запазят настоящите си работници, които иначе биха освободили, като предлагат да осигурят 60% от заплатите им. Но това е приложимо единствено спрямо една тясна дефиниция за заетост, която обхваща работници на редовни и безсрочни договори. Завръщащите се работници-мигранти също нямат право на този вид подкрепа или на обезщетение за безработица.

Понастоящем се наблюдава нарастващ разрив в политиките за социално възпроизводство и най-вече относно тези за труда и живота. Този разрив изостря дългогодишната криза на социалното възпроизводство в ЕС, в която миграцията от Източна Европа играе двойнствена роля. От една страна, въпросът за достъпа до социални помощи и защита е предмет на спор между държавите-членки. Западна Европа отдавна се опитва да лиши източноевропейските мигранти от тях, подхранвайки дискурса за „туризма за социални помощи" - идеята, че мигрантите на Запад се възползват от „щедрите" системи за социално осигу-

zaseche-chetiri-dushi-s-visoka-temperatura.

[8] Faine Greenwood, "The Dawn of the Shout Drone," *Slate* (April 16, 2020). https://slate.com/technology/2020/04/coronavirus-shout-drone-police-surveillance.html.

[9] Faine Greenwood, "The Dawn of the Shout Drone," *Slate* (16 април 2020). https://slate.com/technology/2020/04/coronavirus-shout-drone-police-surveillance.html.

were positive. Instead of rethinking the adequacy of the preventive and containment measures, the response was to further scale up the sealing off of ethnic neighbourhoods.

Essential Disposables

According to the Bulgarian prime-minister, the number of Bulgarians who returned from abroad since the beginning of March is about 200,000 people (for comparison, the total population of Bulgaria is about seven million). And the problem is that for these people, as well as for a large part of the non-migrant population, there is no social or economic security in the context of increasing unemployment and economic stagnation. The government has voted for a limited number of measures that encourage employers to keep their current workers, offering to provide 60% of the salary of workers who would otherwise be laid off. But this would only apply to a very narrow definition of employment, non-precarious workers on regular non-casual contracts. Returning migrant workers would also not be eligible for this kind of support, or for unemployment benefits.

At present, there is a growing void in the policies of social reproduction and, essentially, the basic reproduction of labour and life. And this void adds to a longstanding crisis of social reproduction in the EU, in which migration from Eastern Europe has had a double role. On the one hand, the issue of access to social benefits has been a matter of disagreement between member states, and states in Western Europe have for a long time been trying to limit the access of Eastern European migrants to social benefits and protections, feeding the discourse of "benefit tourists" - people who migrate in the West and then take advantage of the "generous" social security systems there. On the other hand, Eastern European migrants have been essential in sustaining the commodified social reproduction services in the West by providing services as care workers, domestic workers, and agricultural workers.

As borders between EU countries close now and migrants are returning home, these reproductive services in the West are experiencing a lack of migrant workers. At the end of last month, Austria and the U.K. both sent charter flights to "fetch" temporary agricultural and care workers from Bulgaria, Romania, and Poland to fill in the gaps.

ряване. От друга страна, източноевропейските мигранти играят важна роля в поддържането на остоковеното социално възпроизводство на Запад, предоставяйки услуги в сферата на грижите, домашната работа и земеделието.

Тъй като сега границите между страните от ЕС се затварят, а мигрантите се връщат у дома, тези възпроизводствени услуги на Запад търпят недостиг на работници-мигранти. В края на март Австрия и Великобритания изпратиха чартърни полети, с които да си „внесат" временни работници от България, Румъния и Полша за нуждите на селското стопанство и грижовния сектор и да запълнят този недостиг. В резултат от натиска на държави, изпитващи недостиг от мигрантски труд, ЕС издаде препоръки за свободна мобилност, които включват временни селскостопански работници и такива, заети в грижовния сектор, в категорията на професиите от „критични работници", на които се позволява да се придвижват през границите по време на пандемията от COVID-19...[10] Самото понятие „критични работници", което изкристализира по време на пандемията, е достатъчно проблематично. Ако единствената гарантирана защита в контекста на предприетите здравни мерки е социалната дистанция, то критичните работници са тези, чийто труд не само поддържа жизнеспособността на икономиката, но и застрашава собствения им живот. Като имаме предвид, че решението за това кои отрасли са „критични" се взима от капитала и че голяма част от работата в тях е нископлатена, е трудно да си затворим очите пред факта, че „критичният труд" всъщност означава „живот за жертване".

Как това се отразява на вече съществуващото трансгранично неравенство в ЕС? То създава безизходица за работниците от Изток, които не получават социална и икономическа защита от правителствата си. Те са принудени да избират между несигурна мобилност без ясни гаранции за адекватна здравна защита в чужбина и принудително „обездвижване" или икономически застой у дома. В случая на ромите това принудително обездвижване е доведено до крайност в расово-мотивираните лагери. Тези порочни кръгове на смърт и експлоатация включват различни

[10] Официалните препоръки могат да бъдат намерени на адрес: *Official Journal of the European Union*, Vol. 63, C 102I (30 март 2020). https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2020:102I:TOC.

As a result of the pressure of countries experiencing the need for migrant labour, the EU issued recommendations for free mobility that included temporary agricultural workers and care workers in the "essential workers" occupations that should be allowed to move across borders during the COVID-19 pandemic.[9] The very notion of "essential workers" that was crystalized in the time of the pandemic is sufficiently problematic. In the context of healthcare measures, when the only guaranteed protection is social distancing, essential workers are the ones whose labour not only sustains the vitality of economies but also puts their own lives at risk. Given that the decision of what constitutes "essential occupations" is taken by capital and that most of this work is low-wage, it is hard to dismiss the realization that "essential labour" means "disposable lives."

How does this work into existing cross-border inequalities in the EU? It creates a situation of impasse for workers in the East who do not receive social and economic protection from their governments and are pushed to choose between precarious mobility with no clear guarantees for proper health protection abroad and imposed stasis and economic stagnation at home, which, in the case of Roma people, is also coupled with racialized encampment. These descending circles of death and exploitation involve multiple subjects of labour across the Union, as well as the constellation of supranational jurisdiction, national capital, and multinational supply chains of labour. One of the major unions in Bulgaria, Podkrepa, issued an open letter to the government demanding that either workers are not allowed to travel abroad and offered social protection in the country, or that Bulgaria demands of Germany, Austria and U.K. to retain the migrant workers and provide them with healthcare for the duration of the pandemic.[10] The rationale behind these demands is that continuing temporary migration in time of pandemic endangers the rest of the population back home.

In the current pandemic Eastern European migrant labour remains caught between being a dangerous vector of contagion and disposсубекти на труда в целия ЕС, както и набор от наднационални юрисдикции, национален капитал и мултинационални вериги за наемане на работна ръка. КТ „Подкрепа" наскоро реагира с отворено писмо, в което се иска правителството или да забрани пътуванията в чужбина на работниците и да им се осигури социална защита у нас, или да поиска от Германия, Австрия и Великобритания да задържат работниците-мигранти до края на пандемията, предоставяйки им медицински грижи.[11] Обосновката зад тази позиция е, че продължаващата временна миграция по време на пандемия застрашава останалата част от населението у дома.

В настоящата пандемия трудът на източноевропейските мигранти остава впримчен между ролята си на вектор на зараза и живот, който може да бъде пожертван; между наказателните мерки и експлоатацията. И дори в този случай са налице различни степени на експлоатация и безразличие към човешкия живот, при които ромите остават неизменно невидими и отсъстващи от изявленията на синдикатите. Можем ли да си представим организация, която пресича всички тези линии - работници в различни страни, трудови мигранти и онези най-маргинализирани поради етноса си групи – без да подвеждаме всички тези различни опити и преживявания под общ знаменател, който изтрива разликите между тях? Това е най-належащият въпрос в настоящата пандемия, която - противно на твърденията на мнозина - не ни засяга еднакво. И въпреки това тя ни показва, че зад всички тези различни преживявания стои един основен конфликт - този между капиталическата икономика от една страна и животът, от друга.

Превод от английски: Антон Колев

Редакция: Надежда Московска и Рая Апостолова

[9] The official recommendations are available at: *Official Journal of the European Union*, Vol. 63, C 102I (March 30, 2020). https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2020:102I:TOC.

[10] "Отворено писмо относно продължаващите пътувания на български работници към и от Западна Европа" ["Open Letter Regarding the Ongoing Travels of Bulgarian Workers to and from Western Europe"], *KT Podkrepa* (April 1, 2020). http://podkrepa.org/news/отворено-писмо-относно-продължаващи.

[11] „Отворено писмото относно продължаващите пътувания на български работници към и от Западна Европа", КТ „Подкрепа" (1 април 2020). http://podkrepa.org/news/отворено-писмо-относно-продължаващи.

able life, between punitive measures and exploitation. And even so, there are different levels of exploitation and disposability, in which Roma remain consistently invisibilized, missing from the statements of unions. Is it possible to imagine organizing across these lines, workers in different countries, migrant labour, and the most marginalized and racialized without imposing a singular and homogenizing image upon these different experiences? This is the most pressing question in this pandemic, which does not affect us equally, as some claim, but highlights that the main contradiction for all, in their heterogeneous experiences, is capitalist economy versus life.

Antonis Galanopoulos |

Return to a New Normality? Challenges of the Post-Pandemic Era

(2020-04-29)

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As countries around the world begin contemplating the end of lockdown measures, the question of the post-pandemic era arose recently in the press. The most commonly mentioned slogan to signify this new era is the "return to normality" or, even more provocatively, the "return to a new normality." How can one return to a place where s/he was not before? This paradox, the return to something new, has significant theoretical implications that this commentary would like to address.

Relevant reports have been increasing in the media during the last days. The more the debate on the next day deepens, the more we talk about the lost normality, the quest for normality, or its new version. An article published in *The Atlantic*[1] analyzes the four possible timelines for life returning to normal. The last phrase of the article stands out: "life would be back to normal - though at the same time, completely changed." *Foreign Policy* published a piece entitled "The Normal Economy Is Never Coming Back."[2] The author, Professor Adam Tooze, argues: "We may hope that things will 'return to normal.' But how will we tell? After all, things seemed normal in January, just weeks before the world stopped. If radical uncertainty was a concern before, it will now be an ever present reality."

In conditions of crisis, of instability, when society is moving in uncharted waters, the desire to return to a form of social - or even political - normality is understandable. This desire from below is the one that makes "normality" a powerful signifier with popular appeal. However, the above excerpts clearly show that this "return to normality" never refers to a restoration of the status quo *ante*. It hides the productive nature of power that is inherent in the constitution of normal; what Canguilhem and Foucault called normativity. Normality is constructed through the power of norms and rules, through the intertwined nexus of power and knowledge that manages to fix the meaning of normal in a specific era or society. A process similar to the establishment of a "truth regime."[3]

At the same time, crisis events, like the current one, show not only that the "new normal" is not something normal, in the sense that it is not natural, self-evident or necessary, but the same is true of what we previously considered normal. Nothing made it normal in the first place beyond its imposition and/or its acceptance. This is the significance behind the question of Adam Tooze mentioned above: "But how will we tell?" Normal is not to be found somewhere out there. It is declared. And of course, then it is imposed and reproduced. Following the classic quote of Carl Schmitt, we could say that the sovereign in not only the one who decides on the exception but also the one who decides on the normal. These two decisions could be the two faces of sovereignty.

Normality is a contested concept. Even nowadays, within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic when everyone dreams the return to normality, there are critical voices that seriously challenge this idea. Political theorist Wendy Brown commented ironically this ubiquitous desire to return to normal - "the normal of clogged highways, filthy air, meaningless work, disorganized health provision, mindless consumption, bulging prisons, abandoned homeless populations, siloed knowledge practices, growth-based economies wrecking the planet, stratification and abjection across race, class, gender and hemisphere, and overpaid masters of the universe returned to their thrones."[4]

[1] Joe Pinsker, "The Four Possible Timelines for Life Returning to Normal," *The Atlantic* (March 26, 2020). https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2020/03/coronavirus-social-distancing-over-back-to-normal/608752.

[2] Adam Tooze, "The Normal Economy Is Never Coming Back," *Foreign Policy* (April 9, 2020). https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/04/09/unemployment-coronavirus-pandemic-normal-economy-is-never-coming-back.

[3] Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power: An Interview with Michel Foucault," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 1991), 51-75.

[4] Wendy Brown: "From Exposure to Manifestation", *Los Angeles Review of Books* (April 14, 2020). https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/quarantine-files-thinkers-self-isolation/#_ftn4.

Was that normal? Do we really want to return to that normality?

Franco Berardi, Italian philosopher and activist, responds unequivocally in his :Diary of Psycho-deflation"[5] that normality should not return. "Normality is what made the planetary organism so fragile and paved the way for the pandemic, to begin with ... Returning to capitalist normality would be such a colossal idiocy, we would have to pay for with an acceleration towards extinction," he writes emphatically.

Berardi's stance reminds us of the viral slogan during the recent social unrest in Chile: "*We will not return to normality, because normality was the problem*." The slogan was one of the most creative forms of resistance of the movement, which tried to undermine the nodal point of the mainstream discourse[6] that the government was articulating against them. Each crisis can generate potentially its own discourse on "normality," attempting to impose the suffocating limits of the "masters of the universe" upon the critical thinking and the consequent search for alternatives. Ian Manners[7] claimed in his analysis of norms in world politics that "the ability to define what passes for 'normal' in world politics is, ultimately, the greatest power of all."

