phainomena

THE COVID-19 CRISIS

30 | 116-117 | April 2021

PHAINOMENA
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Journal of Phenomenology and Hermeneutics

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Andrej Božič (*Ed.*)

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Vodovodna cesta 101
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Tel.: (386 1) 24 44 560

Email:
institut@nova-revija.si
andrej.bozic@institut-nr.si

Fenomenološko društvo v Ljubljani
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Filozofska fakulteta | Oddelek za filozofijo (kab. 432b)

Aškerčeva 2
1000 Ljubljana
Slovenija

Tel.: (386 1) 2411106

Email:
dean.komel@ff.uni-lj.si

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Andrej Božič

Institute Nova Revija for the Humanities, Vodovodna cesta 101, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia

andrej.bozic@institut-nr.si

The present issue of the *Phainomena* journal is in its entirety dedicated to the pandemic of the rapidly and rabidly spreading novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 (and of its miscellaneously aggressive variants), which has during the last year engulfed the world as a whole, and fundamentally—not only through the staggering rise of its death toll, but also through the strict measures undertaken for its containment—encroached upon the life of humanity, locally and globally affecting all—individual as well as communal, private as well as professional—aspects of (contemporary) co-existence. Insofar as such a—thus almost unprecedented—situation calls for a thorough, cautious, and serious consideration of the problems, which have brought forth the best—selfless solidarity—and the worst—opportunist profiteering—in humankind, the editors, therefore, wanted—and felt compelled—to provide scholars working in the domains of phenomenological and hermeneutic research, as well as in the related realms of the humanities, with a forum for a philosophically engaging discussion of social, political, economic, medical, educational, and cultural exigencies and consequences of the current COVID-19 crisis.

The pandemic has both directly as well as indirectly essentially influenced—and will, it seems, for years to come, continue to influence—all the dimensions of human sociality. Whereas various healthcare structures and, by them, personnel participating in preserving the effectiveness of their functioning—from the medical workers, treating severely stricken patients, to natural scientists, seeking to secure a comprehensive explanation of the disease, from the management officials, ensuring controllable operational conditions, to government representatives, bringing about relevant and supportive decisions to avert the threat—bore the immediate, the imminent brunt of combating the exceptionally infectious and surprisingly resilient virus, the implemented provisions, the necessary requirements, and the proposed recommendations for the suppression of its ruthless onslaught—such as, e.g., decrees with regard to the imposing of statewide lockdowns, the banning of travel, the closing of certain services, the wearing of protective facemasks, the sanitizing of hands, or the keeping of physical distance, etc.—have in a crucial—if (not) im-palpable, mediate(d)—manner marked not only economic matters, pedagogical processes, and artistic activities, but also, first and foremost, the regular course(s) of (our) daily lives, of life, in particular as well as in general: the often frustrating effects of pandemic circumstances—fueling (maybe) the obstinate denial of denialist non-believers among the, as ever, fervently ruminant conspiracy theorists—cannot be denied: denial, should it suggest nothing other than its own negativity, by virtue and by virtuosity of (a mere, a sheer) re-flex(ion), remains—granted: distorted—re-affirmation.

Although it is at the moment of the rampant pandemic, before the end of the crisis, impossible to measure out the complexity of short- and long-term reverberations of the outbreak of COVID-19 for interpersonal relationships, for the multi-spectral state of (people's as well as peoples') affairs, and for humanity as such, a successful outcome and a secure outlook for the world (of an) "afterwards" can only be—in an inter- and a transdisciplinary fashion—occasioned by a mutually respectful conversation among different fields and faculties of knowledge, especially if account is also to be rendered of the concern that the coronavirus pandemic is solely one of the several profound crises denoting the recent development of the so-called post-modern, globalized civilization, the preponderance of which has to a specific extent at once obscured and aggravated precarious predicaments connected with dilemmas of—to mention but a few:—environment pollution and ecological devastation, constitutional rights and authoritarian oppression, war zones and migrant flows. If, naturally, the leading role in the overcoming of the—not only health, but human (well-)being endangering—menace must be, and has been, assumed by branches of (biological, epidemiological, and medical) sciences associated with investigating the characteristics of the virus as well as with establishing the counteractions against it, other—otherwise pre-dispos(ition)ed—capacities circumscribing the—always accomplishment-worthy—in-completeness of our worldly dwelling can, and also do, nonetheless, offer in-valuable insights with regard perhaps predominantly to the potential implications that supersede, sur-pass (through) the COVID-19 crisis itself. Since its commencement, and throughout, the pandemic has—beside the regularly updated information on cases reported at home and abroad—stimulated—as the ample media coverage bears witness—a broad public debate, through which the sometimes opposing—both practical as well as theoretical—standpoints have been given the opportunity to be deliberated upon: in it, not only economists or politicians have taken part, but also social scientists and humanists, activists and intellectuals of heterogenous provenances, not only decision-makers justifying choices accepted and enforced, but also the ones who are, through their agency, (simply) attempting to make sense of—and find firm footing within—the f-actuality of (more or less) co-incidental, yet (by the same token) fatefully significant occurrences. Thus, in the abundant disputes of convoluted, periodically contradicting, frequently irreconcilable opinions, philosophers likewise—quite literally from A to Z, from Giorgio Agamben to Slavoj Žižek—, have voiced views on diverse questions related to the abrupt emergence, the overwhelming emergency of COVID-19. The monothematic, multifaceted publication of *Phainomena* was born out of the conviction that the phenomenologically and hermeneutically oriented philosophical perspective is capable of attentively addressing important and imperative, previously perchance scarcely scrutinized problems and, therefore, of productively contributing to the dialogue, wherein we have found, wherein we are losing ourselves as a (planetary) society of (dif-fused) communities and (dis-joined) individuals, (but) through which we can strive to search for an illumination and an alleviation of the still ongoing, still impending crisis.*

A synoptic recapitulation of papers, presented in the journal issue at hand, divulges a vast variety of reciprocally complementing approaches to an extraordinarily puzzling phenomenon that, as an always already separate, but at once collective, as an already always general, but at once singular experience, simultaneously gives itself to (each of) us to be comprehended, yet also eludes the grasp of our understanding. The movement of the dialectical inter-play of mis-understanding, which is as much revealing as it is concealing, since it can submit (to) merely particular glimpses at the nonetheless intended totality of conceptualization, un-folds itself as an opulently differentiated texture of the con-textual inter-weaving of common contents, abiding topics, recurring notions, and diverging elucidations. Whilst the initial articles, upon the basis of an effort to procure an adequately detailed description of pandemic conditions concerning both, on the one hand, the individuality of human beings as well as, on the other hand, the communality of humanity, emphasize the pivotal impact, the changes COVID-19 has provoked with respect to the perception of reality and the relation towards it, subsequent essays exert to explore the manifold narrative modalities motivated by the confrontation with the coronavirus that can (or, rather, could)—through corresponding non-lingual expression—tread the path towards embodied, lived solidarity, whereby not only the underlying and overarching ethical im-pulse of theoretical contemplation becomes manifest, but also the hazardous and harmful resistances, such as "coronationalism" or fear of facemasks, receive a counterbalancing exposition. The radically paradoxical repercussions of the struggle against the plaguing disease are further enlighteningly demonstrated

* The publisher of the *Phainomena* journal, the Institute Nova Revija for the Humanities, invited members of the international Forum for the Humanities (FORhUM), which operates under its auspices, to participate in a discussion by sharing their thoughts and their judgments, their experiences and their concerns regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. The contributions to the debate, wherein also numerous distinguished philosophers took part (e.g.: B. Babich, J. Grondin, and B. Waldenfels), have been published and are freely accessible on the website of the FORhUM: http://www.forhum.com/humanistic-discussion/.

with the help of characteristic case studies devoting focus to the treatment of healthcare workers in Poland or to the challenges of tourism in Slovenia. If the fortunately fast development and the regrettably retardant distribution of the vaccine(s) seem to direct our timidly trusting glances towards a conclusive, a concluding re-solution of the COVID-19 crisis, its many-sided aftermaths, the mitigation of which art(ist)s alike—as all—pursue, are yet to be gradually realized to the consummate degree: (for) now, at least, we are, whilst trying to take responsibility for our comportment, whilst therethrough trying to maintain our dignity, if not anymore in the eerily silenced un-safety of "the eye," however still "in the midst of the storm."

Insofar as neither the pandemic itself nor the integrality of significance it entails for humankind can at this instant—due to the contiguousness of the (ap)proximate—be examined with the distance of spacial and temporal detachment that would allow (for) an appurtenant panoramic, analytically or synthetically critical re-view over the situation, every and all—kind(s) of—consideration of questions (internally and externally) coupled with COVID-19—regardless of the compulsion of methodological and systematic, "scientific" stringency—spontaneously conveys—through its (at times vexatious) "speculative core"—the for-ever un-mistakable indebtedness to historicity, which co-constitutes being-in-the-world, its embeddedness, its situatedness in the im-possible de-termination of history. Notwithstanding the admirable—if also audacious—courage—confirmed by herein encompassed contributions—to con-front, to con-test—amid duration—the encountered crisis with the principal purpose of attaining its definition and, thereby, its defeat, (particularly) the incongruous and incompatible controversies surrounding the pandemic—hauntingly inhabiting primarily the popular portions of the (supposedly social) media—dis-close historical inter-(im)mediacy, which encircles the horizons of comprehension, which outlines their limitations and their limitedness, (but) which, in its re-turn, accords to all (probable and plausible) answers the mid-air of the un-decidable question: the in-between of in-decision.

The brief—nearly unknown, accessibly authored—essay by Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002) entitled "Was ist der Mensch?"—republished in the "Documents" section of this issue in the original German language and accompanied by the English as well as the Slovenian translation of the text—appeared in print for the first time during the Second World War, in December 1944, in the separate cultural edition *Der europäische Mensch* (*The European Man*) of the *Illustrierte Zeitung Leipzig* (*Illustrated Magazine Leipzig*), whereas, thereafter, the essay was reproduced only once, in 1947, in an assortment of articles from the same magazine under the title *Vom Wahren, Schönen, Guten. Aus dem Schatz europäischer Kunst und Kultur* (*On the True, the Beautiful, the Good. From the Treasury of European Art and Culture*); it namely never achieved addition to any other of its creator's books of selected or collected writings. The central reason for the incorporation of the famous hermeneutic philosopher's nigh forgotten work into a publication on the pandemic of COVID-19 lies, however, neither (just) in the historiographical interest of re-discovery, which could both clarify anew the author's aims and claims of the period as well as enrich the consciousness of his life's scholarly labors, nor (just) in the contemporary intention of re-actualization, which today's perplexing plight repeatedly parallelizes with war and could ensure an auxiliary amplification of its assertions, but—above all—in Gadamer's convincing re-cognition that—at a time of an utterly distressing crisis of humankind—through a sketch of chronological trans-formations of (occidental) thought about man's appointment on earth, upon its basis, on the one hand, acknowledges the urgency of devising answers and the burden of discerning between them, yet, on the other hand, nonetheless, un-ambiguously accentuates the (historical) open(-ended)ness—the beginning—of the question(ing) itself: "What is man?"

Might we, therefore, taking (in) inspiration from Gadamer's essay, from meticulously composed and polyphonically meaningful submissions to the readership of *Phainomena*, from in-numerable myriads of further pertinent, non-literarily safe-guarded meditations drawing (us) near and drawing (us) far from—and to—tradition, (not)—in the end, in the beginning—feel compassionately con-strained to ask ourselves, to ask our selves, whether the COVID-19 crisis, which we endeavor to endure, yet again, epochally, (al)locates humanity before the question of its own (non-?)sense? And: if the pandemic has, by its "abnormality," drastically obtruded and obstructed the effectuation of our habits, of our co-habitation with others, can "normality" we eagerly chase to re-instate within the vaguely envisioned "after" become enlarged enough to take heed and hearken (also) to the dilemmas of the deprivileged, the degraded, and the desolate? And: if the pandemic has, by its virality, laid bare the rudimentary fragility residing within our in-corporeal, our intangible institutions, can (also) the steps be re-traced towards the flowering (of an) awareness of the ephemeral transitoriness of (all) being(s)? Can the rift be bridged between the (hostile?) fragility of virality and the (hospitable?) virality of fragility? How do we respond? How are we responding? How *are* we? We, as what? We, as who?

*

In the sincere hope that the journal enables a fruitful and prolific continuation of discussions regarding the pandemic of COVID-19, the Editorial Board of *Phainomena*—and I myself personally—would like to cordially thank all authors of the published contributions for attentiveness of their participation and professionality of their cooperation in the preparation of the present issue. We would likewise like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Prof. Dr. Facundo Bey for the gracious and generous suggestion to edit the German original and to provide the English translation of Hans-Georg Gadamer's essay, and to Dr. Aleš Košar for kindly translating the text into Slovenian language.

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The Virus of the Question
The Phenomenology of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Daniel Roland Sobota

Polish Academy of Sciences, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Nowy Świat Street 72, 00-330 Warsaw, Poland

dsobota@ifispan.edu.pl

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is a presentation of ordinary experience of the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus. By illuminating fundamental moments of the said experience, this analysis attempts to uncover its deeper dynamics, here described by dint of the notion of questionableness, which—as it transpires—stands in some conflict with what can be observed at the level of ordinary ways of its articulations (shaped and spread by public opinion, which very much desires an answer). The experience of the pandemic uncovers the existence of a certain conflict between its more superficial layer, characterizing a social-political dimension of human existence, and its deeper layer, which unfolds at the level of individual life. This conflict constitutes a manifestation of a few-century-long and evermore aggravated divergence of two sorts of experiences: the objectifying scientific-technical and the existential one.

Keywords: pandemic, COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2, experience, questionableness.

Virus vprašanja. Fenomenologija pandemije COVID-19

Povzetek

Namen pričujočega članka je predstavitev običajnega izkustva pandemije, ki jo je povzročil virus COVID-19. Z osvetlitvijo temeljnih potez tega izkustva skuša analiza razkriti njegovo globljo dinamiko, tukaj opisano s pomočjo pojma vprašljivosti, ki se do določene mere nahaja, kakor se izkaže, v nasprotju s tistim, kar je mogoče opaziti na ravni običajnih načinov njegovih artikulacij (oblikuje in razširja jih javno mnenje, kakršno zahteva odgovore). Izkustvo pandemije razkriva obstoj specifičnega konflikta med njegovo površinsko plastjo, ki zaznamuje socialno-politično razsežnost človeške eksistence, in njegovo globljo plastjo, kakršna se razgrinja na ravni posameznega življenja. Tovrsten konflikt konstituira manifestacijo nekaj stoletij dolge in vedno bolj zaostrene divergence med dvema vrstama izkustva: objektivirajočo znanstveno-tehnično in eksistencialno.

Ključne besede: pandemija, COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2, izkustvo, vprašljivost.

Introduction

The ongoing pandemic of the SARS-CoV-2 virus quickly mobilized a substantial potential of humans, who joined forces to alleviate the dangerous consequences of the transmission of microbes and to avert a global catastrophe. The role of managing this fight was assumed by national and supranational political forces, which almost immediately launched their most effective "weapons." Since causes of the pandemic lie in nature, technology-driven natural and medical sciences try to counter the pandemic. The point is to possibly shortly and adequately diagnose the situation, which would enable, on the one hand, immediately taking up measures minimizing any further transmission of the pathogen; and, on the other hand, discovering in the nearest future a proper remedy as well as inventing an effective vaccine. Simultaneously, also other technology-supported sciences (e.g., economics and the humanities) engaged in fighting the pandemic, in order to smoothly go through the forthcoming economic crisis or to efficiently deal with the repercussions of social isolation. Generally speaking, employing a wide variety of sciences and technologies, one counts on an efficient moderation of the health-related, economic, social, political, and psychological consequences of the pandemic.

And, thus—as briefly sketched—, the pandemic is experienced indirectly, that is, through media reports originating from the public sphere. Media coverages—engaging our consciousness from dusk till dawn, brimming with images and words—constitute a hitherto unknown act in the global spectacle. Firmly locked-down in their premises, the spectators experience it on the edge of their seats, being vexed by what they can see and meekly expecting an improvement of the situation. Can we say anything else about such experience of the pandemic? How does it look, specifically, apart from what media coverages show? What sort of internal existential drama is going on backstage, with the main stage being filled with white noise stemming from our TV screens, smartphones, and computers? What is happening here at all? What moments constitute the structure of this experience and how does it proceed? Is there any distinguishable leitmotif, which can define the whole?

The present paper constitutes an attempt at a phenomenological reflection on the pandemic caused by COVID-19 as considered from the perspective of the ordinary and primordial experience thereof. The paper is tantamount to a sort of philosophical documentation written at the "battlefield." It alludes to recognized achievements of the phenomenological thought; yet, it does not specially favor any of the standpoints.[1] After the preliminary appreciation of what sort of experience we are dealing with here and what moments comprise it from the subjective as well as objective point of view (I), the attempt is made to unearth its deeper structures, reaching for one of the so-called fundamental experiences, which, as it turns out, stands in a clear conflict with the experience as shaped by the messages of the public opinion (II). We are especially interested in the *cognitive* aspect of this experience—about its uncertainty, which may be related to the fear of death, but not reducible to it. We omit, at this point, the question of how much all uncertainty is lined with the fear of death. We skirt the topic of emotions and feelings, which attend this kind of anxiety (e.g., hope, solidarity, gloom). We also only mention changes in the axiological and behavioral layers of the pandemic experience. Confronted with ordinary experience of sciences and of contemporary culture, which constitute sharp messages and for which the ultimate value is to *respond* quickly to what is happening, what stands out, is a dominant feature of this fundamental experience, which is its permanent questionableness (III).

I. Preliminary diagnosis

The pandemic is a situation, in which through personal contacts contagious microbes are transmitted on a large scale causing a life-threatening disease and the mobilization of all the forces aimed at life-preserving. However, it is the protection of *one's own* existence that comes to the fore; or, specifically, the protection of one's health from being infected; due to the fact that other people carry the disease, the pandemic is of a thoroughly social nature. Furthermore, the collective nature of this experience applies not only to persons, but also to non-human animals, objects of everyday use, buildings, and to Nature. Although from the biological perspective the cause of the pandemic is a contagious disease, which is transmitted through infecting successive persons

1 References to specific solutions will be signaled by appropriate bibliographical hints.

and related to individual organisms, the scale of the illness in a given area and at a given time makes up for the circumstance that the disease in question is not experienced as a state of the organism, but rather as a state of the surrounding. It is the environment that is "ill": what is dangerous, is not only the direct contact with people, but also with physical objects, with which the former are in contact; or with air they breathe. Due to the idiosyncrasies of the transmission of the virus, which does not "reside" only on the surfaces of bodies or physical objects, but creates around them a pathogenetic aura, what comes into the limelight in our daily lives, is the existential experience of space, around which a modified approach to the entirety of our surroundings is woven. Space is subject to a reorganization, the principle of which is "keeping distance" and making discriminations. These are the key categories, with which we deal with the world during the pandemic. Thus, the pandemic performs a localizational function: it divides the space of life in such a manner that it gives rise to new physical and mental barriers and/or fixes the already existing physical and mental divisions. What is open in and by itself (space, surroundings, the world) during the plague, is getting more and more closed and divided. Openness and closeness, which are the two basic categories of our natural approach and which in our pre-pandemic life are experienced as constant and invisible motifs of its organization (not only of the spatial one; cf. Sobota 2019), during the epidemic get exposed and solidified, and their respective extensions are fixed anew. Given the disease, one can distinguish in our surroundings between what constitutes the place of our existence, the scope of which is measured by the needs and functions of our bodies (our houses or other places of isolation), and the external world. In case of a healthy person, due to their isolation, one's home is considered a danger-free zone. It is in our houses that we have direct bodily contact with our "loved ones." The criterion of closeness cannot be identified in this case with the degree of kinship, but it is—quite literally—a degree of spatial distance from our bodies: although some of our loved ones may be distant in terms of the relation by blood, the closest ones are the ones who at a given time literally live close to one another. Their distinctive feature is that they are experienced as potentially healthy, whereas the surroundings of our house are the place of residence for those with whom we remain in contact only "from a distance" and who are experienced as being potentially ill. Thus, space is divided along the lines of the scope of sense experiences of our bodily receptors, with this scope determining the routes of transmission of the threat: a contact with the external world is confined to our senses, which by their nature work from a distance (vision and hearing) and which do not pose the threat of a direct contact. The other senses, the functioning of which requires a direct and close contact (smell, taste, and touch), function well only in their immediate surroundings. Certainly, this requires an intensified control over one's body and of its prior behaviors in the public sphere (such as touching objects, greeting by shaking hands, staying close to other people in small rooms, etc.). The persons inhabiting the said spaces are properly discriminated: only "home dwellers" are experienced fully in their bodiliness and in their aspects yielding themselves to sensory perception; "strangers," in turn, are experienced and localized only via senses working from a distance. Hence, whatever is normally open in the bodiliness to experience via senses operating from an immediate distance, now becomes assessed as potentially dangerous. As a result, what is normally constitutive of "being human" and is welcomed in its full disclosure, during the pandemic is identified with a place of potential transmission of the virus and is thus kept hidden. What is thereby meant, is the face and hands. Thus, the humanity inhering in strangers is somewhat phenomenologically modified and, in consequence, they are experienced first and foremost as potential carriers of the virus.

This introductory description of the phenomenological content of the experience of the pandemic already hints at some points, which—put together—constitute a whole and which should be subject to a deeper phenomenological scrutiny. What is at stake, here, are the phenomenology of body, phenomenology of the Other, phenomenology of space, and phenomenology of perception. Furthermore, due to a wide range of the gravity of changes, it is also other domains of phenomenology that can contribute some insights in this respect. The experience of the pandemic is the experience of a change of content and a reconfiguration of traditionally distinguished realms of life (*Lebenswelt*), such as *Selbstwelt*, *Mitwelt*, and *Umwelt*. For example, due to the fact that many work-related duties were shifted online, not only the experience of work changed, but also the experience of residence, work-time, and leisure, of moving as well as the one of intimacy, etc. The significance of technology additionally grew. It is the implementation of technology at home that enabled the contact with what first required an unconditional presence in the public sphere (participation in classes, medical check-ups, celebrating with a group of friends, etc.). Hence, across physical distinctions, there lies a safe haven—from the perspective of the threat of being infected with the virus—of virtual reality, which makes ordinary experience of space tricky and calls for express attention. Finally, the experience of the pandemic described herein is the experience of a healthy person who is at risk of being infected, but who is never actually infected. The situation starts to change radically when we consider the experience of the pandemic from the perspective of the person who either went through the disease or who is doing so now.[2] The fact that the ill person must remain totally isolated from others—because of which they experience not only physical, but also social isolation—, coupled with the fact that, as it happens among the persons infected, they lose the sense of smell and taste, as well as all sorts of anomalies taking place, make it the case that the whole experience of the world changes drastically. Under such circumstances, the experience of the pandemic is getting significantly complicated, which should exert a corrective influence also on our understanding of the meaning of the experience of the pandemic on the part of the person who has not actually fallen ill just yet. It has been long since noted that investigating various experiences of pathological nature contributes to a better understanding of the so-called normal experiences (Merleau-Ponty 2001, 100, 122–167; Carel 2016, ch. 9).

The indicated elements of the experience of the pandemic do not contain the main motif, which focuses them on itself and redefines their functioning. The said motif is the most far-reaching—on the part of the object—point of the "intentional arc,"[3] along which the experience is extended. The natural science calls it "SARS-CoV-2 virus." The main reason for anxiety and the permanent point of reference for our altered manner of functioning in

2 We leave aside the phenomenological research of the experience of the real illness. Cf. Carel 2016.

3 This concept originates with Merleau-Ponty, who borrowed it from R. Fischer (Merleau-Ponty 2001, 155).

our surroundings, the reorganization of which occurs mainly through considering the sensory capacities of our bodies, is, thus, something, which is relatively well established scientifically and which—taking into consideration its physical size—still evades the fine-grained resolution of human senses. In other words, although the illness is experienced in our daily lives in terms of the controlled bodily movement in a reorganized space and accordingly shifted horizons of what is perceptually available, its cause is directly and sensorily *unavailable*. Our extraordinary bodily behavior constitutes a reaction to a pathogenic factor transcending the capacities of our natural sensory perception. Although, as a matter of course, due to powerful microscopes we are able to see the virus, this possibility, reserved to just a few people, does not translate into a natural perception thereof. For the majority of us, an adjustment made to our behavior during the pandemic is a response to what is invisible. However, its sensory inaccessibility does not have the character of privation, but has a definitely positive sense. This non-sensory presence of the virus is merely relative in the eyes of scientists. However, for the majority of us, this very feature of the existence of the virus is fundamental. It is this feature—as the most far-reaching "objective correlate"—that a certain experience refers to, with this experience lying at the foundation of the above-sketched ordinary experience of the potential disease and being experienced through a phenomenologically modified space, taking into consideration therein—quite differently from the "normal conditions"—distinguished permanent reference points (one's own body, foreign body). After all, the phenomenological motive for the above-mentioned discriminations is not an experience of the pathogen, understood as a rationally identified, an under a microscope observable and objective pathogenic factor. Although the virus as such has recently become the most pressing issue, to which all the other issues are subordinated, due to its size, which transcends our natural perceptual capacities, and rather chaotic reports on its transmission, the virus is a sort of imperceptible center of (de)composition and (in)determinacy, from which an awe-inspiring mystery radiates. The virus might also be—with certain qualifications—compared to the transcendental X, which is the point of reference of all our pandemic experiences. Thus, it is no surprise that in prior, more religiously inclined eras, the state of the pandemic normally urged empirical-world-transcending, moral-eschatological interpretations. Nowadays, we know what actually causes the disease; however, this scientific knowledge does not translate into an ordinary sense of confidence or into rational behavior. Because the virus is not experienced at the level of our natural sensory perception, which constitutes our basic way of referring to external reality and founds it commonsensical modalities, its central place within our ordinary experience is not a well-recognized solid entity (such as, say, a comet passing by the Earth) or an event for that matter (such as, say, a natural catastrophe). Rather, the status of the virus is "something" invisible and imponderable, the workings of which extends in space and time. It is a certain process, the details of which are unpredictable and remain just an open question. What one is left with, is waiting for the consequences of the presence of the virus. This presence—as we noted—is not directly given, but, if it "manifests itself," then it is only noticeable through bodily symptoms. Because the virus manifests itself via physical symptoms, about which—statistically speaking—we find out, not through personal experience, but rather through intermediary media coverages, its *presence* is of a strongly representative nature. Moreover, this is such a sort of presence that—although it manifests itself in the mode of human existence—it originates from beyond the human world. The virus "haunts" man, it comes from outside of the latter's world and manifests itself therein as a "stranger" overpowering it. In this respect, it resembles something demonic. Something is happening, something is approaching… Still, we do not know what it is and what consequences it might ultimately bring. Its nature is destructive and yet not fully specified. The peculiar non-sensoriness (asensuality), mysterious and processual, the non-objective nature of the existence of the virus are emotionally experienced in the form of anxiety and fear, which, in turn, can be mixed-up with the hope that "somehow everything will work out."

II. Conflict of experiences

Are the thus sketched experiences subsumable under any one uniform category? And as far as the foundations of the experience of the world altered by the pandemic go, does there exist a describable "fundamental experience," which readjusts and organizes the entirety of our natural approach during the pandemic?

From the perspective of the world image, as created by the media, which is just a part of our ordinary experience, the fundamental and desirable way of referring to the fact of the spreading of the virus is provided by a rational-scientific approach. This tallies well with what for several centuries has been a growing tendency within this natural experience, which first and foremost, historically speaking, characterizes the European part of humankind. From a scientific standpoint, we are dealing with a pathogenic zoonotic virus of a given type, the functioning of which requires man to take some defensive measures. Designing, recommending, and implementing them is the responsibility of scientific institutions and state's organizations as well as of the public media, the task of which is to "spread education." Without a doubt, an effective protection from the virus may be provided only by science and technology. The "problem" is that this dominating role of science in the media messages constitutes just a part of our all-round everyday life experience, which in its prevailing content and in the way of experiencing it relates rather loosely to the former or even—as it is in the case under consideration—conflicts with it. For, in spite of being confident that only science and technology bolstering one another are able to overcome the threat, one feels fairly disoriented towards the two. How is that possible?

The fact that science was designated to be the main defender of humankind against the pandemic's destruction derives from its several-century-long cultural domination. However, it is to be noted that, from a phenomenological point of view, the way of referring to the world, which a scientific approach involves, and the one we are forced to assume when faced with a threat of the virus share at least one important feature: they both require keeping some distance from the surroundings. However, the concept of distance, which we spoke of earlier in the context of the experience of space, has a broader meaning. What is thereby meant, is refraining from direct involvement in the current affairs and from daily striving for "bread-winning." This peculiar withdrawal, which uncovers a normally invisible—and also hidden, namely under the content (*Gehalt*) of the world—fragment of the "intentional arc" (that is its "sense of reference"; *Bezugssinn*; cf. Heidegger 1995, 63), reconciles the experience of the pandemic with the scientific approach. Whereas in the experience of the pandemic, the richness of this sense is still stated in the question and thus preserved, in the scientific approach, the said sense of reference gets reduced to only one, that is to the "objective sense." By eliminating all the remaining ways of reference, the scientific cognition treats the world and its constitutive elements purely objectively. Due to this fact, what is a sort of "mystery" (with all its shades) for the common experience, is—from the scientific point of view—a well-defined *problem*, which needs to be solved. That is why the attempt at reducing the sense of reference to the scientific approach and filtering the entirety of our experience through science is perceived in terms of a cognitive dissonance, which is, in turn, the stronger, the less efficient the "filter" itself is. That is why so much room is made for other types of cognition that do not fit the scientific-technical methodology. The fact that we picked up phenomenology to describe the experience of the pandemic stems from—among others—the circumstance that—similar to the pandemic experience and to scientific experience—phenomenology suggests running counter to the intentional stance—and, thus, suggests suspending the belief of "natural experience" (Husserl 1976, 61–66)—, yet, unlike scientific cognition, it does not reduce the entirety of the sense of reference to the objective sense; instead, it allows for the full manifestation of the rich content thereof. One would even like to say that due to one's retreat from the world and due to suspending the intentional stance, the experience of the pandemic seems tailored to a phenomenological viewpoint.

A phenomenological proposal becomes more attractive than scientific cognition of what happens in the realm of experience,[4] especially given the fact that the latter became skeptical towards what is experienced as "science."[5] Although the official message has it that

4 It is to be stressed that this "advantage" of phenomenology over scientific cognition holds only in the context of the description of the experience of the pandemic and not with regard to the ways of dealing with it.

5 The following remarks, pertinent to science, are not related to its objective content or its immanent, ideal order, but to the way, in which science is normally experienced during the pandemic.

the only thing we are left with while facing the pandemic is to develop our scientific-technological potential—which many a time proved effective under similar circumstances—, the current experience of the pandemic demonstrated its partial helplessness. Any crisis is always a state of uncertainty, but the former becomes the more pronounced, the greater claims it makes for having indisputable knowledge on every single topic. Nowadays, with the several hundred years of scientific and technological progress, the common feeling that we as humankind know a lot about the world and, what is more, that this is the most reliable knowledge, the cognitive optimism, which oftentimes leads to epistemic fundamentalism, constitutes an important element of our contemporary natural experience.[6] From the point of view of the ordinary-instilled trust in the power of the scientific approach, the current pandemic brought about the feeling of disappointment. For it showed how little we know about even the simplest things from the scientific standpoint. Despite the quick diagnosis of what type of a virus we are dealing with, a few fundamental issues remain as yet days unknown. Ordinary consciousness feels disoriented when, facing spectacular and ambitious scientific and technological discoveries, which each day are being made at various corners of the world and which bolster our belief in techno-science's monopoly on truth, there are so many—oftentimes contradictory—answers to seemingly simple questions: what means are efficient for the protection from the COVID-19 virus? Does wearing a mask prevent an infection? Can people who had already been ill fall ill again? Why do younger people go through the disease in a milder manner? What is the incidence rate of the disease and what is its death toll? How long does the infection last and how long is an ill person infectious? Is the ultimate cause of death the virus or the declining health due to the development of a so-called concomitant disease? Although the last issue may seem, from the medical perspective, resolved, it is controversial at the level of, say, regulations related to health insurance. It seems that, given the belief in the omnipotence of scientific knowledge and of technology, these are the questions, which are not supposed to appear at all. But still…

6 The reverse side of the same phenomenon is epistemological skepticism, which calls into question all the truths, including the indubitable ones.

The said lack of orientation towards the virus itself, which—as already mentioned—implies something imponderable, is merely the tip of the iceberg of ordinary feelings of uncertainty and the experience of ignorance revealed by the pandemic. The answers to such questions as: at which moment of the pandemic are we now? when (or if at all) will the world go back to normalcy? what sort of impact is the epidemic going to have on economy and society? shall we expect in the near future the recurrence of the disease?—point to divergent directions and are formulated without adequate confidence. At the same time, in ordinary consciousness, there remains the feeling that something is happening. There appears the question "what is it?", however, none of the answers is able to fill the void of ignorance brought about by this peculiar experience. One poses the question: "What is happening?"; and waits in vain for an answer, which is not forthcoming. One experiences oneself how science, which once "broke the spell" of the world, now coupled with technology enchanted it yet again—this is the very world, from which one is now being wrenched. As a matter of course, the more, in ordinary consciousness, science in its role of combating the virus disappoints and the more room it makes for "subjective" interpretations of reality, the more poignant becomes the feeling that something serious is going on and that nobody knows how to behave and what to think when confronted with these premonitions. However, the fact that the experience of questionableness of the pandemic situation cannot be dismissed by media-covered opinions expressed by scientists or experts and politicians does not make the state of the question accepted as an integral and indispensable part of the experience of the pandemic. A question is not an uncertainty or a doubt, which one can hold on to forever. Any serious question implies the desire of finding an answer thereto. Otherwise, it would simply not be a question at all. That is why, if science—presenting itself in the public sphere as the only one that can provide true answers—fails to give an answer to "what is happening," the desire giving rise to that very question does not disappear at all. Rather, there are other extra-scientific possibilities that are then taken into consideration.

This lack of adequate answers, which would slake the thirst for questioning is hard to bear for ordinary consciousness. The process of socialization and education inculcate in us, from our early childhood onwards, the belief that the European civilization is the proper home for knowledge, which—all in all—means the culture of answer. This superstition, well established over centuries, assumes that an answer is of utmost importance and that the moment of a question should be reduced to a bare minimum because it is only an introductory, provisional moment of acquiring knowledge, which in turn is supposed to be of the form of an integrated system of answers; or, actually, of theses. This attitude was first elaborated within European metaphysics and then became the universal assumption of all knowledge, especially scientific knowledge. The human being raised in this spirit learns that, granted, once people posed questions, to which they did not know answers and which led them to various types of "fantastic" interpretations. However, once the scientific method was discovered, there are much fewer unanswered questions; and the ones that still remain unanswered are either—as neo-positivists claimed—unanswerable (that is, meaningless) or still—due *only* to the state of science itself—ineliminable. Certainly, whereas in the eyes of scientists, the latter set includes not so few questions at all—the awareness of which provides one of the motivating reasons for inaugurating successive investigations—, the extra-scientific ordinary experience is characterized by the circumstance that it does not allow for the former sort of consciousness. The active trace of scientific cognition operating within the natural approach is not methodical questioning. The natural approach is a blend of various perspectives, the common feature of which is the fact that they avoid "remaining in the state of questionableness." If there appears an experience, which urges us to pose questions—and this is indubitably so in the case of certain events, which are important to both the individual and the society, such as the state of an epidemic—, then almost at the very same moment they appear to be marginalized or eliminated, or redefined into so-called problems.[7]

And, thus, the experience of the pandemic appears, in which it transpires that, despite the enormous amount of cognitive resources having been accrued in our culture through the decades—and which are widely available due to the internet—, there are answers to the simplest of questions still missing.