The discourse that attempts to define what is normal or to establish a new order that should be perceived as normal aims at shaping the potential range of acceptable discourses and actions. The new biopolitical condition of our era that is characterized by the introduction and expansion of new, and technologically advanced, *dispositifs* of surveillance and discipline of the population, on the one hand, and by a discourse that attempts to redefine the new social "normal," on the other, can potentially create new modalities of subjection and subjectivation, shaping both collective and individual subjectivities.

As Ernesto Laclau[8] argues, in a situation of a radical disorganization of the social fabric people need an order. This means that the dislocation will lead to a new social and political re-articulation. Various political forces compete in their efforts to carry out this filling function, Laclau continues. This translates into the antagonism of various discourses articulated around different nodal points to hegemonize the public sphere. "Normality" can be such a nodal point.

Thinking together the insights of Foucault and Laclau, we are faced with another paradox, as "normality" has at the same time an elusive meaning and an authoritarian core. The meaning of normal can indeed be re-articulated, but once it is fixed, it constitutes the basis of various mechanisms of normalization. Queer studies have criticized extensively this negative dimension of the "normal" that requires and imposes compliance.

Today, on the eve of a new era of the post-pandemic world, critical thinkers and social movements should struggle against the restoration of a normal that did not meet the needs of the many and against the imposition of a new normal that could be even worse for the social majority. We should continue to problematize and deconstruct the very notion of normal itself even more in our respective disciplines, in our research and in our everyday discourse.

[5] Franco "Bifo" Berardi, "Diary of the Psycho-deflation #2: 'Normality Must Not Return," *Verso* (April 6, 2020). https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4640-bifo-diary-of-the-psycho-deflation-2-normality-must-not-return.
[6] Antonis Galanopoulos, "Anti-populism and 'Normality' from Greece to Chile," *Open Democracy* (February 10, 2020). https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/democraciaabierta/anti-populism-and-normality-from-greece-to-chile.
[7] Ian Manners, "Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?," *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (2002), 253.
[8] Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(s)* (London: Verso, 1996), 44.

Boyan Manchev |

Capital Panic[1]

(2020-06-04)

Boyan Manchev (Sofia, 1970) is a philosopher and writer. He proposes the perspective of a new ontology of existence, described as modal ontology, and dynamic materialism. The search for a new philosophical form and possibility for new expression of ethical, aesthetic and political experience has been central to his work in the past twenty-five years. Manchev is the author of thirteen books and about three hundred book chapters, catalogues and other publications in various languages. Among his books are *Freedom in Spite of Everything. Surcritique and Modal Ontology* (2020, in Bulgarian), *The New Athanor. Prolegomena to Philosophical Fantastic* (vol. 1, 2019, in Bulgarian), *Dark Poem* (2019, with the photographer Boryana Pandova, in Bulgarian and English), *Clouds. Philosophy of the Free Body* (2017, in Bulgarian; 2019, in English), *Metheor. Texts for Theatre* (co-authored with Ani Vaseva, 2018, in Bulgarian), *Logic of the Political* (2012, in Bulgarian), *Miracolo* (Lanfranchi, 2011), *L'altération du monde: Pour une esthétique radicale* (Lignes, 2009), *La Métamorphose et l'instant - Désorganisation de la vie* (La Phocide, 2009), *The Body-Metamorphosis* (2007, in Bulgarian), *The Unimaginable: Essays in Philosophy of Image* (2003, in Bulgarian), *Persister. La liberté sauvage et la nature à venir* (forthcoming, Éditions Dehors, 2020). He edited *Rue Descartes* 64: *La métamorphose* (PUF, 2009) and co-edited *Rue Descartes* 67: *Quel sujet du politique?* (together with Gabriela Basterra and Rada Ivekovic, PUF, 2010).

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In the middle of the sultry day, at the seemingly dullest of noontide moments, when time follows its usual course as if nothing could ever break it, when danger is out of mind, then all of a sudden its course somehow comes to a standstill: time stops running. The moment freezes: as if the wings of the butterflies freeze while fluttering around the blooming spring flowers, as if the buzzing of bees stills to a freeze, as if the air stops quivering and everything is at once in motion and calm. Time has stopped.

What is this? What is this paralysis of the commonplace? What is this extraordinary force, which petrifies time so that it comes out of its joints and remains paralyzed? What is it that breaks the course of springtime? The Greeks invented a name for this freezing moment followed by a sensation of an impending danger and paralyzing horror. It is called *panic*, from *Πανικός*, "of Pan." The word "panic" designates the approaching of the god Pan.

* * *

There is a capitalist panic, there is also a philosophical panic.

There is the apocalyptic spectacle of the "Event"; there is also its critical or philosophical use value. I will designate it as *philosophical panic*. The worse the diagnosis, the more actual it is. The catastrophic diagnosis is necessary for the performative value of critical discourse: the catastrophe must last in order for critical discourse itself to last. This performative use of critical thinking requires that it be installed in the position of a self-exegetical agent of the present - literally in an *apocalyptic* position (from the Greek *ἀπό-καλύπτω*, "to reveal"); but what it reveals is only its own instance. A phenomenology of panic disorder: panic establishes a continuous order, where the difference between inside and outside is erased. The interruption of time becomes a paralysis of the reflexive capacity, that is to say, of the capacity to produce distance, difference, the capacity of *flexion* of a self; it installs the sensation of a *pan-objectivity*, a *pan-actuality*; of an actually infinite, unsurpassable limit. Panic diagnosis erases the differences, the complex singularities of the situation as well as of its complex temporality, its *heterochrony*. Panic disorder has its origin in a pathology of time, in a time path-ontology; in particular, in the suspension of the power of the temporal

[1] Originally published in *Metheorzine* (May 2020). https://desorganisation.org/index.php/en/metheorzine/90-metheorzine/202-boyan-manchev-capital-panic.

vector in the vertical axis of the actual, extrapolated as an unsurpassable horizon. Thus, the discursive apocalypse offers itself as an unsurpassable horizon of the Real. At the same time, the hypertrophy of the actual reveals its abyss as an unsurpassable, therefore ontological, condition. The pandemic quarantine appears today - or yesterday, already - as a symptom of the quarantine of existence in the present. An *ontological confinement*.

* * *

It is in this horizon, the horizon of ontological confinement, that philosophical panic and capitalist panic become structurally indistinguishable. Panic diagnosis is isomorphic to what it denounces: it performs a massive homogenization and simplification, always tending towards an apocalyptic horizon, the unsurpassable horizon of the present. Thus, we have recently heard fellow philosophers speaking of an *invention of panic*, that is, of the invention of a panic moment aimed at a biopolitical mass control through state of exception, the paradigm of the modern state. There is no doubt that we have witnessed the enactment of technologies of collective psychological control, experiments with a collective inhibition. However, to generalize this diagnostic, homogenizing it with all forms of exclusion, exception or biopolitical control, not to mention the complex history and structure of these forms, ultimately results in the paralysis of any possibility of counter-action; in two words, in a state of panic.

What is indisputable is that the "lightning of the event" triggers a collective effervescence, an excitement of thought in the face of the unexpected, even if it could be the worst. It is the inflammatory power of the event. Panic is almost magically transformed into its opposite, into viral social production. Indeed, the *networks* were in flames! If the media jargon - and especially that of social networks - has long been extolling the viral metaphor, we must not fail to recognize the emergence of the pandemic symptom. The truth of networks is the viral spread.

A leftist thinker recently wrote, and rightly so, that the time of the virus goes against the time of capitalism. We can add to this diagnosis that the time of the pandemic suspension itself endangers capitalist time, threatening to hamper or even halt the frantic acceleration of capital. However, we can further identify an isomorphism, which draws the tension between these two temporal orders, in particular: the isomorphism between the structure of viral spread *stricto sensu* - the spread of COVID-19 and the viral spread of capital flows, of material and immaterial goods, exercised by the form of capitalism vaguely called neoliberal, and which I tend to call *speculative* or *performance* capitalism. It is this acceleration that is, so to speak, the regulatory horizon of capitalism today. The fantasy of an immediate effect, of an immediate production of value, is the *telos*.

In short, the obscure object of desire of actual capitalism is to be a *virus*.

* * *

Yet, a virus of lethal power and exponential speed has arrived. A virus: a form of life that is both "primitive" and uncannily "hypermodern," that reflects the capitalist structures of expansion, using them as its vehicle. COVID-19 would never have been so "efficient" without its capacity of hacking the global techno-economic networks: its microscopic intelligence has enabled it to act on a macro-technological scale, a planetary scale. This is why the first effect of the virus was so spectacular, and so catastrophic too: the fluid Leviathan of today has been petrified before the image of its double; his outburst of panic is caused by the terror before his own abyss. His panic attack is the panic attack in front of himself.

Figure 1. Picture-Book of the Life of St. John and Apocalypse. Origin: Netherlands, S. or Germany, circa 1400, British Library.

The virus has chased ghosts from its crypt, and now they wander unbridled in the dumbfounded space of the globe, they invest in what would no longer bring them any profit. Thus, at midday, at the most banal moment of the day, the undead Leviathan found itself surrounded by its own lethal power, for which its circle of synthetic salt - the witchcraft of its speculative economy - no longer has any sense. The financial Leviathan fell into his own trap in Pan's forest: he got entangled in the jungle to which he himself had tried to reduce the world. Having saturated all vacant space, having blocked all the exits, he fell into his own trap: the false substance trying to seize the whole world, - forms of existence in their totality, the totality of "nature" - to consume it. This lethal, irrational desire had to face its own limit, in the image of its Other.

The suspension symptomatically revealed the irrational, if not counter-rational, principle of the hegemonic political and economic structures - on the one hand, the rigidity of the obsolete apparatus of the "Monopolist of legitimate violence," the State, the structural inadequacy of its immune system to contemporary forms of biopolitical regulation (the hegemonic biocapitalism of speculative networks, having commodified the forms of life formerly governed by the State) and, respectively, the progressive but total submission of the old governmental principle to the new "fluid" hegemony, made possible by the deliberate acts of the new type of political "elites," the neoliberal populists; and on the other hand - the need for unlimited, continuous and all-encompassing expansion as a necessary condition for the survival of the perverse, *viral* capitalism. Thus, the inability to cope with the new form of viral spread, *stricto sensu,* ended up mining the fundamental principle of performative circulation: the principle of permanence, the requirement to never stop under any condition. Even if it was only for a few moments - one or two months at most so far - they will nevertheless mark a historic break, a *caesura*, by demonstrating not only the possibility of an interruption, of a suspension of the "normal course of affairs," but also the deep pathology of said normality. After this interruption, whose uncanny exponential speed and "microscopic" origin were unimaginable before, only exalted addicts can remain in a state of *terror and awe* in front of the Capital Leviathan.

* * *

Under the vertical light penetrating the abyss of this caesura, in the thunderbolt of the event, the shadows of the crypt dissipate: the false stability of the financial system, of the circulation of credits that depend on the viral madness of consumption, becomes sharper than ever before; the new poverty of the public structures of the so-called "developed states" are also becoming dramatically visible - not only the reduction of funds, the dismantling of sectors that are no longer deemed profitable, such as public health, resulting in savage privatization, but also the ineffectiveness and inadequacy of its structures, and the structural pathology of the distribution of goods in general. What we live today is a *crash test* on a planetary scale (I evoke Frédéric Neyrat's strong image), by which the hegemonic, techno-economic powers, experiment with disaster management, with massive restriction procedures, by examining the thresholds of tolerance and resistance of the "population," thus revealing the deep structures of power which would not hesitate to seize the direct governance of the lives of "its subjects," which have been preparing this seizure for a long time indeed.

The COVID-19 pandemic thus reveals as clearly as possible the pandemic of today's capitalism, of its structural pathology. And the process of "normalization" cannot but confirm the diagnosis. The viral exception is over, long live ordinary pathology!

* * *

A lethal power has tried to saturate the world, to absorb all forms of existence, the whole potentiality of life, to consume it, to seize the *all*: it has tried to take the place of Pan.

The false Pan has now gotten into trouble. He is in suspension.

The Great Pan is back: *Pan mortuus non est*.

April - May 2020

Mark Cinkevich |

New Pandemic, Old Walls

(2020-06-14)

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With the spread of coronavirus, it became of crucial importance to analyze which narratives are used to talk about the problem. Whether one of war, the end of the world, or conspiracy, narratives have the capacity to frame and determine the perceptions of the phenomenon. Levi R. Bryant was among the first major intellectual figures who, in his essay "A World Is Ending,"[1] introduced the narrative of the globality of the epidemic and referred to it as the planetary problem. Although the globality of the pandemic is not to be disputed, the implications of the planetary narrative glimpse onto kinds of dynamics that made many intellectuals claim the meaninglessness of a great degree of COVID-19-prompted interventions.

Spreading in accordance with an assigned narrative, the supposed planetarity of the COVID-19 deeply entrenched itself in the rhetoric of theoreticians and went largely unquestioned. What contributed to the installation of planetary narrative was also the fact that the vast majority of academics shared a similar experience of the pandemic. The similarity of personal experiences to that of colleagues, confirmed throughout Zoom conferences and publications, made many believe in the universality of personal observations, and draw over-generalizing conclusions. Such framing created the impression that the quarantine measures, isolation, closing borders, massive production shutdown, as well as new emerging forms of radical solidarity, care, and engagement with the local community are universally appealing.

Bryant's first reflections on the pandemic through the narrative of planetarity, coupled with the assumed universality of effects of the virus, have led him to suggest that the pandemic provides an opportunity to rethink the notion of "we," precisely because of virus-produced commonality. He suggests that "we" should emerge as all-encompassing. That the virus allows us to construct the notion of "we" that would not rest on the opposition to "they." And this "we" would arise from precisely the appearance of a universal experience that cuts across both sides of the dichotomy. However, the proposed trajectory collides due to the discrepancy of the experiences and pandemic-associated processes of those Bryant refers to as "we" and "they." This discrepancy renders the attempt to proceed beyond binaries ineffective and exposes the inherited problem of the planetary narrative because there appears to be no experience appealing enough for a commonality to emerge. It reproduces the dichotomy by means of instrumentalization and reduction of "they" to a mere mirror-like object acted upon. "They" is expected to perform a function of background "in the face" of which the new "we" is to arise.

The grip of the planetary narrative manifested itself in the reflections drawn from the Corona-caused digitization of social processes. One of the main features of the COVID-19 pandemic was the emergency relocation of work and study to people's homes. It became an occasion to speculate about the increasing role of a digital subject at the expense of the decreasing role of bodily presence. However, the role of the body and its spatial presence returned with vengeance. It is precisely the bodily geographical location that had become the decisive factor for the kind of experience of the pandemic a person has. A human body and its spatial location turned into both new and old criteria for separating "we" from "they."

In an attempt to provide a sketch of the desired-for emergence of new radical solidarity, Jedediah Britton-Purdy in his text "The Only Treatment for Coronavirus Is Solidarity"[2] produced another slogan

[1] Levi R. Bryant, "A World Is Ending," *Identities: Journal for Politics, Gender and Culture* (April 3, 2020). https://identitiesjournal.edu.mk/index.php/IJPGC/announcement/view/21; see also pp.50-54, in this issue.

[2] Jedediah Britton-Purdy, "The Only Treatment for Coronavirus Is Solidarity," *Jacobin* (March 13, 2020). https://jacobinmag.com/2020/03/coronavirus-donald-trump-solidarity-profits.

through the narrative of planetarity: "an injury to one is an injury to all." However, this sketch loses its potential when contrasted against the same old heavy border walls. What is presented as a new form of radical solidarity is unable to penetrate the decades-old obstacles. This dynamic appears to be the reason why many thinkers expressed deep disappointment in philosophy. In times of urgency, philosophers managed to produce little insightful reflections but rather speculated in an attempt to accumulate academic capital. At the same time, the enthusiasm about the new forms of radical solidarity started to fade away. It became apparent that as the pandemic is getting localized and taken under control in a number of European and Asian countries, the rhetoric of "an injury to one is an injury to all" will eventually return to applying only to those on the inside of the impenetrable border.

Mark Horvath and Adam Lovasz |

Foucault in the Age of COVID-19: Permitting Contingency in Biopolitics

(2020-06-24)

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Introduction

In this article, we seek to answer two interconnected questions. What is the role of the nonhuman in strategies of governance that attempt to regulate life? And, moreover, can a mode of power be imagined which is capable of instrumentalizing chance? It is the relationship between power and contingency that must be investigated. We begin with the second query. In this project, we take two lecture series of Michel Foucault as a point of departure. The lectures represent the most systematic elaboration of biopower and biopolitics in Foucault's work. Firstly, we must understand the former, if we are to achieve a more complete picture of contemporary biopolitical mechanisms. Biopolitics in general is a modern phenomenon, and is inseparable from the history of what has become known as neoliberalism. Without the agonistic, self-restricting neoliberal mode of power, there could be no all-encompassing regulation of life. Neoliberal biopolitics is characterized above all by permissiveness. It is about letting processes take their course.

From Biopower to Biopolitics.

Foucault and the Evolution of Neoliberalism

Foucault's point of departure is a strange anomaly: why did public executions disappear around the eighteenth century? Why does power, after a certain point in history, resign from the spectacle of public punishment? Why is the humiliation and destruction of the criminal by the sovereign no longer an acceptable practice? In Foucault's view, the role of the sovereign in traditional regimes of sovereignty is fundamentally based on "the right to kill."[1] Even if the ruler does not manufacture his subjects directly, he nonetheless has the right to take their lives away. Sovereignty traditionally pertains to the absolute right of power "to take life or let live."[2] From the eighteenth century onwards, a new form of power emerges, which can be summarized as "the power to 'make' live and 'let' die."[3] Several important distinctions exist between these two forms of governance. In the traditional paradigm of sovereignty, discipline is the primary technology, applied to the repression of individual bodies. In contrast, biopower applies to the regulation of entire populations. Foucault describes biopower as a "new nondisciplinary power" which is applied "not to man-as-body but to the living man, to man-as-living-being; ultimately ... to man-as-species."[4] The sovere-

[1] Michel Foucault. *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*, trans. by David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 240.
[2] Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended,"* 241.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid., 242.

ign's rule extends to the ownership of his subject's bodies, whereas biopower massifies those subjected to governance, uniting them in a constructed, aggregated, quantified, manipulated population. Biopower operates on statistically manufactured populations. The individual is replaced by "a new body," a "multiple body" which is a source of problems, unpredictable anomalies and deviant processes to be checked through rational means.[5] From the eighteenth century onward, the scope and breadth of power increases. From their beginnings, the social sciences have functioned as the instrument of social engineering.[6] Alongside the articulation and quantification of social problems, demography made possible a heightened level of intervention. The individual body is replaced by a concern for the body politic as a whole, identified with the health of the national population. Foucault recognizes a tendency which will become ever more apparent during the evolution of biopolitics, namely the *immanentization of contingency*. While in Medieval times and early modernity, chance was considered part of the divine realm, under the biopower regime the goal of intervention became the management of "aleatory events," compensating for randomness, and alleviating variations.[7]

Foucault himself is careful to emphasize that in reality, two forms of power can interpenetrate. Far from being mutually exclusive, sovereignty can intersect with biopolitical regulation, and biopolitics can occasion the unlimited exercize of the older sovereign power to make die. The example of the modern totalitarian regimes, National Socialism in particular, proves that biopower and sovereignty are capable of hybridization, for biopower interventions and social engineering can result in the extermination of populations.[8] Foucault goes to the extent of calling Nazism the "apotheosis" of biopower, for in it we find the most complete interpenetration of disciplinarity and biopower. The "purification" of the national population, through genocide if need be, is in a very real sense the control of aleatory events. The technocratic desire to erase contingency brings with it the elimination of unpredictable, deviant elements within the population.[9] It must be borne in mind that when Foucault speaks of biopower, the intention is not merely to critique this power, but rather to give a functionalist account of its operations. Biopolitics is to a great extent independent of political systems. Indeed, most of Foucault's train of thought in the 1979 lecture series revolves around proving that liberal democracy too contains a range of biopolitical interventions. Against the emancipatory view, Foucault expresses a great deal of skepticism regarding the possibility of the subject ever escaping the reach of power. The only sure line of flight in modernity seems to be death. What made public execution a ritual of political power in former times, at least according to Foucault's reconstruction, was its transgressiveness. Through the killing of a subject, the sovereign ruler surrenders the life of the executed criminal to God, the ruler of the celestial dimensions. In modernity, a "disqualification of death" occurs. Because the state becomes secularized, the issue of life after death is also bracketed, transforming extinction into an element outside any political framework.[10] Because the divine domain has been bracketed by secularization, the transgressive potential of death as a mode of transition between the profane and the sacred has been lost. Today it is difficult to imagine posthumous modes of punishment (or, for that matter, restitution). The most systematically violent regimes in modern history methodically hide their crimes from public view. Following Georges Bataille, one of Foucault's most influential predecessors, we can speak of two sacrificial regimes at work in the history of human societies. These are the "Aztec" and the "Inca" modes of sacrifice. While in the former case the destruction of the victim is done in a spectacular manner, in the latter sacrifice is hidden from view (the Incas conducted their sacrificial rituals in the closed areas of their temples).[11] Power tends to hide its crimes because death poses a scandalous limit to power. This translates into a double relationship between power and death. Under "normal" conditions, biopower strives to reduce the amount of deaths in the population; the dead can be neither controlled nor taxed.[12] At certain turns, however, biopower can switch its mode of operation, conducting large-scale exterminations of certain populations deemed problematic.

[5] Ibid., 245.
[6] Ibid., 243.
[7] Ibid., 246.
[8] Ibid., 255.
[9] Ibid., 259.

[10] Ibid., 247. Although it could be objected that some regimes in modern times have also attempted to manipulate the afterlives of their subjects, for example through the erasure of memory. To cite just one example among many, the Argentinian military dictatorship infamously "disappeared" its victims, neither acknowledging nor denying the status of murdered dissidents.
[11] Georges Bataille, "L'Amérique disparue" (1928), in *Oeuvres complètes I. Premiers Écrits 1922-1940* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), 152-58.
[12] Foucault. *"Society Must Be Defended,"* 248.

In the nineteenth century, we observe the emergence of a new social form, the "normalizing society," directed towards the maintenance of "homeostasis," the endogeneous, dynamic equilibrium of society.[13] Rule in this sense relates not so much to the complete control of every detail, but rather to the management and instrumentalization of contingencies and risks through the evaluation of probabilities. The statistically construed "phenomena of population" takes center stage.[14] Present-day bioregulation generally prefers the indirect management of life to the direct, scandalous oppression of concrete individuals. The living is a constant source of chaotic excess, and its aleatory elements too must be made socially beneficial while not endangering social reproduction. In the nineteenth century - firstly in Imperial Germany and then in other countries - there emerged the completely new idea of "social insurance." Where possible, the aleatory must be compensated and insured for. National Socialism is the most extreme manifestation of a broader statist and technocratic impulse which seeks to "insure" society against all contingency. Foucault explains the nineteenth century "fascination" with sexual deviance in terms of the central importance of sexuality in population dynamics: "sexuality exists at the point where body and population meet. And so it is a matter for discipline, but also a matter for regularization."[15] We see that disciplinarity and normalization work hand in hand. Permissiveness, defined as the removal of restrictions, is also a modality of biopower. Regulation can be achieved through both punishment and incentivization. The normalizing society governs through the combination of positive enticements and negative costs, both being directed toward the smoother management of the population. Biopolitical modes of power usually refrain from explicit oppression, and even when engaging in violence, conduct such acts on a supposedly rational basis.[16] Even Nazism imagined itself to be acting in a scientifically grounded manner, the "problematic" and "impure" elements of the population being described as constituting biological or hygienic dangers to the health of the community.

Biopower and the phenomenon of racism are also integrally linked. The former cannot help but categorize sections of the population according to various characteristics, even without any demonstrable oppressive intent.[17] Racial differentiation is already present in all discourses which treat human beings in terms of general characteristics, generally some anthropological or biological trait. This applies even to certain universalist narratives which ostensibly treat all human beings as equal, while nonetheless differentiating between desirable and undesirable traits. Racism appears on the scene whenever the alternative between "making live" or "letting die" presents itself, especially in terms of a utilitarian calculus of lives deemed worthy or unworthy of existence.[18] It is no longer a case of stopping a morally evil enemy, but rather, of hygienically removing a danger to health or stability, of isolating those deemed un-integratable.[19] No existing society is entirely free of biopower.[20] As soon as politics comes to revolve around the difference between more and less problematic groups, racist mechanisms can come into play.[21] Foucault uses a minimalist concept of racism, describing any fragmentation of populations into "subspecies" as inherently racist.[22] He also emphasizes that socialism too is not free of racism, inasmuch as it operates through the demonization of class enemies. The phenomenon of racism does not seem resolvable by ending capitalism.[23] Something more is required, but the answer Foucault will give to the question ("What is required?") will take us well beyond any recognizably human politics.