7 On the difference between question and problem cf. Gadamer 2004, 368–369.

Strictly speaking, the point is not that there are no specific answers—quite the contrary, there are so many of them that one can get easily confused—, but that the common belief that there must exist such answers is now quite a stretch. What was violated, was the sense of fundamental certainty of this world, which to some degree is simply necessary for life and typically characterizes the common attitude of man towards his surroundings (Husserl 1939, §7). During the pandemic, this certainty is always distorted. However, the higher its degree at the outset, the more poignant the feeling of its weakening. Under the veil of certainty, there crops up a void of ignorance, with the latter not being attenuated by any provisional answers. One must remain in the state of questionableness.

But still, even under such extreme circumstances as the experience of an epidemic and the state of ignorance caused by it, ordinary consciousness comes up with various ways of abstaining from questioning. There are at least a few strategies of reacting to this alarming situation and a few fundamental models of responding to the said experience of questionness (which will be tackled in more detail in the next chapter). Although it is dominating and ineradicable, it is concealed with different answers. These are: 1) a state of passivity and waiting, which disowns its own initiative in favor of effectiveness managed by scientific-technical powers; 2) a maverick sort of attitude searching for its own answer to what is happening, skeptical by nature towards mainstream messages and yet lacking proper competencies and simultaneously being unaware of it; 3) an approach founded upon "animalistic-defense" mechanisms and resorting to aggressive behaviors deprived of rational control; 4) an attitude of instrumental activism, which is "driven" only by self-interest and benefits only itself; 5) an attitude of heroic activism, oftentimes implemented during voluntary service and in the name of higher values, assuming the form of a mission. Each of these attitudes has its own variant of the pandemic experience of space and time, as well as its unique experience of body and of the Others. Also, the emotional note, as well as its intensity, varies across the said attitudes, with the note being a motivating reason for particular behaviors. However, delving into such issues would require several separate and detailed studies…

III. The state of the pandemic as a state of experience in the mode of questionableness

The above-mentioned attitudes are different types of answers that individuals assume towards the extraordinary experience of pandemic happenings. These answers are characterized by the fact that they are as “necessary” as they are inadequate.[8] Phenomenologically speaking, they only partially fulfill questioning intentions, invoking and sustaining the state of disappointment. Where does this inadequacy come from?

The following hypothesis is lying in wait to be justified: what constitutes an essence of an experience, is the fact that the experience reaches certainty through direct contact, which, under the pandemic and due to the recommendation to keep distance, is thwarted. The possibility of getting infected with the virus paralyzes and hinders our experience, which, under normal conditions, indulges itself with being fully blown. Therefore, the state of the pandemic is the experience of the world, in which on experiences—not on the side of the world, but on the side of experience itself—a certain refusal: one experiences that one ought not to experience. Thus, the experience has a sort of inherent character: it leans out, then retreats, unfolds and folds in itself, goes out towards the world with the latter being open to it; and yet, there cannot be (or should not be) any meeting point between the two. In this way, it cannot develop or become a full experience; hence, it cannot be an adequate experience either. In consequence, it becomes “hungrier” for the world, even more questioning, which in turn encourages to stick to any answers that—albeit inadequate—are able to mute the uncomfortable state of questionableness.

In order to justify the above hypothesis, let us attempt to closely characterize the experience of pandemic happenings.[9] We provisionally described it as the experience that something is happening and we do not know exactly what it is. That is why probably the best expression of this experience is the

8 Speaking of necessity and (in)adequacy, we use these concepts in the colloquial, rather than technical sense, with the latter use being adhered to by, say, Husserl. Cf. Husserl 1976, §138.

9 The leading thread of further characteristics of this experience represent the theses from the author’s book *Esej z filozofii dziejów* (cf. Sobota 2018).

question: "What is happening?" As a matter of course, it does not have to be articulated in the manner depicted here. Instead, this question constitutes an ideal expression of the experience of pandemic happenings, which, as a state of questionableness, opens up a wide array of possibilities and invokes in the experiencing subject the desire to find an answer among them. Different issues related to that were indicated above. Thus far, we have been considering the experience of the pandemic from the perspective of space; yet, delving more deeply into it, it seems obvious that it is also a very significant experience of time. After all, the question is clearly of temporal structure: it assumes certain foreknowledge, which points to experience hitherto accumulated and to the state of knowledge on the part of the questioning person, as well as it relates to ignorance, the illumination of which is expected in the near future. The desire for knowledge reaches far into the future, and is suspended up to the moment of finding the proper or the most proximate answer.

In line with the clues presented above, let us try to elucidate the essence of these three fundamental moments of the pandemic experience, that is of questioning, time, and experience as such, in order to ultimately unify them. In this way, we shall gain an insight into what is the fundamental experience of the pandemic, with the pandemic urging us to assume the said attitudes towards it.

First, the question "What is happening?" not only expresses the feeling of what is happening during the pandemic, but also seems to amount to a perfect expression of what the experience as such is. It sounds rather peculiar at first: however, especially considering the fact that experience requires direct contiguity of the subject with the given content, it is the experience "face to face." It is firsthand experience. This contact with a thing, which, in line with the etymology of the word "contactus," means first and foremost "touch," may be understood in a certain analogy to touching.[10] We touch things, but things also touch us (*contigere*): they happen to us, they are contingent. If it makes sense at all to compare experience to one of our senses—even if this sense is to be considered (following Aristotle) fundamental (*De anima,* 413

10 On the understanding of experience as residing, "being-with," and touching cf. Heidegger 1987, 81.

b 5)—, then, while considering the essence of the experience of happenings, what deserves to be emphasized is not only its directness, but also—and perhaps most of all—the moment of suspension inhering in touch, vigilance, readiness to retreat, which during the pandemic is brought to the fore. This element is missing in hearing or visual experience, with both of these senses operating from a distance. This is because touch operates on the border of the subject, which—during contact—an object may violate and like a virus may enter into its organism. Such is also the pandemic experience, which is centered around touch—however, negatively: it makes efforts to avoid touch. Because touch is this special sense, which can turn a toucher into the touched, avoiding touching something is only a part of the survival strategy during the pandemic. The ultimate end is not to be "touched" by the disease. This concern for insulating experience from its full natural development thwarts the intentional movement somehow at the middle of the road. This preventing, stopping, or suspending of the experience characterizing the living conditions under the pandemic is manifested in its other aspects. Whereas, normally, an experiencing subject delves into the content of the world, experiences it directly, somehow forgetting himself, during the pandemic, experience clearly oscillates between two poles of an intentional arc, that is between the subject and object, thus exposing their distinctness and their mutually incongruent modes of existence.

We already stated that in touch, which might be regarded as a model of experience as such, there inheres a peculiar pre-reflective movement: while touching, one experiences oneself as touched by what is being touched. And that is the point: there is no experience without an experiencing subject—much the same as there is nothing experienced without an experiencing subject. Hegel, for example, expressed this in the following manner: "The principle of experience contains the infinitely important determination that human beings must themselves be involved when taking up a given content and holding it to be true, more precisely that they must find such content to be united and in unison with the certainty of themselves." (Hegel 2010, 35) Experience is an encounter, in which its object is given together with the subject's self-awareness. Hegel described this knowledge as certainty. However, the exact opposite is the case—especially during the pandemic. Experiencing something, we are somehow put to a test. In the face of an object, which is not fully determined, a subject experiences their ignorance towards it, their limitations as well as their finitude (Gadamer 2004, 350–351). Experiencing themselves, a subject experiences their individuality and uniqueness. Whereas, normally, this individuality pertains both to the content of experience and to the experiencing subject themselves, in the case of the pandemic, its communal dimension is projected onto the said uniqueness of experience and of its poles: humankind experiences the world or the world experiences humankind in a specific negative way. Still, the said exposition of the subjective character of the experience in the mode of questionableness is perfectly reflected in the experience of the pandemic, with this experience, by opening itself to reality, permanently considering the question of who experiences (as an individual or a community)—and mainly doing so with respect to its physical helplessness and "vulnerability." It seems that—contrary to ordinary experience, which "leaps" into the world and thus loses awareness of itself—the experience of the pandemic goes as far as to expose—during its encounter with the world—its own subjecthood, which presents itself in the mode of bodily feebleness and vulnerability.

While talking about experience, we already took heed of its temporal aspect. The pandemic—as noted above—radically impacts our experience of space; still, the pandemic mainly concerns extraordinary time: "the time of the pandemic." Certainly, each experience is extended over time: with its point of departure being what was experienced in the past, it is oriented toward what is new; in other words, it is inclined towards the future. The so-called collecting and searching for new experience, which are synonymous with getting to know the world and which during the pandemic are hindered, refer to what was unknown before. Experience—as Gadamer contended—is open (Gadamer 2004, 347). The relation between new experiences and the prior ones is of peculiar—dialectical—nature. New experience neither negates nor invalidates any other prior experience. Gadamer says: „Every experience has the structure of question." (Gadamer 2004, 356) In the course of questioning, experience brings an answer. However, it is not an absolute answer, which would not yield itself to further questioning. Acquired experiences do not cancel each other out. Instead, not giving up their distinctness, they undergo some characteristic aggregation (although not a closure), during which each new experience more or less alters *the entirety* of previously acquired experience. This means that experience also leans towards the past—that is, towards the experience, which was already acquired. The experiencing consciousness, shifting from one experience to another, sort of "turns back" (Gadamer 2004, 349). This turning-back encounters not only the favorableness, but also a resistance of what it turns to. The experience of the pandemic exposes this change clearly and painfully. A change in people's lifestyle is so radical that this next experience does not so much clearly dissociate itself from a "before," from "the way it used to be," while reifying the latter into the form of a pre-pandemic "history," as it calls into question its hitherto operative sense. Because past experiences become clearly distinguished from what is happening now and the former's sense is called into question, as the future is not there yet and we are uncertain of what the future has in store, the pandemic experience is the experience of time, which—as a whole—got somehow stopped. During the pandemic, one lives in the mean-time between what is past and what is about to come. The state of the pandemic is a state, in which the entirety of time is experienced from the perspective of the question: "What is happening?"

That is why—taking into consideration this tight connection between experience and time—Gadamer rightly notes that "genuine experience is experience of one's own history" (Gadamer 2004, 351). One could say that as much as history is precisely what is happening, what actually becomes history proper, as time goes by, thus becoming what is *not* happening (history is often associated with "old history"), so does experience, understood as what directly and vividly refers us to the world, under the influence of time, become our experience, that is, it "makes us experienced." Both experience and history are characterized by the same passive-active structure—experience accrues in the experiencing subject and, thus, the former is a decisive factor for the latter's being experienced. Experience and history are brought closer together also by the fact that what experience refers to is not an object facing the subject, but the very influence one exerts on the other. Experience is what *we* are doing, but also what *it* does with us. The same applies to history. This influence, these happenings happen between the subject and an object. One can say that every experience is an experience of history broadly understood. However, such a relation does not hold between experience and history understood in a much narrower sense, that is, that something is happening here. This means that not every experience is an experience of history in the strict sense. Instead, there exists the need for a certain specification, which—in the movement between something and nothing—allows for the possibility of experiencing the dispute between the old and the new; that is, that something is happening here. That something is happening—although we do know what, exactly—, is given onto us in a certain feeling; that is, as anxiety, enthusiasm, or fear. The experience of history implies the awareness of the fact that *something* is happening here though *nothing* certain is known about it. It is a form of knowledge-ignorance, which can be easily identified with an attitude of expectation, hope, or question, for that matter. The said attitude constitutes the subjective factor of experiencing history, which allows for an experience of history in its total stillness ("silence before the storm"). The movement of history does not have to manifest itself in any spectacular way, although, in fact, it does usually contain elements of a spectacle.

This connection of temporal characteristics of experience with its openness is constitutive of its historicalness to such an extent that, as Richard Schaeffler put it, "possibility of history lies in the ability to experience" (Schaeffler 1973, 212). This situation is perfectly represented by the experience of the pandemic. One could actually venture to describe the said experience as an experience of historical character. In fact, historically speaking, the times of a pandemic always did have an all-embracing historical dimension; it was a process intersecting with the course of history and distorting its trajectory, with the process constituting the time of a deep crisis.[11] Unlike in the case of "an ordinary disease," which afflicts selected individuals, the pandemic has an all-embracing nature and it is of everybody's concern. Thus, the community of people at risk is formed. Not only is my individual world undergoing transformation—as in the case of going through an ordinary disease—, but during the pandemic also the world we share changes.

The experience of time is—as is well-known—an experience of change (Aristotle 2018, 221b); the latter has a special character in the experience of the

11 On the notion of crisis cf. Koselleck 2009, 221–235.

pandemic, the character tallying well with the situation of something unknown happening. Although the pandemic has natural causes, it is not experienced from the perspective of an objective natural time, but rather as a time of life, the immanent mobility of which has been significantly altered.[12] As an experience that something is happening, the pandemic is first and foremost the experience of movement. Movement appears in two shapes. First, the hitherto operative movement of life gets suddenly thwarted. In place of daily chores, there appears stillness. However, this stillness is not experienced as peace, but rather as the already-mentioned "silence before the storm." It accumulates energy and, hence, contains a clear tension in itself. Tension, in turn, builds up a sort of internal, invisible mobility of the observed stillness. It is this mobility that allows us to appreciate the historical character of the occurring situation. This is not a uniform motion, which, quite like absolute stillness, is precisely an exemplar of the situation that *nothing* is happening. Although there are some happenings going on here, due to the lack of changes in the movement itself, it is difficult to claim that anything is happening here. On the other hand, the totally chaotic movement, with objects erratically moving to-and-fro, cannot translate into the experience that *something* is happening here. The happening occurs between the said something and nothing. Note that, instead of nothing, we are still talking about something—namely, that *something* is happening here, that something being still indeterminate. One can say that between being something and nothing there is being itself—the fact that there is something, that is, the state of the pandemic. However, this is not a natural fact, devoid of any significance. What is meant in this case, is not just-being, being-itself. Rather, that something, albeit indeterminate, is by no means empty, but grants significance and gravity to the fact of being, depicting the latter as important. Therefore, the experience of history is not the experience of *that*, which is happening—this *that* is precisely the unknown. Thus, the experience of history is the experience that *something* is happening. The experience of pandemic happenings is the experience of something between "that" and "something," and, thus, of the event of something indeterminate. To validly speak of history,

12 On immanent mobility of life cf. Heidegger 1994, 117–123. Movements of existence are tackled by Jan Patočka (Patočka 1991, 226).

it takes fundamental changes; the latter are the ones in the substance itself, with the changes running in an unrecognized direction. This very running occurs at a variable rate. This is also supplemented with irreversibility and uniqueness of historical movement, and also with the fact that the movement itself is not related to some part of reality, but to the whole of it. This, in turn, gives the impression of ubiquity, which requires of the subject—whether they want it or not—to join, to participate—which is perceived as the requirement to take a stand and make a decision, as well as to bear responsibility.[13]

The experience of a ubiquitous change and the need for a decision—as mentioned above—would not be possible if in the experience of the pandemic, *possibility* would not be exposed as a dominating modality of experience. Under the extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic, the change in one's life is not caused by the fact that somebody *actually* fell ill, but that they *can* fall ill. The difference between the state of the pandemic and the fact of going through a disease consists in that the former requires an adjustment in the behavior not only on the part of ill people, but also the healthy ones. A healthy person ought to behave in such a way as to avoid contracting the disease. This, in turn, implies that—in comparison with normal conditions—the possibilities of contracting the disease are greater. On the one hand, one experiences those possibilities negatively. First, because the pandemic exposes the possibility of the person's death and the death of the person's loved ones. Death, which—as Heidegger perceived it—is normally viewed as something nebulous and as a rather distant and indeterminate possibility (Heidegger 1987, 293–296), in the case of the risk of getting infected with the virus becomes a rather concrete possibility, which is "lurking for us just around the corner." Second, a possibility is experienced negatively due to the lack of things one was able to do before. The state of the pandemic is the state of closedness, in which a set of opportunities shrinks. The situation is experienced in a way similar to a prisoner experiencing the world. On the other hand, the state of closedness urges to establish new opportunities, with that state of closedness being at the same time a question, which, in turn, is itself—as Gadamer put it—a field of open

13 During the pandemic, one very often hears the appeals to be responsible (for oneself and for others)!

positive opportunities. Narrowing down the field of available opportunities enhances creativity. Furthermore, a protracted lock-down finally provokes us into directing our thoughts at the times "after the pandemic," with these times being filled with different scenarios.

This change in the internal modality of the content of experience invokes one issue, which cannot be ignored in the experience of pandemic happenings: this is the issue of sense, values, goals, and, hence, the whole axiological aspect of experience. We already mentioned that, although the pandemic is anchored in the law of nature, its consequences seem to reach the highest peaks of culture. Pre-pandemic life carries on according to definite and stable duties stemming from the adopted values. Although they are thematized on the side of the content of experience as the properties of things and behaviors, they actually belong to the realm of *the way* they are experienced. They are "subjective" ways of referring to reality, the ways of its interpretations, which fill the axiological and semantic reality with content. Conforming to certain norms, gives our daily lives a character of normality (Husserl 1973, 117). During the pandemic, which distances us from reality and, thus, excessively extends the intentional arc, what is getting revealed, are the ways of referring thereto—also in the appurtenant axiological aspects—with the said revelation being such that these ways are getting somewhat shaky. It is as if opening the intentional relation and illuminating it through the light of consciousness would cause a certain "panic" among the prior, well-organized, and stable meanings, goals, and values. In this layer, there arises an analogous alarm caused by the virus entering an organism. This shakiness of the layer of sense consists in the shift and change in the status affecting what ought to be. Normally closer to what is and to what must be, what ought to be, during the pandemic gets shifted towards the realm of possibility. Leaving "is" and "must be," which together determine the so-called normalcy, duty or "what ought to be" become only what is *possible*. And because, necessarily, there exists not just one possibility, but a possibility always implies that there are alternatives to it, redefining a duty in terms of what is possible reveals a wide array of possibilities, which were hitherto concealed. As a matter of course, what plays a crucial role in activating these possibilities, is time, which—as we stated before—is experienced not in terms of the present moment, but in the entirety of its ecstasies. The latter are not empty forms of intuition; instead, they carry a rich meaningful content (on the one hand—tradition; on the other—futuristic visions).

And, finally, the last issue characterizing the ontological side of the experience of the pandemic: the experience of the pandemic is an extraordinary experience of questionableness, during which new behaviors and habits are established. After all, experience is not a pure "spiritual" form of cognition from "the bird's eye view," but, from its inception onwards, remains embodied and realized in a particular action. As we noted above, during the pandemic, which separates us from reality—with reality being normally a field of specific possibilities—, one must learn new behaviors, which are, on the one hand, recommended under the implemented "sanitary regime" (wearing a mask, gloves, staying at home, keeping a distance, etc.); and which, on the other hand, refer to the daily routines not related to the problem of the virus (work, leisure, entertainment, sport, celebrating, eating, etc.). In each of these cases, there will emerge new behaviors, which, before they will become "ritualized," must be properly adopted. Quite like actors, we must learn new roles. It is also in this case that the entire issue reduces to the problem of our relation to reality, with the relation being distorted by the pandemic. In each of the cases, the difficulty with adopting new behaviors does not consist in what we do, but in how to do it. Each action has its ergonomic optimum, which—while the action in question is repeated and tried over and over again—becomes discovered and adopted. And action, finally, "kicks in" and finds its internal equilibrium. However, this must not be understood in automatic-physiological terms, but, rather, in terms of vivid bodiliness (*Leib*). Here, we are touching upon a distinct independent issue, which goes far beyond the usual talk of human action (also in phenomenology); namely, the mere talk of "realizing" certain opportunities. Physical resistance of the world, the mass of the matter, effort and work of our muscles perhaps comprise the most important moments of this issue, which are experienced in the pre-expressive order. They are described by eidetic laws, the determination of which takes place in the course of exercises and experiments (Barba and Savarese 2005). Under the pandemic, some of them are even somehow physically cognized while adopting new behaviors. Thus, behaviors under the pandemic are not habitual, but are instead marked with a sort of innovativeness and uniqueness: they constitute certain attempts, searching, learning, which errs and succeeds. And, so, it is clear how daily behavior, even in its most physical, bodily-oriented aspects, reveals a dominating trait of the pandemic experience, which is questionableness.

Conclusion

The state of the pandemic is a special state for many reasons—including cognitive ones. What seems to be under normal conditions well connected and merged to such an extent that its constituents are so tightly fastened they are barely distinguishable, under the pandemic gets loosened, distorted, somehow thwarted, and decomposed. The relations are loosened, seams start to appear, cracks start to emerge, and differences become more pronounced; internal questionableness of reality is, thus, revealed, one could say, in its naked form. Cognitive benefits that the pandemic occasioned are probably the least related to the virus itself, which—already mentioned—constitutes the most far-reaching, and simultaneously the most mysterious pole of an intentional arc. What is more important, is how much under these conditions we find out about ourselves.

The pandemic revealed the fact that what inheres in our relations to reality is a certain conflict of experiences, the poles of which constitute different sorts of—more or less justified—answers, and the dominating feeling of questionableness, with questionableness being incongruent with any of these answers. It turns out that also scientific answers—which in their trivialized and popularized form reach the public opinion—cannot soothe the anxiety of the question. However, it may be the case that what the pandemic revealed through its influence is not only the state resulting from the occurring danger brough about by a transmission of the virus. Instead, what was caused by the pandemic, may be also a certain state of culture stemming from the deepest and long-term tendencies. From the medical perspective, the COVID-19 virus entering an organism exposes the latter's weak spots and makes the already operating diseases more severe. By the same token, from the cultural perspective, the experience of the virus exposes the conflicts and infirmities existing within culture itself. The dogma—inculcated in our minds and dominating us from the very early years of socialization and education onwards—that in the face of the collapse of earlier strategies of dealing with our ignorance only science can provide satisfactory answers to the experience of questionableness ceaselessly haunting our existence leaves us completely helpless in the face of the situation, in which there is a lack of scientific solutions able to mute the said questionableness of being. Enchanted by the unquestionable effectiveness of scientific achievements, we almost completely resigned ourselves from developing alternative forms of cognition, which could prove more "fitting" with the situation of augmented uncertainty. There is nothing similar nowadays to, say, an Attic tragedy, which exposed a Greek to uncertainties of fortune and made him persevere with it despite his fear. Although, sooner or later, due to the development of our scientific-technical potential, we will cope with the current pandemic, and, thus, yet again the experience of the fundamental questionableness of being will be "called to order" and the problem of the diseases will be ultimately solved, it will not disappear completely. The state of spiritual helplessness, into which we are driven by scientific-technical progress in the face of the questionableness of being further deteriorates, and one cannot see any prospects to reverse this process through scientific methods.

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"Life with the Virus"
A Phenomenology of Infectious Sociality

Svetlana Sabeva

Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski," Faculty of Philosophy and History, Department of Sociology and Human Sciences, 24 Tzar Asen Street, 4000 Plovdiv, Bulgaria

svetlana_sabeva@yahoo.de

Abstract

The article conceptualizes the specifics of experiencing time and reality under the COVID-19 pandemic. Its stakes are double: first, critique of objectivist evidences and the inertia of analogizing interpretations of events, in order to find a gaze toward the intercorporeal constitution of an unprecedented infectious sociality; second, revealing the possibilities of becoming Other not under the pressure of life circumstances, but in the borderline situation of anticipating the possibility of pandemic mass death. This is a characteristic social form of death. In the light of the "rendezvous at death," the ethical radicalization of life is a distinctive phenomenon of everyday life. It reveals life as risk and duty, it makes everyone be committed to choices, it makes societies discover the stakes of generative time (the time of simultaneous experiencing the non-simultaneity of lives) where the possibilities of caring for one another, but also of resistances against one another, are funded.

Key words: COVID-19, infectious sociality, intercorporeality, time interval in the social order, becoming Other.

»Življenje z virusom«. Fenomenologija nalezljive družbenosti

Povzetek

Članek konceptualizira specifiko izkustva časa in resničnosti v pandemiji COVID-19. Njegov zastavek je dvojen: najprej, kritika objektivističnih razvidnosti in inercije analogizirajočih interpretacij dogodkov z namenom pridobitve pogleda, usmerjenega k interkorporealni konstituciji brezprimerne nalezljive družbenosti; nadalje, razprostrtje možnosti, kako postati Drugi, ne pod pritiskom življenjskih okoliščin, temveč znotraj mejne situacije anticipiranja možnosti pandemične množične smrti. To je značilna družbena oblika smrti. V luči »sestanka s smrtjo« etična radikalizacija življenja postane razlikovalni fenomen vsakdanjosti. Življenje razkriva kot rizik in dolžnost, vsakogar zavezuje k izbiram, družbe prisili k razgrinjanju zastavkov generativnega časa (časa simultanega izkušanja nesimultanosti življenj), znotraj česar se utemeljujejo možnosti tako medsebojne skrbi kot odpora do drugega.

Ključne besede: COVID-19, nalezljiva družbenost, časovni interval znotraj družbenega reda, postajati Drugi.

As this text is a reflection on the time of pandemic, i.e., an attempt of revealing continuities and discontinuities in a flow, in which we are immersed, it must begin by stating the place and moment, in which one speaks. Here and now (Bulgaria, June 2020), one speaks of the "paradox of prevention" as defined by the following correlation: "the more successful the measures of the most acute phase of the COVID-19 crisis have been, the more they are criticized as being unnecessary." Is there not a more profound underlying problem behind the debate on this, at first glance, merely functional correlation? That would be the problem of the many ways of challenging the reality of the pandemic, a way presenting it not as an insuperable self-evidence, but as a constant "reality check" and as a fragile balance in the clash of incommensurable "senses of reality"? In searching for answers to this unfading question, I would start with a phenomenological and psychoanalytic archaeology of the "unforgettable unrememberable."[1] It requires the salvation of phenomena and attitudes of the most acute phase of the crisis because they do not disappear, they are repressed and they sink in the background behind or deep down, in order to free the forefront for their metamorphoses. Let us call them metamorphoses of an infectious sociality. Everyday language prefers to designate it euphemistically as "new normality" (instead of "new reality") assuming "life with the virus." We do not know

1 On this paradoxical figure touched by a number of memory studies on the border of phenomenology and psychoanalysis, I will here refer to a formulation in Bernard Waldenfels's responsive phenomenology: "The unforgettable is here not in a positive but in a fugitive form; it is more than what we can grasp and more than what we can remember. Here, we again come upon the enhanced form of a forgettance of forgetting. But that does not mean forgettance of what we have had or what we have been, it is a forgettance of that, *by which* we have been affected and *to which*, for better or worse, we will have to respond. […] In every remembrance, in which the unrememberable lurks, we come upon a phenomenological mode of a covering memory [*Deckerinnerung*]." (Waldenfels 2012, 168)

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how long we will live “in” it, what the ways will be of its daily routinization, or whether it is just a phase in the incubation of the “historical animal” that is in the course of being born, wrapped in the veil of the world that seems to remain the same. We should not forget how that animal has been conceived. Thus, the stake of my text is double: first, to criticize the objectivist self-evidences and the inertia of analogizing interpretations of events, in order to discover a gaze toward the intercorporeal constitution of an unprecedented infectious sociality; and second, to reveal the possibility of becoming Other not under the pressure of some circumstances of life, but in the borderline situation of anticipating the possibility of death, of pandemic mass death. This death is not just death pure and simple; it is a characteristic social form of death. The distinctive phenomenon of our present time, in my view, is the ethical radicalization of life that reveals life as a risk and a duty, and makes everyone be committed to their choices, making societies discover the stakes of generative time (the time of a simultaneous experiencing of the non-simultaneity of lives), in which the possibilities of caring for one another, but also resistances against one another, are funded.

1. The reflexive potential of infectious sociality

What is a pandemic? No doubt, it is a massive reality whose ensemble can be well described by what Michel Foucault calls a “dispositive”: a heterogeneous network of buildings, institutions, material resources, architectural arrangements, administrative measures, etc., emerging in response to a crisis situation; a network inscribed in relations of power, which it strives strategically to transform into a given direction (see Foucault 2003, 392–395). If we are ready to accept the vision of virologists that the instituting event of COVID-19, the viral transmission from wild animals to the human species—which was “expected”—, is not going to stop repeating itself, and if we are ready to believe in the general hypothesis of Galilean science that it is possible to calculate epidemic events by increasingly more complex mathematical models, i.e., “to rule over them by calculating” (in the sense of the Weberian “disenchantment of the world”), we could stay in an objectivist stance toward the dispositive of crisis, compare actual experience to past experience (SARS 1, MERS, SARS-

CoV-2…), and expect "the next time." That is, expect the unrepeatable to repeat itself, by increasingly making the network more complex and encompassing more and more participants.

What, however, will determine our being able or not being able to cope, to live with the expectation of X? What—and Who—will the collective subject become, overrun by epidemic crises, but also by the "irreversible ecological mutation" (Latour 2020), and maintaining a definite relation with itself as able or unable to cope? Will this be "an Anthropocene humanity" with its supermodern science, technologies, and capitalism? Or a kind of de-globalized subject returning to nation-states having durability contests according to the maxim "bend without breaking," seeking for isolationist advantages of their biopolitical bodies? Or will we live in a world of communities territorialized in an entirely new way, learning "to think like epidemiologists"? What the modes will be of (non-)belonging of every one to these communities, i.e., the modes of close and distant, of own and foreign? If we start from the basic principle of the responsive phenomenology that I am following—that the "subject" of a crisis becomes one only by the response it invents to what falls upon him, which presupposes a long "work of experience" (see Waldenfels 2015, 262–295; Waldenfels 2019, 163–165)—, we will hardly be able to say anything definite on these issues today. Its very formulation, however, refers to the possibilities to thematize what the objectivist approach to epidemics threatens to reduce, which I will—following the phenomenological perspective toward the unprecedented in the social world—formulate as two basic problematizations (which are also antinomies) shaping the frame of this text.

Pandemic as a time interval: life "with without" pause

The COVID-19 crisis, managed by quarantine politics, is a phenomenon in time—a caesura, an unprecedented factual pause in the meaning and action continuum of the world, and, simultaneously, an essentially temporal phenomenon that unfolds within itself with a horizon of indeterminacy and generates ceaseless modalizations of reality. The state of floating, time-unresistant reality that momentarily stands still by accents, can be phenomenologically described as "mood" or "atmosphere".[2] In the beginning of the pandemic as well as currently, moods are universally shared by "the magic of numbers" (Medarov 2020): the contagion spread curves, the expected peak and fall, the "hammer and dance," the reproductive number, etc., simultaneously regulate anxiety and keep close the arrival of death. In both temporal aspects, the crisis is conjoined with an essentially non-identical "subject." However, we may name it and to whatever degree everyone recognizes themselves in it, it is characterized by a certain degree of tolerance for the ambiguity of events, by a preparedness to accept the imperative nature of reality (social distancing!), and by that itself, preparedness to become Other (even if the *telos* of this becoming is "stay who you are"). The subjective differentiation of responses to the crises is in correlation not only with what we can, together with Pierre Bourdieu, call the "social area" of a person—i.e., the volume and structure of its objectively establishable "capitals" in a given conjuncture of the world (among which, in the first phase of social distancing, not only the means of maintenance and networks of care became evident, but also the spatial goods or shortages, such as having physical space, possibility of working from home, access to telemedicine, etc.; but we do not know what they will be in the future). In my view, it is also in correlation with a *definite configuration of identity*, which in the contemporary phenomenological psychopathology is called "centricity" or "over-identification," and designates a degree of the established normative structure of the world with a pole of "hypernomy" (see Stanghellini 2004, 106). Did not the quarantine resemble a collective "melancholy crisis" dominated by the typical feelings of loss, emptiness, monotony, bodily inertness?

But how would becoming Other be possible if it is limited by what, under the circumstances of the big social closing, i.e., of the factual pause, became intrusively conspicuous as "the missing pause button," in the words of the geneticist Georgi Marinov, in a world based on the systemic imperatives of

2 Atmospheres are not "psychisms," they are mediums, elements that simultaneously surround, wrap, and penetrate us; they are a phenomenon of a contagious retreat from the world of practical action whenever that world, to use a variation of Heidegger's analysis of boredom, leaves us in "the empty" of a long present time, but holds us "chained" to the rest of unfolded, undetermined possibilities (see Sabeva 2010, 151).

incessant growth and universal indebtedness (see Marinov 2020)? Are the systems of the societies of supermodern capitalism even compatible with the ethical imperatives of such a "life with the virus" that does not fetishize the pharmaceutical solutions of the elimination of pathogens? My considerations retain this social-critical horizon, but they transform it at the level of the work of experience and the fractalization of identity in the conditions of "the new normality." The politics of the pandemic demonstrate in an unprecedented way how time interval is in the social order both possible *and* impossible, how the quasi-positive functioning of societies is possible in the conditions of dominating modalities of negativity (inabilities, prohibitions, refusals, abstinences, losses, denials, etc.), all of them perceived in the shadow of the big closing: a mode of *life "with without" pause*.[3]

Pandemic as an intercorporeal configuration

The universal medium of transmission of the contagion today, in the era of supermodernity, transforms social order not so much in the logic of the old quarantine as a "repertory of security" (see Wiegeshoff 2020), nor in the logic of a "state of exception" (see Agamben 2020), nor of the functional "simplification of the social" (see Stichweh 2020), which describe the forms of life and experience in reductive categories. It transforms it into infectious sociality that has its own measure irreducible to "biological life." It requires a *radical reflexive relation* between the personally lived life, as *Leib*, and an anonymously lived life, as an organism, "rhizomatically" interwoven, Deleuze would say, with human and inhuman organisms, but also with the elemental, that which renders possible life itself (air, water, soil, etc.). This

3 I permit myself here to use the figure "with without," by which Alenka Zupančič conveys especially visibly the psychoanalytic conception of negativity: "*A man enters a restaurant and says to the waiter: 'One coffee without cream, please.' The waiter answers: 'Sorry, Sir, we don't have any cream. Can it be without milk?'* This joke has something of the real, and even a certain truth on the real, which is related precisely to its specific negativity, introduced or discovered by psychoanalysis. A negation of something that is not pure absence nor pure nothingness nor a mere complement of what is being denied. In the moment of its being spoken, there remains a trace of that which is not." (Zupančič 2012)

relation could only function by elaborating a reflexive norm of embodiment. Today, everybody knows the specific meaning of this norm, which reads that one can avoid the threat of contagion only, if one incessantly appresents oneself as having a contagion (and acts as such). I.e., one doubles oneself not only as a lived *and* living body, but also as an ethically responsible *and* guilty subject. Some of those who have "met the virus," but have remained "symptomless" know the guilty consciousness of how unegalitarian (unbrotherly) being contagious is: a mature woman who has survived COVID-19 without symptoms shares what it is like to have transmitted the disease to two of your younger surrounding people in a grave form. Thus, the formula of intercorporeality in infectious sociality is not "I protect myself," but everybody else is protected by me: *my Self is not a center, but a medium*.

Is it not worth to deploy in greater depth the implications of this incorporated normativity or normative intercorporeality that strives to become "the new normality"?

This means to trace first the profound processes of sensory disintegration caused by the social distancing imperative both in the subjective sphere (insisting that the hand must retreat from the perceptible world, that the breath that makes masks humid must prevent dangerous inhalation, and that vision must appresent the movement of invisible aerosols) as well as in the intersubjective sphere (insisting that everybody else must be appresented as the dangerous Other and without the indication that comes from the most expressive zone of human intercorporeality—the face, half-hidden under the mask). Thus, the intentionality of the lived body loses its main quality of guaranteeing a certain transparence toward the world—i.e., that we reach "the things themselves," "the Others themselves," but also that we "are ourselves." The Aristotelian term of *koiné aisthesis*, by which some contemporary phenomenologists prefer to designate the problem of sensory integration, claiming that this "common sense" is at the base of ontological security as the pole of the object, of the co-subject, as well as of the pre-reflexive self-awareness (Stanghellini 2004, 116), also hints at the political implication even of the sensory imperatives of the pandemic.[4]

4 The emphasis on sensory disintegration that I make in this context should not be

Would the elementary everyday reflexivity on such questions mean the birth of a “democratic” or “authentically political” biopolitics of everyday life, without this being a contradiction in the idea of politics of life (cf. Sotiris 2020)? This is the second social-critical problematization, from which I start. The interest in the peculiarities of the Swedish model, the debate on the social meaning of the so-called herd immunity, or the medical principle of triage, the sensitivity for losing the symbolic representations of death in a situation of quarantine, the grasping of the ambivalence of presupposed generational divides especially in the onset of the crisis, behind which the latent valorization stands of lives as “ungrievable” (because of having “concomitant diseases”) and “grievable,” and probably also many other not so widely discussed themes (e.g., how to compensate for our haptic impoverishment or how to motivate voluntary participation in the digital tracing of “contact chains”) have all, in my view, demonstrated the following: under the conditions of infectious sociality also, the actions by which we affirm ourselves as a center of spontaneity and initiative (in the spirit of Arendt’s understanding of the political), cannot be transformed without residue into uniform behaviors bearing witness to our biologically identical reactivity as “naked life.”

2. Contagion and atmosphere: phenomenological analytics

The epidemiological knowledge of the way of transmission of the contagion has an already rich history, which, however, still contains many enigmas, controversial points, and surprising news. If we leave aside for a moment the unclarified origin and the “zero event” of the contagion—the passing of SARS-CoV-2 from a bat to a human organism—, as well as the

hastily pathologized. It is possible that this ascesis of the senses works positive in the direction of a different intermodal synthesis of sensoriness and other kinesthetic habitualizations. They would be a part of the long time of a universal process that characterizes the passive syntheses of intentionality as *eco-intentionality*, as I called it some time ago (with a reference to Merleau-Ponty’s remark on the so-called intentionality of the environment—*Umweltintentionalität*), which characterizes every “physiological subject” (see Sabeva 2014, 176). This corresponds to some evolutionary-biological conceptions of the pandemic that see the natural way to tame the new coronavirus in the global establishment of the new hygienic and behavioral habits.

story of the strongly misleading recognition of its identity and virulence as a biological agent with their political consequences, then for us, the lay people of the planet, the knowledge of the way of infecting has a perpetual core. What are its phenomenological implications? Although it has primarily an instructive nature, focused on "how" rather than on "that" and "what," this knowledge aims at making the protection from "meeting the virus" not only mentally conceivable, but also practically perceptible, by two basic *perceptive substitutions*—the spatial substitution, summed up in the imperative of social distancing, and the haptic substitution, summed up in the imperative of not touching oneself in the permeable zones (mouth, nose, eyes). The essence of the infection, however, is its being of "airborne-droplet" nature, i.e., of an atmospheric and atmospherized, i.e., climatically modulated character, combined with the shocking pathogenicity of the virus (a doctor of a COVID-19 ward spoke about the dead silence among her colleagues at the sight of the first X-ray images of affected lungs). The droplets coming on us from somebody coughing, sneezing, or simply speaking in front of us, and even more the aerosols that are inaccessible to the senses—neither seen nor olfactible, i.e., devoid of hyletic content—, are the ones that have an indeterminate virus load and unknown stability in the air and eventually on contaminated surfaces, they turn air—the medium of our life—into a medium of a mortal threat. Maybe everybody could revive the memory of a shocking experience, in which one has known this "for the first time" in an embodied way.[5] In these ambivalent conditions, breathing stands out as a total vital kinesthesis that we can control only to a tiny degree, making us anticipate the vital effect of

5 To me, this was an experience "at the threshold" also quite literally: stepping into the office of a general practitioner in early March 2020, when I was left totally perplexed not only by her startling appearance with gloves, a protective helmet, and a mask I had never seen before, but most of all the container, from which she sprayed the space between us during the conversation; I did not yet know what an infection gap is. Regarding such "instituting" events of meaning (which Husserl calls *Urstiftung*), I will quote Waldenfels again, who also takes up motives from Merleau-Ponty: "The play between visible and invisible refers to a history of seeing. The first gaze, the first contact, the kindling of the first desire does not merely mean the 'positing of a content,' it is, rather, an *initiation*, the opening of a dimension, an instituting, a key event that does not just let us see something *other* in the world, but makes us see *in a different way*, in another light, and in another scenario the world, ourselves, and the others." (Waldenfels 2012, 105)

suffocation and respectively artificial breathing as an extraordinary form of human mutual aid. Who has not felt "the pain in the chest" and "suffocation" during the quarantine? Thus, the transmission of the contagion comes out to be identical to the very processualization of living bodies as breathing and speaking. Unlike HIV, for instance, SARS-CoV-2 is not identitary and selective (i.e., quasi-recognizable through a certain form of life of its carriers), but an indifferent and inclusive virus; contracting it, is not related to bodily practices and excretions marked by the sinful or the dirty, but to our very disposition in life conditions that are beyond our control. This makes the ecological turn in the medical crisis, which thematizes the *conditions* of our biological life, not simply as being one of its possible political uses, but as an inevitable meaning implication (even if we leave aside the factual discoverability of a dependence between the virus's contagiousness and the pollution with fine dust particles). The ecological implications concern the conditions favoring not only the undiscoverable beginning of the interspecies transmission of the virus (the human intervention in the habitats of wild animals), but also the conditions of its replication that parasites over the basic forms of embodied freedom, by which we as human beings re-measure space (being more or less massively "always on the road" and always "meeting Others"). The formal equality of human community, reinstated by the pandemic, comes with a reverse sign—it is not us who posit ourselves as politically equal before the virus (cf. Raychev and Stoychev 2020), but the radically foreign, which is even not living, posits us as equal by its very being able to act upon us *as breathing beings*. It is not a protesting political community (like the one who in 1989, in the conditions of the crumbling communist regime in Bulgaria, rose against the gas pollution in Rousse) that says *Breathe!*, which means "fight for your right to life against the system".[6] It is the un-human that "says" *Breathe!*; and in the "fight for survival" between biological agents, the conatus of our corporeality that reveals to us through the virus is: "Breathe—in order to die." By this way of expression, I am not making an anthropomorphic transfer nor a naturalization of intentionality. I am stressing the turn in the oriented constitution of the world in the following sense: in the situation of a crisis, the measure of understandability is given

6 I allude to the famous film under that title, of 1988, by director Yuri Jirov.

not by how we are mastering natural objects, but by how they—as "rebellious" and "reacting"—force us to responsively constitute ourselves in relation to the measure of our embodied freedom in a primordial sense—*as freedom of our vital kinestheses*. Amidst the climatic events that take place between the poles of heat and cold, floods and draughts, amidst the epidemic events that untangle the rhizomes of the living and the parasitizing living, we rediscover ourselves as a field of localized feelings of the meeting with the world. If one can speak of *ecological intentionality* that consists of practicing embodied freedom in this primordial sense, it is because "the absolute here" of my lived body (which I can neither leave nor move aside) only exists as grown together with a resting fundament (the earth as soil) and with the unobtrusive balance of the basic elements of life.[7] *Gaia* is "reacting," "non-dead," we could say with Latour, but also with Merleau-Ponty, because the "elements," into which also being itself and the imaginary itself belong, are not objects but "fields, soft being, non-thetical, being before being," in which the feeling is a part of the felt without coinciding with it, but just allows it to unfold as a gap of the world (see Merleau-Ponty 2000, 272).

Therefore, "infectiousness" phenomenologically means an affective transformation of our being-able before the face not of something in the world, but of our meeting with the world in its entirety. It is a specific mood or attunement that, the more mercilessly it makes us face our being-thrown in the world and the impossibility to reify the threat, the more it makes us *reject* the world. Withdrawal, escape, isolation, the aversive attitude to the others are not panic effects in the sense of psychopathology, but the very infectious sociality

7 The background of these motives are the phenomenological analyses of Klaus Held on the bodily location "between the earth and the sky as invariants of the natural life-world" (see Held 1998, 21–41). Thinking the "living earth" within the horizon of "ecollapse," and hence as a stake of a non-classical critical theory, Deyan Deyanov, however, proposes us to historicize the limits of capitalism as well as these "invariant structures": "There are no such phenomena as *the* immobile earth, *the* sky, *the* ocean, *the* air, etc., in general, they are always the immobile earth, sky, ocean, air precisely of this or that surrounding life-world, they are *indigenous*, and historical at that, and they appear as freely variable only to the transcendental phenomenologist who always comes *post festum*—after the *Europeans* have discovered, Christianized, conquered, and modernized them; they have imputed mono-dimensionality onto them and, hence, imputed onto them also invariant structures." (Deyanov 2014, 27)

par excellence, as far as it represents the grasping of possibility *as possibility* rather than the establishment of presence (hence, “the magic of numbers”). That is why the aesthesiological space of the pandemic in its most acute phase is re-dimensioned not to the degree of the threat (say, the park, the sidewalk, the shop, the pharmacy, the hospital), but on the mechanism of drive splitting into “inside” and “outside” in Freud’s sense, which refers to “the most archaic, oral drive impulses—I want to eat this or I want to spit it out… it must be within me or outside of me” (Freud 2006, 533).

I began by saying that the atmospheric nature of the contagion (in the physical sense that coincides with the affective atmospherization of the world) becomes accessible to us solely through perceptive substitutions: through spatial distance and haptic ascesis that must lead the aerosol pollution to being present. But it does not announce itself with the obviousness of a miasma or of a dust, of a hurricane or an aurora, i.e., it has no hyletic content—and, respectively, it does not provide an ontic security about our state of being threatened. But is there anything special in this substitution for us who have long become used to practical idealizations under the form of a pictorial or mathematical representation of the micro- and the macro-world? What is problematic is not even so much the fact that the physical space in the social world is obviously neither one of physics nor of geometry, and that the elementary contact is a practice of “territorializing”—i.e., of controlling the distance, getting closer or more apart—, which becomes situated, incorporated, and affectively charged. This is why infectious sociality, of course, is always in the plural, it is an infinite set of sensory entireties unable of mathematical modelling. The more essential, in my view, is that the *koine aisthesis*, i.e., the intermodal synthesis of perception, decomposes in such a way that, both in its primary affective layer as well as in the super-constructed epistemic levels, infectious sociality turns into a field of what Merleau-Ponty calls “*perceptive belief*” with a decisive re-emphasizing of the fantastic element in this dialectic structure of ascertainability and inaccessibility:

> Just because it is a belief, i.e., a belonging that is understood beyond proofs, not necessary, woven out of incredulity, at all times threatened by disbelief. Belief and incredulity are here so closely related that we

> always find the one in the other and, in particular, we find a sprout of untruth in the truth: the conviction that I have of being included in the world through my gaze already promises me a world of phantasms if I leave my gaze to wander. To cover your eyes, in order not to see the danger, means, they say, to not believe in things, to believe only in the private world, but this is, rather, to believe that what it is for it is absolutely, that a world we have managed to see as safe is safe, this means to believe to the highest degree that our vision reaches the things themselves. (Merleau-Ponty 2000, 39)

The antinomies of perceptive belief based on regimes of communal belonging stand, in my view, at the basis of the intrusive division of lay people into alarmists, negationists, and balancers; but it is also the fundament of scientific controversies. In the pandemic world, *the way in which one necessarily lives* is by mixing up the perceived and the imagined, between potentiality and fiction, as well as by the insecure assumption that *one perceives* and *one thinks* of the same object. Whom and in what I should believe, who and what I will deny, whether the pandemic even exists or is it a mere media simulacrum—every next day is a question of affective coordination between my habitualities and the anonymously-universal infectious attunement or mood which dynamically changes its object investments. Between the four walls, we are not on "islands" existing as protected spaces, but between atmospheres that come toward us—from the aerosols we exchange as breathing creatures and from the worries, by which we care for or surveil one another; through the collective phantasms of forced breathing and the double fixation on the respiratory machines meant to save (or kill) medicalized bodies unnaturally connected to them (lying on the belly); to the atmosphere of death maintained on a daily basis by national and global statistics on the dead that have been criticized for not making the difference between "dying with COVID-19" and "dying from COVID-19." In infectious sociality, however, one necessarily lives with the supreme self-evidence that can be endured only if it is repressed away into the social unconscious and euphemized by the so-called capacity of health systems: just like war and bombing, the epidemic means that we are amidst the possibility of death from which the "the *epoché* of everyday attitude" has been withdrawn (Schutz). Thus, "the fundamental anxiety that I know that I will die and I am afraid to die" (Schutz), is the medium of life itself, lived every next day as *missing death*. "One of us can go, sister," told me my 51-year-old brother as we discussed how we would take care of our mother. This is the time of the "rendezvous at death" (after Derrida's phrase) for a simultaneous experience of the non-simultaneousness of lives—and this self-evidence is such a part of the *conditio humana*, which cannot be removed by even the most precise statistics of the number of death cases. We witnessed, however, how risky and even unforgivable is to violate *in a public political way* the taboo on the expected death not as my death, but as *the death of others*—be it in the refined manner of Dr. Wolfgang Scheuble (who said that human dignity as an absolute value "does not exclude the fact that we must die") or with the neurotic outburst of such a military surgeon from the field of medicine of catastrophes as General Mutafchiyski, the leader of the Bulgarian crisis team, who brutally predicted mass deaths. An Italian writer saw in the attitude to death a lack of sense of the tragic in the generations of today. This, I think, is a socio-analytic symptom that suggests that the legitimate affects, at least in the first phase of this crisis, should have been coordinated with the logic of biocapitalism: precisely because this capitalism polarizes the biological life not between life and death, but between *survival and life*, so that the modality of its practices is to *make* someone survive (calculating the epidemic time in the drive for medically-functional solutions) or to *let* them live.[8] And one more socio-analytic symptom from the thanatopolitics of the pandemic, pointing to the same direction: the public stratification of death effectuated by introducing the division between death "with concomitant diseases" and death "with no concomitant diseases." Because death in the era of biocapitalism is not simply death, it is always a social form of death based on a different index of symbolic (de-)valorization of lives—as being "grievable" or "ungrievable."

3. Ways of becoming Other: instead of a conclusion

"When is this all going to end," used to ask me almost every morning over the phone my mother whose everyday life does not allow for the absence of care on the part of her close ones. The factual global pause, i.e., the unprecedented series of social closings (following the Chinese model), was in fact a

8 By this thesis, I am actually reformulating the famous Foucauldian definition of biopower as being influential in the modality of "*making* someone live or *letting* them die."

heterogeneous repertory of security and control evoked by the impossibility to find pharmaceutic solutions to the medical crisis. But if the quarantines of old were so long and as permeable or impermeable as the natural cycle of contagion would require, the COVID-19 quarantines postulated a calculable future: they were based on mathematical models of gaining biological time (keeping a flat curve of contagion) by taking into account institutional criteria of the so-called capacity of health systems. In this sense, the factual pause in the existing order was a "deal for future" (after the expression of Andrey Raychev). The different political-legal forms of the state of exception that legalized quarantines were far from that "absolute power" of handling the time of others that Pierre Bourdieu speaks about:

> Absolute power consists in unpredictability; in denying others any rational anticipation, in leaving them in absolute uncertainty, and in not leaving them with any standpoints allowing them to foresee what is going to take place. […] All-powerful is the one who does not wait, but makes others wait. (Bourdieu 2001, 293)

The problem, however, is that the pause is not only in time and is not only based on a calculable future that keeps its continuity with its past. It is also the deployment of its own time—of a long present without a future, whose indeterminacy ensues from that which, "with an unforeseen fury" (as it was called in the Bulgarian case), does not stop coming toward us, without being inscribed in the continuum of duration as a future in the course of fulfillment. The time of the pause is doubled. How the X falling on us is going to debilitate the usual course of the world, and by that also our being-able, is a matter of subjective dispositions, in which the pivotal role belongs to the *difference* in the *position of the possible*—i.e., the empty space of that unimaginable, of which we can only say that "it will have been"; respectively the different ways, in which we can wait.[9]

9 The problem of the time interval (the pause) in the functioning order is not to be confounded with the problem of taking a stance (affirmative or negative) toward

But what comes after passing through precisely this phase of infectious sociality? In my view, that will be: forms of deceleration that is not perceived as deceleration; forms of closing that is not perceived as closing; forms of reevaluation of the world of the close and the presence that is not perceived as a zone of control, but as a zone of fragility due to its membrane structure. The task of a phenomenologically sensitive socio-analysis would be to recognize the signs and symptoms in "testing" this new reality.

In his book *Is It Tomorrow Already? How the Pandemic Changes Europe* Ivan Krastev shares the important observation that there is no narrative of epidemics and, therefore, no collective memory of them (see Krastev 2020, 15–16). I would not entirely agree with him since things hinge on the understanding what collective memory is. A passive layer of that memory, it seems to me, is the *transgenerational imagined bodily* of pandemic, which is transmitted *leiblich*, by feeling-in (*Einfühlung*), into the "reasons to survive," although the historical chain is interrupted, i.e., there are spared generations. It participates in our experience as co-constituting the measure of what it is to withstand, "bend without breaking." This passive layer is key to the generative time of life, intersected by birth and death, and constituted by giving time, but also by giving lived corporeality. During the quarantine, some were reading Boccaccio and Camus, others asked themselves questions not only regarding the "Spanish flu," but also what it was like during the blockade of Leningrad, of the bombing of Dresden, or Sofia, or how those Jews felt who for years survived hidden in the basements of the Nazi-occupied Europe. It seems to me that this *transgenerative synthesis of lived corporeality*—as one of the possible

this pause under the form of "refusal" that presupposes some "work" of desire. This is, however, what Bruno Latour seems to do when, in the spirit of a sociological enlightenment that calls for individual and group self-analysis, insists on refusal under the form of "barrier gestures" that would prevent the return to "the same": "Thus, the most important now is to use this time of imposed isolation in order to *describe*, first everyone for themselves, then in a group, that, to which we are attached; that, from which we are ready to become *emancipated*, liberated; the chains that we are ready to reconstitute and those that, in our behavior, we are resolved to interrupt" (Latour 2020). In everyday perception, however, "pause" and "refusal" are indistinguishable. A makeup artist from the Sofia Cinema Center who has remained without a job, is asked the question: "How do you cope?" And she answers: "I just don't. There are no film productions, no prom parties. And who wants to have makeup—people wear masks."

forms of self-inheritance in the era of supermodernity—can be inscribed in the project of a post-Bourdieusian socio-analysis of self-inheritance, giving access to the question of What and Who becomes the "subject" of the crisis. Every analogizing apperception of what befalls us must be perceived as funded in the transgenerative synthesis of lived corporeality. It is open not only to the past, but also to the future by a "prospective empathy" (as, e.g., Habermas demonstrated in analyzing the *possible* suffering of those born by genetic programming in the conditions of a liberal eugenics),[10] which makes it an alternative to the naturalistically-biotechnological projects of supermodernity and of the "drive of capital" (Marx) for biotechnologically gaining time.

Thus, there are two projects of "survival"—either to biologically preserve yourself by quarantine, vaccine, and cure in your here and now, or withstand in the measure of a transgenerative anticipation of what it means to be a human *from this Earth*.

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10 More details on this interpretation see in Straub 2012, 123–140.

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Initial Reflections on Man in the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Reality That Is and Is Not the Same Reality

Jarosław Gara

The Maria Grzegorzewska University, Institute of Special Education, Szczęśliwicka Street 40, 02-353 Warsaw, Poland

jgara@aps.edu.pl

Abstract

The paper discusses the problem of the specificity of experience of the life-world by man of the "COVID-19 era." This experience should be considered in terms of the universal participation in times of the pandemic, the individual and collective experience of crisis and existential disintegration, as well as the consequences of the pandemic in the form of social restrictions and limitations related to counteracting this global threat. In this context, the contribution refers to the inspirations connected with the anecdote about the ship of Theseus, and selected elements of Jan Patočka's phenomenology of the life-world. Therefore, the text attempts to prove the fundamental thesis that man of the "COVID-19 era" experiences reality that is and at the same time is no longer known to him. The life-world in the experience of man in the "COVID-19 era" is a world, in which many changes have taken place and are still taking place, which fundamentally changes the situation of man in the various dimensions of everyday life as well as the experiences of time, carnality, home, and work.

Keywords: life-world, existential experience, existential paradoxes, COVID-19.

Začetna razmišljanja o človeku v pandemiji COVID-19. Resničnost, ki je in ni enaka resničnost

Povzetek

Članek obravnava problem specifičnosti izkustva življenjskega sveta, kakršna opredeljuje človeka v »dobi COVID-19«. To izkustvo je potrebno premisliti z vidikov univerzalnega sodelovanja v času pandemije, individualnega in kolektivnega izkustva krize ter eksistencialne dezintegracije in posledic pandemije v obliki družbenih omejitev, ki so povezane s preprečevanjem globalne nevarnosti. V tem kontekstu prispevek črpa navdih iz anekdote o Tezejevi ladji in izbranih elementov fenomenologije življenjskega sveta pri Janu Patočki. Besedilo potemtakem skuša dokazati osrednjo tezo, da človek »dobe COVID-19« izkuša resničnost, kakršna mu hkrati je in ni več znana. Življenjski svet v izkustvu človeka »dobe COVID-19« je svet, v katerem so nastopile in še vedno nastopajo številne spremembe, ki bistveno spreminja situacijo človeka v različnih razsežnostih njegovega vsakdanjega življenja in njegovega izkustva časa, telesnosti, doma in dela.

Ključne besede: življenjski svet, eksistencialno izkustvo, eksistencialni paradoksi, COVID-19.

"From the standpoint of natural experience, the subject is always bound to a body, dependent on the givenness of realities outside it, and hence finite; it is a person." (Patočka 2016, 36–37)

"Humans offer existents the occasion for manifesting themselves as they are because it is only in their being-here that an understanding of what it means to be is present—and so a possibility which things of themselves lack and which has no meaning for them—the possibility of coming to their own being, that is, of becoming phenomena, of manifesting themselves." (Patočka 1996, 6)

Introduction

The subject of my interest is the specificity of experience of the life-world by man of the "COVID-19 era." However, the following is only the indication of a possible direction for further in-depth studies on the issue. In the light of the adopted cognitive perspective, the discussed problem is presented through the prism of already known ways and categories that describe the aporetic dimensions of human existence.

The very term "COVID-19 era" is justified by its special character due to the universality of both individual as well as collective experiences of limitations and effects of the pandemic on the global scale. And although the term is conventional, it undoubtedly refers to the real state of things that have in this form not yet been experienced by man within the contemporary configurations of social life organization. Thus, in a globalized world, man of the "COVID-19 era" not only experiences a multitude of risks and uncertainties, but also experiences them with the consequences of globalization previously unknown on such a scale. In this peculiar and boundary situation, which not only poses a threat to health and life, but also—and perhaps above all—generates unpredictability of events, which all the same disorganize or even render impossible the daily functioning in all the spheres of social life.

The paradoxicality of the situation experienced by man in the "COVID-19 era" lies in the fact that what has so far been an unquestionable determinant of high status, prestige, and life opportunities in modern, affluent, and economically as well as infrastructurally developed societies, has suddenly become the main carrier of risks and uncertainties related to the extent and intensity of the spread of the coronavirus. Consequently, what in the globalized world defines the mainstream style and way of social functioning, suddenly shook its foundations, and further reinforced the threat and unpredictability. Such achievements, which in the "COVID-19 era" became the main source of risk and unpredictability, undoubtedly include for example: 1) mass mobility means that allow for quick and comfortable movement on national, continental, and intercontinental distances; 2) architecturally modern economic and agglomeration zones that focus on a small area of representation, headquarters of companies as well as large commercial and residential zones; 3) modern ways of the logistic organization of production and services on the market, i.e., industrial, transport, construction, educational, artistic, entertainment, catering, tourism, or medical services, etc. For this reason, the situation of humankind in the "COVID-19 era" should be considered in terms of the general experience of collective participation in the times of the pandemic, in terms of individual manifestations of the experiences of existential disintegration, as well as in the context of the consequences of the pandemic and social strategies (supervision and punishment) that counter this threat. Social strategies increasingly and unconditionally bring man of the "COVID-19 era" closer to the experience of social reality as a panopticon (cf. Bauman 2000, 48–54; Žižek 2020, 73–81): "Things we were used to as part of our daily life will no longer be taken for granted, we will have to learn to live a much more fragile life with constant threats." (Žižek 2020, 78)

The attempt, here, to refer to the title problem of the reality of the "COVID-19 era" as experienced by man, i.e., a reality, which is and at the same time is not yet known (cf. Žižek 2020, 85–86), will be set in the context of two fundamental heuristic inspirations. On the one hand, certain inspirations will be found in an anecdote related to the ancient paradox of the ship of Theseus, and, on the other hand, some inspirations will be based on the selected motifs deriving from the 20th-century phenomenology of life-world as conceived by

Jan Patočka.[1] Thus, the initial reflections related to the human experience of the "COVID-19 era" will be formulated by referring to certain selected areas of the paradoxicality of social conditions and consequences of living "in a state of the pandemic."

The paradox of the ship of Theseus and the experience of the life-world in the "COVID-19 era"

The paradox of Theseus' ship is based on the aporia of the problem of identity of something that seems to be "the same," but, at the same time, is something "totally different." This paradox is related to the anecdote about the gradual replacement of individual elements of the ship until all its parts were entirely replaced by completely new ones; the planks, from which the ship was built, when they corroded and got rotten, were being constantly replaced by new planks. Therefore, after some time, the ship of Theseus, preserved by the Athenians after his return to Athens, was and was not the same ship. The realization of this fact made the issue of the ship forever unobvious, for some claimed that it is, and others claimed that it is not the ship of Theseus.[2] The paradoxicality of this problem is, therefore, expressed in the question of what kind of ship we are *de facto* dealing with when all its elements were gradually replaced with new ones, so that there are no longer any original elements of the old ship. Still, the question remains: is it the same ship, because all the time the Athenians could have it in front of their eyes, and the gradual changes made upon it were almost unnoticeable; or is it a completely new ship that has nothing in common with the ship once commanded by Theseus. In this paradox, therefore, the issue of ambiguity

1 In this respect, I will refer to the selected inspirations from two works by the Czech phenomenologist: from the early period of his work—*The Natural World as a Philosophical Problem* (*Přirozený svět jako filosofický problem*; 1936)—and from the late period—*Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* (*Kacířské eseje o filosofii dějin*; 1975).
2 "They took away the old timbers from time to time—as Plutarch described this—and put new and sound ones in their places, so that the vessel became a standing illustration for the philosophers in the mooted question of growth, some declaring that it remained the same, others that it was not the same vessel." (Plutarch 1959, 49; cf. Chisholm 2002, 89)

and problematicity of what is old and new, as well as what is the same and different, becomes apparent. Moreover, another problem is also revealed, namely the one related to the extent, to which what is new and different is completely different, as well as to the extent, to which it contains an element of identity of what is old and the same.

In the anecdote related to Theseus' ship paradox, three basic dimensions of the existential paradox can be exposed: 1) the ship was in terms of appearance (materially) perceived/recognized (due to the fact that it was at the same place where Theseus' ship had been left, it was made in the same way and it looked the same), and, at the same time, in terms of origin (symbolically), it was not perceived/recognized as Theseus' ship (because it did not have any original parts, of which Theseus' ship was originally made; on the boards of this ship, Theseus did not make sea voyages and nothing connected it with the original ship); 2) what was presented as the ship of Theseus hid a mystery that was visible only from the perspective of historical memory and the knowledge related to the lot of the renovation of the ship; 3) the gradual replacement of individual parts of the ship led imperceptibly to the replacement of all the elements, of which the ship was originally built, and, eventually, to the replacement of the whole ship. The first of these dimensions can also be described as the paradox of *recognition*, the second—the paradox of *memory*, and the third—the paradox of *noticeability*.

That is why the anecdote about the ship of Theseus can be treated as a suggestive illustration of the open and changeable, but also multilayered and approximative nature of life-world. The life-world confronts us with the paradoxical structure of reality we experience; it appears to be the same and different at the same time, close and at the same time completely distant. This reality also becomes the source of the sense both of collective participation as well as individual alienation.

The common and direct experience of social strategies, restrictions, and the very consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic also confront the contemporary man and his life-world with a particular purport of Theseus' ship paradox. In this sense, as it can be assumed, the validity of the meaning of the ship paradox can be shown by referring to certain selected motives and characteristics, with which the Czech phenomenologist described the specificity of the experience of everyday life.

The life-world, both in Jan Patočka's view as well as according to the original intention of phenomenology by Edmund Husserl, is given "directly." It is a subjective world, "lived in its concrete whole" as a world of concrete existence "here" and "now." Thus, it is a world of everyday situations and practical action, a world, in which people meet, are born and die, learn and work (Patočka 1993, 42–44). This is a world, in which man is a "neighbor of man" (Leško 2012, 33). And, in this sense, it is a nonproblematic world based on primary obviousness.

Consequently, the life-world is always given to us in a way that both precedes our theoretical thought about it and our practical interventions in its construction. In this meaning, our attitude to this primary world of experience is natural and naive (Patočka 2016, 7, 21). Man as a subject is dependent on the world of his daily life, because this world is the substrate of all initial (naive and natural) existential experiences and unconditional beliefs, opinions, and habits that belong to them (Patočka 2016, 49, 51). Such a world is, therefore, always experienced in its original temporality as (being) "here" (Patočka 2016, 28, 116; Landgrebe 2016, xxvii).

According to Patočka, it is also possible to talk about fundamental phenomenological moments in the life-world as well as make attempts at a structural description of its elements (parts), as well as the relations and relationships that exist there (Patočka 2016, 64, 70, 84). In this way, it is possible to point out primary components of the universal structure of the world of everyday life that are present in human experience, namely time, carnality, home, or work. Man of the "COVID-19 era," in a special way, as I will try to demonstrate, also experiences specific forms of risk and uncertainty, insofar as the indicated components of the experience of life-world are taken into account.

Man as a person of time—*homo temporalis*—in the "COVID-19 era"

The original temporality of experience is expressed in the naive and thoughtless, i.e., nonproblematic, attitude of man to the surrounding world (Patočka 2016, 119). Primary time is an opening of the horizon that "events in the world are only just making possible": "Time in the original sense is a unitary function of expectation, perception, and retention of what is." (Patočka

2016, 69) Within this relationship, man perceives himself as an integral part of the natural world of life, which is taken as an obvious horizon of existence and participation in what is intersubjectively experienced as common. The original structure of experience is expressed in a peculiar openness to the potential possibility of discovering and cognitive objectification of one's own world of life. Thus, primary temporality of human experience does not relate to everything that exists, but only to what exists in a particular place and time, and belongs to his own life-world (Patočka 1996, 7–8).

The course of human life is, therefore, entirely periodized according to the principle of elapsing or separating time intervals. This applies both to the experience of time in its natural dimension, e.g., time of day, time of year, periods of life (childhood, adulthood, old age), as well as to time encountered in social practices, e.g., rest time, working time, meal time, or play time (Patočka 2016, 58). The experience of the temporality of life perceived in this way is something obvious and nonproblematic for a person who expresses one's "holistic attitude" to the surrounding reality (world, life, people) in specific feelings and moods that are closely related to time (Patočka 2016, 8).

The human experience of time in the "COVID-19 era" is paradoxical; man experiences the passage of time, while at the same time is also being immobilized by it. This is an experience of time that, in its extreme forms of intensified risk and uncertainty, completely closes the individual and the social horizon of expectations and events. Paradoxically, however, the very intensity of risks and uncertainties experienced is not, as it seems, the result of the intensity of the spread of the pandemic itself, but rather of the social restrictions established and implemented (by law), as well as restrictions of the nature of isolation and abstinence from certain life activities. Man as an individual experiences these restrictions and limitations in the very center of his own life-world and his own everyday matters.

The biological dimension of the pandemic should be combined with the category of time that one experiences in its natural dimension. Getting ill as a result of the spread of the virus primarily changes the way one perceives, values, and experiences time that becomes simply the time of biologically (physically and mentally) experienced illness, healing, or death. It is, however, the social dimension of time associated with certain forms of social participation and social practices that plays a key role in the constitution of the peculiarity of the human experience of time in the "COVID-19 era." This is because the virus threat and social restrictions enforce a complete reorganization or suspension of the current forms of rest time, working time, mealtime, fun time, etc. Therefore, man of the "COVID-19 era" not only experiences disintegration, but often a kind of time blockade in the social dimension of life. This determines a specific way of being human, and is connected to the habits, practices, and specific needs of the social forms of participation. During the pandemic, they are subject to disorganization or blockade, while the experience of time in the social dimension loses its existential horizon of expectations and predictability. In this way, the social dimension of the time of work, meal, rest, or play has lost its obviousness and has become problematic. The prevailing mood of time of the pandemic has become the feeling of risk and uncertainty.

Man as a subject of carnality—*homo corpus*—in the "COVID-19 era"

Man's position in the world of everyday life is corporeal, which is why man as a person is always "bodily connected" with the surrounding world. "I cannot think—wrote Patočka—a human being without embodiment and bodily communication with the surrounding world." (Patočka 2016, 53) Corporeality emphasizes non-reducible determinants of the human condition as conditioned by nature. It is the human body that first and foremost decides about its connections with the surrounding world and the specific relationships it establishes with other people. In general, the entire contact between man and the surrounding world has a corporeal character (Patočka 2016, 76). All physical or subjective interactions with the surrounding world take place through and in the context of the corporeal dimension of human life. Through the senses, the world originally appears to man and lets itself be known to him.

Thanks to his corporeality, man finds himself in this naively shared world, and experiences the influence of the world, which, in an intersubjective way, is equally or similarly accessible to other people as subjects of corporeality (Patočka 2016, 55). Human corporeality, as understood in natural terms, is, thus, an irreducible and "fundamental part of the relationship" that defines its belongingness to the surrounding world.

Therefore, it can be said that the global crisis that has disorganized and shaken the foundations of all, macrosocial as well as microsocial areas of human existence is taking place in the context of the main problem related to the natural condition of man, i.e., the corporeal dimension of human life and interpersonal contacts. It is the human organism that actively carries the biological threat, the coronavirus, the easy spreading of which has caused the global crisis. The physical dimension of human contact in the postmodern world has overnight become a source of risk and uncertainty.

Thus, man of the "COVID-19 era," as a subject who is "bodily connected" with the surrounding world, has been put in a situation of the necessity for a long-term isolation from other people. And since the threat is global, the choice or order of social isolation is universal and global. This new and specific situation, on the other hand, gives rise to a whole series of more or less visible consequences for the everyday functioning and the quality of life of both individual people and entire communities. Although isolation from other people can be an expression of a voluntary choice by individuals, in connection with conscious prevention and care for their own health, as well as with socially obligatory orders, it does not affect the perception of the very consequences that such a massive and long-term isolation brings with it. The consequences undoubtedly include at least two types of circumstances. On the macro-social scale, these consist of the procedures and social restrictions, which make it either very difficult or even impossible to carry out a whole range of activities in public space that previously seemed completely natural or simply standard. On the micro-social scale, on the other hand, they can cause a reflex fear and mistrust in the physical relations with other people, which, instead of directness, establish ubiquitous spatial distance in the various areas of social *praxis*.

In this way, the physical (bodily) dimension of the human way of life and activity in contact with other people, contrary to the contemporary affirmation of the body and its location at the very center of the social perception of human subjectivity and human need for physical closeness as well as direct, face-to-face relations, has become an essential source of the widespread sense of threat and uncertainty. Although the threat itself, as should also be emphasized, is often exaggerated in the media or used for political purposes. Therefore, the physical dimension of human activity that until now was completely natural and obvious, in the human consciousness of the "COVID-19 era," has on the global scale in the blink of an eye become something problematic. Human ties and relationships in the layer of social practices and contacts have necessarily been weakened and loosened. Interpersonal openness in different social practices has been replaced by instructive and methodically recommended or required attitudes of distance and isolation. The naively shared life-world in the dimension of its spontaneous or organized interpersonal contacts is, therefore, subject to specific and not always fully visible forms of transformation and reorganization.