"Biopower" and "biopolitics," for all their similarities, differ in a fundamental way. In the 1979 lectures, Foucault promises a history

[13] The phrase "normalizing society" describes not only sociocultural methods of pathologizing certain behaviors, but also the permission and encouragement of behavior patterns. Biopolitics is about the propagandistic popularization of supposedly beneficial cultural codes as well as the repression of outliers and criminalized scapegoats. Ibid., 246.
[14] Ibid., 250.
[15] Ibid., 251-52.
[16] Ibid., 252-53.
[17] The relevant literature on the structural oppression of racialized minorities highlights the automatic, unreflective functioning of racism. For an analysis of the system of North American white supremacy that analyses the phenomenon as constituting a "bad spontaneous order" which is erosive of trust, see Caleb Harrison, "Bad Spontaneous Orders: Trust, Ignorance, and White Supremacy," in *Exploring the Political Economy and Social Philosophy of F.A. Hayek*, eds. Peter J. Boettke, Jayme S. Lemke and Virgil Henry Storr (London and New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018), 233-59.
[18] Foucault, "*Society Must Be Defended,*" 254.
[19] Ibid., 255.
[20] Ibid., 256.
[21] We could, of course, use other phrases as well, such as ageism or ableism. Why does Foucault nonetheless use "racism" in the minimalistic sense of denoting a differentiation of categories within and among populations? In one sense, we could say that it has a moral content, but on the other hand, Foucault is trying to describe rather than condemn. Such a use of the concept of racism has the obvious advantage of extending its applicability, bringing more phenomena into the debate.
[22] Ibid., 255.
[23] Ibid., 261.

of "biopolitics," but what we get is a history of twentieth century liberalism. Biopolitics writes itself into the dominant agonistic form of social power in the late twentieth century, and uses permissiveness as an instrument of governance. Our goal is to reconstruct the concept of biopolitics from Foucault's description of neoliberalism, whilst also uncovering the role of contingency in his interpretation. Certain elements will be crucial to our own reading, as well as connecting Foucault's work to the present COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly to Weber and Nietzsche, Foucault too seeks to go beyond good and evil: "let us suppose universals do not exist."[24] We must follow a similar routine in relation to the concept of *truth*. It is not an issue of denying or negating truth, or, worse, claiming that all reality is "merely" a social construct. The bracketing of universals and truths resembles the phenomenological reduction (*epokhé*) of phenomenology. By treating the truths of power as nonexistent, we will be in a better position to describe *how* new truths are created in social life. *Foucault's intent is not to discover what truth is, but rather to find out how truth works.* The goal is to discover "how a particular regime of truth makes something that does not exist able to become something."[25]

Utilitarianism is a key component of what is described here as neoliberal governmentality (*(gouvernementalité)*. Successful politics is that which enables the spontaneity of society.[26] Neoliberalism represents an agonistic form of rule based on the classical liberal idea of self-restraint. Foucault's goal is neither a normative critique of social reality nor an uncritical acceptance or celebration of neoliberalism. Rather, the value-neutral method employed in his 1979 lectures is directed toward "a history of truth," to "determining under what conditions and with what effects a veridiction is exercised."[27] Every "regime of truth" must be considered equally valid. As Foucault notes laconically, "insanity is just as oppressive" as the mental asylum.[28] Neoliberalism really is new, and relates to much more than just the right of the individual to be left alone by the state. Instead of dialectical or binary logics, we must decipher the "strategic logic" in play beneath politics.[29] The new liberalism follows the imperative of *letting things happen*, through unceasing interventions directed at constructing and maintaining the broader framework of nonintervention. The effectiveness of the state is guaranteed by the market, the primary indicator of political success being financial pricing. For the market to operate efficiently, every element must be removed which causes blockages and inefficiencies, including government overreach. In the "negative theology" of neoliberalism, the state as such is transfigured into "the absolute evil," the source of all social ills.[30] To an even greater extent, the market comes to serve as the model for governance.

Any practice or group of practices can be summarized under the heading of governmentality, which "conducts the conduct of men," including technologies of self-control.[31] Neoliberalism, especially in its North American form, is the first form of power which makes its own self-restriction a primary constitutive element. From here on out, the legitimacy of a government will be predicated upon the degree of its self-restraint, as well as the corresponding freedom of economic players. What makes American neoliberalism compelling for Foucault is the radicalism of the economism it introduces into all sectors of society. Every process can be reimagined in economic terms. Subjectivity itself can be articulated in terms of "human capital."[32] This concept signals the extent of the subject's reduction to an aspect of the flow of capital in late modernity. The worker is a "machine/stream complex," an anonymous machinic component which can also be conceived of as an autonomous "enterprise" in itself.[33] Every individual is a business, incorporating inputs and giving birth to new outputs. All of us are economic agents. In late modernity the economy is generalized, extended to every sector. "*Homo oeconomicus*," says Foucault, is "an entrepreneur of himself," a self-organizing, self-creative molecule.[34] From a posthumanist perspective there is no clear limit to this extension of the category of general economy. Here Foucault is not claiming that *homo oeconomicus* is a delusionary capitalist reduction of reality to the profit/loss dyad.

[24] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*, trans. by Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2008), 3.
[25] Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 19.
[26] Ibid., 16.
[27] Ibid., 35-6.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid., 42.
[30] Ibid., 116.
[31] Ibid., 186.
[32] Ibid., 220.
[33] Ibid., 225.
[34] Ibid., 226.

Rather, it composes a virulent truth-construct which is actualy-ly transforming social life in its own image. Precisely the virulence of the "free market" idea is what makes it fascinating for Foucault. Even in regard to contemporary ideas already prevalent in the 1970s (which today we would call "transhumanist," i.e., the radical enhancement of human beings through biotechnological means), Foucault does not see such future developments as implying the problem of racism. Today, good genes are a limited but nonetheless free good. The market will find a way to integrate genetics into market processes.[35] What is important from our perspective is the transformation of society into an aggregate of "enterprises." The individual is at once an investor, an entrepreneur and a form of accumulating capital, operating itself by latching onto profitable flows. General economy brings with it a generalization of the "enterprise-form," while the limitless nature of market logic will have important ramifications when it comes to the issue of contingency.[36]

The imperative to "let things be" is in the process of being expanded to social phenomena which were previously considered "deviant." Two specific examples are crime and unemployment. Foucault extensively cites the Nobel-Prize winning economist Gary S. Becker's 1968 paper "Crime and Punishment: An Economic Approach." Neoliberalism has found a way to normalize criminality, strategically integrating the latter into the programming of society. Neoliberalism is chaos-programming. Arguing against those advocating for a tough-on-crime policy, Becker claims that crime can be interpreted in terms of "profit/loss" calculations. Criminality is an industry, and criminals are just as rational as other economic individuals.[37] Crime in general is a "supply" provided by criminals to the justice system and society at large, while the criminal justice system "pays" this supply of negative goods (crimes) with punishments. Because criminals - understandably - seek to avoid punishment, in an economic sense they can be said to behave in a rational way. In this manner, criminals can be integrated into the sum of rational economic agents, at the price of eliminating their anthropological specificity. Foucault calls this process the "anthropological erasure of the criminal."[38] Instead of a deviant, irrational, not entirely human person, neoliberalism conceives of the criminal as a rational entrepreneur seeking to maximize profits while keeping costs down. The *homo penalis* is transfigured into *homo oeconomicus*.[39]

Through a consequential use of the *homo oeconomicus* construct, Becker is able to bracket the human characteristics, motivations and anthropological specificities of the criminal. What makes an agent criminal in Becker's view is the temporal divergence in their profit/loss calculations from the rest of society.[40] This makes possible an amoral account of crime. It does not appear that Foucault in any way attaches a negative connotation to this development. In a 2013 symposium, François Ewald said to Becker that "you were a liberator for Foucault, a liberator from past models, with this new objectivation of criminal behavior."[41] The amoral Nietzschean liberator tasks us to go beyond good and evil. The view that Foucault somehow takes a moralizing position is rather implausible.[42] What makes the generalization of the idea of market actors a theoretical "liberation" is, that an economic agent does not have to be endowed with rational insight into their own actions to qualify as economically rational. Becker separates economic rationality from reflexivity: economically, that is, generally speaking, an agent is "rational" insofar as it "accepts reality," and evidences behavior which shows that this is indeed the case.[43] This minimalization of rationality is what allows for the expansion of economic rationality to all areas of society.

The flexibility of *homo oeconomicus* makes possible an integration of unpredictable, irrational agents into the system of neoliberal governmentality. In Foucault's view, Becker's 1968 paper is a revolutionary development in social theory, because it allows for a permissive view on crime. The economist writes of an "optimal" level of crime, in which the costs of fighting crime do not outweigh the social damage

[35] Ibid., 228.
[36] Ibid., 242.
[37] Gary S. Becker, "Crime and Punishment: An Economic Approach," in *Essays in the Economics of Crime and Punishment*, eds. Gary S. Becker and William M. Landes (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1974), 1-54.
[38] Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 258.
[39] Ibid., 250.
[40] Becker, "Crime and Punishment," 9.
[41] Gary S. Becker, François Ewald and Bernard Harcourt, "Becker and Foucault on Crime and Punishment: A Conversation with Gary Becker, François Ewald, and Bernard Harcourt: The Second Session," *University of Chicago Coase-Sandor Institute for Law and Economics*, Research Paper No. 654 (2013), 3.
[42] David Newheiser, "Foucault, Gary Becker and the Critique of Neoliberalism," *Theory, Culture and Society*, Vol. 33, No. 5 (2016): 14.
[43] Gary S. Becker, "Irrational Action and Economic Theory: A Reply to I. Kirzner," *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (1963): 163-68.

inflicted by criminality. Crime is optimal if it causes less losses to the public than the costs of the criminal justice system considered as a whole.[44] The reverse also holds: a justice system is more efficient if it can spend less on the restitution of damages originating from crime. Under the neoliberal biopolitical regime, "penal policy has ... renounced the objective of the complete suppression and exhaustive nullification of crime."[45] Neoliberal biopolitics accepts contingency as a fact of life. Governmentality is a game of balancing probabilities, seeking to integrate contingency into power games, striving for the maintenance of a permanent state of uncertainty.[46] Rather than ending crime altogether, the neoliberal path follows a logic of "minimalization." Becker maintains the need for the extensive use of fines, which would attach a price to each criminal act.[47] Although the antisocial nature of crime is not eliminated, this move allows for an economic legitimation of criminality. Risk can only be mitigated, but never ruled out altogether. Every regime which accepts the power of chance, codifying the uncontrollability of economy, can be called " biopolitical." As Foucault notes, "economics is an atheistic discipline; economics is a discipline without God; economics is a discipline without totality; economics is a discipline that begins to demonstrate not only the pointlessness, but also the impossibility of a sovereign point of view over the totality of the state."[48] The economy of uncontrollability governs a headless society. Neoliberal biopower is acephalic.

The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Posthuman Opening of Biopolitics

The considerations outlined above can be applied unproblematically to the nonhuman dimension. At one point in his March 17, 1976 lecture, Foucault mentions two examples which are highly relevant to our situation. The first is the permanent possibility of thermonuclear conflict. This would constitute a mode of biopower in overdrive, so extreme that the management of life results in "the power to kill life itself."[49] The second possibility relates acutely to the COVID-19 pandemic: this is the accidental escape of biopower from any human framework. Artificial viruses - bioweapons - show the possibility of a "biopower" which is "beyond all human sovereignty."[50] Because the virus fails to respond to interventions, it shows the fluidity of the human dimension. Present day world-society must accept the invasions of non-human agents. Although it is still uncertain as to whether neoliberal governmentality can indeed overcome the COVID-19 pandemic, the idea of impermeability has suffered a fatal blow. A crack has emerged in the self-immunizing global Human Security System. Similarly to the experience of the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, being compelled to integrate the fact of criminality into its own social programming, world society today must adapt to the pervasive presence of Coronavirus. Neoliberal biopower is a form of management open to flows, its entire *raison d'être* being predicated on creating and maintaining an ecology of unhindered mobility. Neoliberalism is an "ecological form of intervention," aiming for population-level modifications of behavior, and not the disciplining of the individual.[51] Life is economized, becoming an element in the management of risk. To live is to manage contingency.[52] The virus itself poses no exception to this imperative. It responds to its ecology to a degree. We may be justified in calling it minimally "rational." Striving for maximal proliferation, the virus, like other economic agents, is a profit-maximizing device. Searching for hospitable endogeneous environments, the virus avoids soap and disinfectants. Becker's idealized *homo oeconomicus* is so minimal that even an irrational agent lacking a brain can act as if it were economically rational.

The acceptance of the autonomy of the virus as a non-human agent is what differentiates neoliberal discourses from those we may call "nonliberal." Neoliberalism, synonymous with the herd-immunity approach, is permissive when it comes to infection rates, whereas nonliberal methods of disease prevention attempt to slow down the process. It is not just a case of analyzing government responses to the situation, but also of interpreting the virus itself. Our goal is to

[44] Becker, "Crime and Punishment," 23.
[45] Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 256.
[46] Michael Dillon, "Governing through Contingency: The Security of Biopolitical Governance," *Political Geography*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2007): 41-47.
[47] Becker, "Crime and Punishment," 44.
[48] Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 282.
[49] Foucault, "*Society Must Be Defended*," 253.
[50] Ibid., 254.
[51] Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 260.
[52] Gordon Hull, "Biopolitics Is Not (Primarily) About Life," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (2013): 329.

outline what a permissive posthuman neoliberal biopolitics would look like, a mode of power which accepts and even instrumentalizes nonhuman agencies. As a reality in itself, the virus contains an excess that makes it inaccessible to power. The unpredictability of death from infection introduces new difficulties into the programming and engineering of society. The Coronavirus is an uncontrollable posthuman excess of sovereignty, threatening to undo the body politic through large-scale infection. The COVID-19 pandemic, which originated in the People's Republic of China, is still surrounded by mystery. For example, medical professionals do not know exactly through what mechanisms the virus kills its hosts. Doctors are uncertain as to whether the virus itself is to blame, or if the exaggerated immune system response is what actually results in death.[53] This uncertainty extends to the process of diagnosis, as well as policy responses. Death connects with the unknown, introducing an inescapable agnotology. On the one hand, death is impossible to thematize as a transition from the profane to the sacred, at least in modern or postmodern secularized societies where the plausibility of religion has declined.[54] The nothingness of secularized death is mediated by the chronic ontological instability of the virus itself. In the final section of our article, we highlight some contemporary philosophical responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing in particular the posthumanist and nonhumanist possibilities of exiting the modern biopolitical regime. The relative permissiveness of neoliberal biopolitics shows that society is capable of taking the virus as an economically rational agent into account. By the end of this piece, hopefully, we will have gained an understanding of why the concept of biopolitics is still relevant, while also highlighting that biopower can escape human control altogether. In so doing we connect to the broader theoretical movement which has been characterized by Richard Grusin as the "nonhuman turn."[55] According to our view, while nonhuman alterity is capable of integrating into the workings of neoliberalism, not even the permissive regime can fully exhaust the alterity of the virus in itself.

The COVID-19 pandemic has provoked a stream of intellectual responses, which are colored, so to speak, by our own prior relation to alterity. What does "alterity" mean? Our use of the term relates to the undecipherable, the uncontrollable, in a word, the contingent, ungovernable element. Alterity is an agency which insinuates itself into human structures of governance, producing problems not easily resolvable in the context of liberal democracy. Externality becomes frighteningly internal. Alterity is a horrifying opening onto contingency. Uncertainty reigns supreme, and beshadows the horizon of governance. According to Slavoj Žižek, "the situation is too serious to lose time with panic."[56] To say the least, the Slovenian philosopher does not mince words. Either we follow a brutal individualist utilitarianism or adopt a new, reformed form of global communism. We can be forgiven for seeing Žižek as a rusty, broken, red clock. More communism is always the answer, no matter what the problem happens to be. Assuming there is ever a dualistic alternative is to play according to modernist political rules. But reality is more complicated than the Left vs Right (i.e., Opposition vs Government, or "Permanent Opposition" vs "System"). Binary coding only gets you so far. The rejection of the predominant status quo becomes a tiresome, conservative convention after a while, as evidenced by the theoretical lameness of Giorgio Agamben's lamentably predictable response to the crisis. Like Žižek, we can predict in advance what Agamben will write. The pandemic and the governmental responses are examples of biopolitics, which the Italian philosopher seems to associate with an apocalyptic conspiracy of governance against the populace. This is not much more than a rather schematic use of Foucault's insights without Foucault's value neutrality.[57] The emphasis on the completely nonhuman nature of the virus represents a third alternative which, following Graham Harman and the OOO/Speculative Realist movement/s, recognizes the innate tendency of objects to withdraw from contact, be it human access or the accessibility to

[53] Heidi Ledford, "How Does COVID-19 Kill? Uncertainty Is Hampering Doctors' Ability to Choose Treatments," *Nature*, No. 580 (2020): 311-12. https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01056-7.

[54] Interestingly, in India, some have taken to praying to the virus, personifying it as "Corona Devi." This represents a starkly different economy from Western rationality.

[55] Richard Grusin (Ed.), *The Nonhuman Turn* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

[56] Slavoj Žižek, "Global Communism or the Jungle Law, Coronavirus Forces Us to Decide," *Russia Today* (March 10, 2020). https://www.rt.com/op-ed/482780-coronavirus-communism-jungle-law-choice.

[57] We do not wish to engage more extensively here with the considerable debate Agamben's blog post generated. Neither do we seek to entirely discount Agamben's claims altogether. For a translation of the original text, cf. Giorgio Agamben, "The Coronavirus and the State of Exception," trans. by Julius Gavroche, *Autonomies* (March 3, 2020), https://autonomies.org/2020/03/giorgio-agamben-the-coronaviris-and-the-state-of-exception. For a defense of Agamben's train of thought, see Babette Babich, "Retrieving Agamben's Questions," *Philosophical Reflections* (April 30, 2020). https://babettebabich.uk/2020/04/30/retrieving-agambens-questions.

other objects. This recognition is already present in Foucault, who explicitly addresses cases of objects (nuclear weapons and bioweapons) escaping human control. A renewal of politics must take the autonomy of real things into account, without undermining them into manifestations of an evil infrastructural "power that be." An object is always more than the sum of circumstances from which it originated.[58] Coronavirus too is a novel reality, something in addition to a wet-market in Wuhan Province or the networks of global travel which made its propagation possible. The alterity of objects demands a politics open to contingency and chaos, the Coronavirus itself being a nature-cultural entity. Bizarrely, the treatment of the disease, the vaccine, also necessitates a hybrid technology. Pharmaceutical companies use the cruelly extracted blue blood of horseshoe crabs to test for contaminants in medicinal ingredients.[59] A hybrid can only be treated through the mobilization of new hybrid agencies, penetrating binaries, forking them into a variety of directions. Political reactions must be interpreted in light of the inexhaustibility of the object itself.

Jean-Luc Nancy, describing the various computer models of infection, speaks of a "viral state of exception," implying that alterity cannot be separated from other phenomena, especially the media of communication. Spectral phenomena haunt the media which constructs the state of exception by enabling the flow of information regarding the rate of infection, the number of deaths and the rate of recoveries.[60] The media amplifies the COVID-19 pandemic by creating virulent panic reactions, emphasizing the sense of danger. Nobody is safe, not even the children. Nancy emphasizes that contemporary biopower must respond not only to the endogenous economic, health and institutional effects, but also to the danger posed by the chaos of communication. Can a mode of governance be imagined which is capable of integrating chance? As the coronavirus has been sweeping across the world, various philosophers have been searching for answers. Unsurprisingly, following Agamben's lead, many contemporary thinkers have emphasized the concept of biopolitics in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. Sergio Benvenunto, while emphasizing the uncertainty surrounding the death rate of the virus, also highlights the economic collapse caused by social distancing, which is greatly impacting countries severely affected by the virus such as Italy. Benvenuto shows that panic is a pervasive ecological category, affecting entire populations. Along with panic comes alienation on a scale not seen before. The good citizen acts in a panic-stricken manner.[61] Decisions brought to slow the spread of the virus, such as the lockdowns implemented in most of the world, are made following a preventive logic. The threat must be stopped before it is present. As Benvenuto reminds us, however, governance is faced at this juncture with a "biopolitical decision," and most of the relevant choices are presently being made by the World Health Organization rather than local bodies.[62] What does the phrase "biopolitical decision" mean? The most basic activities become regulated in a way without precedent in living memory, at least in the few states which remained liberal democratic throughout the twentieth century. These strategies of isolation were supposedly required to prevent the dissolution of the body politic. The various international organizations brought biopolitical decisions which were then swiftly internalized, but this in itself is not enough to allay suspicions and exclude contingency. In Benvenuto's view, what makes the coronavirus horrific is the extent of the unknowns we are facing. The nonhuman agency and the speed of its proliferation show that the fear of the unknown is not entirely unfounded, resulting in the creation of a territory in which the human dimension is being ever further eroded, and excluded to the benefit of the nonhuman.[63] Rocco Ronchi draws on different themes when writing about the Coronavirus. Against the biopolitical homogenization enacted by quarantine and lockdown, the virus represents a heterogeneity. In Ronchi's view, the immaterial ambiguity of the virus, its double status as mediated representation and materialized agency, as well as the speed of its flows, makes it resemble accelerated global capital flows. From the

[58] Graham Harman, "Strange Realism: On Behalf of Objects," *The Humanities Review*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2015): 3-18.
[59] Alex Fox, "The Race for a Coronavirus Vaccine Runs on Horseshow Crab Blood," *Smithsonian Magazine* (June 8, 2020). https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/race-coronavirus-vaccine-runs-horseshoe-crab-blood-180975048.
[60] Jean-Luc Nancy, "Viral Exception," trans. by Emma Catherine Gainsforth, *European Journal of Psychoanalysis* (February 27, 2020). https://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/coronavirus-and-philosophers.
[61] Sergio Benvenuto, "Welcome to Seclusion," trans. by Emma Catherine Gainsforth, *European Journal of Psychoanalysis* (March 2, 2020). https://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/coronavirus-and-philosophers.
[62] Benvenuto, "Welcome to Seclusion."
[63] Ibid. This can also be said to apply to the broadly beneficial ecological effects of the subtraction of human agency from the scene. The less humans are travelling, the more carbon dioxide emissions go down.

1970s onwards, many social theorists such as Marshall McLuhan and Jean Baudrillard drew on the virus-metaphor when describing social communication (we could also mention the nineteenth century sociologist Gabriel Tarde, who imagined social phenomena along the lines of self-replicating viral cultural contents). Today the comparison between viral media content and COVID-19 is one which lends itself as evident. But, as Ronchi shows, such a comparison is "too straightforward," and fails to account for the very real ontological difference between the media and biological phenomena.[64] Any real theorization of alterity is excluded from the outset if we seek to reduce material processes to similes for communication. More is at stake here.

It appears that no restriction can entirely exhaust the being of biological agents. The contingent is already present at the moment of political decision. Instead of thinking in mutually exclusive binaries, it is time to let heterogeneity into our thinking. Becker's revolutionary approach was to integrate deviance into the programming of social reality, and something similar is required today, a revolution in thinking about society which reintroduces chance into the mix. Two divergent policy responses can be seen. On the one hand, we have restriction, the modernist, nonliberal, bio-authoritarian approach which has been adopted by most national governments at the behest of the World Health Organization. This is the logic of lockdown. The second approach, the stratagem of herd immunity, is the more radical and, arguably, more progressive and permissive mode of a explicitly neoliberal biopolitics. Scandalously, herd immunity posits the avoidance of social closure at all costs. The goal is to allow the infection of the human population (with the exception of the chronically ill and aged), building up immunity, while preventing damage to the economy. All this is conducted under the paradigm of risk management. As Sweden's chief epidemiologist, Anders Tegnell, notes, "we can't kill all our services. And unemployed people are a great threat to public health."[65] From a Foucauldian viewpoint, this semantics is interesting because of its juxtaposition of the *lumpenproletariat* and the virus. Both are dangers to social homeostasis. Neoliberal biopolitics is guided by the view that risks must be balanced against one another. This leads to an instrumentalization of contingency in managing risks. Although several national governments showed a willingness to use the herd immunity approach, only Sweden ended up following this path. In terms of the social system's own self-definitions, the program was a success. Sweden reported far more deaths per capita than neighbouring Norway, but GDP kept on growing, outperforming other European economies.[66] Herd immunity has resulted in a successful sacrifice of humans for economic gain. Already certain neoliberal outlets are touting the Swedish model as a successful solution to the crisis which ought to be applied globally.[67] Permissiveness is the primary imperative of neoliberalism. Flows must never be halted, because blockage results in inefficiencies. The neoliberal biopolitics of herd immunity presents itself as a teleology of openness. But the radical alterity of Coronavirus or Corona Devi cannot be wholly integrated into any mode of biopolitics, nonliberal or neoliberal. Herd immunity as a stratagem presents us with an opening which is to be exploited by posthumanist future-politics.

Reacting to Nancy, Roberto Esposito - drawing on Foucault's work - shows that Nancy overemphasizes the role of technological mediation in the pandemic, as if digital media metaphors were easily adaptable to biology and vice versa. Esposito speaks of a technocultural situation or condition in which virality is already there prior to the differentiation of culture and life. The concept of the viral has infected various disciplines and language games, but this also obscures the very real divergences between the sectors and territories of society.[68] Biopolitics is, for Esposito, itself a viral paradigm, an infectious discourse. Through the interventions made possible by biotechnology and other instruments, biopolitics is capable of reaching

[64] Rocco Ronchi, "The Virtues of the Virus," trans. by Emma Catherine Gainsforth, *European Journal of Psychoanalysis* (March 14, 2020). https://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/coronavirus-and-philosophers.

[65] Samuel Lovett, "Coronavirus: Scientist Leading Sweden's COVID-19 Response Says U.K. Lockdown Has Gone Too Far. Epidemiologist Anders Tegnell 'Sceptical' of British Containment Measures and Insists Swedish Strategy 'Beating' COVID-19," *The Independent* (April 5, 2020). https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus-uk-lockdown-sweden-scientist-response-gone-too-far-a9448026.html.

[66] Jon Miltimore, "Sweden Sees Economic Growth in 1st Quarter Despite Global Pandemic," *Foundation for Economic Education* (May 30, 2020). https://fee.org/articles/sweden-sees-economic-growth-in-1st-quarter-despite-global-pandemic.

[67] Nils Karlson, Charlotta Stern and Daniel B. Klein, "Sweden's Coronavirus Strategy Will Soon Be the World's," *Foreign Affairs* (May 12, 2020). https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/sweden/2020-05-12/swedens-coronavirus-strategy-will-soon-be-worlds.

[68] Roberto Esposito, "Cured to the Bitter End," trans. Emma Catherine Gainsforth, *European Journal of Psychoanalysis* (February 28, 2020). https://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/coronavirus-and-philosophers.

ever deeper layers of reality, but also of implementing new modes of permissiveness. Pervasiveness does not mean total control, but rather the controlled instrumentalization of chaotic phenomena such as bioterrorism, migration and climate change. In Esposito's view, Agamben's adaptation of biopolitics as power conspiracy fails to do justice to the situation: "governments are nothing more than grim executioners, and taking it out on them seems more like a diversionary manoeuvre than a political reflection."[69] The state of exception is itself viral, and we must, in Esposito's view, return to Foucault's original work. Such a return is precisely what we have tried to achieve. While we do not entirely agree with Esposito that politics and life are now almost one and the same, theory has to account for monstrous hybridity in all its forms. Far from being a mere instrument of government, "the exception" is "becoming the rule in a world where technical interconnections of all kinds" permeate social reality.[70] The mistake is to reduce an emergent hybridity to a product of governance. No longer can politics go on as a separate functional system. If life is always already deformed by technology, while politics is medicalized, then medicine too is being politicized. Puzzlingly, what none of the thinkers mentioned above really emphasize is the manner in which permissiveness gains a posthuman opening in the herd immunity approach.