Man as a subject of domestication—*homo domesticus*—in the "COVID-19 era"

Home is a special place that defines our own location and position in the surrounding world (Patočka 2016, 56). Home is also a place of refuge, although it is not a material place, because its basic feature is to provide a sense of familiarity and closeness. "We can say that home is the place of normal satisfaction of normal needs, a place where we are safe, the masters (in various modalities), i.e., a place at our disposal." (Patočka 2016, 78)

However, the human experience of possessing a home shows us different shades and degrees of the phenomenon of being settled. Home has both its particular (individual) and general (communal) dimension. For this reason, we can perceive home either in a "narrow" or in a "broad" sense. In the first case, it will be a family home with "its vital functions of daily contact and order." Whereas in the second case, it will be "home" in the sense of belonging and attachment to a particular place, society, or tradition (Patočka 2016, 56). Therefore, the space of home includes both the "private sphere" as well as the "public sphere."

Home as a place of refuge with its basic functions occupies a specific place in the context of the human experience of the "COVID-19 era." The private home, although primarily a physical space, has become a socially recommended refuge from the invisible threat of the pandemic. Paradoxically, however, home as a shelter and a natural place, in which the basic needs of life are usually secured, has become for many people a place of a long-term, physically and emotionally oppressive social isolation. In this way, home has become a kind of an unexpected trap for many people. Also, the home as a private space has been separated by a wall of prescribed or recommended social isolation from the home as a public space. In the broad sense, the home as a common space of everyday life and a "common household," connected by specific social traditions and practices, has become a place of anticipated danger. Contrary to the basic reflex of daily entry into, and presence in, the public space, responsible participation and involvement in public affairs (the "common household"), due to the pandemic, paradoxically revealed the necessity of physical withdrawal and actual refraining from direct social contacts.

In addition to its natural functions, home, in the narrow sense, i.e., as an intimate space, has also taken over, on an unprecedented scale in the modern world, the functions that have thus far been essentially fulfilled in the public sphere as a "common household." For many people, the private space of the home has become a place of socially ordered isolation and fulfilment of professional obligations in the form of remote work. Thus, the home as a private space of shelter and realization of life needs has potentially become a space subject to social rules that have thus far been applied in public space. In the case of compulsory home isolation, people are forced to submit to the control and supervision of social services, and in the case of remote work in the form of video conferences or on-line transmission in real time, they are necessarily forced to respect certain conventions of behavior or ways of dressing in their own home, etc., which have thus far been reserved for the general social space. In this way, the "private space" of home, in its various dimensions, has out of necessity been introduced, with its various consequences, into the "public space," and vice versa: the "public space" has been introduced into the "private space."

Both in the case of the institution of compulsory isolation as well as in the case of remote work in the form of videoconferencing or on-line real-time transmission home as a private space loses its basic dimension of the broadly understood intimacy and security. Indeed, the privacy and intimacy of home as a space of refuge has been fundamentally affected. Therefore, when on the private space of home there are imposed the obligations, which have thus far been binding in the public space (in the street, in the park, in the offices, at work, at school, or at a university) as a "common household," home, metaphorically speaking, more or less loses its "protective walls," ceases to be a shelter, loses its unconditional intimacy of private space that man has full control of.

Man as a subject of work—*homo laborans*—in the "COVID-19 era"

The human world is a world marked by hardship and work. Work is an expression of the openness of human nature, and becomes the basic relationship that defines human existence in the world. The world of work becomes the source of man's self-awareness, and distinguishes him from animal forms of life because animals do not have the ability to organize, transmit, or cede their own "world of work" (Patočka 1996, 14–18). The purposefulness of the "world of work" makes man "a citizen of our human world" as opposed to animals that are driven by simple and direct instincts to satisfy their needs. The world of work becomes a component of the experience of time itself, because human activity, among other things, takes the form of the time of work (Patočka 2016, 72–73).

Work also reveals the problematic nature of the natural world, because work serves life as well as "obscures the view of life and obstructs life." Human work is an existential paradox. Work as a necessity and as a possibility is an expression of man's disposition of space and time (Patočka 1996, 21–25, 29), but, all the same, work is also the "self-disposal of ourselves as being at the disposal of others" (Patočka 1996, 31). This "constraint on life" is, specifically, the human production and productivity, i.e., the "world of work." The primary cell and model of such a "world of work" is "the household that provides for life's needs; as protection against its own inner trend to rest, routine, and relaxation it has the stimulus of the public openness" (Patočka 1996, 38).

The threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic generated widespread risks and uncertainties on a scale unprecedented in modern societies; in addition to health and life dimensions, the pandemic has had serious consequences for the labor market and employment. Both aspects, the medical aspect (the threat and health of citizens) as well as the economic aspect of the situation (labor market and the level of employment), should also be considered in terms of problems that require socially systemic solutions. However, problems on the labor market and problems with work are fully conditioned by the state of the epidemiological threat and its unpredictability. Thus, during the pandemic, many people, on the global scale, lose their jobs, and cannot temporarily perform their professional duties, or have to perform them in diverse conditions and to a different extent. Undoubtedly, this situation also, to a greater or lesser degree, affects individuals, entire regions of the world, or specific sectors of the labor market.

Carrying out work in most forms of social organization, requires leaving one's own home and staying in a particular place of work. The modern, professional, and institutionalized employment relationship (i.e., subject to labor law, guarantees, and obligations as well as supervision of social institutions) in most sectors assumes leaving the private space of everyday life. In this way, doing one's work always becomes a way of being present in the surrounding world, which allows man to be present in the world as *homo laborans*. Social ways of responding to the crisis of the pandemic and the systemic strategies for the prevention of uncontrolled transmission of the coronavirus (based on obligatory decisions of the state administration at various levels) fundamentally change this situation. The crisis on the labor market is a result of the widespread and administratively ordered lockdowns, and takes three basic forms: suspension, restriction, or change of work form. Each of these forms result in productivity deficits, and, inevitably, productivity is a crucial determinant of the value of work. Also, these three forms have other specific consequences: they intensify the risk and unpredictability experienced by people in connection with the work they have done thus far.

It seems to be completely obvious that, however dramatic, the disintegration of human work in the event of its suspension or reduction has negative consequences (e.g., loss of job, reduction of salary, change of employment conditions, etc.). By contrast, the change of the form of work entails various consequences that are not fully perceived. In many sectors of the labor market, the change in the form of work from on-site to fully or partially remote (e.g., work in corporations, banking, education, universities, public offices, or healthcare, etc.) is a completely new phenomenon that has emerged in the context of human work. This phenomenon can also be considered both positively and negatively. In the positive aspect, it can be said that the change in the form of work fully "serves life," because it allows to maintain the continuity of work and income when many people do not have any possibility of doing work or have to do it in a limited way. Changing the form of work to remote mode also contributes to the implementation of various innovations in the way work is organized and performed.

On the other hand, taking into consideration the negative aspect of the change of the form of work, it should be noted that work performed in this way still "hides the view on life." The change of the form of work from on-site to remote constitutes an additional and often significant physical and psychological burden. In the context of professional duties, there are at least two circumstances that can be pointed out. Firstly, the employees who perform remote work from home have to reconcile professional activities with the activities of other home dwellers, which can cause both a sense of discomfort and various types of awkwardness as a result of being seen by colleagues (e.g., during videoconferences or on-line transmissions). In this way, not only do private homes host professional activities, but they also host the looks of outsiders. People, as if by chance, can take a look into someone else's home and witness what is happening there at a given time, which may happen thanks to the image or sound mode during an on-line transmission. Secondly, it should be pointed out that much greater working time or, to put it more closely, much greater workload is necessary to perform the same or similar professional tasks in remote conditions. In this way, the workspace has not only been linked to private life at the expense of the latter, but also the limits of working time were extended at the expense of private time. Therefore, it can be said that in such a situation the "constraint of time" has been intensified by work. The subjective proportions of "self-disposal" and "being at other's disposal" are disturbed, and so is the autonomy of the man as *homo laborans*, insofar as disposition over workspace and working time are concerned.

Conclusions

Analogously to the meaning of the paradox of Theseus's ship, the life-world in the human experience of the "COVID-19 era" in many respects is and is no longer the same reality. It is a world that still looks the same, even though the basis is no longer the same. It is also a world, in which many changes have taken place overnight, and are still taking place. This fundamentally alters the situation of man in various dimensions of his daily life and things that he experiences: time, carnality, home, or work. By presenting the nature of these changes in the context of the selected aspects of Jan Patočka's philosophy of the life-world, it is possible to discern how much the natural and obvious foundations of everyday existence of the contemporary man have been violated. In various dimensions of everyday life, man as *homo temporalis*, *homo corpus*, *homo domesticus*, or *homo laborans* paradoxically experiences that the surrounding world still is and is no longer the same world. In the "COVID-19 era," the change in the way such fundamental components of everyday existence as time, body, home, or work are experienced and perceived seems to go unnoticed and is burdened with various far-reaching consequences. Everything takes place in the atmosphere of a paradox, analogous to the paradox of the ship of Theseus as described by Plutarch, and in accordance with the interpretation, as adopted here, of the three fundamental moments, in which this paradox is experienced: recognition, memory, noticeability.

Man of the "COVID-19 era" lives in a globalized world, and is, therefore, exposed to a kind of paradoxical risk and uncertainty. Furthermore, the foundations of his modern way of life, his sense of security, and his belief in his own infinite agency have been enduringly violated. In this context, the anthropological status of man as *animal insecurum*, as described by Peter Wust, becomes meaningful as it expresses man's primary existential condition, i.e., the *insecuritas humana* (Wust 1995, 18–19). Additionally, since this experience is not only universal, but also shared by humanity on a global scale at the same time, it takes on a special meaning, namely: this experience becomes a peculiar and individually shared "boundary situation" that entails a "shock" and is "inevitable" (Jaspers 1999, 407).

According to the first moment of an interpretation of the paradox of reality (the paradox of *recognition*), which is and at the same time is not the same reality, some recognize that nothing great has happened in the world, in which they live, while others point to the changes that occurred on the structural basis of everyday existence. The second moment (the paradox of *memory*) indicates that the misunderstanding of the nature of the phenomena and changes that are taking place, *hic et nunc*, is always a reflection of the level of a reliable memory of past experiences. Man is subject to the pressures of the so-called instant culture and the domination of pop-culture media, and that is why he often loses the critical ability to remember the past. Consequently, man also loses the ability to understand what is happening in the present. Finally, the moment of unnoticeability (the paradox of *noticeability*) is linked to the paradoxicality of a situation, in which the life-world is changing fundamentally or completely, but this happens gradually or in a dispersed way, and, therefore, remains largely unnoticed. That is why the vast majority of the participants of social life get used to the new situation of the life-world that is conditioned by the implementation of certain norms of organization and supervision of social life, while at the same time people believe that the surrounding life-world is still based on the same implicit basis and obviousness.

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Common Sense and Common Disease
The Pandemic and the Expansion of the Non-real

Victor Molchanov

Russian State University for the Humanities, Department of Philosophy, Center for Phenomenological Philosophy, Miusskaja Sq. 6, GSP-3 125993 Moscow, Russia

victor.molchanov@gmail.com

Abstract

The starting point of this article is the intersection of two global phenomena—the pandemic and the internet. The pandemic and its possible social consequences are viewed from the perspective of two differences that constitute the human world: the difference between certainty and uncertainty, as well as the difference between the real and the unreal. A new mixture of the Real (the accidental, the unexpected, the uncertain, the dangerous, etc.) and the Non-real upsets the balance between them in favor of the Non-real each time a certain system of meanings is expressed in different texts in the broadest sense of the word. The Non-real is not unreal (absurd, contradictory) and not the Illusory. The latter belongs only to the Real. Furthermore, not only the role of philosophy and science in the formation of the virtual world and non-illusory consciousness is discussed, but also the issue of the freedom of thought in an era of the expansion of various kinds of texts, from comprehensive physical theories and literary works to advertisements for certain products.

Keywords: pandemic, definite, indefinite, real, non-real.

Skupnostni čut in skupna bolezen. Pandemija in razmah ne-realnega

Povzetek

Izhodišče članka predstavlja presečišče med dvema globalnima fenomenoma: pandemijo in internetom. Pandemijo in njene možne družbene posledice obravnavamo z zornega kota dveh razlikovanj, ki konstituirata človeški svet: razlike med gotovostjo in negotovostjo ter razlike med realnim in nerealnim. Nova mešanica Realnega (naključnega, nepričakovanega, negotovega, nevarnega itd.) in Ne-realnega zmoti ravnotežje med njima in ga tako prevesi na stran Ne-realnega vsakokrat, ko se določen sistem pomenov izrazi v mnogoterih tekstih v najširšem smislu besede. Ne-realno ni nerealno (absurdno, protislovno) in tudi ni Iluzorno. Slednje pripada samo Realnemu. V nadaljevanju se ne spoprimemo samo z vlogo filozofije in znanosti pri formiranju virtualnega sveta in ne-iluzorne zavesti, temveč tudi s problemom svobode misli v času razmaha raznolikih vrst tekstov, od vseobsegajočih fizikalnih teorij in literarnih del do oglasov za določene proizvode.

Ključne besede: pandemija, določno, nedoločno, realno, ne-realno.

Die Wahrheitszusammenhänge sind andere als die Zusammenhänge der Sachen.
(The connections of truths are of a different kind than the connections of things.)

Edmund Husserl

"Truth" is essentially unnecessary. If it were suddenly found, it would be a very unpleasant surprise. At least Lessing asserted it (and he knew what he was talking about) when he asked God to hold the truth with Himself, and to keep for man the ability to err and to seek.

Lev Shestov

Introduction

From a routine, planned, and fairly predictable life as a chain of certain events, the contemporary pandemic brings most people back to reality: to dangers, to accidents, to uncertainties. As compared to good old Johann Strauss's *The Bat* (*Die Fledermaus*), the present-day Chinese bats organized a masquerade of a radical new type, a prosaic, compulsory masquerade for the masses with almost identical masks. The elite also gave the masses a new meaning of "social distance," attaching to this term a positive connotation of equality. The reality of the pandemic appears in a series of uncertainties: whether the COVID-19 virus exists or not, has an artificial origin or not, whether this virus is more dangerous than the influenza virus, etc. What is not accidental, is that there may be illusions and errors, which these uncertainties generate. Illusions are an element of reality, and not of "ideas"—theories, artistic images, literary manifestos, political programs, etc.

The sequence of events of the pandemic (real or fictional) was presented in sanitary-epidemiological and administrative economical language. From a scientific perspective, the pandemic brings to the fore the language of biology and virology, which will dominate, together with the language of computer science, the discussion of many pressing problems, including political ones, for a long time and perhaps "forever." In California, and not only "there" alone, they already dream of computers that will look like human beings, and long before the advent of computers, the authorities of all types always dreamed of men who perform, sometimes even "creatively," one or another of their programs. Is this a technique of power?

On the one hand, computer technology greatly reinforces the already powerful weapons and means of observation; on the other hand, it finds application in science and practice, including the medical one; "on the third hand," it gives almost unlimited possibilities of entertainment. The contemporary pandemic can be paralleled to computer technology. Firstly, it recalls to attention the capabilities of biological weapons and the possibilities to restrict freedom of movement with the help of special applications; secondly, it points to new possibilities of cognition and medical practice; and, thirdly, it not only does not limit the volume of computer entertainment, but increases it through the restriction of travelling of various types, including tourism. The languages of biology and computer technology (and politics) are converging, and perhaps they will merge into one "superhuman" language. At least the term "virus" is common to both languages. In 500–1000 years, IT-biologists will assert that human beings originated from a computer or from the intersection of a computer and a virus; the debate will only be about which operating system and which virus was the source of this emergence.

It is known that the analogy between computer and human being is called "artificial intelligence;" the analogy between man and virus could be called "natural irrationality": there are many viruses, there are also a lot of people; viruses can live only at the expense of living organisms, including humans, a man can live only thanks to other people; the virus mutates, human behavior is uncertain (the sea is quieter than man, as Jules Michelet argued), and meetings of people that entail long-term communication (friendship, marriage, teamwork, etc.) are more or less random; viruses are sometimes dangerous to a person, a person is sometimes very dangerous to another person even without the pandemic. And, last, but not least: both the world of viruses as well as the world of people are somewhere intermediate between living and inanimate. "*Lebenswelt*" (life-world) is an unfortunate name for a world where there is not only love and birth of children, but also hatred, murders (and of children, too), diseases; where even perception (the basic structure of the life-world, according to Husserl) depends on many “lifeless” things, for instance, upon the social status (not to mention judgments and emotions); where there are not only “fathers and citizens,” but also villains and criminals; where even a theoretical conclusion is characterized as enforcement. The main difference between humans and viruses is that viruses do not create theories about humans, but humans create theories about viruses. No matter how adequate these theories may be, are the theorists themselves not losing, and not only those who are involved in biology?

As a new and global phenomenon, the pandemic brings to the fore at least two differences, which can, on the one hand, serve as possible starting points for its thematization, while, on the other hand, allowing the differences themselves appear in a new light: the difference between certainty and uncertainty, as well as the difference between the Real and the Non-real.

1. Pandemic and philosophy. Viruses as a model of reality

Formerly, philosophers were looking for the general, and not only for themselves, now the general itself came to philosophers, and not only to them. The “truth” has now been found, the truth on a planetary scale, and it was a truly unpleasant surprise, crowning all the tensions and problems of the contemporary world. In the 20th century, there were also very general “truths,” but still not so all-encompassing. The two world wars forced millions of people to make efforts of a certain kind, determined the moods, thoughts, and feelings of various social strata and groups. Husserl’s “truth” as the definiteness of being or, more modestly, the definiteness of what exists, corresponds to the standard of classical ideal objects. Can it be attributed to real objects and processes, including social (and antisocial, which are essentially also social)? In peacetime, the uncertainty of behavior and the “search for truth” can be optional. In times of war and during a pandemic, decisions and actions are determined by circumstances to a much greater extent. All-encompassing truths entail greater certainty of the present (self-isolation, masks, gloves, “social distance,” etc.), but also greater uncertainty of the future in relation to the spread of the disease, as well as in relation to its social consequences. Such truths sharply separate the present and the future, give a new mixture of certainty and uncertainty, in order to redistribute human spaces, and to test new management possibilities.

If the pandemic is not a world war without warring parties (if we exclude, of course, the purposeful distribution of COVID-19), then it is, in any case, a global threat, and in different dimensions of human existence. From one side, it is a threat to health and life, from another one, again to different dimensions, firstly, as a threat to human rights, and, secondly, as a threat to the present-day type of mass lifestyle.

The COVID-19 pandemic can be called the transition to the digital form of globalization: the real movement of people and goods has decreased; virtual communication of all kinds has become predominant. However, the pandemic is not only a transition, but it is also the first global event, or, rather, the first global process, in the era of globalization, a process that affects almost all aspects of social life: production, business, travel, scientific research, entertainment, everyday life, etc. With the exception of world wars, the pandemic has only one rival concerning the coverage of the world as a whole. This is philosophy. Philosophers say: at the heart of everything is water, air, fire, ideas, forms, cogito, monads, transcendental imagination, absolute spirit, will to power, being, disciplinary practices, etc.; maybe it was like that before, politicians and biologists say (new opportunities for this stable link are emerging), but now everything depends on viruses. The point, however, lies not in a certain carrier of the world, whether the latter rests on three whales or on millions of viruses, but in the fact that turtles and whales, eidos and monads, cogito and even spontaneous syntheses, as well as other mythological creatures and philosophical entities are based on "things" as something definite. The certainty of the foundation presupposes a certain certainty of a building, the knowledge of which requires certain methods. This certainty is not cancelled neither by the procedural character of foundation nor by spontaneity, which for some reason immediately breaks down into twelve headings—blind syntheses. Nor does the "movable foundation" and "existential time" cancel out the certainty of the world, just because time, including existential time, is fiction. Even the rhizome, with its labyrinths without beginning and end, and without the guiding thread, speaks more of the uncertainty of thinking processes, of the contingency of thought than of the contingency of the world. The original plurality (of consciousness), which does not have a single center, was already "known" by J.-M. Guyau at the end of the 19th century. Physicists talk about the uncertainties of the microworld, but people do not live there, and threats do not come from the microworld directly, but from devices made using theories about the microworld. Viruses, unlike electrons, live in humans—the most non-biologically variable creature—, and pose an immediate danger. If the physical uncertainty of the world says nothing about the uncertainty of the human world, then viruses, diseases, epidemics, destructive forces of nature, etc., tell us about this: the human world is fundamentally indefinite; nature manifests certainty in a living organism, including the human organism, but this is only one side of its existence. All diseases, and not only during an epidemic, arise by chance and unexpectedly, if we take into account the "life-world," and not the science of etiology.

The second question that connects the pandemic and philosophy, as well as science, first of all the natural science, is the following: the 2019–2020 pandemic (which will possibly last longer) appeared in the era of an ever-increasing segment of the virtual world. At the same time, it is obvious that the contribution of science and philosophy to the formation of the virtual world can hardly be overestimated. It is also obvious that the scope of the virtual sector has increased during the pandemic. Can we conclude from this that the sphere of the real has decreased? But then reality can be quantified, and even with numbers! Or ciphers? This is exactly what they are trying to do now with the help of the media, reporting on the number of cases, recoveries, and deaths.

What is surprising, here, at least for philosophers and mathematicians? The first person who began, in ancient Greece, to call himself a philosopher, just proclaimed that all things are numbers. In the formation of the virtual world, the union of philosophy and mathematics immediately became apparent: numbers, eidos, forms, *mathesis universalis*, pure reason, theory of all theories, etc.

Is the pandemic a kind of tough and disturbing response to serene virtual communication? Or does the pandemic multiply the power of the virtual world over the Real and Non-real?

The third question is the question of the freedom of thought. A pandemic, like a war, like any mass disaster, requires, on the one hand, an intensification of intellectual efforts to resist people or nature (and generally destroy hurricanes and earthquakes, as Fichte dreamed or planned), and to overcome the consequences of the disaster. On the other hand, each disaster significantly narrows the scope of intellectual and spiritual life, not to mention the partial classification of scientific information and the destruction of communication in various dimensions of the human world.

"How absurd men are! They never use the liberties they have; they demand those they do not have. They have freedom of thought; they demand freedom of speech." To these ironic words of Kierkegaard one can now add: people still demand freedom of trips, and without masks! The question of the freedom of thought is, of course, more complex, perhaps the most difficult of all philosophical questions, if they exist in their pure form. The pandemic focuses attention on a certain, and at the same time indefinite, range of issues, but at the same time raises new questions, which is one of the conditions for thinking.

Is, thus, not an ideal situation being created for phenomenologists? Whether an isolated virus exists or not, a pandemic can be viewed as a phenomenon with its threats to health, rights, work, communication, entertainment, etc., but considered again "theoretically," according to the phenomenological attitude. "To the things themselves!" Is this a way to reality, or to the theory of all theories, and to the method of all methods?

2. The Real, the Non-real, and the Illusory

Communication is a fundamental and value-neutral phenomenon of the human world. The difference between real, non-real, and illusory is one of its main constitutive differences and a necessary condition for any, including global, communication.

On the one hand, the pandemic is an obstacle to communication of different—but far from all—types; on the other hand, it is one of the main, if not the main, topics of discussions, assumptions, guesses, etc. In this, again, a pandemic is similar to a world war.

In the real dimension, the pandemic is becoming global due to population density and the intensity of the movement of people using up-to-date modes of transport; in the non-real, informative dimension, the pandemic is grasped as a general threat, as a series of ongoing efforts, etc., thanks to the media and individual means of communication. The distinction between real, non-real, and illusory, which in itself deserves to be the subject of research, becomes especially relevant in this kind of a “borderline situation.”

Reality is a word that everyone knows and understands, if no one asks about it themselves. Usually, the real is understood as what does not depend on human will and desires, and limits, even determines it. However, the non-real as a system of meanings also does not depend on, and thus limits the will of the people. For example, 2x2 is always 4, no matter how much someone wants it to be five or eight.

The Real and the Non-real are not two substances or abstractions denoting something objective, but two fundamental dimensions of the human world, which mutually complement each other in the communicative space of a certain human world. The Non-real is not a denial of the real, but its counterpart. The Non-real includes any relatively closed system of meanings realized in written texts (scientific theories, literary works, political programs, etc.) and in oral speech. The Non-real is not illusory and unreal. The Unreal is something opposite to the Real; it is fictional, false, absurd, etc. However, the meaning of something fictional is not fictional, the meaning of something false, which presupposes the meaning of truth, is not false, the meaning of something absurd is not absurd, etc. Meaning is neither real nor unreal. It is non-real. On the one hand, the Non-real is the means of ordering the real, on the other hand, it can be a source of the fictional, the absurd, etc. In its turn, the Real can be a source of the illusory. It sounds paradoxical, but the illusory is a sign of reality.

The Real and the Non-real form a certain proportion, and their balance is a basis for the sustainability of the world. The experience of the Real is the experience of the accidental, indefinite, obstructing, sometimes dangerous, and terrible. The experience of the Non-real is the experience of the ordered, rational, logically grounded, systemic, and “theoretical.” The Real is what makes the world uncertain, the Non-real is what makes the world defined and manageable.

It is possible to single out the main criteria for the distinguishing between the Real and the Non-real. 1. The Real implies the presence of the human body as well as objects, processes, living organisms that in one way or another, directly or indirectly, can come into contact (in a broad sense) with the human body. In the Non-real, i.e., in the systems of meanings, there is no place for corporeality; you can touch the surface of the table, but you cannot touch the mathematical plane, just as it is impossible to shake hands with a literary hero, if this is not a metaphor. The real is perceived objectively or procedurally; in the sphere of the Non-real, perception is only a means (for example, a drawing) for working with a system of meanings. 2. The Real implies contingency and uncertainty; the Non-real, structural and logical completeness and certainty.

The mediators between the Real and the Non-real are, firstly, the "acts" of differentiations and differentiations between differences (acts of consciousness, which are communicative in one way or another); and, secondly, diverse sign (and symbolic) systems. Thus, the contemporary world is composed at least of the following elements: the Real, the Non-real, the communicative ("acts" of distinguishing between differences), and the semiotic. Now, the question is to what realm the illusory belongs.

In the literal sense, an illusion means a deceptive perception of an object, caused either by a similarity of objects or by a combination of phenomena that appears as a certain object. In the figurative sense, an illusion is something imaginary and, as a rule, positive concerning other people, the course of life, etc.; it is something similar to dreams and hopes. Both the first and second types of illusions belong to the real dimension of human life: illusions (and disappointments) refer to real people and circumstances of affairs in real communication. The question, however, is: can illusions of the second type also relate to the Non-real: to the characters of the works of art, to the images of historical figures, to this or that image of an era, to ideological attitudes, etc.? In the realm of the Non-real, we are, rather, dealing with the depiction of illusions and their loss in the heroes of novels (for example, in Balzac).

At first glance, the depiction of illusions and their loss in the novel, differs from the interlocutor's story about his illusions in real communication only in artistic merits. However, it is not so. The interlocutor's story conveys his own experience in a complex communication process, in which new illusions and disappointments can arise, a certain degree of trust can be established, etc. The illusions in the novel are already defined; they require not trust, but the tuning of imagination. As for the first type of illusions (in the literal sense), they cannot, as we will see later, take place in the sphere of the Non-real. All types of illusions belong to the human world. Human life is hardly possible without illusions of one kind or another. Even politicians sometimes need the illusions that they are working for the benefit of society as a whole.

It is obvious that the Real can be illusory: a bird can be mistaken for a branch, and vice versa, a stump for a wolf or a dog, etc.; here, one real object "pretends" to be another one. In the realm of the Non-real, one meaning cannot pass itself off for another. The Non-real, centaurs, logarithms, and round squares, etc., cannot be illusory; a rider on a horse cannot be mistaken for a centaur, they belong to different worlds. Not only are theories, as Husserl argued, made up of meanings; centaurs are unreal objects, but as figures in mythology they are also made up of meanings. One can only naively assert that a centaur is a combination of a man and a horse, because this is simply not true, because in reality there is no such connection; a centaur is a combination of many meanings, among which the meaning of a horse and the meaning of a person are decisive and are combined into one image. Unlike real spaces, in Non-real spaces one cannot be mistaken for one another: a square for a triangle, two for three, a centaur for Narcissus. This does not concern images of figures or signs, but abstractions themselves, or images, compared with other abstractions or images. You can assume that you see two objects, but in fact there will be three of them; you can take the number two for the number three with poor eyesight or writing, but it is impossible to consider the number two as the number three, and vice versa. One can take the image of Hercules for the image of Achilles, and vice versa, but it is impossible to consider Hercules as Achilles, or vice versa, as heroes of various myths. On the contrary, in the forest, we believe that this stump is a wolf or a dog, because in the forest there are no images of each stump next to the original, so that the traveler does not feel fear. In this case, fear is another sign of reality; when we take Achilles for Hercules, neither one nor the other threatens us. (The danger of the Non-real lies in another direction.) In the Non-real world, everything is already marked, labelled; abstractions and images are correlated with each other, even if not unambiguously: there are variants of mathematical proofs, variants of myths, different editions of the same revised work (artistic or philosophical), etc., but this variability again presupposes internal certainty as the proposed option. In one version of the myth, the hero performs some actions, in another—others, but in the same version, there is no uncertainty or even probability in relation to certain actions or deeds. In mathematical theorems and proofs, there is no destiny governing them, but in the same way there is no uncertainty and randomness, if it is not a result related to the field of application. It cannot be assumed that on the Euclidean plane the sum of the squares of the legs may accidentally turn out to be different from the square of the hypotenuse or that such a statement is more or less likely. The probability is not calculated here. Where probability is concerned, it refers to real processes and objects, but the calculus of probability itself is not probable.

The source of errors lies in the subjective sphere, the source of illusions is the objective state of affairs; the main method of researching the Real is analysis, the main method of researching the Non-real is interpretation. Analysis and interpretation complement each other in the same way as the Real and the Non-real. There can be errors in mathematical reasoning, but there can be no illusion; on the contrary, illusions, directly or indirectly, are always associated with the uncertainty of the real world, bodily-practical and emotional attitudes. Analysis, not interpretation, plays a critical role in exposing illusions. At the same time, the use of the term "interpretation" as the main method in relation to the Real is a very dubious enterprise. When Husserl defines intentionality as an interpretation of sensations, then the act of consciousness turns out to be non-real, giving meaning (one can hardly experience interpretation) to the real, i.e., sensation. The example of a wax doll, which we supposedly "interpret" first as a lady, and then recognize as a doll, is indicative. According to Husserl, we interpret the same complex of sensations in different ways, at one time, in this way, at another one, differently. However, we are simply not in the position to interpret what has not yet received a definite meaning, i.e., just a complex of sensations. Sensations are not interpreted, but the immediate surrounding world, which always contains communicative and non-real elements (a certain configuration of meanings). The difference between the lady and the wax figure is the difference between the two worlds, communicative and non-communicative; we tend to be mistaken, because we are offered communication (the lady bows), and this is a sign of everyday and habitual action.

In the realm of the Non-real, there is no place for the illusory, because in the realm of the Non-real, there is no place for the fundamental uncertainty and contingency of the real world. On the one hand, we are dealing here with already formed images, with interpreted signs, with well-known images; on the other hand, we ourselves form images, interpret signs, and recognize images. This or that interpretation can be caused by a random cause, i.e., by random circumstances, in which the interpreter finds themselves. However, the interpretation itself, which is realized in the system of meanings, cannot be accidental in the process of its explication.

In the case of illusion, we are not talking about distorted perception, but about deformation of the perceived field, in which a shift in meanings takes place. In the realm of the Non-real, i.e., "within" a certain system of meanings, be it a mathematical proof or a discussion about the artistic merits of a performance, etc., our judgments can only indirectly correlate with the perception of real objects. Here, our judgments are primarily associated with the perception of signs. However, for all the inseparability of sign and meaning, signs are not what establishes meanings, but meanings require signs as their representatives in the realm of the Real. If actions require security, then it is security as a meaning that requires certain signs, thanks to which the realization of meaning becomes possible. Signs require, in turn, systems of their material embodiment. In everyday life, people believe that traffic lights provide safety. However, safety is still ensured by people with the help of a traffic light, a device that gives signals-signs, but does not hold the hand of people walking at a red light. Signs of this kind are created by some people and deciphered by others according to their meanings. Likewise, masks and gloves during a pandemic are safety measures that require human decision. In this case, the mask becomes a sign of both relative safety and law-abidingness. It is not the masks that decide, which of the meanings of this sign is more important in that moment.

The Real cannot exist without the Non-real, but the Non-real has relative independence. However, no matter how the Real and the Non-real are intertwined within any one communicative world, this difference becomes apparent during the transition from one type of communication to another, with the awareness of many worlds and many ways of acting.

The pandemic brings us back to reality, but at the same time, it destroys illusions to a large degree. Firstly, the suddenness of the pandemic destroys the illusion of the endless flow of everyday life. Secondly, the illusion of independence of many decisions made—the most common plans, projects, etc.—are destroyed. Besides, and this is the main thing, the pandemic leads to an expansion of the virtual sphere, where there is no, and cannot be, illusions.

3. Texts and reality

The pandemic was unexpected, but not very surprising after the many disasters (natural and artificial) taking place in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Much has been written about the benefits and dangers of science for life in the 20th century. Auguste Comte proposed the classification of sciences as a movement from the most abstract science—mathematics—to the most concrete one—sociology. At present, it is possible to propose a classification of scientific applications according to the chronology of harmfulness. Physics and chemistry are clearly arguing for the status of the first science here: with the help of physics, more precisely mechanics, the first weapons of mass destruction have been created: multi-charge rifles, then machine guns, and submachine guns. However, the creation of such weapons was initially perceived as an improvement of the old ones—muskets, smoothbore guns, etc. At the same time, chemistry has been creating something fundamentally new—chemical weapons, which found their application on both sides in the First World War. Afterwards, physics gained revenge by proposing a weapon that can destroy the planet Earth completely. And finally, biology, with its viruses, bacteria, "bats," etc., makes the source of death invisible, inaudible, imperceptible, and universal. The weapon becomes directly indefinable and adequate to the mass society (a sort of a *das-Man*-weapon). Thus, weapons, like knowledge, went from the singular to the general: one arrow—one person; one sword and one pistol—one or two or three people; one rifle—several people; one machine gun—dozens of people; one bomb—hundreds and thousands; one virus (one type of virus)—all of humanity.

These negative consequences of scientific discoveries, many of which would not have been possible without mathematics, are well known; I have only arranged them in a chronological (perhaps not very precise) order as stages of a kind of phenomenology of the militaristic spirit that strives for its absolute realization.

In fact, one cannot have any doubt about the positive and negative impacts of science, including the extension in the sphere of the virtual world: all its "carriers"—television, computers, smartphones, etc.—were not created without the help of science. But what about theories, and not their applications? Can scientific or quasi-scientific theories influence the consciousness and behavior of people, prompting them to replace real forms of communication with virtual ones? There is hardly a direct influence of this kind, although an indirect influence undoubtedly takes place: in the process of education, the schoolchild and the student master the internal logic of various scientific disciplines; the study of various scientific theories teaches us to move from meaning to meaning, from presuppositions to consequences, from theory to experiment. Afterwards, it can turn out that the theories being studied are wrong, despite their logical perfection. Other theories are accepted, which can also be rejected. Thus, criticism is carried out within the framework of the non-real "autonomous third world" that develops independently of the first two. At the same time, the "movement" from theory to practice becomes even more dangerous in social sciences and practices.

The essential difference between the world of theoretical knowledge as such and the worlds of human life is that in the world of knowledge as a world of connection of meanings there is not a grain of reality—no chance, no corporeality, no uncertainty (concerning the latter, the question is more complicated). However, there is a similarity between scientific and "unscientific" worlds, which is that "unscientific" worlds also form closed typologies of meanings and actions. As a matter of fact, any human world (the worlds of labor, science, art, sports, etc.) has certain boundaries. Within this or that world, the system of meanings can develop as much as necessary, but only within the predetermined framework of a certain typology of language and objectivity.