Foucault's biopolitics lectures allow us to envision a mode of biopolitics which resigns from both control and discipline. The agony of power demands self-restraint. Contingency, in the form of crime or infection, is to be permitted as part of the normal functioning of society. Permissiveness seems to be very much the name of the game when it comes to biopolitics in the twenty-first century. Implicitly this radical mode of openness is what is at stake in permissive policing and herd immunity alike. Against the modernist model of a homeostatic society closed to its chaotic environment, the externalities are being internalized. Safety is outmoded. Breaking down the inherent racism of closure requires a recognition and acceptance of alterity. We can advocate as best we can for the right of other beings to be. In this project, speculative realism is invaluable. Levi R. Bryant has written of the need for a fragmented mode of thought which recognizes the irreducibility of the Coronavirus to any particular perspective, as well as a rethinking of what community means.[71] Uncomfortably, we realize that we must share our communities and bodies with nonhuman others. Death is pervasive, Coronavirus persists on packaging, door knobs, the surfaces of textile fabrics, but so is viral alterity, as distinct from any profile or aspect. The pandemic has rendered the world in general a temporarily inaccessible, foreign, uncanny place, while also illuminating the richness of reality. Bruce Clarke has characterized authentic posthumanism in terms of a "nonhumanism" which actually goes beyond the human element as such. The nonhuman, as radical posthumanism, would therefore incorporate any scenario which envisions the elimination of the human altogether.[72] Contemporary posthumanist philosophy, as well as evolutionary theories, all take account of a future nonhuman condition of human disappearance. Authentic posthumanism envisions the end of the human. Posthumanism is much more than yet another iteration of humanism. David Roden writes of a "speculative posthumanism," which can be used productively to theorize completely alien agencies such as viruses, while opening up social thought to the prospect of anthropo-extinction. Roden advocates for a deeply posthuman posthumanism, which would give us a representation of nonhuman agents.[73] Claire Colebrook's "ethics of extinction," as well as Patricia MacCormack's "ahuman theory" also give us novel ways of thinking about the end of the Human Security System.[74] Roberto Esposito's positing of the "inhuman," the "non-discursive" reality of "he who is absent," a category of subjectivity lying outside of self-immunization, is also a promising line of inquiry.[75] Human abolition could very well represent the next stage in the elaboration of an emancipatory politics of openness. If we are to go beyond closure, a politics of acceptance is required.

[69] Esposito, "Cured to the Bitter End."
[70] Ibid.

[71] Levi R. Bryant, "A World Is Ending," *Identities: Journal for Politics, Gender and Culture* (April 3, 2020). https://identitiesjournal.edu.mk/index.php/IJPGC/announcement/view/21. See also pp. 48 in this issue.
[72] Bruce Clarke, *Posthuman Metamorphosis: Narrative and Systems* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).
[73] David Roden, *Posthuman Life: Philosophy at the Edge of the Human* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 22.
[74] Claire Colebrook, *Sex after Life: Essays on Extinction*, Vol. 2 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Open Humanities Press, 2015); Patricia MacCormack, *The Ahuman Manifesto: Activism for the End of the Anthropocene* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2020).
[75] Roberto Esposito, *Immunitas: The Protection and Negation of Life*, trans. by Zakiya Hanafi (London: Polity, 2011), 196.

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Socrates in Quarantine

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One death has proven to be exceptionally devastating for Western politics and philosophy, as well as for political philosophy - and has left its mark on life in the city (*polis*).[1] Socrates' death illustrates many philosophical, political, and ethical themes, strong impressions of many debates, and deep insights into two complex matters that can be observed in their restless omnipresence from antiquity to the present day: common living (or the existence of the community) and the living of a singular self (or singular existence). Through the reconstruction of Socrates' final moments, by using Plato's dialogue *Phaedo* in this case, and in light of the current pandemic of the COVID-19 virus, among other things, two strong elements of life in the city emerge - dialogue and friendship. In his last moments, Socrates did not discuss Athens, or life in the *polis,* or the Athenians - the usual sources of his questions and his art of midwifery (i.e., the Socratic method), his final breath that can still be felt, perhaps now better than ever, carried his last wish - that his friends take care of themselves, because if they do not, that would mean the end of the dialogues they had. This fusion of the care of the self and dialogue actually reveals how mutual dependency between singular and common living is possible, and why, in fact, it is necessary.

Dialogue

Socrates introduces dialogue as an ethical, political and ontological means that creates and then is contained in a series of signs that point to an active life: thinking, speech and action. In the current pandemic, the three elements in this sequence can be examined in two places (*topoi*), which the strict legal provisions in this period allow, that is, *to be* at home and *to be* outside. "Home" is an ambiguous feature of space, it is difficult to define, and should be constantly attached to the distaste for widely accepted, codified images; but the house or the apartment in which one feels at home has one constant trait - it confines the outside world and its abundance. "*The word* 'house' *is something like a frozen thought that thinking must unfreeze* whenever it wants to find out the original meaning."[2] Although there are two conflicting aspects of thinking while staying at home, by following Socrates' legacy of dialogue and friendship, they, in an unexpected way, finally harmonize and bring out the first element of what we previously described as a series of signs of active life: thinking in the form of a dialogue, a dialogue that contains the plurality of the human condition at anytime. Thus, thinking can take place, if I have someone else by my side, above all, someone shaped through and derived from the abundance of the world, from the countless and contingent possibilities for making friends and building relationships, and all the stimuli and affective experiences that follow; and vice versa - their (re-)examination, which will then reveal the platform of thinking as a verb, i.e., the first sign of active life. Hence, thinking can happen at least in this case, I-with-me or two-in-one, where the world and the other person that the world

[1] Previously, a longer version of the text was published in Macedonian on the web platform *Okno* (April 23, 2020). https://okno.mk/node/84114; and an adjusted and shortened version was also published in Greek by the Institute for Alternative Policies (June 17, 2020). https://www.enainstitute.org/ο-σωκράτης-σε-καραντίνα.

[2] Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind: The Groundbreaking Investigation on How We Think* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 173.

has given to me, and I, are contained together in the "two," and where, at the same time, they make room for me to conduct a side in the dialogue or for my position in the "one," following the scheme I-with-another-with-me. Prompted by a meeting with his friend and teacher Socrates, Plato uses the term *dialegesthai* for the word dialogue, which actually appeals to a "traveling through words." But living with oneself, thinking in the I-with-me form of dialogue, has one precondition: living with others, in the realm of the political, in the public space. Thus, one who can live with oneself is presumed to be able to live with others:

> The self, too, is a kind of friend. The guiding experience in these matters is, of course, friendship and not selfhood; I first talk with others before I talk with myself, examining whatever the joint talk may have been about, and then discover that I can conduct a dialogue not only with others, but with myself as well. The common point, however, is that the dialogue of thought can be carried out only among friends...[3]

The latter reminds us that the walls of the quarantine-home will not withstand the pressure of the ability to think dialogically, to look for conversations taking place outside, in the world, facing the world and being exposed to perspectives of us in return, between friends where all questions start (even the most basic one among them: "Who am I?"), noting that it is not enough only to "be", but also to "appear", in the world as such. "This possibility is of the greatest relevance to politics, if we understand (as the Greeks understood) the polis as the public-political realm in which men attain their full humanity, their full reality as men, not only because they *are* (as in the privacy of the household) but also because they *appear*."[4] But even Socrates had to return from his favorite place in the city - the square - to his house in Athens, and be alone and away from the others. In light of the measures against the spread of the COVID-19 virus, what emerges from the practice of staying at home, and is a key point to thinking in the form of dialogue, is solitude. Before I appear in the world, I have to appear before myself. In fact, in a domestic condition,[5] I can reach from one for two, let the two-in-one dialogue pierce through me in order to reach again the plurality of humanity to which I belong. When the so-called "discourse within the soul" takes place, I am the one who asks and answers the questions, so that duality makes thinking a true activity. To put it in Arendtian terms again: "Nothing perhaps indicates more strongly that man exists essentially in the plural than that his solitude actualizes his merely being conscious of himself."[6] This reveals a sweet paradox of the dialogue - the opposite natures of the political arena and the solitude which harmonize in the two-in-one formula. The reason behind the deep dissatisfaction with the measures points to the home walls-confines that cannot stand upright facing the outside if they are not touching the inside of the world. We must be free to move along all possible points of the axis with two ends: in and out. Moving along this axis is not that safe though. This becomes evident when the fear of another threat to health, that is, mental health, suggests a cry for something that would be defined as a "theory of care." One heavy sigh barely mutters, "I am in default of myself" (*ich bleibe mir aus*); when solitude no longer is the context, but thinking in dialogue is dominated by loneliness, a new dangerous situation arises where "I am one and without company."

Friendship

"Abbandonarsi alla solitudine del pensiero sulla pubblica piazza. Che impresa pericolosa!" ("Abandon oneself to the solitude of thought at a public square. What a dangerous endeavor!"[7]) The other two elements of the series of signs of active life, in addition to thinking, are speech and action, and they are performed from the sphere of the private, at home or in solitude, but they also necessarily transfer the capacity for dialogue to the realm of the political and the public sphere, the political arena. Given the structure of the two-in-one dialogue, it is already clear that friendship is the driving force of speech, which, in the public sphere, becomes a set of countless voices and the differences they contain. Namely, access to speech

[3] Arendt, *Life*, 189.
[4] Ibid., 21.
[5] Elettra Stimilli, "Being in Common at a Distance," trans. by Greg Bird, *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* (March 20, 2020). https://www.utpjournals.press/journals/topia/being-in-common-at-a-distance.
[6] Arendt, *Life*, 185.
[7] Donatella Di Cesare, *Sulla vocazione politica della filosofia* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2018), 49. Trans. by the author.

and having a voice always presupposes the existence of a friend who supports the structure of dialogue. Speech is not possible if it is not addressed in duality, translated as the beginning of the plurality of the human condition. We live together when every encounter is simultaneously a request for no one to be neglected; everyone can be a potential friend because her voice will become one with the dialogue I have with others and with myself. Without the voice of the other, my voice also disappears from the public sphere. The value of friendship, in this sense, is generalized, it spills out of the intimate boundaries of sharing and investing in a micro-world of togetherness - namely, the intimate friendship assumes its form only after the public sphere becomes equipped with countless combinations of encounters, contingents of contacts, heterogeneous views and insights into other and unknown vital dynamics, which in turn affects our own life stories, when, finally, all this together enables the ability to think, to formulate speech and materialize action. Given the entrenched inequality and unbearable stratification we encounter in the world, the community has a chance to establish its own existence, *to be* that - a community - precisely through friendship:

> The community comes into being through equalizing, *isasthēnai* ... The political, noneconomic equalization is friendship, *philia* ... [Socrates] therefore ultimately sees friendship from the viewpoint of the single citizen, not from that of the polis: the supreme justification of friendship is that nobody would choose to live without friends even though he possessed all other goods ... The equalization in friendship does not of course mean that the friends become the same or equal to each other, but rather that they become equal partners in a common world - that they together constitute a community.[8]

So, what happens to friendship in such cases where the countless combinations of encounters and appearances in the world become clogged in a mathematically precise and incriminating ambience like "... gathering in public places and areas of more than two people (for grouping over five people together to be considered a crime and to have criminal responsibility)"?[9] What happens to friendship when a new political figure is introduced into the political arena, that of the possibly contagious individual, which, acting as an extension of the enemy, will turn the health status into a key political determinant? What happens to the contingent contacts which contain the timeless abundance of the world within themselves, if social distancing becomes the new norm for common life? The fear of the touch of the other can be dangerously equated with the fear of the new society. Namely, what will happen next, which is anxiously and hopefully intertwined in the phrase, "nothing will ever be the same again," is likely to raise a new front: the official truth spread by the centers of power and capital will build on the fear of the touch of the other, and the dark political spikes of right-wing and authoritarian populism will not treat the other side gently; which in order to survive must necessarily be guided by the principles of friendship, dialogue and care, of interdependence and its material and bodily provability, of vulnerability as a renewed position of resistance. The new society, in this sense, will not be really that new.

Rooster

Following a lengthy debate with intimate pleas to consider another solution besides drinking the poison, Socrates concludes by reminding his companions that he owes Aesculapius a rooster, and asks Crito to return it in his name. These "ridiculous and terrible" last words, as Friedrich Nietzsche says, were not accidental and reveal something unexpected about the life that Socrates lived, which we could imagine was led in the full splendor of active life. Aesculapius is an ancient god of medicine, and this, according to Nietzsche, means that Socrates suffered, namely, that his last words were in fact: "O, Crito, *life is a disease*."[10] Life is a disease, the full splendor of active life is by no means devoid of suffering. The choice to die over any other option, even that of escape, which should not be immediately ruled out considering Socrates' experience of being a foreigner, migrating in and out of the rules of living in his own city, that is, the

[8] Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), 17.

[9] "Decision of the Government of Republic of North Macedonia from the 44th Government Session," *Government of Republic of North Macedonia* (April 18, 2020). https://vlada.mk/node/21099.