From one perspective, science opens closed and little worlds of ordinary life striving towards the general and infinite; from the other perspective, scientific disciplines, as a result of the differentiation of sciences and the professionalization of knowledge, turn out to be relatively closed spheres, inaccessible not only to laymen, but also to colleagues from other fields. Thus, a certainty of thinking is formed: a certain way of forming abstractions, or concepts, a certain set of methods, the choice of a paradigm or tradition, etc. Abstraction as an element of a system cannot be indefinite; it serves other abstractions within a theory: "Alle Wissenschaft ist ihrem objektiven Gehalt nach, ist als Theorie aus diesem *einen* homogenen Stoff konstituiert, sie ist eine ideale Komplexion von *Bedeutungen*," Husserl rightly asserts (Husserl 1984, 100),[1] and the experience of the mathematician suggested this truth to him. The refusal to recognize the theory of knowledge as a theory of a deductive type does not mean the refusal from the theory as a study of the pure connection of pure meanings.

Abstract mathematics forms the only and vast independent sphere of the Non-real, and has no direct relation to reality. The famous physicist Pyotr Kapitsa sarcastically proposed: "Isn't it time to list all mathematicians in the sport section, like chess players?" Another aspect of removing mathematics from reality was noted by A. N. Whitehead: "Let us grant that the pursuit of mathematics is a divine madness of the human spirit, a refuge from the goading urgency of contingent happenings" (Whitehead 1925, 26–27). In fact, the "tingling of chance" forces you to hide from it where there are no, and cannot be, accidents and, therefore, no reality. Unlike abstract mathematics, applied mathematics, in the sense of its name, is directly related to the description of real processes. However, not only technology is improved (including weapons) with its help, but virtual worlds are also constructed. Thus, applied mathematics brings us back again to the Non-real.

The positive functions of the internet as the main carrier of the virtual world are known, they are primarily associated with the speed of information exchange, new opportunities in training and education, etc., although the quickly transmitted information itself can serve for purposes that are not necessarily good. Thus, as in the field of science, one negative consequence can cancel all positive ones. The internet is now becoming a place of the realization of mass consciousness, a special lifestyle, a kind of art for art. If

1 "All the theoretical science consists, in its objective content, of *one* homogeneous stuff: it is an ideal fabric of *meanings*." (Husserl 2001, 226)

Hollywood cinema was called the dream factory, then the present-day internet (beyond the transfer of scientific, business, and other information in a broad sense) is a factory of opinions and presentations, as well as self-presentations on the most insignificant occasions. The virtual world creates an illusion of reality, but in this "reality" there are no illusions, no emotions caused by real communication. Illusions as a necessary element of human life (the inevitability of the transcendental Illusion is Kant's great discovery) disappear when the real component of the human world is eliminated. This lifestyle provides neither disappointment nor exposure of illusions, but only a binary system of assessments—like it or not. This "like"/"dislike" binary is imitative and collective as a rule. On the contrary, disappointment is one of the few communicative acts that imply an independent decision.

Nonetheless, the virtual world has an inconceivable effectiveness in social life. Life without illusions obeys the logic of meanings, including imposed meanings and their systems. Paradoxical as it may seem, but the massive flow of internet consciousness reveals a certain similarity with its absorption in literary texts and even scientific theories. One might agree with Heidegger when he argues that science does not think. But this does not mean that scientists do not think. Likewise, one can say that literature does not think, and this does not mean that writers, at least some, do not think. However, in the scientific and artistic texts themselves, already formed systems of meanings are given—theories, developed plots, and artistic images—, which only indirectly relate to the real strata of the world and which change themselves only in order to appear again in a complete form. The ecstasy of scientific and literary creativity, as well as the involvement in the study of scientific theories and in the reading of exciting (this is already an aggression) literary texts, could not weaken the social energy of both creators and readers, but it creates the illusion of reality as orderly (chaos cannot be portrayed), reasonable (even the image of the irrational and the unconscious is completely rational), and comprehensible (comprehensibility is identified with the truth).

Be that as it may, mathematics, natural science, philosophy, and literature in the form, in which they have developed over hundreds and thousands of years, have not created a paradigm of social action and social thinking, which would lead to significant changes in social life, preventing epidemics and wars. Against the background of advances in biology and medicine, we have nothing more and nothing less than a common threat to life, health, and freedom of travel. Against the background of the great literature of the 19th and 20th centuries, we have the pandemic announcement as an instruction from authorities, i.e., as a purely ideological act, the content of which we must simply believe. Instructions can be correct, but that does not stop them from being instructions. In the pandemic, the attitude of authorities towards the population (the masses) takes on the connotation of the attitude of adults towards minors and the elderly. This became obvious through the age discrimination during the period of so-called self-isolation. At the same time, "adults," as it often happens, do not know exactly what to do with their wards.

Objectively, however, a pandemic is the identification of a new management potential of the Non-real. It is even possible that this is another step on the way to a new dystopia, where texts in the broad sense of the word will become one of the main means of administration and control.

Great examples of literature differ like heaven from earth from detective stories and advertising texts, films of great directors from popular TV series, the creations of great artists from crafts of mediocrity, etc. However, the earth and the sky converge on the horizon, and this horizon is texts, different texts that possess different people, and their power over a person is greater than that of a person over them. Who has not praised the text as such in the 20th century? The authors of texts have died and are dying in the literal and figurative sense, but the texts do not die, because they are non-real. For Ray Bradbury, the salvation of culture consists in memorizing the great works of literature and philosophy. Does man then not become an appendage of the text, as he once was an appendage of the machine?

Conclusion

1. The more the balance of society shifts towards the Non-real, the easier can it be managed and the likelier it is to obey. Ideology is not an augmented reality, but the Non-real, supplanting the Real. Intellectuals lose to authorities and business, and are often forced to play along with ideologies due to their focus on closed systems of meanings.

2. Weapons of mass destruction and mass disease will disappear only when the masses disappear. This provides two options in accordance with Kant's "Eternal Peace." Any optimistic scenario would now be utopian. The pandemic reminds us of the fundamental uncertainty of future and of the alternative of utopias and dystopias. It is unlikely that the resolution of this alternative, upon which the existence of the future depends, can be possible without common sense, the subject of which can only be the finite and free association of people that accepts the paradigm of balance between the Real and the Non-real, the meaningful finiteness of projects and the responsibility for non-aggressive communication. However, this can also be only a utopia, because the utopia of common sense remains the most utopian of notions in the contemporary world.

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Narrative Autonomy as Means of Vulnerability Management

Silvia Pierosara

University of Macerata, Department of the Humanities, Section of Philosophy, Via Garibaldi 20, 62100 Macerata, Italy

silvia.pierosara@libero.it | *s.pierosara@unimc.it*

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic that has spread rapidly and affected the world at large represents a shock, from which society can either recover by radically changing its presumptions or slowly fade away. The pandemic has highlighted the weaknesses of particular conceptual constellations that seemed to have been definitely acquired in our social, ethical, and relational environments. This shock calls for a brand-new reframing of certain moral categories, as they have been recently connected together.

This contribution focuses on two concepts that have gained increased attention in ethics and moral philosophy in the last few decades, namely autonomy and vulnerability. It tries to refigure them in light of the pandemic experience, since the COVID-19 emergency as well as the policies of containment and lockdown have let other ways of being autonomous and vulnerable emerge, and have hastened the affirmation of new meanings for both concepts, which could have barely been imagined before. The two concepts are often understood as problematically linked, if not opposed to each other. This relationship needs to be articulated and explained, as it can be useful not only from a theoretical perspective, but also from practical and political ones.

Keywords: autonomy, vulnerability, relationality, solidarity, pandemic imaginary.

Narativna avtonomija kot sredstvo obvladovanja ranljivosti

Povzetek

Pandemija COVID-19, ki se je hitro razširila in prizadela svet nasploh, predstavlja šok, od katerega si družba lahko bodisi opomore z radikalno spremembo svojih predpostavk bodisi se zaradi njega počasi razblini. Pandemija je poudarila šibkosti posamičnih konceptualnih konstelacij, za katere se je zdelo, da smo jih dokončno sprejeli v naša družbena, etična in odnosna okolja. Tovrsten šok terja popolnoma novo uokvirjenje določenih moralnih kategorij, kakršne so donedavnega bile medsebojno povezane. Prispevek se osredotoča na dva pojma, ki sta v zadnjih desetletjih bila deležna posebne pozornosti znotraj etike in moralne filozofije, namreč na pojma avtonomije in ranljivosti. Poskuša ju nanovo premisliti v luči pandemičnega izkustva, kajti nevarnost COVID-19 ter politike obvladovanja širjenja okužbe in zapiranja so omogočile pojavljanje drugačnih načinov avtonomnosti ter ranljivosti in so obenem pospešile pripoznavanje novih pomenov za oba pojma, kakršne si je predhodno komajda bilo mogoče zamišljati. Razumevanje obeh pojmov navadno izpostavlja njuno problematično povezavo, če ne celo medsebojno nasprotstvo. Razmerje med njima je potrebno opredeliti in pojasniti, saj je lahko uporabno ne samo iz teoretske perspektive, temveč tudi z vidikov prakse in politike.

Ključne besede: avtonomija, ranljivost, odnosnost, solidarnost, pandemični imaginarij.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic that has spread rapidly and affected the world at large represents a shock, from which society can either recover by radically changing its presumptions or slowly fade away. The pandemic has highlighted the weaknesses of particular conceptual constellations that seemed to have been definitely acquired in our social and relational environments. This shock calls for a brand-new reframing of certain moral categories, as they have been recently connected together.

This contribution focuses on two concepts that have gained increased attention in ethics and moral philosophy in the last few decades, namely autonomy and vulnerability. It tries to refigure them in light of the pandemic experience. The two concepts are often understood as problematically linked, if not opposed to each other. I assume that the COVID-19 emergency as well as the policies of containment and lockdown have let other ways of being autonomous and vulnerable emerge, and have hastened the affirmation of new meanings for both concepts that could have barely been imagined before. The pandemic has unveiled, though implicitly, their strict connection and has made it clear that there is a strong interdependence between the two, rather than an opposition. This relationship needs to be articulated and explained, as it can be useful not only from a theoretical perspective, but also from practical and political ones.

In order to provide a different conceptualization of their relationship, I proceed in two steps and present some concluding remarks. Firstly, I present a minimal definition of autonomy that circulated before the pandemic and prove that it needs to be reexamined in light of the new issues that have emerged. I highlight that, even though the necessity of refiguring autonomy was already present in literature, the pandemic has reinforced this need and made it urgent. In doing so, I come up with some, at least partly, new insights on autonomy. Secondly, I focus on vulnerability and trace its main meanings by referring to some studies that existed before the pandemic and have proved proper to the context of the pandemic.

In the concluding remarks, I articulate a proposal, according to which the refiguration of autonomy and vulnerability is only possible by reading these concepts together and presenting their interconnectedness. Is it true that autonomy is inversely proportional to vulnerability? Or is, rather, autonomy about being capable of managing one's own vulnerability that cannot be eradicated permanently? Through this contribution, I expect to provide enough arguments to speak of "autonomy in vulnerability" instead of "autonomy against vulnerability." The structure of the contribution aims to reflect on a conceptual difficulty, namely the impossibility of coming up with a complete and exhaustive definition of autonomy without referring to vulnerability. Thus, the first section is a sort of interrupted discourse on autonomy that will be accomplished only after making a *detour* into vulnerability.

2. Upheavals of autonomy

Autonomy has become an increasingly contested concept over the last few decades. It has alternatively been seen as the triumph of a monological subject that exerts control over the external and the internal world, or as an absolute value that protects free choice and resizes or relativizes the content of the choices itself. Notwithstanding the hyperbolic trait of these critiques, it is true that the original Kantian idea of an agent being capable of self-legislation has progressively lost moral import and has increasingly become an expression of a white, male, abstract, and falsely universal subject. The necessity to argue for a defense of autonomy as a value, though not the only one, seems irrefutable to me, because of its proximity to freedom. I wish to set up a definition of autonomy that corresponds to a quality of actions and practical life, rather than to an essence. Thus, being autonomous should mean becoming capable of preserving the space of articulation and projectuality. I hypothesize that the experience of pandemics has contributed significantly to this definition.

The "ground zero" of the argument is as precise a delimitation of the meaning of autonomy as possible. Here, I mostly refer to autonomy in the four senses codified by Joel Feinberg (1989).[1] Autonomy is the capacity "to govern oneself," "the actual condition of self-government," or "an ideal of character," and "the sovereign authority to govern oneself" (Feinberg 1989, 28). All these

1 Even if he does not explicitly relate these meanings to morality, I assume that they apply to moral life as well.

meanings are based on the idea of mastery with respect to one's own choices and imply a static, transparent, and unchangeable self. There is no need to remember the contentiousness of these assumptions.

It would be impossible and misleading to provide a complete account of the most recent debates concerning autonomy. An issue that works as a background assumption here is that it deals with the paradigm of relational autonomy that has been outlined by Mackenzie and Stoljar (2000). Their pivotal research aims to restore autonomy and safeguard its value by rethinking it as a relational concept. According to the authors, recognizing the socio-relational trait of autonomy helps face critiques that this concept has undergone since the "fall of the subject." The background, against which this discourse is made, comprises a consideration of the subject as porous, embedded, and always already connected with others. From the publication of their major collective volume on this theme, a large amount of work on this topic has been circulated, and relational autonomy has been used in many fields of applied ethics.

One of the most debated issues during the COVID-19 pandemic concerns the fairness of the limitation of personal liberties to lower the contagion index and to reduce the extent of damage caused by the pandemic. These critiques have implied a consideration of freedom as opposed to any kind of law and to any kind of responsibility toward others, and have tended to hide a concern around the paternalism implied in such measures. Upon a closer look, the standpoint of these criticisms is a consideration of a lonely subject that is always already autonomous and capable of self-determining, self-legislating, and self-governing. In turn, the discussion concerning autonomy has systematically ignored the following questions: How do pandemics affect autonomy and agency? What does "to be autonomous" mean during a pandemic? Who can afford autonomy during a pandemic and who can afford to legislate on their own?

During the pandemic, on more than an occasion, the impression has been that autonomy as the capacity of self-determining and self-legislating in order to preserve oneself and others was a luxury good that progressively lost its status as a relational good, a particular good that expands, rather than diminishes, when benefited from.[2] The emphasis on the relational dimension of autonomy has enabled increasing attention to the internal, social, and economic conditions that make personal and moral autonomy accessible. This relational quality of autonomy is crucial, but it is far more important to highlight that being relational also means that it is relative to a context, a situation, or a particular emergency. Along this path, relational autonomy means more than the fact that the self is a social one, but also allows for an interpretation of autonomy as relative to a context and position. In other words, it depends on the position that is temporarily or definitely occupied by the subject in a particular context.[3]

An attentive reading of the processes that have affected agency during the lockdown and the pandemics shows that being autonomous cannot enjoy a limitless freedom of choice and the concrete conditions to carry out these choices. Autonomy seems linked to the capacity to manage risks and balance desires, wishes, and responsibilities in the long run. This prospect is completely lacking in normal times, but emerges as a radically different imaginary during pandemics: the feeling that we are at the mercy of nature has been compounded by the perception that the worldwide interconnectedness can significantly increase the risks of contagion. Human extinction has been related to the massive intervention of humans in the environment and in the lives of others. The pandemic has highlighted how short-term thinking is proper for humans and should be normatively substituted with an effort to think prospectively. Autonomy in this context appears impossible to pursue, but remains fundamental. So, it is necessary to rethink it as an in-between quality rather than as an essence, as the capacity of thinking prospectively even in extreme uncertainty. How can humans act autonomously if they lose control over their bodies, both because of the pandemic and the policies adopted to

2 For a complete and exhaustive definition of relational goods, a reference should be made to the Italian tradition of Civil Economy, spokespersons of which are Luigino Bruni, Leonardo Becchetti, and Stefano Zamagni (see Becchetti, Bruni, and Zamagni 2019).

3 The fact that autonomy is relational in the sense that it is positional has been recently pointed out from a political perspective by Gerard Rosich: "[…] the nature of autonomy is relational and the entities within this relation are conceived of as polities. It is a political concept that is used to characterize a different kind of relation between polities that does not start out from relations of domination and violence." (Rosich 2019, 94)

contain the spread of the disease? The tragic events recently experienced have become a magnifying lens for finding a response. A paradigm shift is needed from autonomy as mastery and control to autonomy as articulation of the problematic relationship between the self and the environment.[4]

When considered from a practical standpoint, autonomy has to do with the context, and agency models itself based on policies and social environments. It aims to strike a balance between those forces, while having others in view and caring about them. At first glance, the pandemic has emphasized the internal dimension of autonomy and its external conditions of exercise. The internal space of deliberation has been increasingly considered a necessary capacity to behave responsibly and to avoid social contact as far as possible. Nevertheless, the rhetorical discourse concerning responsibility has avoided considering that autonomy—that is, the capacity of giving oneself the law—should be meant as a problematic relationship with a norm that each individual articulates in their own conscience and that this capacity can be owned by the subject only at certain relational conditions. Paul Ricoeur has emblematically thematized this meaning of autonomy in the following words:

> […] for us as human beings, this idea is inseparable from that of a subject who is capable of affirming himself, of positing himself. This is one of the two components of the key idea of autonomy: oneself in relation to a norm. (Changeux and Ricoeur 2002, 202)

4 Immediately before the spread of COVID-19, an insightful book by Christos Lynteris (2019) outlined the question of autonomy related to an imaginary pandemic in terms of the "end of mastery." In his view, "humankind is thus seen as deprived of its foundational, autopoetic capacity, insofar as it is unable to self-create itself anew through its relation to the world following the latter's end as a world to which humans relate through a project for mastery. […] the pandemic imaginary should be considered not simply as a form of anthropological closure but as a field of signification that is always already part of the creation of new kinds of institutions and ways of instituting humanity." (Lynteris 2019, 17) According to Lynteris, just before the spread of the imaginary pandemic, it had significantly presented another mode of self-interpretation that emerged from mankind, and indicated that this latter aspect is always capable of instituting and creating new imaginaries and new social signifiers.

This meaning is far from the more ambitious and unrealistic claim to be the creator and the "copyright owner" of the self-imposed rules. Moreover, this meaning implies that autonomy is inevitably dependent on the context and that respecting the rules imposed by the governments was not up on the individual alone. In many cases, the failure of respecting rules should not have been considered a fault or a sin, but rather as something ascribable to a socioeconomic condition that compelled one to violate the quarantine.

As a result of curtailing the illusory dreams of instrumental control, autonomy turns out to be a relational quality of mankind's being-in-the-world, in the sense that it is a response to a state of affairs, and is not only related, but relative to a context and its way of shaping, forging, and transfiguring individuals and their connections. Against this background, the idea of control fades and leaves room for the idea of autonomy as a different kind of mastery. The latter looks rather like a constant exercise of balancing forces, a sort of reflective equilibrium, as an in-between resonance (see Rosa 2019). The signs and traces of this kind of autonomy are far from the idea of control, but, rather, appeal to a narrative capacity of synthetizing the heterogeneous and to manage the feeling—and the fact—of being at others' mercy, to use the expression that Ferrarese coined to define vulnerability. The way, in which human beings manage dispossession and seek a path to gain self-ownership, can be seen as a lifelong task carried out without the pretense of control, but with the commitment to articulation and experience of non-objectifying ways of self-recognition. If it is this way, self-ownership does not deal with the monolithic subject that does not change in time, but rather with a narrative to be written and rewritten every day. Autonomy is thus that path, and cannot be limited to the internal and individual dimensions as it is performed externally, and leaves traces to future generations in terms of legacies and ways of articulating that, to some extent, still demand a relevant work of imagination.

The public discourse on responsibility is affected, maybe even infected, by the neoliberal logic that shifts the exclusive responsibility of the contagion onto individuals and their behaviors instead of assuming the costs needed to trace contact and to ensure public health measures. Autonomy, meant as the reflective endorsement of rules aimed at increasing individual and common good, runs the risk of being rhetorically used for the same objective, as some authors, taking the cue from Foucault (2007), note: nowadays, even if a consolidated tradition is followed, power does not exert its coercive force directly, but rather, rhetorically and indirectly "invites individuals voluntarily to conform to their objectives, to discipline themselves, to turn the gaze upon themselves in the interests of their health" (Lupton 1995, 11).[5] Autonomy should be rescued from this neoliberal drift outlining that it can be authentically experienced only when it corresponds to the capacity to distinguish between the rules that promote human dignity and that are aimed at corroborating anonymous structures of power. Second-order autonomy is needed. Giving oneself the law or subscribing to others' law is not enough, if those processes do not involve a lifelong critical stance.

On the one hand, an excessive emphasis on individual autonomy should be avoided in institutions that strive to unload their responsibilities. It comes as no surprise that these policies imply the picture of the (neo)liberal individual, detached from the context. On the other hand, autonomy should be valued, but reconsidered, in light of a biological, and not only social or relational embeddedness, according to which:

> Autonomy is not simply a matter of the choices of separate and separable agents who affect one another only contingently. It is a matter

5 A recent report by Remco van de Pas of the Clingendael Institute stated that: "What is required to contain the coronavirus (and infectious disease epidemics in general) is in essence well known. It includes public health principles of detecting, testing, isolation, treatment and tracing. However, this needs to be contextualised. It needs to be proportional and there needs to be absolute political scrutiny that state and/or medical powers are not abused. To give an example: an effective and well-proven way to trace the contacts of Covid-19 patients is by simply contacting them directly. One could map the contacts with the explicit consent of an infected person and call them. This provides for more autonomy and personal contact, and might establish trust in the authorities. This form of contact tracing is the standard practice of public health institutions. But it is time-intensive. It requires a large and skilled workforce. It requires financial investment to cover, for instance, decent salaries for all these public health workers." (Pas 2020, 19) The emphasis on moral responsibility and autonomy may sound like a disengagement by institutions that, instead of investing in practices of contact tracing and in the workforce in the short run, and in funding scientific research in the long run, appeal to the morality of individuals, as though being infected were a matter of moral goodness.

> of the choices of embedded agents, way-station selves, who must take into account the ever-present possibility of their unavoidable biological connection with each other. (Battin, Francis, Jacobson, and Smith 2009, 85)

Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic has clearly shown that relational autonomy is not only a matter of a "romantic vision of relationality as constituted merely by friendship and familiar relations" (Kalbian 2013, 292), but rather invests the biological constitution of the human body. If this is true, while conceiving of public health policies, not only does the social environment matter, but "physical locatedness […] is critical as well" (Battin, Francis, Jacobson, and Smith 2009, 78).[6]

If it is true that one cannot be fully autonomous during a pandemic, it is true that a sort of autonomy has been experienced as well. This conundrum ensues from the circumstance that if autonomy is meant as a kind of control aimed at restoring mastery over the self and others, then experiencing it during a pandemic is impossible. In contrast, if autonomy is meant as an effort to respond to dispossession and, to some extent, to accept and live with it and resist it when necessary, then it has been experienced even during the pandemic, although it requires substantial reframing. The balancing of internal and external forces whose respective limits are so often conflated means that the aim of an autonomous action or set of actions and of agency is not to definitely eliminate vulnerability, but rather to transfigure it as something to live with, face, resist, and transform by narrating different stories.

Only after having reconstructed the complex and multi-faceted cluster of issues raised by autonomy can the question of "who can afford autonomy during a pandemic" be addressed. Perceiving oneself as potentially capable of an embedded autonomy is far from being taken for granted: the folk conception of autonomy, which fits the aim and implicit anthropology of neoliberalism perfectly, is based on the illusory control of the self that should be able to decide

6 In the context of pandemics, embeddedness means that every human being is a victim and a vector at the same time, as the title of the work of Battin, Francis, Jacobson, and Smith (2009) suggests.

on its own, without interference. It fits neoliberal views perfectly as both ignore the interconnectedness as a feature that goes from biology to society. This path leads to the misrecognition of social and economic conditions that impair autonomy and probably reinforces them, as it ignores the fact that many people cannot afford social distancing and are not completely free to manage their own vulnerabilities. Interferences are a part of autonomy, and if they are not recognized and made visible, they can seriously impair the deliberative process of the subject. In turn, situations of considerable reduction of autonomy can affect policies and views of public health decision makers and workers, as is the case in the course of implementing pandemic clinical triage protocols.[7]

It is possible to answer the question on whether autonomy is possible in conditions of "unfreedom" (to use an expression made famous by Adorno; cf. 2004) only if vulnerability is recognized as implied in the definition of autonomy and an exceeding dimension of creativity even in oppressive contexts is recognized as a human trait, although it may be difficult to let it emerge. While comparing oppression and pandemics as events that aim (even if not voluntarily) to reduce self-ownership to dependence and dispossession, autonomy seems to be the response aimed at recovering the space of self-articulation. The relationship with a norm is only one of the key features of autonomy and can contribute toward enforcing and enduring the capacity of articulation and conceiving projects. This diachronic, context-dependent,

7 Provisions addressing survival in clinical triage protocols usually do not consider the context and the overexposure of some subjects to infectious diseases: "It might be ethically justifiable to assign priority for critical care to patients who are more likely to survive—as is the case with typical triage protocols—if becoming ill from an infectious disease like influenza was simply a matter of bad luck. […] in real-world situations, morally relevant inequalities exist in virtually all populations, and exposure to infectious disease is not assigned randomly. In fact, the likelihood of exposure is often increased for individuals who suffer from morally relevant inequalities." (Kaposy and Khraishi 2012, 77) The translation of this issue in terms of clinical pandemic triage, as the authors noted, is quite ironic: "The irony consists in the fact that attempting to avoid bias in this way may actually lead to bias. Prioritizing survivability might disadvantage those whose social identity is marked by factors that reduce survivability." (Kaposy and Khraishi 2012, 78) This also applies to autonomy. If the questions of who can afford autonomy, who can legislate on his own, and who can afford social distancing are not asked, any appeal to personal autonomy and responsibility would fall into a vacuum at best, or, worse, increase the occasions of infection.

embedded consideration of autonomy leads to a narrative pattern that can have a normatively disruptive effect if it is applied to policies and decision-making processes at individual and social levels.

The adjective "narrative" applied to autonomy does not refer to the coherence of a life expressed by the well-known idea of narrative unity. Rather, the normative force of narrative lies in it being "trajectory dependent" and "interpretation sensitive" (Jones 2008). Being narratively autonomous means to recognize a dependency on the context and on the past in imagining the future, and to be sensitive to upheavals in self-interpretations that increase one's confidence in their capacity to carry out transformative actions. Narrative autonomy also recalls the issue of authorship: self-authorship can be a candidate for substituting the semantic field of self-ownership, as according to some interpretations,[8] the latter is too strictly related to the idea of property. Self-authorship becomes a vector of a normative focus[9] in constant search for proximity with one's center. Narrative autonomy seems a concrete example of what Axel Honneth (2007) called "decentered autonomy."

In sum, the dependency on trajectories, the interpretation sensitivity, and the projectual capacity[10] design a space of articulation, in which one can understand oneself as being capable of self-authorship. These features are unavoidably interlinked with vulnerability as exposure to events and accidents, with autonomy acting as the capacity to manage this vulnerability by recognizing its use and abuse. Autonomy cannot exist without vulnerability. It is possible to reformulate the issue of autonomy only if vulnerability is recognized as implied in the definition of an embedded and responsive human agency that resists the sacrificial logic at least in two points: infection is not a punishment and does not exclusively depend on the misbehavior or misconduct of the individual alone, and autonomy is neither an inherent feature of human beings

8 Think of the liberal accounts that see the grounding pattern of the self-relationship in property. The concern for self-ownership, particularly outside of liberal tradition, is legitimate and fair, as it stems from the suffering caused by alienation.
9 Here, it is difficult not to think of the regulative ideal coined by Kant, who defined it as *focus imaginarius* (Kant 1998, A645/B673, 591).
10 In this contribution, by "projectual capacity" I mean the ability to conceive and realize projects.

independent from context nor a burden that can easily lead to an overload of responsibilities, which cause the positive aspects of the link between autonomy and responsibility to fade, and instead emphasizes its dark side. Besides the paradigm of control, autonomy can be meant as self-authorship that exerts responsibility in terms of projectual capacity with others.

3. Vulnerability against the background of its misunderstandings

This section explores vulnerability and starts from the experience of the pandemic. This lens contributes toward dispelling some myths concerning the equation between precariousness[11] and vulnerability, and uncovering the layers in the meaning of this term. Starting from some considerations in dealing with a pandemic, the arguments developed will examine current explanations of vulnerability to recognize it as an embedded, and not static or definitive, phenomenon, while also taking into account the possibility that some policies aimed at reducing vulnerability actually increase it, especially at the social level. The pervasive recourse to the theme of vulnerability can be considered a rhetorical device that justifies the existing fragilities without repairing them. Such a process can be labeled as an improper use of vulnerability, and even as an abuse of it.

At first glance, it seems that pandemics have provided further evidence of the intrinsic fragility that characterizes human life on earth.[12] However, upon a closer look, it has become clear that pandemics have been affecting vulnerable subjects and have made evident the necessity to reformulate vulnerability in terms of autonomy. The condition of increased vulnerability, thus, does not refer to an innate condition, but rather to a situation wherein every human

11 Judith Butler pointed out the difference between precariousness and precarity. According to her, while the former is a common trait among human beings, the latter is the result of external conditions of experienced injustice, discrimination, and morally relevant inequalities. Butler referred mostly to the experience of bodily vulnerability as the possibility of being harmed. This possibility gives rise to an ethical response to suffering against the background of a defense of nonviolence.

12 In her insightful interpretation of the ontological and ethical connections between autonomy and vulnerability, Carla Danani recently proposed to ground this issue "on the ontological feature of 'living on the world', on openness and interdependency" (Danani 2020, 198).

being can be affected and wounded—metaphorically speaking—, but the actual wounds are because of the economic, social, psychological, and cultural conditions. The latent condition of vulnerability may emerge and become real or may be aggravated through situations, even if transitory, which impairs the capacity of deliberating and acting subsequently, in order to stay safe, in light of all the information owned, and without being constrained by urgent needs. It can be said that there is a space between being capable of producing unseen vulnerabilities that irretrievably threaten the capacity of taking care of oneself and of others in the long run. This capacity can be read as a projectual one, as it encompasses transformative thinking concerning the past and the future, and the possibility of mobilizing agency.

Before reaching the conceptual level of vulnerability analysis, it is worth focusing on what can be labeled as a pluralization of vulnerabilities that becomes apparent during a pandemic. In the literature concerning the ethics of pandemics, this topic has been addressed several times. Some scholars have pointed out that the misrecognition of social vulnerability may lead to ineffectiveness in pandemic planning. With reference to the H1N1 experience, Anna Mastroianni relates some examples:

> […] an undocumented restaurant worker receiving low wages and lacking job security and health benefits may have no real choice but to continue working through an illness, and may avoid seeking medical attention that he cannot afford and fears might lead to deportation. (Mastroianni 2009, 11)

She argues: "In any community, there are individuals who cannot afford to practice social distancing—undocumented workers, for instance, and those who rely on community settings for their livelihood or for their day-to-day existence […]" (ibid.).

A stronger commitment of all stakeholders in pandemic planning can make it far more effective through the participation of all actors involved, starting from an accurate description of their fragilities and their "capacity to respond to public health directives" (ibid.). It can, therefore, be maintained that her arguments rely on a pluralization of vulnerabilities. The latter cannot be reduced to traditional ones, such as gender, race, age, and so on, but need to be specified further. Vulnerabilities need to be pluralized both in synchronic and diachronic directions, as they can be linked to a particular situation that is experienced temporarily by the subject that may be overcome or may change with time. If not constantly "updated," these vulnerabilities turn into many pitfalls that may erode the dimensions of self-reliance and agency. It is fundamental to read vulnerabilities as relational and dynamic processes, instead of considering them as statuses, if policies in critical times have to be effective.

Going a step further toward the conceptualization of vulnerabilities, an important contribution in terms of applied ethics comes from Florencia Luna, who proposes:

> […] that the concept of vulnerability be thought of using the concept of *layers*. The metaphor of a layer gives the idea of something "softer," something that may be multiple and different, and that may be removed layer by layer. It is not "a solid and unique vulnerability" that exhausts the category; there might be different vulnerabilities, different layers operating […] (Luna 2009, 129).

Just like autonomy, vulnerability takes the shape of a relational, and even positional, event:

> This concept of vulnerability is a relational one. That is, it concerns the relation between the person or a group of persons and the circumstances or the context. It is closely related to the situation under analysis. It is not a category or a label we can just put on. (Luna 2009, 130)

The emphasis on vulnerability as a lack of attention (as Vaughn 2020 put it) and projectual capacity should not be transformed into an overload of responsibility on the subject, which recalls the appeal to self-entrepreneurship or the widespread rhetoric of resilience. To the extent that the production of vulnerabilities is a matter of personal, social, and political relations and conditions, their reduction or their management should be a concern carried out at a social level, as well. Again, vulnerability lies somewhere in between. In this respect, Luna's argument is very convincing: "Another way of understanding this proposal is not by thinking that someone *is* vulnerable, but by considering a particular situation that *makes* or *renders* someone vulnerable. If the situation changes, the person may no longer be considered vulnerable." (Ibid.)[13]

The background, against which those conceptualizations gain sense, can be articulated with the help of a well-known attempt to systematize the issue of vulnerability through a distinction made by Rogers, Mackenzie, and Dodds (2012), who distinguish among three types of vulnerability: "We conclude this section by proposing a brief taxonomy of three different, but overlapping, kinds of vulnerability: *inherent*, *situational*, and *pathogenic*." (Roger, Mackenzie, and Dodds 2012, 24)

Both inherent and situational vulnerability can be "*dispositional* or *occurrent*" (ibid.). In turn, they highlight that:

> In keeping with our commitment to autonomy and fostering capabilities, we would argue that the background aim of any such interventions must be to enable or restore the agency of vulnerable persons or groups […]. In contrast to agency-supporting responses to vulnerability, some responses may exacerbate existing vulnerabilities or generate new vulnerabilities. We refer to these as *pathogenic* vulnerabilities. (Ibid., 25)

In addition to its utility in mapping and framing their consequences in terms of moral and political obligations, this taxonomy deserves to be problematized further with regard to the idea of an inherent vulnerability that recalls the considerations addressed by Butler concerning precariousness; the background assumption that vulnerability is something that can be erased and not something to live with and, in turn, that agency as autonomy is always something that is already owned and quite independent of context, even if relational; as well as the powerful insight on the kind of vulnerability that is termed *pathogenic*.

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13 The debate concerning vulnerability as a label is wide-ranging and, although it cannot be reconstructed here, it should at least be mentioned that the labeling approach is usually understood as opposed to the analytical approach, of which Luna and Kipnis (2003) are two representative authors.

As for these reasons of interest, inherent vulnerability can be equated to precariousness, as it depicts a common condition of uncertainty, dependence on others, and embodiment that can be summed up as what has previously been indicated as the impossibility to control each and every aspect of one's life. Thus, since inherent vulnerability is close to precariousness as Butler (2004) described it, it seems worth deepening what the relationship between inherent and situational vulnerability is, on the lines of the link Butler drew between precariousness and precarity. At any rate, the focus on specific and targeted interventions that should follow an attentive analysis of vulnerabilities seems to suggest that there is something that should be repaired in terms of resilience and capacity to cope with suffering. The impression is that such a taxonomy relies still too much on a static vision of vulnerability as something that occurs to individuals and not among individuals: the interventions proposed aim to restore something damaged in the individual or in their life, not to transform oppressive and negative circumstances in order to distribute vulnerability and risks equally.

Inherent vulnerability sounds like a recognition of the finitude of humankind, and of the interdependence that constitutes and structures every life. Situational vulnerability seems rather interesting because it deepens, exacerbates, and even accelerates the path toward death. It transforms a common condition into a moral harm, to which one has to oppose the projectual capacity acquired *via* narrative autonomy. The individual cannot be overloaded by discharging the responsibility of the external conditions on him or her, but conditions should be created and enforced to allow for a self-confident subject that is capable of attempting syntheses between actions and events, wishes, dreams, and circumstances. Two opposite tendencies should be avoided: that of removing responsibility for social issues from the state and blaming individuals for suffering and experiencing vulnerabilities; and the equally dangerous attitude of sticking a label of vulnerability that converts into a cage enforced by policies only apparently, but indeed paternalistically, targeted at the reduction of vulnerability.

Pathogenic vulnerability can be related to the uses and abuses of vulnerability at a social and political level. Behind the insistence on the need to protect the vulnerable (to quote the title of the groundbreaking work by Goodin 1989), there can be a large amount of interest to keep some categories thus, and not foster their capacity to manage vulnerability through informal channels and solidarity bonds. Pathogenic vulnerability may also be interpreted as an outcome of the process of labeling vulnerability and vulnerable categories, without recognizing the intersectional dimension and the in-between dimension of it. Vulnerability as a process, as an event that occurs in the relational space, and as an interplay of forces, can be defined not only as relational, but also positional, meaning that it depends on the position and the role assumed from time to time, with this category. If referring to an inherent vulnerability makes sense, it is because sooner or later, every human being may experience a situation of vulnerability that makes interdependence, embodiment, and exposure more than evident. The policies and social constructions, in which he or she is embedded, should ensure a space of articulation of such vulnerability, and not prevent people from organizing bottom-up actions aimed at reducing the abuse of vulnerability and managing it without letting it become the source of other new vulnerabilities. Some measures are counterproductive and increase precarity and vulnerability instead of reducing it. This idea was shared by Mitroupoulos (2020), who described quarantining as one of these pitfalls.

A life outside vulnerability is unthinkable. Even autonomy without vulnerability is an illusion. Rather, "[w]hat needs to be understood is the capacity to notice disturbance and its relevance to everyday life" (Vaughn 2020, 519). This insight is useful in recognizing a process of impairment of projectual capacity as a common trait of the vulnerabilities (environmental, social, and so on), which starts from analyzing and being capable of recognizing the external factors that can seriously compromise it and undermine the long-term vision of the future. Even if this latter usually lacks and cannot be said to be innate, it is true that it can be crucial from a normative standpoint. The situations of increased vulnerability do not generate *ex novo* this inability to think in the long run, but simply exacerbate it.

To some extent, it can be said that the concept of vulnerability should be fragmented and seen through a glass prism, in order to avoid the risk that it may be used (and abused) as a label that impedes autonomous agency. In turn, increased or multiple situations and conditions of vulnerability should be recognized as one of the causes of the impossibility of performing fully autonomous actions. A middle ground between the impairment of autonomy because of the stigmatizing use of vulnerability and deliberate disregard for *situational* vulnerability is necessary. Both attitudes may lead to *pathogenic* policies: the former because of a crystallization of vulnerability, an ontologization of it, and the latter because of a deliberate indifference toward vulnerabilities that can lead to stigmatizing processes. The effectiveness of health policies also depends on this balance between the ontologization and the negation of vulnerabilities. This is only possible if vulnerability begins to be seen as something that happens and that is transitory. The content of such vulnerability is unpredictable, but it can be assumed that in some form, it is present in the lives of every human being.

The fact that vulnerability is an in-between mode of relations has been recently highlighted by Estelle Ferrarese, who defined this phenomenon with well-argued content:

> A vulnerability only ever arises as the hollow side of a power to act. It materializes only vis-à-vis a power that either threatens to act or, on the contrary, fails to do so. To speak of vulnerability is to speak of another's (or of a pronouncement's or a structure's) power to act, and clearly does not exclude finding a power to act on the side of the vulnerable subject too. What effectively illuminates the notion of vulnerability is thus the idea of "being-at-another's-mercy." (Ferrarese 2018, 1)

This quotation clearly shows the relational quality of vulnerability, which is not only an endogenous phenomenon, but rather one that can be seen as something that happens within the social realm and between subjects. The feeling of being-at-another's-mercy is a trace of an event that involves at least two subjects. She sets the issue out in terms of power or failure to act with consequences for another subject. As Ferrarese notes, this definition of vulnerability is highly different from the kind of vulnerability that is said to affect every human being, as it depends on the quality of the relations and rights involved, as abuses of vulnerability do creep into the social world.

This space generated by the interplay of at least two agencies, one of which provokes the other's feeling of being at another's mercy, can be analyzed further. After comparing different models of vulnerability and providing an exhaustive framework of the main current theories, Ferrarese effectively articulates the in-between trait of vulnerability, and points out that it:

> […] necessarily appears at the same time as the horizon of obligations (fulfilled or not) and of normative arguments, and as materialising right at the level of social interactions. […] Exposure is permitted and shaped by normative expectations that are situated *between* subjects. (Ibid., 57)

The content the Ferrarese indicates shows that the normative expectations, which are implicit in any exchange and in mutual actions, generate and delimit the width of vulnerability, which is always morally informed.

4. Toward a narrative autonomy as the management of vulnerability

Is autonomy the other side of vulnerability? The discourse of autonomy and vulnerability usually interprets these two fields as being opposed to each other. Having clarified a few aspects that emerged during the pandemic, this section reads them together as part of the same phenomenon. This has been made possible as the pandemic accelerated the processes of reflection on those themes. The standpoint of such a reading is that the recognition of their interconnectedness could considerably enhance health policies. Only a few authors have outlined their intrinsic interconnections. Among these, in a thought-provoking fashion, Estelle Ferrarese affirmed:

> Access to the principles of justice only ever occurs negatively. It is therefore only because they are infringed, only because expectations are disappointed, only because vulnerability is averred, that something approaching a political subjectivation is realised. Vulnerability is thus instituted as a cognitive operator. (Ibid., 75)

Therefore, according to Ferrarese, vulnerability appears to be like a heuristic principle that is able to prompt individual and collective action. The moral and political subject is not only the outcome of a process of anonymous subjectivation. Rather, it emerges from a context of denied and ignored normative expectations. When not met, they compel the subject to live at the mercy of others, systematically dispossessing them of the capacity of self-articulating, deliberating, and caring for themselves.[14] Autonomy and vulnerability meet precisely in the interstice between unfulfilled expectations and the resignation of being at another's mercy.

Borrowing and applying the icastic reference to the layers from the description of vulnerability, it can be maintained that autonomy has layers, too. The first comprises acknowledging one's vulnerability and being able to link it to a specific unfulfilled normative expectation. The example of the undocumented worker is emblematic here, as he can neither protect himself nor give himself the law (i.e., the imperative of social distancing). Being autonomous thus means gaining a space of self-awareness, with a self-reflective attitude concerning the situational vulnerability that does not allow the restoration of projectual capacity in a meaningful present. Society, in general, and institutions, as well as their policies, are involved in this, as they must remove obstacles that impair such capacity. The second comprises gaining confidence that visibility will be achieved through action. This implies self-consideration as the author of one's own actions as well as a privileged observer and interpreter of them. The third step implies an additional level of awareness to the effect that situational vulnerability is unavoidable. Autonomy can be configured as the capacity to manage it not in the sense of accepting unfair situations and labeling processes, but, rather, in the sense of the steps explained above. Being autonomous does not mean mastering internal and external conditions of life, but rather considering oneself an author who is capable of synthetizing actions and events, projects, and circumstances, and who never stops seeking or inventing sense.

In order to make the connection, the refiguration of vulnerability proposed in the previous section needs to be linked with the proposal of a narrative autonomy as self-authorship. One possible response to the question as to the kind of link that exists between autonomy and vulnerability lies in the capacity

14 In a pandemic or epidemic, it is fundamental to remember, as previously stated, that the subject is a victim and a vector at the same time. Thus, care for the self automatically becomes care for others. This process deserves a more in-depth analysis from an ethical viewpoint.

of conceiving projects starting from the difficulties involved in a particular situation. Autonomy and vulnerability are events and not things. They are positional and relational, and outline a means of occupying a position, a quality, and not an essence. Autonomy as narrative capacity for managing vulnerabilities depends on the context and should not be taken for granted. Defined thus, it is capable of recognizing vulnerabilities and transforming them into reasons to act. It refers to the management of the space to heal wounds. It thus outlines a kind of management of vulnerability, not in the sense of resilience or overload of responsibilities, but rather in the sense of confidence in the transient nature of some vulnerabilities and in transformative agency at an individual as well as collective level. This translates to the abovementioned projectual capacity. Vulnerability and autonomy do not appear opposed. Rather, they are the main characters of the same scene, and the latter cannot exist without the former.

"Layers, not labels," which is the title of Luna's mentioned contribution, is the sentence that has been guiding the analysis of vulnerability. In response to this pluralization, a promising approach comprises an intersectional insight that grows within the bonds of solidarity:

> […] to develop a new vision of intersectional solidarity that is not beholden to the hegemonic models of the past, but inspired by local struggles and achieves the remarking of humanism, seems to be one of the most crucial intellectual and political tasks of our time. (Gomes Duarte and Lima 2020, 137)

That a pandemic will automatically lead to a better world based on solidarity (see Žižek 2020) is a highly problematic view. It is quite difficult to see it as based on solid ground. It can, of course, seem like a wish, and it falls in the realm of moral duties. Nevertheless, the likelihood of sanitary and ecological emergencies should help redefine the blurring contours of autonomy and vulnerability with self-awareness placed at the heart of this redefinition. How can the vulnerable be autonomous? Only the vulnerable can be(come) autonomous, as autonomy means enjoying the (internal, relational, social, and political) conditions that allow for a narrative and transformative management of vulnerability. The latter can finally be recognized as the fundamental precondition for autonomy.

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The Words of Ethics across the Media in a Time of Pandemic
From Misinformation to Solidarity

Veronica Neri

University of Pisa, Lungarno Pacinotti 43, 56126 Pisa, Italy

veronica.neri@unipi.it

Abstract

In such a peculiar time as the one we are living in now due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, our perception of risk and uncertainty have exponentially grown. The media have changed their lexicon, redefining some of their keywords, and have taken *ad hoc* communication strategies. Such a new communication narrative requires an ethical reflection, which should spur us to move along the pivotal principles of behaving "well" in a social context where everyone's behavior takes on paramount importance, as it can make all the difference in lessening and/or expanding the risk of contagion; misinformation can also do likewise. It goes without saying that this means values and principles such as awareness, (joint) responsibility, and trust, which may strengthen the relationship among individuals (experts and ordinary citizens), institutions, and media for a new sense of community built on mutual solidarity. “Good” communication, built on such concepts, can with regard to the contemporary individualistic atomism crucially contribute to an increase in awareness and extend a true sense of support for the sake of public welfare in our taking care for ourselves as well as for others not only as individuals, but above all as a community.

Keywords: communication, community, ethics, trust, responsibility, media, solidarity.

Medijsko posredovane besede etike v času pandemije. Od napačnih informacij do solidarnosti

Povzetek

V nenavadnih časih, v kakršnih živimo sedaj spričo stiske javnega zdravstva, ki jo je povzročila bolezen COVID-19, se naše zaznavanje tveganja in negotovosti eksponentno stopnjuje. Mediji so spremenili svoje slovarje in nekatere ključne besede opredelili drugače, pri čemer se poslužujejo *ad hoc* komunikacijskih strategij. Takšen nov komunikacijski narativ zahteva etično refleksijo, ki naj bi nas spodbudila k spoštovanju osrednjih načel »dobrega obnašanja« v družbenem kontekstu, v katerem je vedênje slehernega od nas odločilnega pomena, saj lahko bistveno prispeva k zmanjševanju in/ali povečevanju tveganja za okužbo; tudi napačne informacije lahko storijo enako. Seveda to vključuje vrednote in načela, kakršna so ozaveščenost, (skupna) odgovornost in zaupanje, ki lahko okrepijo razmerja med posamezniki (strokovnjaki in navadnimi državljani), ustanovami ter mediji in tako součinkujejo pri vzpostavljanju novega občutka za skupnost, zgrajeno na medsebojni solidarnosti. »Dobra« komunikacija, utemeljena na takšnih pojmih, lahko, zlasti z ozirom na sodobni individualistični atomizem, ključno prispeva k povečanju ozaveščenosti in ponudi resnično podporo javni dobrobiti pri – ne samo posameznikovem, temveč skupnostnem – zagotavljanju oskrbe zase in skrbi za drugega.

Ključne besede: komunikacija, skupnost, etika, zaupanje, odgovornost, mediji, solidarnost.

1. Premises

Nowadays, as an increasingly global and composite society is taking shape in all dimensions of life (economy, environment, public health, culture, and welfare), individuals feel shrouded in a climate of uncertainty and an increasing fear of risk, which they try to fight on their own. Today's concerns for the worldwide public health threat have pushed such trends even further.[1]

Thus far, the so-called "society of individuals," which has replaced the 20th-century "mass society," has invested onto itself also the fear of others, risking a radical weakening of the relational dimension. The atomistic individualism, focused on the self-affirmation of the individual, has slowly eroded the role of community and the social bonds that have been its distinctive feature over the course of history (Taylor 1993). And, with the COVID-19 public health crisis, individual choices can sometimes have unpredictable consequences, involving risks—but, as we will see, opportunities as well—for the lives of other individuals or for society as a whole that are beyond our control and our full awareness. The "desire for community" that Bauman reflected upon much earlier than the pandemic, now seems to respond to the perception of this new global fragility within the media universe that has been revolutionized by the internet, where communication (institutional, social, commercial, and, above all, scientific-public health communication) can spread as quickly as uncontrollably and sometimes even misleadingly (Bauman 2001; Bauman 2007; Fistetti 2003).

In such a context, the pandemic is questioning society about the need for a new civil *ethos*, the individual's active and conscious participation in responding to the expansion of risk and uncertainty. Now, unlike in the past (and the earlier pandemics), the paradigms of the media, which are unquestionably those most responsible for strengthening and/or weakening people's vulnerabilities and fears, have changed. Nowadays, the media can

1 Even if a feeling of uncertainty has always been the human being's constant companion, the current public health crisis has sharpened such a feeling, because, at least in the Western world, it immediately followed a time of prosperity and financial security (Millefiorini 2015, 288–291, 240; Beck 2000; Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994; Sennett 1998; Giddens 1994; Inglehart 1998; Ignazi and Urbinati 2020; Parsi 2020).

create bubbles of knowledge, guide public opinion, and "mask" or sensationalize facts, sometimes unbeknownst to users. And in such circumstances, they act by changing the narrative modes of information—focused on statistics, numbers, expert opinions, and emotions—and the lexicon, according to the public-health and epidemiological semantics.

A reflection inspired by communication ethics plays, therefore, a key role in the truly responsible behavior. In the early days of the pandemic, we saw institutional communication use some of the keywords of ethics, partly redefined in their general meaning. A sort of reminder—like an advertising slogan—of the suspended time we are living in and of the removal of some fundamental freedoms, which are protected by constitutional charters (something that raises a few questions, in terms of legitimacy and effectiveness). It is an inducement to an ethical behavior for the protection of oneself and of others, as part of oneself. This leads to using a lexicon that speaks of cohesion and reciprocity. And it is interesting to look at the way such concepts, conveyed by and in the media—especially in public service announcements and commercial advertisements, as the case of Italy has shown—, have strengthened people's feeling of belonging to their community, spurred by the deepest motivations that should lead people to behave responsibly. Communicative action has moved in multiple directions, involving citizens, experts, and institutions: the more personal one, from individuals (often the most emotional), the one from the institutions, to inform and give guidelines, the commercial one to buy things that are in keeping with the new living requirements, and, lastly, the one from the experts who communicate objectively—based on Bacon's idea of science for the benefit of all mankind—to reduce the feeling of insecurity and increase that of mutual trust (Greco 2017, 28).

The ethical connotation, which has been given to some terms in such forms of communication, involves all those dimensions and is by now becoming part, not so much of the communicative lexicon, but, rather, at a deeper level, of a new social imagery, based on conscious knowledge and, therefore, on responsible and mutually supportive action. And the sense and reasons that lead us to make a definite choice deeply depend on our expressive and defining abilities. When one uses language, one opens up to others, to a common space, and a meaning is given to words through a shared universe of values (Taylor 2016).

2. Risk and uncertainty. The role of the media amidst experts, citizens, and institutions

The risk of contagion and the uncertainty about its spreading are threats, which, as Beck wrote before the public health emergency, have always belonged to the human condition. The semantics of risk is not new, and "refers to the present thematization of future threats that are often a product of the successes of civilization" (Beck 2011, 9). And it is precisely on the successes of civilization, on the individualistic approach based on individual profit and personal fulfilment, like a kind of radicalization of the *homo ad circulum* of the Renaissance, that attention should be focused. Risk has two faces: one is unexpected danger, the other one opens up new opportunities, such as, for instance, the ability to predict and control. But the pandemic threat can mainly be kept in check if it is taken as an opportunity, as a change of perspective in human behavior. If risk, as Beck goes on to say, "is the model of perception and thought of the mobilizing dynamics of a society that is confronted with the openness, the uncertainties, and the blocks of a manufactured future, and no longer clings to religion, tradition, or to the dominance of nature, but has also lost its faith in the salvific force of utopias" (Beck 2011, 10), then the media thematization, the choice of a code and channel of communication, and the strategies for spreading messages can be additional spheres of knowledge (or sometimes pseudo-knowledge) and, above all, of choice. Nevertheless, paradoxically enough, the further the science goes, the less worthy becomes the authority of experts, so overexposed that, it would seem, they are not always heeded. As if a sort of scientific *information overload* would have happened. And, conversely, as Nichols writes:

> The fact of the matter is that we cannot function without admitting the limits of our knowledge and trusting in the expertise of others. We sometimes resist this conclusion because it undermines our sense of independence and autonomy. We want to believe we are capable of making all kinds of decisions, and we chafe at the person who corrects us, or tells us we're wrong, or instructs us in things we don't understand. This

> natural human reaction among individuals is dangerous when it becomes a shared characteristic among entire societies. (Nichols 2017, 15)

The mistrust of experts is certainly not new in the history of thought. Since the time of Socrates, experts have been mistrusted so many times. As De Tocqueville noted, in 1835 the Americans relied more on individual efforts than on the theories of the most authoritative intellectuals: "It is not only confidence in this or that man which is then destroyed, but the taste for trusting the ipse dixit of any man whatsoever." (Nichols 2017, 17; De Tocqueville 1863) One is led to think that anyone, through the internet and a smartphone, may become an expert.[2] Much earlier than the internet, Ortega y Gasset defined the masses as arrogant and self-assuming as if he would feel "the progressive triumph of the pseudo-intellectuals, unqualified, unqualifiable and, by their very mental texture, disqualified [...]" (Ortega y Gasset 1957, 16).

Thus, on the one hand, there is less focus on knowledge and experts and, on the other hand, we are deluged with such a variety of information that we might end up with low levels of knowledge, since the belief has spread that all opinions are equally good, and, without a critical understanding of the authority of the sources, such—often unconscious—attitude is powerfully corroborated in the internet (Somin 2015 and 2016). A primarily American phenomenon, which has then spread all over the world, was born as the stance of learned and highly-educated individuals who think that, in some areas, they know more than the experts. As it has recently happened with vaccines across the world. The public opinion thoroughly looks for the experts' mistakes to deprive them of their authority. Knowledge is exclusive, the more you are an expert in one area, the less specialized you are in another, and you begin to exclude nonexperts from your reflections. While anyone can potentially carry on with one's inexperience,

2 As Nichols writes, an expert is someone who has "'comprehensive' and 'authoritative' knowledge, which is another way of describing people whose command of a subject means that the information they provide the rest of us is true and can be trusted. Their opinions are likelier than those of non-experts. They are certainly people who have received a certain education, who have a certain aptitude for and experience in the subject they are expert in, and whose knowledge is tested and proven by people who are as expert as they are." (Nichols 2017, 29–30)

everyone should trust the accredited experience of others, for a really functioning and civilized community (Barrotta and Gronda 2019).

3. Communicative ethics amidst responsibility, awareness, and trust in (un)certain community

Thus, applied ethics, and specifically communication ethics, steps in to help experts (increasingly overexposed in the media), citizens, and institutions regain and maintain trust in each other. In the face of the pandemic, the world of communication had the opportunity to readjust its dynamics. Shrouded in such emergency, people did and do need information that is truthful, never ambiguous, correct, and accessible to (and intelligible by) everybody. Such an opportunity has not always turned into reality. Communication has the power to provide guidelines on behaviors and values, and, in these circumstances, it accomplishes this by exploiting our vulnerabilities, our fears, as well as our expectations and hopes.

In this context, the principles and values that good communication is built upon cannot but be based on awareness and responsibility, leading towards a reinstatement of the sense of community (and, therefore, of mutual respect) that has gone lost in the modern age. Principles that can create a bond of trust that lasts even after the public health emergency, but that, just because of it, become and are perceived as necessary principles to come out or try to come out of the pandemic and the crisis it has triggered. Therefore, it seems essential, first and foremost, to briefly mention the meanings of the concepts, to which the media have focused their attention, not in order to regulate everyone's lives down to the tiniest details, more than is needed, with even stricter protocols. This is the concept of responsibility that is born of awareness and, quite paradoxically, of modern individualism and the ensuing culture of authenticity. As well as of the "desire for community" that recalls another keyword, i.e., mutual trust (between individuals, but mostly in the community), even more so in the relational complexity, in which we have to communicate and cooperate today.

While it can be detrimental to the resolution of the pandemic, individualism embraces authenticity, which—following in Taylor's footsteps—looks like a demand for a radical transparency of the self to create ethical, responsible social relationships.

> Authenticity points us towards a more self-responsible form of life. It allows us to live (potentially) a fuller and more differentiated life, because more fully appropriated as our own. There are dangers. […] When we succumb to these, it may be that we fall in some respects below what we would have been had this culture never developed. But at its best authenticity allows a richer mode of existence. […] authenticity opens an age of responsibilization […]. By the very fact that thus culture develops, people are made more self-responsible. (Taylor 1991, 86 and 90).

But what does behaving responsibly mean in the context of the current public health emergency?

First, the meanings that are deeply rooted in the Latin etymology of the noun, "responsibility," should be mentioned. The word recalls the Latin predicate *respondeo*, which implies the meaning of responding, formed by the prefix *re-* and the verb *spondeo*, suggesting a mutual pledge (Miano 2010, 7).

The noun also recalls the association between *rem*, the accusative singular of *res*, "thing," and the verb *ponderare*, the individual's ability to appraise a given situation; but it also recalls the predicate *re-sponsare*, in the sense of "resisting" to someone even when the latter behaves inappropriately or in a way that is unsuited to the context; or, again, *re-spicere*, formed by the prefix *re-*, "back," and the verb *spicio*, "to look," that is, "looking back" or "having regard for." It is the latter sense that reveals a connection between responsibility and risk management, making assumptions about a possible future. The conceptual *focus* shifts from the performer of the action to the other party, who asks to be protected and taken charge of.

With regard to the specific meanings that derive from *respondeo*, the first one is "answering *to*" something or someone, the second one is "'answering' something or someone," the third one is instead "'answering *for*' something or someone," accounting for them and accepting the consequences (Fabris 2014, 52–57; Fabris 2018).[3] In the light of such triple variants, responsibility may

3 As to the multiple suppositions of the concept of responsibility, especially in connection with its English variants, *responsibility* (associated with the sense of having

be defined as a relationship, in which there is a responsible person who acts, responsibility as a dimension, and finally the person/entity one is responsible to. This meaning emphasizes the connection between the idea of causality and the idea of responsibility as to the cause of a given response. The supposition that is most closely associated with "answering for" is the one connected with the concept of the juridical nature of liability. But what seems most relevant, nowadays, is responsibility from a predictive perspective regarding the consequences of actions, as explained, for instance, by Jonas's "principle of responsibility," formulated as follows: "Act so that the effects of your action are compatible with the permanence of genuine human life [...]." The pandemic imposes a reflection on the ultimate *consequences* of one's actions, which must pursue the "continuity of human life in the future" (Jonas 2002, 16–17). One's behavior must be rethought according to the specific values that guide the present actions. First and foremost, it is the relational, inter-subjective, and mutual nature of responsibility that becomes essential, here, as it implies a relation with someone else and transcends the (inward or outward) judging entity. As Ricoeur writes, I am responsible for the other who is in my charge, transcending the relationship between the agent and receiver of the action (Ricoeur 2005, 108).

Besides such concepts, there exist the meanings of "answering to" and of "answering someone," *à la* Derrida, which denotes that one always answers "to" someone, to a community, to an institution, but one also answers "someone" (Derrida 1996, 294). In accordance with Levinas, answering someone else's call, makes the Self get out of its self-reference and embrace otherness; this meaning is nowadays more relevant than ever (Levinas 1991).

The ramifications of responsibility are enriched by additional nuances, in the light of the *new media* and their independence, the unpredictability and immeasurability of the consequences of our communicative actions. Appealing to a principle of caution and risk assessment, becomes, therefore, even more

to do something), *answerability* (in the sense of being responsible for what happens), *liability* (more similar to a legal responsibility for something) and *attributability* (whose sphere of action is related to its character), see: Hart 1968; Miano 2010, 7–8; Franco 2015; Vincent 2011, 5–35; Fisher and Tognazzini 2011, 381–417; Raffoul 2010; Bagnoli 2019, 11).

important, as it is based on "strong evaluations," on choosing qualitatively based on a moral hierarchy for the benefit of individuals and society (Taylor 2004, 49–85).

The inter-subjective and interpersonal meaning of responsibility recalls, therefore, the taking charge of the other as part of a relationship between me and the other or others who have been entrusted to me or whom I personally vouch for. Without the other, the concept of responsibility cannot even be deployed. "The other" that can be the media itself. Our choices are even more heavily affected by technological progress, which drives our actions, sometimes arbitrarily, based more on an algorithmic ethics than on ethical responsibility. "Conscious responsibility" is required even for what technology can or cannot entail, which cannot deprive the very notion of responsibility of its meaning to create false beliefs if not downright ambiguities.

Jonas further writes: "Prometheus, unleashed definitively, to whom science gives unprecedented strengths and economy an untiring impetus, calls for ethics that through voluntary restraints will restrain its power to harm humanity." (Jonas 2002, XVII) In a time of the pandemic, this dimension is essential, since whatever could be converted into a digital form through the internet has also received this transformation. Here, then, the semantic image of responsibility cannot but be completed by the Anglo-Saxon concept of *accountability*, meaning institutions having to account for their choices and actions, vouching for the role of the media and the messages they send. A "responsibility" that is enhanced by the duty (not just the moral duty, but the legal one as well) to be transparent, that is, to let citizens know what public agents do, throughout the process. In this case, *accountability* means the accountability of the establishment. Coming from the English verb *to account*, and the noun *ability* in the meaning of "being able to" or "being fit to," it suggests "one's responsibility," i.e., the responsibility for one's actions, a sort of a moral duty to explain and justify one's conduct in the context that demands clearness (Raffoul 2010, 5, 242 ff.).

The responsible attitude, in the aforementioned senses, boosts the strengthening of a sense of community and recalls the need for increasing trust among agents, not just among citizens, on the horizontal level, but also among the institutions, the citizens, and the experts (not least also in connection with the role of the media).

The reasons that are reawakening the individuals' new interest in the *communitas* can be found in the etymology of the word itself, which means something that is not personal, something that belongs to many. The word derives from the Latin preposition *cum*, carrying a social character, and the noun *munus*, which also recalls the concept of duty, a gift that implies mutuality, a constant sharing that requires to be reciprocated. Inspired by Benveniste (Benveniste 1966), Fabris actually writes: "those 'gifts' belonging to the same community are exchanged with confidence to consolidate their relationships. And among these gifts the word, or more generally the communicative act, is what most effectively achieves this purpose." (Fabris 2018, 10)

Such a gift is, in a nutshell, a sort of duty one takes towards someone else, which demands to be released. And, while pre-pandemic atomistic individualism aimed at releasing itself of the duty of the *donum*, a new need for such obligation is reawakening nowadays. For an "operative community" to be "with" again (Nancy 1983), since every human being calls another one or several others (Blanchot 1983, 35), but especially for a society of individuals, who are interconnected by often invisible links. Elias writes:

> And in this way each individual person is really bound: he is bound by living in permanent functional dependence on other people. He is a link in the chains binding other people, just as all the others—directly or indirectly—are links in the chains which bind him. [...] and it is this network of the functions that people have for each other, it and nothing else, that we call "society." It represents a special kind of sphere. Its structures are what we call "social structures." (Elias 2001, 16)

On this journey to the rediscovery of the role of the community, the new media play a key role. As we start to lose confidence in the institutions and in the experts, we start to trust the often unknown subjects, which are "visible" on the internet, but are "equal" in "horizontally"-structured spaces. This can lead one to disregard the emergency rules issued by institutions and comply with others, alternative and scientifically uncorroborated, but suggested online.

Trusting or mistrusting becomes a litmus test for a consciously responsible community, a community, in other words, in which "one believes." The neo-

Latin root word fid, which we find in the Latin *fides*, "faith," and in the Greek *peith*, in *peitho*, "joining," actually means "believing" as well as "persuading." They both derive from the Indo-European roots *bandh* and *bheidh* and hint at social ties (De Vaan 2008, 218–209; Rendich 2014, 271). If one establishes a trusting relationship, then one makes a commitment and is led to believe in what is communicated within such relationship of trust. And, as pointed out by Benveniste, believing, from the Indo-European root **kred*, hints at a magical force that we attribute to someone or something we have confidence in. However, as we mentioned, both the Latin *fido* and the Greek *peitho* also nod to the concept of persuasion, in its active and passive form "being persuaded" (*peithomai*). When one arouses a given feeling, one leads the other party to trust, and trust needs to be given and/or not given to move forward, and make a choice or action (Benveniste 1976, 131; Natoli 2016). Faith makes one open up to the other, so that, as Fabris writes:

> In trusting others, we are willing not to consider ourselves as the only guarantors of the legitimacy of some notion or the effectiveness of some action. This happens because we admit—more or less consciously—that we have limits, that we do not know everything, that we do not control everything. My turning to someone else means that I cannot get something without the other's help. So, I must trust others, I must rely on them, I must ask for their support. But first and foremost I must confide in the fact that this support will come and will actually take place in the way I expect it to: even if that's not a foregone conclusion. (Fabris 2020, 124)

Actually, the level of trust involved affects a person's choices and actions, in a conscious cooperation for the common good.

If we, instead, turn to the English word "trust" and the German "Vertrauen"—as a certain addition to the first meaning—, they allude to the dimension of a sound truth (Kroonen 2013, 522–523) that enables us to rely on others, that gives guidance to our actions, without having to surrender ourselves.

Therefore, within a community, trusting becomes the determinant if we do it consciously and responsibly, driven by the need to be mutually connected. It is a responsibility that citizens have towards themselves and the community, the experts towards the community, which they communicate to, and the institutions that lead it. And, last, but not least, the media, in the communication strategies they deliver to their interlocutors.

Today, the connection between responsibility and trust within a community, which, after the COVID-19 crisis, will hopefully be more cohesive, can happen, especially through solidarity—in the more common sense of sharing as well as in the etymological, more far-reaching sense that we attempt to describe bellow (Neri 2020).

4. Solidarity for a new bond of trust

Then, trust and solidarity are essential resources for civic action that, in the context of a global emergency, aims to protect people as individuals, but above all as a community. And, in such a context, the communicative dimension provides the tools as well as the space, in which such cohesion among individuals, committed to cooperating for the reduction of infection at the level of public health and for the reduction of ambiguous, if not downright false, information at the level of the media, can happen.

Having briefly defined the concept of trust as "fides vinculum societatis" (Locke 1954, 202), Cunico regarding solidarity states:

> […] it is about the (natural and moral) fact that all members of society take care (or will take care) of the needs and interests of all the others. This is partly a constitutive fact, without which (as a partly factual, partly ideal assumption) society would not even exist and would not function, not even minimally. It is partly an unconscious (at least in some respects), involuntary or unintentional, spontaneous exchange, which allows social interdependence to set in and work, as an unsought consequence of individual behaviour, intended to pursue its purposes even through others, as partners in a family relationship (looking after one's spouse, children, parents) or as instruments (cooperation or use of labour, trade or sale […]). (Cunico 2017, 189–190)

Solidarity can, therefore, be viewed as an ethical-social duty, a guiding principle for individual action for the benefit of the community. But joint responsibility, too, is required, for solidarity to be morally understood as taking care of others, where the perspective of charity is replaced by proactive, factual action, a sort of duty, as suggested by its French etymology. Coming from the French *solidarité*, derived, in turn, from the Latin adjective *solidarius*, meaning "joint debtors," it first and foremost means a duty to pay the whole debt (after all, the Latin word *solidus* meant "tough" as well as "undivided," and it is from this adjective that the Italian noun, "soldo," and also "soldier," comes from).

The connotation of a mutuality of obligation—featuring largely in the *Encyclopédie* with the word *solidarité* and with *rapport de solidité*—, of the joint indebtedness of all community members, seems to be historically attributable first to the legal dimension, then to the ethical one, in which everyone is responsible for a moral debt to someone else. Since the time of *De l'Humanité* (1840) by Pierre Leroux, inspired by Maistre, the noun has taken on an even more definitely moral connotation, associated with the sense of joint belonging to a large or small community, of sharing, of active participation. A mutual cooperation, redolent of the revolutionary concept of fraternity (Blais 2012, 3; Cunico 2017, 183 ff.). Here, then, a relationship of solidarity is meant as a relationship of mutual support in a large or small community, with common interests and goals: "each one is responsible for all the others, is burdened with a debt towards the community, but is also relieved from it by the symmetry of the relation of mutual duty and dependency" (Cunico 2017, 191).

Such solidarity can only take place if distances are reduced, from the bottom up, through the citizens' cooperation, and/or from the top down, without detracting from the importance of individual choice. Everyone contributes as much as they can, and receives as much as they need. While solidarity is easier to apply to small communities, where people live close to each other, "closeness" may happen on the internet, regardless of physical closeness one has learnt to do without in the current emergency. Solidarity among citizens, as well as between the state and the citizens, strengthens trust, which is the value and the tool required to fight indifference, conflict, and all sorts of imbalances—social, economic, cultural (Cunico 2017, 181–198; Blais 2012, 153–156). A necessary, reasonable utopia, as Rodotà writes, which could provide an antidote to some realities and legitimate some behaviors. Participation in the construction of solidarity as active citizens is required in the context, in which citizens and institutions discharge their civic and social duties (Rodotà 2016, 235–236).

But solidarity occurs only if the community is ready to accept it, if others are trusted, and if there is a deeply-rooted culture of participation that can protect it from a general situation, which might fail to feed it. The crisis revealed this with civic participation mixing with volunteering to make up for the restraints imposed by COVID-19.

Solidarity is built on active behaviors and "thus shows an inclusive aptitude, not only towards people but towards all the tools that, in different times and contexts, make it possible" (Rodotà 2016, 239). After all, perceived as mutual support, solidarity is one of the three pivotal principles that underpin moral normative value, which is typical of communicative action, as in Apel's *Kommunikationsethik*, and which is, together with joint responsibility, to be regarded as a mutually-supportive effort to promote mutual agreement (Apel 1992, 30 and 41; Fabris 2014, 61–62).

Therefore, if everyone—the individuals (citizens and experts), the institutions, and the media—commits themselves to behave in a jointly responsible way in the solidarity-imbued context, that trust among all the parties, which is a prerequisite to strengthen the virtuous circle based on active, shared participation for the benefit of the common good, will be reinstated. Science and experts cannot guarantee security that people, further weakened by unexpected events, are asking for. Now is not the time for an atomistic individualism for its own sake *à la* Taylor. People must share in the good social functioning, starting with correct information based on "first reality" à la Luhmann. Otherwise, this would pave the way to the ethics of algorithms and the mechanisms of polarization, to theme clusters between those who believe in the pandemic reality and those who think it is a mere media construction, to *echo chambers*, to inaccurate, if not false information, even to downright *misinformation*, caused by the increasing unreliability of information available online, although without the intention of making it go viral (Quattrociocchi and Vicini 2016; Grignolio 2017, 80; Del Vicario *et al.* 2016, 554–559; Laidlaw 2015, Pariser 2011).