[10] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974), 272.

experience of *a-topia*;[11] this choice is an indication that the sickness represents a context in which active life sometimes takes place. If Nietzsche's interpretation is as sound as it is intriguing, it means that the life that takes place in the city is already sick, that the sickness had spread before the pandemic, because the city configures a life with illnesses that are chronic: unprotected workers in cramped and crowded factories—conditions that preceded the strictest COVID-19 related measures; old people who act as waste for human capital, forgotten in the waiting rooms of death, that is, the nursing homes; the poor who have been neglected and have not yet heard the bad news about their so-called compromised immune systems; the marginalized communities whose ghettos are now behind quarantine bars. If the disease had already been rampant in the city, this specific virus should not be abused by the state apparatus. Namely, the overall *dispositif*, in order to promote in a less discreet way than before, and under false pretenses, the immunitary paradigm as the official context from which rules are derived that dictate in which way life will be allowed to proceed. The immunitary paradigm is now being reflected in the phrase "saving lives." We should be extremely careful when there are formal intentions to take over the care of life. If getting out of a pandemic means entering into a new order of life that needs to be saved, it is important to pay attention to a few things. The organized response to the COVID-19 pandemic appears to have the effects of a *pharmakon*: it is one-part medicine for the health emergency caused by the virus, and one-part political poison:

> If life - which in all its forms is the object of immunization - cannot be preserved except by placing something inside it that subtly contradicts it, we must infer that the preservation of life corresponds with a form of restriction that somehow separates it from itself ... To allow the community to withstand the entropic risk that threatens it, and with which it ultimately coincides, it must be sterilized of its own relational contents.[12]

Immunization (*immunitas*) and community (*communitas*) are in a surprising way both linked to the same singular root - *munus*, a gift. Considering that in the most generic sense a community means giving a gift, participating in the communal life through (self-)giving, and at the same time, given the fact that immunization implies the cessation of this social exchange - the person who is immunized is excluded from this social exchange and cannot give nor receive a gift. In this sense, immunization is not established as an antonym of the community, the gift is not missing because the need for immunization has been imposed, but because the members of the community cannot take part in it at all if they do not support the social exchange, such as giving, with all the risk it carries. The resistance to the immunitary paradigm is not a misguided attempt to reject the suppression, cure and actions that would make COVID-19 less risky, but it is a resistance to a disease that has already attacked active life, as already elaborated. Here we should remind ourselves of the words of Des Esseintes, the protagonist of Karl Huysmans' novel À rebours, who, without being forced to do so by a pandemic locked himself away and who at the end of the description of his so-called world for himself, in his house in Fontaine, exclaims: "Collapse society: die, old world!" (*Croule donc, société! Meurs donc, vieux monde!*)

[11] See more at Di Cesare, *Sulla vocazione*.
[12] Roberto Esposito, *Immunitas: The Protection and Negation of Life*, trans. by Zakiya Hanafi (London: Polity, 2011), 8, 13.

Anthony Nestel |

The World-Creating COVID-19 Protest in Tel Aviv

(2020-07-19)

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Since the Israeli lockdown began due to COVID-19, the Israeli government has started passing anti-democratic bills in the name of the crisis. In response, the Black Flag movement organized a physical live protest in April 2020 in Tel Aviv, while maintaining social distancing. Organizers carefully measured and marked Rabin Square in central Tel Aviv with assigned spots, in the shape of an X, to safely accommodate as many protesters as possible according to the distancing guidelines. 2,800 spots were marked for protesters, which proved to be insufficient, and resulted in many people standing at the required distance on surrounding streets.

This protest, which had succeeded others that were held mainly online, physically united people in radical ideological and political disaccord. What occurred at the Rabin Square was something unique and unprecedented. As Chairman of the Joint List Ayman Odeh said in his speech during the protest: "It's not easy for me to stand among some of the speakers here tonight, but we need to see the main point - only through a joint Jewish-Arab struggle can we succeed." Odeh added, "This crisis presents a huge opportunity for a wide Jewish-Arab front for peace and democracy."[1]

[1] Josh Breiner, "Two Thousand Israelis Brave Coronavirus Fears to Protest Assault on Democracy," *Haaretz* (April 19, 2020). https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-over-a-thousand-israelis-brave-coronavirus-fears-to-protest-netanyahu-1.8781869.

COVID-19 and the Transindividual

2019 saw the emergence of a new virus that was named COVID-19. Many scientists discussed, prior to this emergence, the possibility of a new, highly contagious virus. They all agreed that a COVID-19-like virus would have tremendous and unpredictable ramifications for our highly globalized world. We now say that these scientists were absolutely right. However, what the scientists did not and could not predict was the quality of the encounter between the people of the world and this imperceptible, more-than-human wandering entity. Moreover, equally unpredictable was/is the human behavior regarding this ongoing encounter.

The French philosopher of individuation, Gilbert Simondon, identifies a "reciprocal relation"[2] between the psychic - the human's interior individuations - and the collective - the human's exterior individuations. These two correlated individuations continuously transform into new and emergent ontogenetic individuals, each in their own line or tendency, though never without impinging on each other. Inner individuations are required for the materialization of the collective and the collective broadens and intensifies the psychic into new and unprecedented individuations. This ontogenetic process is never linear but always an interpenetration. It is the power of the collective that transforms and individuates the human being by placing ever new and changing problems in front of her. The inexhaustible excess from which the individual contracts is what Simondon calls the *preindividual*[3], or is, in other words, Deleuze's *virtual*.

What occurred with the introduction of the virus was that the protesters in Israel endured extra or deeper transformations by accessing the virtual even more. This extra contraction is what made this protest possible. Simondon defines this extra contraction as the *transindividual.* To partake in the transindividual, he argues, the psychic individual abandons something of her identity - this abandonment is always the result of a contingency, a disorganizing event - and must be contained and limited to personality marks and unique qualities - fundamental to social and collective existence.[4]

[2] Gilbert Simondon, *L'individuation psychique et collective à la lumière des notions de forme et d'information, potentiel et métastabilité* (Paris: Aubier, 1989), 19.
[3] Simondon, *L'individuation psychique*.
[4] Ibid.

COVID-19 has been such an event. Some people *disindividuated* by renouncing - consciously and nonconsciously - parts of their identities in furtherance of a deviating becoming, an expansion of the reality of the virtual that made every individual and collective life possible but which the social always tries to contain and habituate. Nevertheless, the collective is imperative to the transindividual, it cannot be evoked without an encounter, something that a solitary individual can never accomplish. It is in this encounter that a "more-than-individual" and "more-than-collective relation"[5] is produced. With the transindividual, new and subtracted individuals can penetrate and originate something of the reality of the virtual, a new entity or event - in this case, the protest - that has the potential to transform collective and psychic life forever from within. How it will change is impossible to foresee.

Black Flag and the Change of Strategy

Many journalists say the protest was an act against the coalition deal signed between Blue and White leader Benny Gantz and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. A deal that ended more than a year of political stalemate and deadlocked elections. Since March 2019, the Israeli population has been asked to go to the polls three times, in each instance producing a tie between Gantz and Netanyahu. On the third occasion, Gantz, after the introduction of the virus in Israel, made the scandalous move of joining Netanyahu - a Prime Minister Gantz called unsuitable for the position due to many corruption claims - and destroying his own centrist political party. The pair's deal incorporates an accord that Gantz would take over the position of prime minister in eighteen months. Netanyahu however, who will keep the prime minister position in the meantime, induced Gantz to consent to many political requests, one of which was veto power over the appointment of the following state prosecutor and attorney general in his many trials for bribery, fraud and breach of trust. Additionally, Netanyahu is allowed to choose half of the committee of designated judges.[6]

Amid all of these political negotiations, Black Flag[7] organized its first protest on March 19th when a convoy of cars drove from all over Israel to Jerusalem for Knesset speaker Yudi Edelstein's "refusal to set up parliamentary committees and his attempt at thwarting Blue and White efforts to advance the replacement of Netanyahu."[8] The movement quickly transformed into a national phenomenon, one event turned into weekly protests in Tel Aviv and beyond. The culmination, in my opinion, occurred when many thousands of people decided to gather at the Rabin Square on April 16th against, according to some journalists and protestors, Gantz's coalition plans to join Netanyahu and other "controversial policies advanced by the government to curb the spread of the coronavirus."[9] So, what made the protestors assemble? Why this shift in strategy after many "safe" convoys and online protests? Why did people in radical disaccord decide to meet that night? I believe it was mainly out of a desire to create, to feel and perceive the new.

The Creative Act

How to apprehend this desire and consequently the protest as an experience? I would postulate that the answer lies partly in Deleuze and Guattari's concept of affect. Affects, according to Deleuze and Guattari, are not to be represented in language or signification, they take place on a divergent register, an asignifying one, and can only be encountered in experience, as the passage from one intensity to another, and as a reaction, at the level of matter, in or on the body. They are what constitutes life as a whole. In Deleuzo-Guattarian terms, affects are the "molecular" "beneath" the "molar,"[10] the molecular understood here as what Simon O'Sullivan argues is, "life and art's intensive quality, the stuff that goes 'beneath,' in fact that always parallels, signification."[11]

Affect is what connects humans to the becoming of the world. It is the matter in and on us reacting, resonating and interacting with the

[5] Elizabeth Grosz, *The Incorporeal: Ontology, Ethics, and the Limits of Materialism* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2017), 197.
[6] Ben Sales, "Five Important Points about the Gantz-Netanyahu Deal and Israel's New Emergency Government," *The Jewish News of North Carolina* (April 22, 2020). https://www.jweekly.com/2020/04/22/5-important-points-about-the-gantz-netanyahu-deal-and-israels-new-emergency-government.
[7] Black Flag was initiated by three brothers and a sister who had not been previously involved in any political activity.
[8] Rina Bassist, "Israel's Black Flag Protest Gathers Momentum," *Al-Monitor: The Pulse of the Middle East* (April 26, 2020). https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/04/israel-benjamin-netanyahu-benny-gantz-knesset-black-flag.html.
[9] Bassist, "Israel's Black Flag."
[10] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. by B. Massumi (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013).
[11] Simon O'Sullivan, *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 43.

matter of the world. The creative act for Deleuze and Guattari is an "access point," the gateway to a divergent world of molecular transformation - a different experience. They argue that this is what renders the creative act abstract: the rendering visible of imperceptible forces.[12] John Rajchman writes about this notion of the abstract as the realm of potentialities prior to figuration. The creator - in this case the protestors - come to experience the world as intense, not as the repetition of the old, but rather "filled with unseen virtuality of other strange possibilities."[13] This is, I would argue, what occurred prior to the protest at the Rabin Square. The night of the protest was a coming into being of what was previously seen with the help of the transindividual. We must not, however, interpret this "seen" as a clear image but rather as a strange possibility for experiencing the radically new.

That night redefined what a protest is, and what a protest can do. The creators that night generated a different world, a new experience for themselves and the rest of the world. That night people performed otherwise, in a relational milieu stripped of all their self-centredness. The (prior) right-wing Israeli Jew cared for the Palestinian body, and vice versa, not entirely out of self-care, but also out of care for the event, for the relational potential that surpassed them as individuals; for the realm of affect, the possibility for another molecular becoming. This performativity, I believe, did not entirely serve the purpose of a critique or a sense of what a different future might entail but rather it was the presentation of a creative work in progress. It was the making and unfolding of a creative act in close collaboration with an abundance of human and more-than-human entities. COVID-19 did/does not only decrease our capacity to act, it has the ability to also produce joyful encounters, those which increase our capability to act in this world.[14]

The protesters did not encounter their habitual Selves that night nor did they encounter the habitual Other. The role the protestors performed was that of an asubjective body amongst a performance as an event. The habitual and the intellect were cast overboard. The encounter was not with this or that subject, but with a body on an X. These Xs functioned as a choreography of care, in search of unknown affective encounters. For Deleuze, affective "imageless thought"[15] encounters are forced into action via the interruption of ordinary notions and habits. These encounters are the genuinely new and are embedded in paradoxes. The protest's form is no longer its recognizable one; the right-wing Jew is no longer recognizable as the right-wing Jew; the left-wing Jew is no longer recognizable as the left-wing Jew; the Palestinian is no longer recognizable as the Palestinian; "I am no longer recognizable as myself." The imageless thought in the encounter, as many of the protestors experienced that night, defies recognition.[16] The creative act and its unfolding was an expression and manifestation of the domain of affects; the realm of affects here being understood as the virtual. This protest truly involved a moving beyond the recognizable: a kind of overcoming of oneself via the transindividual into the virtual. How can that not be a creative act?

The Virtual and the Possible

In his speech, Ayman Odeh brings up an idea for a better possible future world to come. However, while the future is tremendously important, as is the critique of the unfolding present, the other-worldliness created and expressed in the protest was, I would argue, world-creating in its very becoming: another world and not merely a springboard for a better, different world far into the distant future.

What was at stake in the protest was not only the setting up of a possible futuristic world that would ultimately require certain conducts for its realization. Realization, in this instance, always already resembles the real, according to Deleuze.[17] The idea of a possible

[12] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (London: Verso, 1994), 181-82. Art is another way to describe this creative act according to Deleuze and Guattari.

[13] John Rajchman, *Constructions* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998), 61.

[14] For Spinoza, encounters will always have different characters: certain encounters will be fruitful, others not as much. Joyful encounters are of the joy-intensifying type, the ones that increase our capability to act productively in the world. Benedict Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. by W.H. White (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2001).

[15] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. by Paul Patton (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).

[16] The new equals the unrecognizable, as Deleuze argues in *Difference and Repetition*, "the new - in other words, difference - calls forth forces in thought which are not the forces of recognition, today or tomorrow, but the powers of a completely other model, from an unrecognized and unrecognizable *terra incognita*." Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 179.