5. Conclusion. The role of media language

In the last few months, convergent, trans-media communication across multiple media, focused on the pandemic in the myriad of its facets, has been the leitmotif of everyone's daily life. Websites, social platforms, TV programs, newspapers have turned the spotlight on interviews with experts, institutional leaders, media professionals, and ordinary citizens in the attempt to convey the most timely, clear, and correct information ever, and to establish a dialogue based on mutual trust with all the parties involved. But, at the same time, an attempt was made to stir everyone's sense of responsibility, not only to encourage everyone to do their bit in the efforts to diminish the aggressiveness of the virus, but also to curb the spreading of unreliable, ambiguous, if not deliberately false information, which may lead us to behave in ways that are wrong for ourselves and for others. Misinformation, as we saw, can induce misbehaviors, it can create a second reality that is disconnected from, if not opposite to, the first one. The increasing virality of infection seems to have also sparked off a mechanism of information virality, which people, both expert and nonexpert, must be able to cope with (Sfardini 2020, 63–74).

Such joint efforts have led the media to reframe their schedules, at times with scaremongering—to remind people of the seriousness of the moment and warn them not to lower their guard—, other times with skeptical or garbling overtones, and then again for merely informational, awareness-raising purposes and/or for calling to mutual support reflecting the view of a community that is not only local, but increasingly global.

Therefore, the aim of focusing attention on some of the keywords of ethics, by choosing to incorporate them in the media lexicon, meant working on achieving a real awareness regardig what is happening, partly by promoting that much sought-after civic solidarity, partly by using the web in public and private procedures, in the attempt to relieve the burden of the loss of several degrees of freedom, which people were forced to give up (Urbinati and Ignazi 2020).

In the area of information, mass communication, as well as trade—and, of course, we mean the many advertisements for food and toiletries—, the lexicon carried by the media played a key role to embellish words with moral overtones and retrieve their etymological origins. It is here, then, in the institutional leaders' speeches, in advertisements, in the internet, and on the social media—through strategies that relied on empathy, emotion, and reassurance—that such words as mutuality, sharing, belonging, awareness, joining forces, we, responsibility, trust, solidarity, community, and community of individuals—as the Italian Prime Minister pointed out in commemorating Norbert Elias—could be heard.

Of the many systematized concepts, responsible solidarity (in its etymological sense) could maybe be considered as a foremost tool to establish and strengthen the bond of trust among all players, as well as between those players and the media. If trust is lost, that minimal sense of balance for a possible "restart" vanishes. In such a scenario, the communicative dimension seems to be the tool as well as the space, in which such relationship among all players, sharing the same desire for a social, civic, and ethical fabric, committed to cooperating together, may be established (Quadrio Curzio and Marseguerra 2009, 19–39).

And, in this case, the individualism of the contemporary subject, bound to authenticity, can also produce a greater level of responsibility and self-responsibility. If every individual would act by accounting for themselves in the face of others, transparently, for the sake of the general wellbeing, then they would leave behind the pursuit of profit just for themselves, for the sake of a *homo civicus* who can retain independence, but in an ethical manner. Therefore, not by reducing the freedom of the individual, but by increasing it, virtuous relations can be formed, and the existing ones can be strengthened, in the ever-increasing public arena, as also the pandemic has revealed (Beck 2000, 40).

Such bonds will virtuously fight societal vulnerability precisely because of ethical principles, especially joint solidarity, built on the new bond of trust between agents. In other words, becoming experts in communicating and acting ethically, seems to be particularly appropriate, in order to avoid the risk of creating another form of disease based on miscommunication, which would become its aetiology, means, and end (De Kerckhove and Rossignaud 2020). And the choice of language, the most straightforward expression of human behavior, becomes the determinant. Since the expressivist breakthrough, then, the meaning of what is can be conceived as assumedly dependent on language, on the way man acts or is acted upon by language (as well as culture, tradition, community) (Taylor 2016, 17). Consequently, the words of ethics become fundamental for communication in the state of emergency, for the action that takes charge of oneself and others.

Morin writes:

> […] the unexpected surprises us. Because we are too safely ensconced in our theories and ideas, and they are not structured to receive novelty. But novelty constantly arises. There is no way we can predict it exactly as it will occur, but we should always expect it, expect the unexpected […]. And once the unexpected has happened, we must be able to revise our theories and ideas instead of pushing and shoving the new fact in an attempt to stuff it into a theory that really can't accommodate it. (Morin 2001, 26)

And the language of ethics—predominantly some of the keywords of communication ethics—, conveyed through multiple forms of the media, cannot but be helpful in accepting and coping with the unexpected and acting upon it.

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A Hermeneutical Account of Social Distance as a Form of Negative Solidarity

Exploring the Peculiar Case of "Coronationalism"

Uroš Milić

University of Vienna, Faculty of Philosophy and Education, Department of Philosophy, Universitätsstraße 7, A-1010 Vienna, Austria

uros.milich@gmail.com

Abstract

The overarching aim of this contribution is to make a hermeneutical account of social distance as a form of negative solidarity. This scope brings forth two guiding questions worth considering: 1. How does a collective solidarity narrative that supports inward security influence the execution of restrictive measures such as social distancing? 2. Does a collective solidarity narrative merely focus on prescribing social distance as a universal normative measure or does it involve other sociopolitical narratives that can cause negative solidarity? In order to answer these questions, I focus on the adverse effects that a flawed collective solidarity narrative can cause in respect to social cohesion. In the sociopolitical sense, I focus on the peculiar case of nationalist politics known as coronationalism. In order to reach this aim, I expound upon various insights found in the hermeneutic tradition, as well as draw from other sources that involve the fields of social ontology and phenomenology.

Keywords: collective solidarity, negative solidarity, social distancing, coronationalism.

Hermenevtični premislek socialne distance kot oblike negativne solidarnosti. Raziskava o nenavadnem primeru »koronacionalizma«

Povzetek

Osrednji namen pričujočega prispevka je hermenevtični premislek socialne distance kot oblike negativne solidarnosti. Takšen zasnutek prinaša dve vodilni vprašanji, o katerih je vredno razmisliti. 1. Kako narativ kolektivne solidarnosti, ki podpira notranjo gotovost, vpliva na izvajanje omejitvenih ukrepov, kakršno je socialno distanciranje (omejevanje socialnih stikov)? Ali se kolektivna solidarnost narativno osredotoča samo na zapovedovanje socialne distance kot univerzalnega normativnega ukrepa ali vključuje tudi druge socialnopolitične narative, ki lahko povzročijo negativno solidarnost? Da bi odgovoril na obe vprašanji, se osredotočim na škodljive učinke, kakršne lahko z ozirom na družbeno kohezivnost povzroči pomanjkljiv narativ kolektivne solidarnosti. V socialnopolitičnem smislu se posvetim nenavadnemu primeru nacionalistične politike, ki jo poznamo pod imenom »koronacionalizem«. Da bi dosegel zastavljeni cilj, obravnavam različne uvide, kakršne je mogoče najti znotraj hermenevtične tradicije, in se obenem nanašam na druge vire, ki vključujejo področji socialne ontologije in fenomenologije.

Ključne besede: kolektivna solidarnost, negativna solidarnost, socialno distanciranje, koronacionalizem.

> "Thus the disease, which apparently had forced on us the solidarity of a beleaguered town, disrupted at the same time longestablished communities and sent men out to live, as individuals, in relative isolation. This, too, added to the general feeling of unrest."
>
> Albert Camus: *The Plague*

1. Introduction

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly shed light on the way we take part in, as well as experience, social interaction in contemporary times, given that the restrictions and regulations imposed by our European governments have made all future projections of a common globalized world less feasible. The difficulty lies in the very potency of the COVID-19 pandemic, which spurred a multitude of questions surrounding public safety. These questions involve not only matters of health risks, but also the extent of international cooperation and the possibility of a stable socio-economic future. Thus, because of the multifarious nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, it quickly became evident that the problem of contagion cannot be reduced to biology and epidemiology alone, especially if we consider the fact that most of the measures taken by the European governments were met with a considerable amount of civil and political unrest. And yet, for all the interesting reasons that I intend to explore in this article, the call for self-quarantine and social distancing is primarily presented as a broad matter of collective solidarity, either through political discussions, established media outlets, or through the more contemporary online media platforms. By the looks of

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things, self-isolation and social distancing have become the sociopolitical and populist means of acknowledging the strength of a *collective we*. What is more, it is as if these solutions took on the role of an ethics, which enables people to master not only the measures taken against the COVID-19 crisis, but also their fear of contagion. In this sense, we are faced with a universalistic type of ethics that tries to substantiate moral agency, as Nancy successfully points out, through "confidence, mastery, and decision" (Nancy in: European Journal 2020). Moreover, these points lead to the proposition that individuals who practice social distancing understand the notion of distance not only as a governmentally instructed normative measure against the spread of the coronavirus, but also as a reasonable way of expressing individual obligation, which, in turn, internally supports the circulation of the present world order. Hence, various accounts of social distancing, such as maintaining appropriate distance from others in the work environment, partaking in online lectures at universities, cancellations of various social events, are generally conducted, or so it seems, through a collective solidarity narrative, i.e., in the form of a universal battle against contagion. At least, if we again refer to Nancy, "this is the image that seems to emerge, or to take shape in the collective imagination" (ibid.).

However, as a recent report prepared by the European Policy Institutes Network clearly shows, the EU member states have been thoroughly perplexed with the question of how to collectively deal with the plight of the COVID-19 pandemic, primarily with regard to the economic repercussions caused by the measures taken against its spreading. One of the main questions that arose during these ongoing discussions concerns the limits of Europe's aid policy toward third-world countries, countries that are still in transition, and also the more underdeveloped EU state members. In a nutshell, the extent of the various economic repercussions makes it difficult to ascertain whether Europe's geopolitical ambition remains unscathed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This brings forth a crucial normative feature of these discussions, one which, to say the least, involves a highly ambiguous collective solidarity narrative. The ambiguity lies in the fact that these discussions mainly revolve around the question of *internal solidarity* among members of the EU, and not so much around the question of whether or not the EU and its member states wish to support other countries (Debuysere 2020; Poli 2020; Brudzińska 2020; Katsikas 2020). Thus, on the one hand, international cooperation has generally continued as it did before the declaration of the pandemic, although "in a more Covid-19 tailored manner" (Debuysere 2020, 3). This means that most European countries "embraced external solidarity," and "refrained from pitting this practice against internal solidarity" (ibid.). More precisely, they accepted the prospect of external solidarity as a reasonable normative extension of internal solidarity, in the form of a political *good-will*, as it were. In France, for instance, no *France First* slogans were heard during the outbreak (Vimont 2020), whereas countries such as Germany and Spain openly embraced the prospect of external solidarity, soon after they successfully executed internal safety precautions. Still, unlike the question of internal solidarity, external solidarity "has so far stirred very little to no public debate or political discussion" (Debuysere 2020, 3). Apart from the various European right-wing political parties, which publicly opposed external support, the prospect of international cooperation "did not feature much in the public debate" (ibid.), and has, for the most part, remained outside the public forum. Thus, unlike the clear-cut oppositionist response to the possibility of extending help beyond the borders of a country, the prospect of international cooperation did not feature as much in the public debate, as most EU state members remained content with a "broad political consensus" (ibid.). The lack of a more profound debate about the extent of external solidarity suggests that even though the majority of the larger member states accepted the prospect of external solidarity as an extension of internal cooperation, the presence of right-wing populism, which has grown immensely over the recent years, caused many European governments to become "politically and economically inward-looking" (ibid., 4). Consequently, this inconspicuous trend of maintaining internal solidarity in virtue of further self-enclosure gave rise to a peculiar form of nationalism now referred to as *coronationalism* (Debuysere 2020; Mureşan 2020).

Therefore, the argument to be made, here, is that the collective solidarity narrative falls short in grasping the negative implications of social distancing caused by the threat of contagion, precisely because of its situatedness within an ambiguous consensus between the internal and external form of solidarity. These negative implications include, but are certainly not limited to, negative social phenomena such as *mass panic* and *ethnic blame-casting*. In this regard, it is important to provide a hermeneutical account of how a lack of a more affirmative stance toward external solidarity can give advance to an unwarranted collective solidarity narrative that combines restrictive health governance, which calls for "distancing and severing contacts," with a political narrative "conceived in increasingly nationalist terms" (Aaltola 2020, 5). Moreover, investigating these phenomena in a hermeneutical key provides an avenue for unveiling the presence of *negative solidarity* in the collective solidarity narrative. Unlike the latter, negative solidarity represents an unwarranted form of social cohesion that combines the fear of *a disease* with more palpable cultural images of an outside threat such as *the outsider*, *the foreigner*, *the immigrant*. Hence, the investigation will require two steps. I will start by focusing on the disruptive implications that restrictive measures, such as social distancing, can have for collective solidarity, when observed through the lens of coronationalism. Namely, how does a collective solidarity narrative that supports inward security influence the execution of restrictive measures such as social distancing? Does it merely focus on prescribing social distance as a universal normative measure, or does it involve other sociopolitical narratives that can cause negative solidarity? By focusing on these questions, I will then attempt to show how social distancing can also turn into a skewed form of negative solidarity that causes social antagonism, such as ethnic blame-casting. In order to reach this final aim, I plan on expounding upon the various insights found in the hermeneutic tradition, as well as drawing from other sources, which involve the fields of social ontology and phenomenology.

2. Coronationalism: a collective or a mass phenomenon?

As mentioned in the introduction, coronationalism suggests an overlapping between the restrictive health governance and the nationalist political narrative. As such, it ascribes political value to measures that should primarily concern public health regulations. For example, after the COVID-19 outbreak in Northern Italy, which subsequently lead to satellite outbreaks in other European countries, the EU state members first hesitated to impose restrictions within the Schengen area. According to Aaltola, this hesitation showed an "open expert debate on the usefulness of significantly restrictive measures" precisely because of the political value "open borders and trade inside the Schengen area" (Aaltola 2020, 6) have for inter-European relations. In mid-March, however, expert advice started to fade into the background, as it was cast aside in the name of more efficient political action. This gave way to "widespread border closures based on national political borders" (ibid., 6), which suggests a stringent politicization of health policies. On the one hand, the politicization of matters that pertain to public safety is not that unreasonable. Legitimate political action is, nevertheless, crucial in the times when preventive and responsive measures have to take place. Put crudely, legitimate politics serve as an "enabler" of the "efficient functioning of expertise," that is to say, an "enactor of health institutions" and a "mobilizer of adequate resources" (ibid., 5). As such, politics play a supporting role in providing funding for health programs, in building the necessary infrastructure, such as health offices, laboratories, check-points, etc., besides imposing restrictive measures such as self-quarantine and social distancing. Legitimate political action, to a degree, underlines the partnership between politics and health governance, inasmuch as political co-option is used to secure efficiency in health regulation. This, again, is made possible exactly because of the "general legitimacy of health governance" (ibid., 6). Without it, people would simply not trust different political administrations, given that health governance usually functions, or at least it ought to, "outside of politics" and various "political leanings" (ibid.).

On the other hand, however, the reciprocal arrangement between politics and health governance heavily favors an inward bound political agenda. It seems that whenever "a sudden disruption" occurs, especially in the form of an uncanny human epidemic such as the COVID-19, the general "collaborative pattern" between politics and health governance can rapidly change into a socially disruptive pattern where "politics easily takes priority over health efforts" (ibid.). This means that the line between what is legitimate and what is considered as purely political tends to be blurred at the very moment, when politicization causes "the paralysis of the underlying mission" (ib.), i.e., when it breaches the domain of efficient health governance in an unwarranted fashion. Affairs such as these echo Agamben's assessment, developed mainly in his work *State of Exception*, that such political breaches are characteristic for "periods of political crisis" (Agamben 2005, 1), since they serve as the state's "immediate response to the most extreme internal conflicts" (ibid., 2). In this case, utilizing health governance for securing political goals signifies extreme political action, seeing that social distance is used as an illegitimate nationalist term, geared toward further disengagement. Still, does this serve as a legitimate proof of coronationalism? The trend of violating the limits of health governance can nonetheless serve as means to any political end. According to Agamben, the overlapping between negative political co-option and health governance represents one of the many ways, in which regulatory measures such as social distancing play a part of a much larger biopolitical narrative. Hence, what Agamben stresses is not the upheaval of a nationalist political narrative but a "new paradigm of biosecurity" (Agamben 2020a), the aim of which is not only to mollify the threat of contagion, but also to impinge upon the disease-stricken community a sense of urgency, which prescribes the preservation of one's *naked life*. In the blog post "Biosecurity and Politics," Agamben thus declares the COVID-19 pandemic as a governmentally imposed *state of exception*, the main purpose of which is to regulate social interaction within a new world order. From Agamben's standpoint, what is truly at stake, is not the prospect of coronationalism, but "a new paradigm for the governance of men and things" (ibid.), according to which the inherited ways of perceiving and maintaining solidarity will eventually fall victim to a universally imposed ethos of *survival at all costs*.

Not surprisingly, Agamben's encompassing sense of distrust toward the normative measures taken by European governments was criticized by many as being part of a theoretical *collapse into paranoia* (Cayley 2020; Berg 2020). One of such critiques was also given by Nancy, who considered Agamben's radical anti-governmental critique "more like a diversionary manoeuvre than a political reflection," provided that governments "are nothing more than sad executioners" of derailed "techno-economic powers" (Nancy in: European Journal 2020). However, by defining the COVID-19 pandemic as an *imposed* state of exception, Agamben also stresses the danger of founding a normative frame on the "apparatuses of exception" without entertaining the possibility of observing and defining this frame "beyond the immediate context" (Agamben 2020a) of urgency and self-preservation. Interestingly enough, the same problem of normative intrusion adheres to the social phenomenon of coronationalism, although in a slightly different manner. Obviously, it would be unreasonable to refer to coronationalism as a universal and omnipotent case of biopolitics, since it does not represent a predominant normative directive. In the narrower sense, coronationalism does not imply "a new wave of nationalism," i.e., a new world order, but rather reinforces the proclivity toward self-enclosure that "was already there" (Debuysere 2020, 4). In a certain way, coronationalism is a product of an underlying sociopolitical dynamic, which diseases, such as the COVID-19 and its precursors, tend to accentuate, rather than a fully integrated form of biopolitics. It is, therefore, primarily an indication of the need to seek solace in autonomy, when facing imminent danger such as that of contagion. As such, it merely highlights the fact that as soon as mass panic sets in, and a nationalist political agenda starts to intersect with health governance, the battle against a "deadly disease outbreak" can turn into a battle against anything that is remotely considered "unfamiliar" and foreign to a state of autonomy or, conversely, to one's own sense of safety. Moreover, this type of nationalist politicization only further intensifies the fear of contagion, given that political action and national integrity take predominance over expert-guided health governance. Consequently, one no longer speaks solely of collective solidarity, health restrictions, and regulations, but also of further self-insulation, stringent border patrols, and avoidance of so-called *hot-zones* at all costs. As Aaltola stresses:

> Throughout the history of states' interaction with epidemics, it has been very difficult to distinguish between their genuine efforts to minimize the health implications of epidemics and their opportunistic attempts to minimize or gain political benefits from an outbreak. (Aaltola 2020, 12)

Arguably, Agamben's insights do indeed point toward this issue, even if it is obscured by his critics, as well as his own theoretical focus on the totalitarian features of biopolitical governance. Namely, the more important question that has to be addressed with regard to the problem of an imposed *immediate context* is not whether the solidarity narrative supports an overarching totalitarian paradigm. The question is rather: does this narrative hold fast to an underlying normative requirement or is it merely a prefiguration of social distance inherent to the social strata of a falsely collectivized community? Put differently, is social distancing, understood in the performative sense, i.e., as a normative attitude, a matter of uninterrupted collective cohesion, which holds fast to an underlying normative requirement, or, as Agamben poignantly stresses, a matter of "mass-inversion" (Agamben 2020b)? The guiding answer to these questions can be gleaned from Agamben's reflections found in his contribution entitled "Social Distancing":

> […] what the measures of social distancing and panic have created is certainly a mass—but an inverted mass, so to speak, made up of individuals who at all costs keep each other at a distance. A mass, therefore, that lacks density, that is rarefied and which, however, is still a mass. (ibid.)

As one can clearly see, Agamben's notion that one is now required to keep *distance at all costs* does not merely outline the broad questions of state supervision and normative intrusion, the purpose of which is to impose an ethos of survival, but also points to the question of whether we can speak of *a collective* in collective solidarity at all! If observed mainly through the prism of social distance as a form of negative sociality, to keep distance *at all costs* is, in fact, not merely a signification of normative intrusion, intimately appropriated and falsely distributed within a biopolitical agenda. It primarily singles out the fallacy of defining *a mass of people* in collectivist terms. Namely, unlike a mass of people or a crowd, collective solidarity requires a "self-evident communality" that follows a "common establishment of decisions" and a transparent relation between "moral, social, and political life" (Gadamer 1992, 218). On the other hand, if we were to paraphrase Camus' insightful passage from *The Plague*, addressing the crowd as a collective, only adds to the *general feeling of unrest*, meaning that it only forces upon us the solidarity of a *beleaguered* (Camus 2010), i.e., a *disease-stricken community*. In other words, it illuminates the fact that a community, the future of which depends entirely upon the successful containment of a threat, is in no way sustainable as a collective since it substitutes solidarity and "humanitarian compassion" with "containment" (Aaltola 2020, 5). In a certain way, compassion, understood as one of many attributes belonging to collective solidarity, becomes a form of social contagion, aimed at further containment. With Nancy's words, "compassion is the contagion, the contact of being with one another in turmoil" (Nancy 1991, xiii). And given that it is a form of compassion that thrives in turmoil such as pandemic hysteria, it cannot be neither "altruism" nor collective solidarity, but the "disturbance of violent relatedness" (ibid.).

Arguably, the violent relatedness Nancy speaks of adheres directly to the relation between the "sudden global jolt of aversion and fear" (Aaltola 2020, 5) and the rise of reactionary right-wing politics, which, in turn, maintain the fear of contagion for the sake of further political co-option. More importantly, this also points to the fact that "when a serious infectious disease spreads, a 'threat' is very often externalized into a culturally meaningful 'foreign' entity" (ibid., 1), which can cause various forms of social antagonisms within a preconceived image of national autonomy. Drawing from one of Nancy's more insightful passages from *Being Singular Plural*, one could say that when political thinking becomes "fearful and reactionary," it declares that "the most commonly recognized forms of identification are indispensable," and consequently, if we follow Nancy's argument to a tee, equates the terms "people, nation," with the much more ambiguous terms, such as "culture," "ethnicity," and "roots" (Nancy 2000, 47). In fact, as Nancy would argue, it leads to the diffraction of a community into a "chaotic and multiform appearance," which causes "the dis-location of the 'national' in general" (ibid., 36). Hence, as longs as a nationalist narrative maintains that "the destinies" proper to these identity markers "are used up or perverted" (ibid., 47), in times of crisis, a false sense of communal existence can arise. This point brings back the thought of collective solidarity as a form of mass social contagion, rather than a collective performative attitude. Similar to a virus, which, as Derrida points out, "is in part a parasite that destroys, that introduces disorder into communication," so, too, can solidarity become a form of negative association that "derails a mechanism of the communicational type" (Derrida 1994, 12). This derailment of communication not only causes a fallacious sense of internal solidarity, but also unwarrantedly transfers one's sense of endangerment to those that do not fall into the politically co-opted sense of public safety. Consequently, the fear of *a disease* permeates through the more palpable cultural images of an outside threat, only to further obfuscate the difference between negative association, wherein biological fact and political co-option intersect, and what one might consider as the genuine prospect of collective solidarity. This, in turn, causes an unwarranted sense of safety, as though the virus can only come from the outside, i.e., in the form of a foreigner, and not from within a nationally homogenous group setting. To this point, Agamben quotes a passage from Canetti's work *Crowds and Power*, which further illustrates Agamben's assessment about social distancing as a product of *mass-inversion*, although this time, paradoxically, also with regard to the process of overcoming the fear of infection by becoming a part of the crowd. According to Agamben:

> While men usually fear being touched by the stranger and all the distances that men establish around themselves arise from this fear, the mass is the only situation, in which this fear is overturned to become its opposite. (Agamben 2020b)

Agamben's words reflect Canetti's following statement:

> It is only in a crowd that man can become free of this fear of being touched. That is the only situation in which the fear changes into its opposite. […] As soon as a man has surrendered himself to the crowd, he ceases to fear its touch. […] The man pressed against him is the same as himself. He feels him as he feels himself. Suddenly it is as though everything were happening in one and the same body. […] This reversal of the fear of being touched belongs to the nature of crowds. The feeling of relief is most striking where the density of the crowd is greatest. (Canetti 1973, 16)

Judging by the points made thus far, it would be quite plausible to argue that the nature of the threat that is coronationalism lies exactly in the twofold manifestation of mass fear, which, on the one hand, causes a fallacious sense of collective agency, whereas, on the other hand, facilitates further political co-option that mainly supports an internal form of solidarity, i.e., one that is essentially bound to autonomy and containment. As mentioned, this inward-bound inclination of coronationalism, in effect, gives rise to a negative form of solidarity, seeing that it causes the underlying social antagonisms found in the ethnocentrically contrived narrative of efficient health governance to resurface. A pandemic, as the ongoing practice of imposing restrictive measures suggests, can nevertheless also be "territorialized, nationalized, ethnicized, and racialized" (Aaltola 2020, 1), meaning that it can also arise in the form of social antagonism that produces "*difference*, *exclusion* and *marginalisation*" (Giddens 1991, 6). I intend to focus on this issue more in the next segment by introducing some of the latest insights from the fields of phenomenology and social ontology. Through this, I will attempt to argue that the social phenomenon of coronationalism not only contorts the perception of collective agency by relying on mass hysteria, but is itself a fundamentally anti-collective social phenomenon.

3. Coronationalism as an anti-collective social phenomenon

Recent studies in phenomenology and social ontology have shown an increased interest in the dynamic of collectivization, mainly by tackling the open-ended question of what exactly is the nature of interpersonal understanding, social interaction, and social participation. Moreover, many scholars, such as De Warren, Ferran, and Szanto, would agree that sociality is not only a matter of *intersubjectivity*, i.e., the relations between subjects as established relations between a *you* and an *I*, but also in the sense of a *you and an I* relating *to a we*, which may or may not be situated against a *them*. On the one hand, the notion of a *We* or an *Us* underlines *the positive third*, that is, a statutory group, to which the subject, as its constituent, pledges himself. If we were to understand social distancing as such a pledge of solidarity, then one would primarily denote a "bound to certain obligations, duties, and norms of the group" (De Warren 2016, 320). These obligations, in turn, would then represent "an objective guarantee" that "protects and inhibits me from becoming *Other*," that is, protects me "from exiting and/or betraying the group" (ibid.), regardless of whether the other is present or not. On the other hand, however, there is also the view of the third as a "group in fusion," i.e., a form of collective agency, in which "individuals are reciprocally bound to each other" through a "common praxis" (ibid., 315). Unlike the statutory group, the process of cohesion concerning the group in fusion is "still in flux," meaning that a group in fusion "comes into being through a spontaneous emergence of a concerted praxis of individuals in view of a common objective" (ibid.). For instance, individuals that wear a mask can be seen as sharing a similar goal (containing the spread of the contagion), and yet remain determined by individual self-interest at the same time (primarily taking care of their own health and well-being). The same applies to individual purpose (remaining uninfected) and the possibility of conflict with others (scarcity of masks, disinfectants, etc.), as both factors rely on a string of contingent events that could either end up in a "cooperating praxis," which follows a "genuinely common objective" (ibid.), or a complete lack thereof. Drawing from Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, De Warren suggests that it depends on the way "the disruption of habit" or "the disruption of seriality" manifests itself. A group in fusion is thus "neither genuine collective agency nor complete absence of concerted movement," which is the same reason why it remains open-ended with regard to the possibility of a "new social configuration" (ibid.).

However, unlike the binding force of a pledge, which binds the subject to a common *praxis* of a statutory group, the possibility of a new social configuration is set against the other, i.e., another group. This makes the *group in fusion* primarily a *reactionary* formation, the unity of which, as De Warren argues, "is negatively determined" by "an external threat" (ibid., 316). Moreover, this external threat becomes "interiorized within the group" as "individual constituents come to recognize each other as belonging to a unified group on the basis of acting in concert" (ibid.). Similar to Agamben's point about the way mass panic inverts the uncanny exterior into the interior, so does the encounter with an external threat shape "the 'totalization' (or 'synthetic unification') of different actions," such as keeping appropriate social distance, into "common praxis" (ibid.) as, for instance, an overcoming of the fear of contagion. According to Sartre, the active and passive elements in the formation of a *group in fusion* are "often impossible to differentiate, that is, whether the group differentiates itself internally or in reaction to an external threat" (ibid.). This is the main reason why the interiorization of an outside threat can take different shapes and forms, either that of fear of the virus or that of overcoming the very same fear by taking a representative role within a mass of people. According to De Warren, Sartre's insights regarding the process of interiorization can be divided into three distinct dimensions: 1. the psychological interiorization of a common objective and reciprocal recognition of other individuals; 2. the sociological interiorization as a group delimits itself from other groups; 3. the material interiorization within a field of action (De Warren 2016). All three dimensions, in some form of another, correspond to the interiorizing process of mass-inversion characteristic for the phenomenon of coronationalism, but perhaps it is the third that best captures the gist of subverting health governance by seeking refuge in a mass. Namely, material interiorization invokes a "territorialization of physical space" and for this reason alone demarcates a line between "us" and "them." Each individual within a group in fusion is, thereby, a "self-determining individual" and an individual who determines himself or herself according to what Sartre calls "the third" (ibid., 316), or, in the case of coronationalism, a nation, a sense of ethnic belonging, etc. In a nutshell:

> Insofar as I see myself as a part of a group, I determine myself from the point of view of the group, or as "the third." As Sartre stresses, this unification, or "totalization," is *practical* insofar as I realize a common *praxis* through my own individual *praxis*. […] I have interiorized a common interest, means, and an objective into my individual praxis, such that the group acts "in" me, *is* me, much like the savvy U.S. Army recruiting slogan, "Army of One." (De Warren 2016, 317)

However, stating that an individual takes a representational role within a mass of people, i.e., that one executes a common ideal by way of individual commitment, does necessarily imply the sort of representation that holds fast onto a collective goal. Following Szanto's insights into the nature of collective agency, when speaking of a collective, one has to take into account that collective normative requirement necessarily outflanks individual agency. Put differently, it makes individuals, as bearers of a common goal, "interchangeable," for every individual, perceived as a part of a collective, "is considered to be co-responsible" for what is understood as being of "communal value" (Szanto 2016, 304). In short, only a collective can enable the type of representation characteristic for "the principle of 'non-representable' solidarity" (ibid.). To represent a mass of people or a crowd, on the other hand, signifies the opposite. Unlike the collectivist type of representational agency, seeking ethical value in a mass, i.e., the type of collective, which is merely a *group in fusion*, is essentially an anti-collectivist worldview and, much to the same effect, essentially non-representational. As already indicated above, the mass is constituted by violent relatedness, i.e., the type of social contagion, which relies on the inexplicit probability of an outside threat, and not on an established moral framework. This, in turn, not only makes the prospect of collective solidarity hard to imagine, but also endangers the possibility of collective solidarity within a pluralistic spectrum, i.e., in the form of a *pluralist community*. Namely, unlike a mass, whose act of sharing a prescribed norm depends on a skewed, i.e., internally compromised normative attitude, a pluralist community signifies a group of like-minded individuals whose adherence to a prescribed norm denotes an autonomous exertion of solidarity with a degree of singular variation. In this sense, a pluralist community also qualifies as anti-collectivist, given the fact that one's individual capacity for moral agency ought not to be overridden by representation, as this would only further obfuscate the distinction between "what actually is a 'real We' and what is not" (Loidolt 2016, 52). Unfortunately, due to the conceptual limitations of this contribution, I will not have the chance to explore this argument further. Instead, I will merely emphasize that neither a collective, understood as an aggregation of different individuals into a unified whole, nor a pluralist community, understood as a social unit, which holds fast onto the variability of its constituents, promote the type of social cohesion that rests on "emotional contagion and identification" (Ferran 2016, 225). Hence, the primary argument to be made, here, is that a mass functions "at the level of sensations," and, for this reason alone, lacks "ethos or responsibility" (ibid.).

To this point, numerous accounts of ethnic blame-casting that have been occurring throughout Europe and the U.S. only serve as additional proof of the ambiguities surrounding the collective solidarity narrative, given the fact that they mainly support a sensationalist form of solidarity, bound to internal autonomy. According to Aaltola:

> Epidemic encounters tend to involve situations where political legitimacy is contested and events contain a strong judgmental note. These legitimacy crises can easily be used to criticize the authorities or to construct alternative visions of a "healthier" sense of national cohesion. Such dramatic moments of judgement and legitimacy tend to come with a plot: They involve a fight by the presumed protagonist – often in the guise of the whole nation or even the international/global community – against the negative elements of perceived antagonism. The protagonists include such stock figures as watchful authorities, proactive doctors, efficient national and international health agencies, and politicians who 'did their job'. The disease and disease-causing agents, on the other hand, easily become associated with some ethnically, nationally or ideologically defined minority, non-vigilant authorities, and self-serving/corrupt politicians. (Aaltola 2020, 7)

For instance, during the SARS outbreak in 2003, many countries associated SARS with China or the ethnic Chinese. This happened because of the many stereotypical depictions of the Chinese as "secretive, closed, incompetent and somehow corrupt," which provided sufficient material for further propagating SARS as an exclusively Chinese virus. Not only that, SARS was also interpreted as a call "for domestic political reform in China," so that it could be "safely allowed into the mobility-based global system" (ibid., 9). A similar kind of narrative applies to the case of the COVID-19. Namely, during the beginning stages of the COVID-19 outbreak, many European countries, including the U.S., decided to restrict the entry of Chinese nationals, alongside those who resided in mainland China. However, unlike the case concerning SARS, these restrictions started to take the shape of a full-blown blame game, resulting in racist terms, such as the *Chinese Virus* or even *Kung Flu*, if we refer to Trump's insensitive choice of words. Another example of coronationalism occurred in Belgium. Belgium's global response to the COVID-19 pandemic caused a fair amount of discontent among the Flemish nationalist parties such as Vlaams Belang and the Flemish nationalist NVA, who denounced 450 million euro of "EU corona support" (Debuysere 2020, 5) meant for Morocco, even though the money in question was only a re-distribution of existing funds governed by the EU Neighbourhood Policy. However, given that Moroccans constitute the largest group of immigrants in Belgium, the denouncement of funds did not come as a surprise. As a consequence, various politicians were accused of xenophobia and racist bigotry, even though some would argue that their intentions were to protect Belgium's national interest. In Italy, for instance, the right-wing political parties put the blame on the refugees kept in the Sicilian detention centers, whereas in Germany, the popular consensus was that it is the Italians and Spaniards that are most culpable for the spreading of the virus, primarily because of poor health governance.

By drawing from these various occurrences, one can see a pattern between the nationalist narrative that supports an externally bound association between individuals, i.e., a mass, and the discriminatory acts of ethnic blame-casting.[1] The latter, in effect, represents the enaction of the negative relation between political co-option and health governance, either in the form of an unwarranted nationalist narrative or an upscaled sense of urgency and mass paranoia. As already stated above, the inward-bound inclination of political co-option causes a negative form of solidarity, which gives rise to underlying social antagonisms found in the ethnocentrically contrived narrative of efficient health governance. And in spite of particular differences between countries, primarily in terms of their political systems, the fact remains that representatives of such forms of solidarity "do not show self-consciousness"

1 The same applies to several spurious statements given by the spokesperson for the Slovenian crisis headquarters Jelko Kacin, namely, for instance, that public gatherings in Slovenia should not involve people with "different cultural and national backgrounds." Statements such as these paint an overall picture of the political climate in Central Europe, which has since 2015 fallen under the influence of a strong nationalist movement led by the likes of Viktor Orbán or Janez Janša. Orbán has even stated, in one of his interviews, that in spite of being under continuous scrutiny by "Brussels' bureaucrats," who accuse him of using the COVID-19 crisis for political gains, sooner or later, all EU state members will take up Hungary's "well-conceived system," which is designed to regulate the transit of those with a different nationality.