[17] Ibid., 211. In *Difference and Repetition* (1997) Deleuze makes a crucial distinction between the possible and the virtual: "The only danger in all this is that the virtual could be confused with the possible. The possible is opposed to the real; the process undergone by the possible is therefore a 'realization.' In contrast, the virtual is not opposed to the real; it possesses a full reality by itself. The process it undergoes is actualization. It would be wrong to see only a verbal dispute here: it is a question of existence itself." Ibid.

Jewish-Arab front is already an actualization minus its realization. Contrarily, the actualization of the virtual is always a genuinely creative act. This protest actualized invisible universes, affects that prior to their actualization were real but unable to be envisaged or conceived. Consequently, following Deleuze, the process of realization and actualization differ in kind with the former functioning via resemblance (representation) - intellect - and the latter via distribution (difference) - affect. This grants the protest an ethico-political imperative because it implicates a moving beyond the previously familiar and a reordering of the world. Ultimately, the political cannot but also be situated in the new, in the creative act that brings about a genuinely new experience.

Jasmin Lilian Diab |

Gender and Migration in Times of COVID-19: Additional Risks on Migrant Women in the MENA and How to Address Them

(2020-07-21)

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1. Background

The Coronavirus does not discriminate who it affects, and the health, political, economic and psychosocial responses to the virus should not either. At one of the most difficult times we are undergoing as a humanity, women migrant workers across the globe currently stand on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic in almost every capacity. These women work in essential but low-paid and vulnerable jobs, as health and care workers, nurses, cleaners and domestic workers, not only placing them at an elevated risk of exposure, but also rendering them one of the most vulnerable populations to COVID-19.[1] With women migrant workers inherently having to grapple with intersectional forms of discrimination and inequalities, gender-specific violations in migration policies, insecure forms of labor, racism, and xenophobia, to name just a few, the virus currently adds another layer to this intersection that has not been explicitly addressed in policies on the ground.[2]

Moving from this reality, these women face a higher risk of losing their livelihoods, having their labor and human rights violated and contracting COVID-19. In the MENA region, they currently work in the informal economy, particularly as domestic workers or caretakers, with insecure contracts, inhumane sponsorship laws, and no paid leave or ability to work from home.[3] They are frequently engaged in short-term, part-time or informal working arrangements.[4] Their jobs are excluded from contributory social insurance schemes, labor laws, and social safety nets which would ultimately be able to compensate for currency devaluation and economic crises, as well as for limited or no access to health care and maternity protection during these critical times.[5]

With the true number of women migrant domestic workers who currently reside in the MENA is close to impossible to assess, the true impact of the COVID-19 global economic crash on these women is close to impossible to pin down. The onset of the pandemic has led to job losses across the region, with their health and safety ignored and even violated.[6] For live-in migrant domestic workers

[1] United Nations, "Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women," *Relief Web* (April 9, 2020). https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-en.pdf.
[2] United Nations, "Policy Brief."
[3] Jasmin Lilian Diab, "On Selective Racism: All Black Lives Matter, Including the Ones You Hired Under the Kafala System," *Foreign Policy News* (June 5, 2020). https://foreignpolicynews.org/2020/06/05/on-selective-racism-all-black-lives-matter-including-the-ones-you-hired-under-the-kafala-system.
[4] Diab, "On Selective Racism."
[5] Amnesty International, "MENA Governments Must End Discriminatory Crackdowns and Abuse of Migrants," *Amnesty International* (December 18, 2018). https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/12/mena-governments-must-end-discriminatory-crackdowns-and-abuse-of-migrants.
[6] Ben Hubbard and Louise Donovan, "Laid Off and Locked Up: Virus Traps Domestic Workers in Arab States," *The New York Times* (July 6, 2020). https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/06/world/middleeast/coronavirus-saudi-domestic-workers-maids-arab.html.

in the region, losing their jobs ultimately means losing their place of residence. The onset of travel restrictions has increased financial challenges and uncertainty, with many stranded far from home, unwelcome and unsafe.[7]

2. Impacts and Implications

The impacts and implications of COVID-19, no matter from which intersection they are addressed, are different for men and women and will ultimately create larger inequalities for individuals who are in vulnerable positions, such as migrants. UN agencies and international organizations alike are well aware of this inequality and have voiced their concerns publicly – urging governments to look at the existing realities from gender and intersectional perspectives whilst implementing policy and precautionary directives.[8] This critical step in the area of policy would not only permit for the identification of these inequalities, but will further assist in the incorporation of greater protection and assistance to more vulnerable populations in response plans.[9]

According to UN Women, among the particular risks COVID-19 has caused for women migrant workers, are: (1) job insecurity, (2) exploitation, as well as (3) socio-economic impacts.[10] The UN Migration Agency (IOM) in its *World Migration Report 2020* reminded us that migrant women represent around 74% of the service industry, which includes domestic work, and in many cases experience job insecurity.[11] A significant portion of their income goes towards supporting their families in their countries of origin, with the economies of many countries around the world sustaining themselves by the remittances sent home by women migrant workers.[12] Remittances provide a lifeline for families and communities in their countries of origin, and particularly amid this ongoing global economic crisis. Given the economic downturn caused by the impacts of COVID-19, women migrant workers are sending fewer remittances, further exacerbating the vulnerabilities of families that depend on this income.[13]

As UNDP indicates, throughout a health crisis with implications on the mobility of people, migrant women who are domestic workers, and especially those that are irregular, become more dependent on their employers and are further removed from social protection services – at least the minor ones the *Kafala* System provides.[14] Even when the isolation from the health crisis ends, the stigmatizing that migrants have COVID-19 "just because they are migrants," makes them a target to threats on multiple levels.[15] In the specific case of migrant women, this discrimination can have dire implications upon their health, such as the lack of adequate care in a medical center and other healthcare settings that are specific to women, such as pregnancy care or gender based violence.[16]

3. Gender-specific Hindrances and Obstacles

In order to increase the understanding of the gender-specific impacts of COVID-19 and subsequently ensure that the needs and priorities of all women migrant workers are fairly and adequately addressed in response plans and policies, multiple specifics need to be taken into account by governments and policy-makers alike.

Primarily, the UNDP has highlighted the limited ability of the majority of migrant women to access protective face masks and hand sanitizer, as well as their greater tendency to live in overcrowded conditions which leaves this population less prepared to face the virus.[17] The UNDP further highlighted the reality that women do approximately twice as much unpaid care and domestic work as men.[18]

[7] Hubbard and Donovan, "Laid Off and Locked Up."
[8] United Nations, "Policy Brief."
[9] Ibid.
[10] Idem.
[11] International Organization for Migration, "World Migration Report 2020", *IOM Online Bookstore* (2020). https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2020#:~:text=The%20World%20Migration%20Report%202020%2C%20the%20tenth%20in%20the%20world,of%20migration%20throughout%20the%20world.&text=This%20flagship%20World%20Migration%20Report,and%20is%20available%20online%20only.
[12] International Labor Organization, "A Migrant Centered Approach to Remittances," *International Labor Organization* (2020). https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/policy-areas/remittances/lang--en/index.htm.
[13] International Labor Organization, "A Migrant Centered Approach."
[14] Marie-José L. Tayah, "Claiming Rights Under the Kafala System," *Open Democracy* (August 17, 2017). https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/claiming-rights-under-kafala-system.
[15] Jeremy Douglas, Karin Hulshof et al., "End Stigma and Discrimination against Migrant Workers and their Children During COVID-19 Pandemic," *Relief Web* (2020). https://reliefweb.int/report/world/end-stigma-and-discrimination-against-migrant-workers-and-their-children-during-covid.
[16] Douglas et al., "End Stigma."
[17] UNDP, "COVID Emergency Appeal Lebanon," *UNDP* (2020). https://www.undp.org/content/dam/lebanon/docs/2020/Publications/COVID19LebanonAppeal.pdf.
[18] UNDP, "Appeal."

The workload resulting from the closure of academic institutions and the care required for individuals who fall ill is predominantly assumed by and imposed on women.[19] In the case of some migrant women, such as refugees and migrant domestic workers, when their livelihoods are affected in their country of residence, caring for other people disproportionately falls on them on multiple levels.

In addition to experiences within their immediate working requirements, mobility and quarantine restrictions force a significant number of women to isolate themselves with their abusers or potential abusers. As the ABAAD Resource Center for Gender Equality insists: "... in cases where there is a predisposition for violent behaviors, the frustration of being locked at home will likely cause that violence to increase."[20] Gender-based violence is exacerbated by labor and migration uncertainty, as well as social distancing.[21] For many migrant women who do not have sufficient support networks in transit and destination countries, isolation with their aggressor is not only a potential threat on their lives, but often the only choice they have.

4. Recommendations and Conclusion

A number of UN agencies and international organizations have contributed to ensure that COVID-19 response policies are both tailored and comprehensive. Particularly, that they encompass tailored policies which take the complexities of the "migrant woman" into account. The UNDP stresses that safe facilities, especially at borders, may assist in the reduction of "the risk of contagion and situations of sexual and gender-based violence," as well as stressing that this must be provided to the migrant population – even those with irregular statuses without exception.[22] It further insists on the provision of bonuses and extraordinary payments with the intention of guaranteeing that migrants, and women in vulnerable situations specifically, have access to economic compensations throughout this stagnation period, regardless of their immigration status.[23]

In addition to the UNDP's recommendations, it is pivotal that governments ensure access to care services without discrimination. As women often fall victim to double discrimination (i.e., for being women and for being migrants), it is necessary to monitor the provision of non-discriminatory care across assistance centers, and in the health centers particularly. Confidentiality must also be protected in cases of sexual violence, domestic violence or exploitation.

[19] Ibid.
[20] Emily Lewis, "Coronavirus: Domestic Violence Grows Under Lebanon's Lockdown," *Al Arabiya English* (April 13, 2020). https://english.alarabiya.net/en/features/2020/04/13/Coronavirus-Domestic-violence-grows-under-Lebanon-s-lockdown.
[21] Lewis, "Domestic Violence."
[22] Ibid.
[23] Idem.

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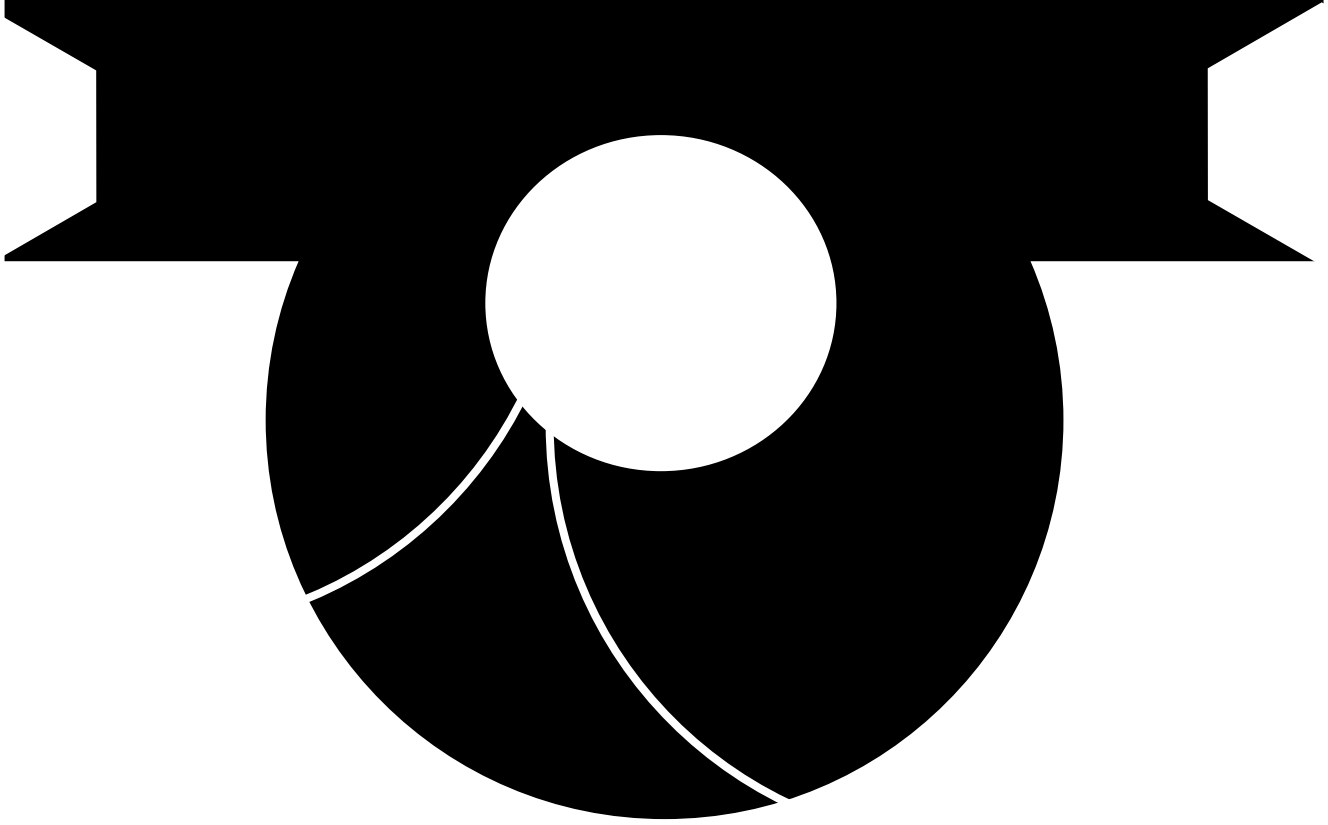

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