(Ferran 2016, 225), which inevitably hampers the capability of expressing solidarity toward anyone located outside the preconceived social frame, either that of nationality or of ethnic origin. In fact, the boundaries with the other "are essentially blurred" (ibid.) within a mass-produced sense of public safety, which is perhaps one of the main reasons why the talk of national autonomy seems to be prevalent in the times of a pandemic crisis.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, let us return to the initial questions. How does a political narrative that supports inward containment influence the dynamic of collective cohesion? Does it actually succeed in prescribing social distance as a necessary normative restriction, or does it further intensify mass panic and alternate forms of negative solidarity? The answer to the first question can be gleaned from the subject matter of this contribution. It was stated that unlike a more open-ended solidarity narrative, the sort of social cohesion that functions exclusively within a preconceived sense of national autonomy, that is to say, inwardly, can, on the one hand, help constrain the spread of disease. However, as a byproduct of its exclusivist narrativity, it can also cause negative solidarity, wherein the distinction between *them* and *us* becomes prevalent, even if the cause for this distinction cannot be seen by the naked eye. According to Aaltola, "co-option and pretense are one of the leading ways a state can use the outbreak of a lethal infectious disease" as a political excuse "for politically motivated actions," such as "restrictive manoeuvring or economic sanctions" (Aaltola 2020, 12). An epidemic can "enable states to divert people's anxiety and frustrations away from its own actions or lack of action," and also use it "to justify its actions against perceived threatening elements" (ibid.) such as foreign nationalities, ethnic groups, or illegal immigrants. The answer to the second question inhabits the same ambiguity as the first one. On the one hand, social distancing is indeed a prescribed norm, which, to a certain extent, advocates an obligation or a sense of duty toward fellow man. On the other hand, however, if it is politically co-opted, then the outcome becomes the opposite of what social distancing is supposed to represent. Instead of prescribing a health measure meant to constrain the fear of contagion as well as the contagion itself, it becomes the means of its further intensification.

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Zrenje v masko kot pogled v končnost

Strah pred krizo kot strah pred smrtjo in sodobni stoicizem

Zmago Švajncer Vrečko

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Aškerčeva cesta 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia

zmago.svajncer@gmail.com

Povzetek

V članku govorimo o vrednosti (antične) filozofije v krizi (COVID-19), ki spomni na eksistencialno dejstvo smrti, zaradi česar se ji ljudje želijo izogniti in nočejo upoštevati varnostnih ukrepov, kakor je, denimo, (pravilno) nošenje mask, s katerimi bi lahko zaščitili življenja. Ne želijo si konca bivanja, a je ta, paradoksalno, bližje zaradi njihove neodgovornosti. Mark Avrelij, ki je živel med epidemijo, piše o tem, kako se spoprijeti s strahom pred smrtjo. Predstavimo sodobni stoicizem in spoštovanje Avrelijeve filozofije v današnjem času ter predlagamo – čeprav postavimo zoper predlog tudi nekatere protiargumente –, da lahko človeku v krizi koristi stoiški nauk, s katerim si prizadeva premagati strah pred smrtjo oziroma, v prenesenem pomenu, krizo ter postane bolj preudaren in odgovoren, namesto da upošteva svoje metafizično-etične zakone, ki so lahko zanj tudi škodljivi. Po stoicizmu je spoprijetje s strahom pred smrtjo človekova moralna odgovornost, saj lahko, nasprotno, izgubi etičnost v obdobju krize človečnosti.

Ključne besede: COVID-19, Mark Avrelij, sodobni stoicizem, strah pred smrtjo, kriza.

Gazing at Masks as Staring into Finality. The Fear of Crisis, as Fear of Death, and Modern Stoicism

Abstract

In the article, we discuss the value of (ancient) philosophy in crisis (COVID-19), reminiscent of the existential fact of death, which makes people want to avoid the crisis and not follow safety measures, such as the (proper) wearing of masks to protect lives. They do not want the end of their being, but it comes, paradoxically, even closer because of irresponsibility. Marcus Aurelius, who lived during an epidemic, writes about how to deal with the fear of death. We present modern Stoicism and respect for Aurelius' philosophy in today's times, and suggest—although we also put forward some counter-arguments against the suggestion—that a person in crisis can benefit from the Stoic doctrine and with it seek to overcome the fear of death or, in a figurative sense, the fear of crisis, as well as become more prudent and responsible instead of following their own metaphysical-ethical laws, which may also be harmful to themselves. According to Stoicism, overcoming the fear of death is a person's moral responsibility as otherwise their ethicality can be lost in the time of a crisis of humanity.

Keywords: COVID-19, Marcus Aurelius, modern stoicism, the fear of death, crisis.

Dandanes živimo v času kriz, od krize bolezni COVID-19 – v razpravi jo jemljemo resno, kot dejansko nevarno situacijo, ki lahko ogrozi naša življenja in morda celo povzroči smrt –, do okoljske, begunske, politične krize in tako naprej. Kriza je tisti pojav, ki lahko v ljudeh prebudi občutja groze, stiske in nemoči. Mnogo filozofov je pisalo o tem, kako je človeka strah smrti, od antičnih v zahodni filozofiji do nekaterih filozofov v azijskih filozofsko-religijskih tradicijah. Mark Avrelij (121–180), stoiški filozof in rimski cesar, je prav tako deloval v času smrtonosne bolezni, antoninske kuge (prim. Gilliam 1961). V rokopisu mu namenjamo veliko pozornosti. O njem pomemben raziskovalec zgodovine filozofije, Giovanni Reale, pravi, da je udejanjal cesarsko oblast z globokim stoiškim občutjem dolžnosti, nikoli ni občutil ne pijanosti ne veselja ob tem, da opravlja najvišjo nalogo, kar jih je na svetu, ter je črpal energijo iz stoiške vere in znal resnično udejanjati cesarsko oblast kot služenje drugim (Reale 2002b, 106). V sentencah in premišljevanjih, ki jih je sestavljal tudi med vojaškimi pohodi ter niso bili namenjeni objavi (ibid.) in jih danes poznamo v slovenščini pod imenom *Dnevnik cesarja Marka Avrelija*, zapiše:

> Kdor se smrti boji, ga je strah, da ne bo ničesar več čutil, ali pa da bo na drugačen način čutil. Toda če človek ničesar več ne čuti, tudi hudega ne more čutiti; če pa dobi drug način čutenja, postane drugačno bitje in ne neha živeti. (Avrelij 1988, 115)

Ameriški klasični filolog in prevajalec *Dnevnika* oziroma *Meditacij* (*Meditations*), kar je bolj uveljavljen naslov v tujini, Gregory Hays, trdi, da je v tem filozofskem delu močno poudarjeno dejstvo človeške umrljivosti (Hays 2003, xlii). Avrelij neprestano ponavlja, da se ni treba bati smrti, saj je nekaj naravnega in zgolj ena od mnogo sprememb. Po drugi strani je lahko tudi najpomembnejša uteha, kot pravi Hays (ibid.), v čemer je mogoče videti protislovje med pripisovanjem različnih pomenov smrti. Avrelij pravi:

> Pri vsakem delu se vprašaj: V kakšnem razmerju je to delo do mene? Ali se ga ne bom nemara kesal? Še malo in mrtev bom in vsemu bo konec. Moje delo je delo umnega družabnega bitja, ki ima iste zakone z bogom [*lógos*]: česa naj torej še iščem? (Avrelij 1988, 104)

Poudarek na ničevosti in nepomembnosti vsakodnevnih dejavnosti se pri Avreliju ujema s splošno idejo o minljivosti vseh reči. Te se namreč lahko spreminjajo, propadejo in so zapisane pozabi (Hays 2003, xlii). Podobne ideje o strahu pred smrtjo je opaziti tudi v budistični filozofiji, ki jo raziskovalci radi primerjajo s stoiško. M. O'C. Walshe v študiji z naslovom *Buddhism and Death* zapiše, da je strah pred smrtjo – *abhiniveśa*: nagonska navezanost na življenje in strah pred smrtjo (Milčinski 2003, 17) – v budizmu razumljen kot nepopolno stanje uma. Človeku s tem strahom kot tudi drugim ljudem z drugačnimi strahovi in nepopolnimi stanji duha lahko pomagajo budistični nauki (Walshe 1978, 1). Strah pred smrtjo je v skladu z budistično filozofijo univerzalen (ibid., 5). Prvi korak na poti premagovanja tega strahu je sprejetje dejstva, da se bomo ponovno rodili, sčasoma pa moramo potem počasi premagovati tudi navezanost na ponovno rojstvo (ibid., 10). Poglavitni cilj budistične filozofije je, da naj bi vsa bitja prišla do poslednje *nirvāṇe*, ugasnitve, stanja osvoboditve ali razsvetljenja, ki človeka osvobaja trpljenja, smrti in ponovnih rojevanj kot tudi vseh svetnih navezanosti (Milčinski 2003, 64). Strah pred smrtjo pa še bolj okrepi svetno navezanost na telo ter vsakodnevno življenje in tako preprečuje posameznikovo doseganje *nirvāṇe*.

Ta strah je eden izmed naših temeljnih strahov oziroma, v skladu z določenimi filozofijami, recimo, Avrelijevo in budistično, čeprav so med njima seveda velike teoretske razlike, morda celo najbolj temeljen. O podobnem pišejo tudi nekateri psihoanalitiki in psihoanalitičarke, na primer oče psihoanalize, Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), ki trdi, da ljudem lahko strah pred smrtjo preprečuje, da bi v življenju znali uživati (Freud 1959, 203), in da močno vlada v njih, pogosteje, kot se ga zmorejo zavedati (Freud 1918, II), ali Melanie Klein (1882–1960), ki pravi, da je strah pred smrtjo tisti, ki ljudem povzroča največ skrbi (Blass 2014, 613). V budistični in stoiški filozofiji se omenjajo nekatere *(filozofske) vaje*, s katerimi se lahko ta strah premaguje.[1] Ena izmed pomembnih tehnik je vživljanje v to, kako je umreti, kar lahko omogoči, da so ljudje manj navezani na tukajšnje življenje. Avrelij pravi:

1 Za več o tem v budistični filozofiji prim. LeRoy Perreira (2010).

> Kakor da si že mrtev in si le do danes živel, moraš preživeti ostanek življenja, ki ga imaš za nameček, v skladu z naravo [*lógos*]. (Avrelij 1988, 100)

Učitelj *rinzai zen* budizma, Shidō Bunan (1603–1676), izreče podobne besede:

> Umri, ko si še živ, in bodi popolnoma mrtev.
> Potem počni, karkoli boš želel – vse bo dobro. (LeRoy Perreira 2010, 248)

Zaradi strahu pred smrtjo morda ne zmoremo preudarno delovati v času različnih kriznih situacij, zavoljo tega pa je še bolj ogroženo naše življenje in življenje drugih ljudi. O zavedanju strahu pred smrtjo v krizi piše tudi sodobni filozof Simon Critchley, ki pravi, da se je bolezen COVID-19 ukoreninila v strukturo naše resničnosti: povsod je mogoče videti bolezen, a je obenem nevidna, ne poznamo je še dovolj in je ne znamo zdraviti (Critchley 2020). Critchley s sklicevanjem na nekatere pomembne filozofe, med drugimi tudi na Michela de Montaigna, pravi, da nas strah pred našim izničenjem zasužnji, najti uteho v filozofiji pa pomeni, da prenehamo zanikovati smrt ter se pogumno in realistično spoprimemo s tesnobno situacijo (ibid.).

Spoprijem s tem ali podobnimi strahovi je, kot lahko vidimo, izjemno težka naloga. Filozof Dean Komel trdi, da pričnemo zaradi strahu begati v mislih in spreleti nas neugodje (Komel 2019, 132). Strah nam ne pusti misliti, v tistem trenutku pa imamo lahko pred očmi opomin Martina Heideggra, češ da »je najpomiselnejše *v našem* pomisljivem času to, da še ne mislimo« (Heidegger 2017, 11). Komel trdi, da dandanes ne gre za kako premagovanje ustrahovalnega, marveč zgolj za odvračanje vseh možnih strahov, za kar imamo na voljo tudi dovolj sredstev (Komel 2019, 132). Vendar se ravno v tem »puščanju navzven in navznoter nečesa v nas« oblikuje zmožnost misliti, ki jo zajemamo kot možnost »razumevanja in sporazumevanja« (ibid.).

Zaradi strahu pred smrtjo želimo krizo morda odmisliti in se raje posvetiti drugim rečem, saj se nikakor nočemo spoprijeti z bivanjskim dejstvom smrti, po drugi strani pa se lahko, paradoksalno, zaradi tega znajdemo v stiski, še bolj ogroženi in bliže smrtni nevarnosti, saj zavoljo bežanja pred eksistencialnim dejstvom *krize-smrti* v danem položaju tudi ne ukrepamo tako, da bi zaščitili življenja. Lucij Anej Seneka (ok. 4 pr. n. št.–65 n. št.), veliki stoiški filozof, trdi, kako večini ljudi ni ljubo, da so smrtni in da njihovo življenje traja le kratek čas, s tem pa se ne želijo sprijazniti:

> Večina smrtnikov, moj Pavlin, se pritožuje nad zlohotnostjo narave, ker prihajamo na svet le za kratek trenutek večnosti, ker nam odmerjeni čas poteče tako hitro, tako bliskovito, da življenje vse ljudi, razen drobne peščice, zapusti, ko so šele sredi priprav nanj. […] Nimamo malo časa, temveč smo ga veliko zapravili. (Seneka 2015, 91)

Podobne besede navede še en prepoznaven stoik, Epiktet (55–ok. 135), ki je precejšen del življenja preživel kot sužen. V njegovih besedah je mogoče še bolj očitno videti stoiški odnos do minljivosti. O smrti med drugim zapiše:

> Kakor pa stvari stojijo sedaj, le pretehtaj, ali bi zmogli prenesti, ko bi nam kdo v ječi rekel: »Hočeš, da ti preberem hvalnico?« »Zakaj me nadleguješ? Mar ne veš, v kakšni nesreči sem? Kaj sploh morem v takšnem položaju?« »V kakšnem položaju?« »V smrt grem.« No in? So mar drugi ljudje nesmrtni? (Epiktet 2001, 34)

Stoiku se, skratka, zdi popolnoma nesmiselno to, da nočemo premišljevati o smrti, se je bojimo in jo imamo za nesrečo. Morda je to izogibanje razmisleku o njej ravno razlog, da med krizo COVID-19 ne upoštevamo določenih vladnih ukrepov, na primer varne razdalje, (pravilnega) nošenja mask in odgovornega razkuževanja. Vendar bi lahko kritiki na to odgovorili, da je morebiti dobro, da ne upoštevamo ukrepov, ki jih predpisuje vlada, saj morda sploh ne gre za krizo, ki bi tako močno ogrožala naša življenja, in vlada morebiti pretirava z določenimi varnostnimi ukrepi.

Znanstveniki so do sedaj pridobili že precej informacij o virusu SARS-CoV-2 oziroma bolezni COVID-19 in ugotovili, da gre za resno bolezen, zato bi bilo vendarle dobro upoštevati določene vladne ukrepe, med njimi ukrep (pravilnega) nošenja mask. V nasprotnem primeru bi se lahko namreč zgodilo, da bi zaradi veliko okuženih prišlo do preobremenitve zdravstvenega sistema, kar bi morda celo pomenilo, da bi zdravniki odločali o tem, kateri okuženi posameznik bo deležen intenzivne nege, ki bi ga lahko obdržala pri življenju, in kateri je ne bi bil deležen, na primer zaradi starosti ali pridruženih bolezni, kot se je to zgodilo v Italiji na začetku izbruha virusa (prim. Lintern 2020). V primeru, da bi do tega prišlo tudi v Sloveniji, čeprav vsekakor upamo, da se to ne bo zgodilo, ostaja odprto vprašanje, ali bi bili zgolj zdravniki poklicani za reševanje te problematike glede življenja in smrti ali pa bi v razpravi morali sodelovati tudi filozofi (medicinske in druge etike). Brez njih namreč v tako skrajnih situacijah skoraj ne bi šlo. Spoštovanje nekaterih razumnih oziroma premišljenih vladnih ukrepov, s katerimi nas oblast želi zaščititi, je torej koristno v epidemiološki situaciji, v kakršni smo se znašli; vsekakor pa so v demokraciji poglavitnega pomena ukrepi, ki so utemeljeni na znanosti, jasno predstavljeni in konsistentni. Za vlado v demokratičnem sistemu, ki ne upošteva najsodobnejših znanstvenih raziskav in ljudem laže, bi težko rekli, da je dobra in preudarna, zlasti ne v kriznih situacijah.

Eden izmed možnih načinov, kako se torej spoprijeti s strahom pred smrtjo in ga posledično tudi zmanjšati, ker nam ni vseeno za življenja ljudi, je, da sprejmemo smrt kot dejstvo, kot nekaj naravnega in nekaj, kar se bo zgodilo v bližnji ali daljni prihodnosti. Avrelij glede tega pravi:

> Če bi kateri od bogov dejal, da moraš jutri ali najkasneje pojutrišnjem umreti, se menda ne boš kdo ve kako krčil, češ da rajši pojutrišnjem kakor jutri, razen če si popoln strahopetec. Saj koliko pa je razlike v času? Prav tako si misli, da je enako, ali imaš še leta in leta pred seboj ali pa se tvoje ure že jutri iztečejo. (Avrelij 1988, 66)

V skladu s stoiškim naukom je pomembno, da zmoremo sprejeti določene stvari, tudi take, ki bi jih najraje postavili na stranski tir. V današnjem času pa se človek ne počuti več primoranega upoštevati določenih metafizično-etičnih (religioznih) pravil in zakonov (posameznih naukov). Ima se za svobodno bitje, na kar je v veliki meri vplivalo obdobje razsvetljenstva. Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) v spisu »Odgovor na vprašanje: Kaj je razsvetljenstvo?« zagovarja pomembnost uporabe uma, »s čimer pridemo ven iz svoje nedoletnosti, ki smo je krivi sami« (Kant 1987, 9), postanemo bolj svobodni in ne verujemo več slepo vsemu, kar slišimo, na primer duhovnikovim besedam, ki nam omejujejo svobodo (ibid., 10). Kljub temu si je človek primoran začrtati lastno življenjsko pot in živeti svoje življenje na način, kot ga, kolikor je to le mogoče, določi sam. V tem pogledu je ustvarjalec določenih metafizično-etičnih struktur in pravil, znotraj katerih in po katerih lažje osmišlja svoje življenje, čeprav si jih morda večino časa niti ne ozavesti do konca ali pa sploh ne ter jih sprejema neupravičeno in včasih tudi nerazumno.

Po drugi strani posamezniku ne uide tudi sprejetje, upoštevanje in sledenje različnim pravilom, ki so jih oblikovali drugi ljudje, najsi gre za posamezna družbena, kulturna, politična, etična in mnoga druga pravila, čeprav si tega ne želi priznati, saj se ima morda za popolnoma neodvisnega posameznika. Tudi stoiški modrec, ki deluje v skladu z *lógosom* oziroma naravo in je pri tem svoboden, še zmeraj deluje v skladu z njim, zato bi lahko rekli, da se njegovo življenje uvršča v posamezni eksistenčni okvir, ki ga določajo specifični zakoni

lógosa. Avrelij, recimo, pravi, kako lahko dosežemo svobodo, če sledimo bogu oziroma *lógosu*, a še zmeraj opravljamo svoje dolžnosti in smo mu pokorni:

> Narava [*lógos*] te ni tako trdno spojila s telesno gmoto, da bi se ne mogel omejiti na samega sebe in s svojimi močmi opravljati svojih dolžnosti. Kaj lahko je namreč postati božji mož, ne da bi kdo za to vedel. Misli zmerom na to, obenem pa ne pozabi, da je za blaženo življenje le zelo malo potrebno! In četudi nimaš več upanja, da postaneš kdaj prida dialektik in naravoslovec, se zato menda ne boš odpovedal možnosti, da ostaneš svoboden in skromen in družaben in bogu [*lógos*] poslušen človek. (Avrelij 1988, 102)

Čeprav je stoik po eni strani svoboden, saj mu življenje, ki sprejema zakone *lógosa*, to omogoči, bi lahko zaradi tega, ker ima na voljo zgolj dve možnosti, bodisi da spoštuje zakone *lógosa*, bodisi da jih ne spoštuje, rekli, da je v obeh primerih primoran upoštevati eno ali drugo obliko življenja, kar mu v nekem smislu spet onemogoči popolno svobodo. Tako mu ni omogočeno, da mu ne bi bilo treba upoštevati določenih zakonov, bodisi torej zakone *lógosa* bodisi življenjska pravila, ki tega ne upoštevajo. Kljub temu ima *lógos* še zmeraj zadnjo besedo o tem, kako bodo potekale stvari v eksistenci, saj se vse ravna po njem, ker je ontološko počelo kozmosa (Reale 2002a, 262).

Filozofska ideja, ki jo želimo poudariti in v kateri izhajamo iz navedenih stališč, ni daleč od dogajanja v današnjem času po svetu, saj jo potrjujejo nekateri primeri filozofije v praksi oziroma praktične filozofije. Trdimo, da bi lahko človek v krizni situaciji sprejel metafizično-etične nauke, pravila in načela določene filozofije, ker bi mu lahko morda pomagala zmanjšati njegov strah pred smrtjo oziroma – v prenesenem pomenu – krizo.[2] S tem bi se morebiti izognil temu, da izoblikuje in sprejema katerakoli metafizično-etična načela, ki lahko morda naredijo več škode kot dobrega oziroma ga pripravijo, da v krizni situaciji ostane pasiven. S takšno idejo želimo predvsem poudariti, da bi ga sprejetje določene pozicije napravilo bolj preudarnega v kaotični situaciji, in sicer zaradi zmanjšanega strahu pred smrtjo oziroma krizo, zaradi česar bi lahko med drugim tudi s spoštovanjem upravičenih in na znanosti utemeljenih ukrepov vlade zaščitil svoje življenje in življenja drugih. Naša ideja se nanaša na dejansko dogajanje v času sodobne svetovne epidemiološke situacije. O tem podrobneje spregovorimo v nadaljevanju. Tukaj si lahko postavimo tudi pomembno filozofsko vprašanje, ali je sploh mogoče zavestno sprejeti določeno metafizično-etično pozicijo.

To je namreč težko, saj morajo za to, da jih lahko sprejme, človeka določene ideje *eksistencialno nagovoriti* oziroma jim mora *dovoliti, da ga nagovorijo*, po drugi strani pa lahko pomeni sprejem določene pozicije tudi verovanje v njeno neomajnost – odnos med verovanjem v nekaj in sprejetjem racionalnih argumentov, zakaj to upoštevati, pa je zanimiv in težek filozofski problem, preveč obširen za podroben prikaz v članku. Glede tega lahko morda povemo to, da je v krizni oziroma vsesplošno kaotični situaciji velikokrat tako, da je ogrožen človek postavljen pred dejstvo strašljive situacije, ki od njega zahteva, da nekaj hitro ukrene, saj bo v nasprotnem primeru verjetno, da bo izgubil boj v težkem družbenem stanju.[3] Če poskušamo to aplicirati na našo idejo, ki se na

2 Ne smemo pozabiti dejstva, da gre različne strahove zmanjšati tudi z umetniškim udejstvovanjem (prim, denimo, Švajncer Vrečko 2020, 189).

3 Znan psihiater in začetnik logoterapije, Viktor E. Frankl (1905–1997), v knjigi *Kljub vsemu reci življenju da* opisuje, kako je bil v koncentracijskih taboriščih prisiljen nekaj narediti, najti nekakšen smisel v neznosnem trpljenju in ohraniti upanje, ki sta mu

določen način ujema tudi s sodobnim dogajanjem v svetu: človek se bo bodisi na specifični ravni pripravljen zavedati svojega strahu pred smrtjo oziroma krizo in bo tako pripravljen tudi nekaj ukreniti glede tega, recimo, sprejeti metafizično-etično pozicijo, ki bi mu vsaj v krizni situaciji pomagala prebroditi težko stanje in preprečiti, da bi s svojim vedenjem, med drugim neupoštevanjem varnostnih ukrepov, povzročil izgubo življenj; bodisi tega ne bo storil, se bo še naprej vedel malomarno, živel v skladu s svojimi (v tem času morda neustreznimi) metafizično-etičnimi prepričanji ter mogoče okužil koga izmed ljudi in povzročil njihovo ali svojo smrt, smrt, ki se je tako strašansko boji.

V krizni situaciji je torej morda zanimivo to, da se človek, ki je popolnoma obupan, zaradi neznanske *bivanjske nemoči* velikokrat odloči, da bo sprejel določeno metafizično-etično pozicijo, četudi ni natančno pretehtal vseh argumentov zanjo. Do tega pride nemalokrat ravno zaradi tega, ker bi (se) rad (od)rešil oziroma bi rad zaščitil tudi druge ljudi, kar se, podobno, dogaja prav tako danes, čeprav ne gre pozabiti dejstva, da veliko ljudi v težkih situacijah izgubi zaupanje v določene eksistencialne (religiozne) ideje, ki bi jim pomagale prebroditi krizo.[4] V članku se poskušamo navezati na prvo točko in pokažemo primer, kako se to dogaja v sodobnosti s človekom in zaupanjem v antično filozofijo.

Vprašanje, ki je na tej točki pomembno, je prav tako, katero metafizično-etično teorijo sploh sprejeti, saj lahko nekatere delujejo proti človekovemu dobremu življenju in temu, da bi mu zares pomagale postati bolj preudaren v času krize, kot se je na primer zgodilo v znanem primeru množičnega samomora v gvajanskem Jonestownu pod vodjo Jima Jonesa, ko je umrlo več kot 900 ljudi, med katerimi si jih je veliko vzelo svoja življenje zaradi njegovih naukov (Richardson 1980, 240). S širšega vidika zajema ta problematika tudi vprašanje, katero teorijo ali filozofijo z določenimi zakoni in pravili

pomagala prebroditi mučne čase (prim. Frankl 2016). Sicer mu verjetno ne bi uspelo preživeti, kot ni uspelo tudi mnogim njegovim sojetnikom, ki so izgubili vsakršno vero v odrešenje od trpljenja v taborišču (ibid.).

4 V koncentracijskem taborišču Mauthausen, Avstriji, so bile na steno zaporniške celice izklesane besede: »Wenn es einen Gott gibt muß er mich um Verzeihung bitten [Če Bog obstaja, mora on mene prositi za odpuščanje]« (Lassley 2015, 1). Za več o tem, kako je veliko Judov med 2. sv. vojno ali po njej izgubilo svojo vero, prim. celoten navedeni članek.

sploh upoštevati, da bi nam omogočila živeti lažje in bolj smiselno življenje. Filozofskih raziskav takšnih vprašanj in odgovorov ne gre zanemariti, sploh ne v kriznem času, saj so izjemnega pomena za mnogo (ranljivih) posameznikov. Vendar se je mogoče glede tega tudi vprašati, zakaj ne bi mogla biti človekova lastna metafizično-etična pravila v času krize bolj koristna kot ideje določene uveljavljene metafizično-etične filozofije. Njegove lastne ideje bi mu lahko morda pomagale postati bolj preudaren, kakor da bi upošteval ideje katere druge teorije, ki bi ogrozila njegovo življenje (prim. npr. Richardson 1980).

Posamezniku bi morda njegovi metafizično-etični zakoni zapovedovali, da ostane pasiven in v kriznem času ne naredi ničesar, kar bi lahko bolj koristilo temu, da bi zaščitil določene ljudi, kakor če bi deloval na kakršenkoli drugačen način, ki bi ga v tem primeru priporočale ustaljene teorije. Če bi, recimo, želel aktivno upoštevati zlato pravilo, ki se v pozitivni obliki glasi: stori drugemu tisto, za kar želiš, da bi drugi storil tebi. Morda bi želel ljudem, ki mu veliko pomenijo in trpijo za COVID-19, zmanjšati trpljenje in jim nekako stati ob strani, a bi se mu obenem vendarle zdelo, da se z varnostnimi ukrepi nekoliko pretirava, zato ne bi zahteval, da nosijo drugi v njegovi bližini maske, tega pa tudi sam ne bi počel v stiku z njimi. Ker bi okuženi bolniki upoštevali njegovo odločitev in ne bi bili primerno zaščiteni, bi tudi sam podlegel okužbi in morebiti izgubil življenje, s čimer bi se njegovo upoštevanje zlatega pravila izkazalo za neučinkovito in bi bilo mogoče v tem primeru bolje, če bi ostal pasiven, se zato posledično ne bi okužil in bi preživel, preživeli pa bi tudi ljudje, ki so zanj pomembni, četudi ne bi bili deležni njegove tolažbe.

Kljub navedenim protiargumentom je vredno preučiti, kako bi lahko človeku v kriznem času koristila antična filozofija, torej filozofija, ki ima svoje metafizično-etične zakone. V nadaljevanju poskušamo prikazati nekatere izmed možnih (proti)argumentov za našo filozofsko idejo, pokazati na vrednost (antične) filozofije v času krizne situacije in jo konstruktivno kritično ovrednotiti, poleg tega pa predlagamo in konstruktivno analiziramo metafizično-etično stoiško filozofijo Marka Avrelija, ki smo jo že delno predstavili in v skladu s katero bi si lahko posameznik začel (vsaj začasno) uravnavati svoje življenje in učinkoviteje zaščitil življenja, ki so mu dragocena, kar se, podobno, po svetu tudi dogaja z razcvetom akademske in neakademske filozofije (v praksi) – sodobnega stoicizma.

Sodobni stoicizem in množičen pojav spoštovanja filozofije Marka Avrelija v krizi COVID-19

V današnjem času postaja tako med akademsko izobraženimi kot neizobraženimi ljudmi čedalje bolj popularna filozofija stoicizma. Govorimo lahko o sodobnem stoicizmu, gibanju, ki skuša oživiti tradicionalne stoiške nauke ter jih aplicirati na sodobno dogajanje v svetu in na to, kako si lahko človek v skladu z njimi kroji svojo življenjsko pot. Nekateri izmed akademskih predstavnikov so: Massimo Pigliucci, Martha Nussbaum, Christopher Gill, že preminuli Lawrence C. Becker in številni drugi. Na internetu je mogoče najti na primer spletno stran *Daily Stoic*, na kateri se nahajajo različne misli posameznih stoiških filozofov, mnogo »filozofskih vaj« in ponudba različnih izdelkov, ki se jih da kupiti (glejte Daily Stoic 2020), v čemer je mogoče videti, kako nekateri s (tradicionalno stoiško) filozofijo služijo in jo prodajajo kot »sredstvo za samopomoč« v kapitalističnem neoliberalnem svetu. Na spletni strani *YouTube* je prav tako mogoče najti veliko videoposnetkov o stoiški filozofiji, takih, ki imajo tudi po več milijonov ogledov; med njimi sta na primer videoposnetka dveh znanih filozofov, Alaina de Bottona (prim. The School 2018), ki vodi *Šolo življenja* (*The School of Life*), mednarodno uspešno šolo in podjetje, ki želi med ljudmi popularizirati filozofijo in druge znanosti, da bi jim s tem »pomagala« v njihovih življenjih in nekaj prav tako iztržila od njih, in že omenjenega Massima Pigliuccija, pripadnika šole sodobnega stoicizma, na mednarodno znani spletni strani *TED* (prim. TED-Ed 2017), ki izobražuje ljudi z različnimi pomembnimi vsebinami.

Pigliucci v svoji knjigi zapiše, da je ena najpomembnejših idej, ki so jih imeli tako stoiki kot tudi tisti filozofi, ki jim je stoiška filozofija dajala navdih, na primer Montaigne, zagotavljanje, da je poglavitna korist filozofije v tem, da nam dobro razloži, kakšen je naš položaj, v katerem se nahajamo, in nas nauči, kako živeti na čim boljši način in sprejeti dejstvo, da se nam ni treba bati smrti (Pigliucci 2017, pogl. 11). S tem bi se v celoti strinjali tudi epikurejci, ki so bili veliki nasprotniki stoikov (ibid.). Pigliucci trdi naslednje:

> Kljub svoji izvirnosti ima stoicizem veliko stičišč z drugimi filozofijami, religijami (budizmom, daoizmom, judaizmom in

> krščanstvom) in sodobnimi gibanji, kot sta na primer sekularni humanizem in etična kultura. Kot nereligioznemu človeku je zame nekaj zares privlačnega na taki ekumenski filozofiji, ki si lahko deli cilje in nekatera splošna stališča z drugimi velikimi svetovnimi etičnimi tradicijami. […] Stoiku v resnici ni pomembno, ali razumemo *lógos* kot Boga ali Naravo, nadvse pomembno pa je zanj spoznanje, da je človeško življenje, ki ga je vredno živeti, tisto, v katerem človek uri svoj značaj in skrbi za druge ljudi (ter naravo samo), hkrati pa uživa v čisti – vendar ne fanatični – nenavezanosti na materialne dobrine. (Pigliucci 2017, pogl. 1)

Podobnost stoiškega nauka z drugimi filozofijami in religijami, trdi Pigliucci, pomaga tudi religioznim ljudem, da se lažje oddaljijo od škodljivih fundamentalizmov, ki pestijo sodobno zgodovino (Pigliucci 2017, pogl. 1). Avtorica, ki se v sodobnih časih ukvarja s preučevanjem stoiške filozofije, je prav tako že omenjena Martha Nussbaum. V predgovoru k novi izdaji knjige *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* pravi:

> V zadnjih petnajstih letih sem veliko premišljevala in pisala o stoiškem kozmopolitizmu: ideji, ki nam sporoča, da je treba biti najgloblje zvest človeštvu kot celoti in da so drugi načini zvestobe (družini, mestu, državi …) na določen način omejeni s to prvo zvestobo. Ta ideja se pojavlja v različnih oblikah v stoiških in sodobnih besedilih. […] Zanimalo me je tudi, kakšen je vpliv tega zgodovinskega pogleda na Kanta, filozofa, ki sprejema obliko kozmopolitizma; Nietzscheja, čigar kritika samopomilovanja je utemeljena v stoiških normah; in na mnogo drugih mislecev, ki so imeli vpliv na očete Združenih držav Amerike. Istočasno sem zagovarjala prav tako obliko te ideje kot sodobne norme, in to v zvezi z debatami glede domoljubja, internacionalizma in narave liberalne vzgoje. (Nussbaum 2009, III.)

Tako Massimo Pigliucci kot Martha Nussbaum, za katera bi lahko rekli, da sta predstavnik in predstavnica sodobnega stoicizma, stoiško misel močno cenita in jo želita v svojih znanstvenih delih v kar najboljši luči predstaviti tako akademsko izobraženim ljudem kot splošni javnosti. Med drugim skušata pojasniti, kako velik vpliv je imel stoicizem v zgodovini filozofske tradicije na mnogo pomembnih filozofov.

Eden izmed zelo priljubljenih antičnih filozofov v sodobnem času je Mark Avrelij, ki je, kot smo že omenili, svoje filozofske ideje zapisoval v dnevniku. Njegova priljubljenost se je v času krize COVID-19 še povečala, saj je tudi on deloval in pisal med epidemijo, antoninsko kugo, ki je pobila veliko ljudi v rimskem cesarstvu (prim. Gilliam 1961). Eden izmed najpomembnejših britanskih medijev, *The Guardian*, je objavil članek, kako ljudem lahko pomaga Avrelij v času sodobne bolezni (prim. Robertson 2020). Tudi na spletni strani *YouTube* je mogoče najti veliko videoposnetkov, ki govorijo prav o tem in hvalijo Avrelija (prim. npr. Philosophies 2020). Ustrezna bi bila konstruktivno-kritična analiza sprejemanja njegove filozofije kot množičnega sodobnega pojava, s širšega vidika bi bila zanimiva tudi raziskava vrednosti antične filozofije kot »oblike samopomoči« za ljudi v današnjem času COVID-19, torej »samopomoči« v »pomoči potrebnem« modernem kapitalističnem svetu.

Eden prvotnih namenov filozofije je bil namreč ta, da je pomenila sredstvo za lažje, bolj razumno, svobodno in plemenitejše življenje, kar je mogoče videti v Avrelijevem pisanju in o čemer pišejo številni filozofi, izmed katerih je eden pomembnejših Pierre Hadot (1922–2010) (prim. Hadot 2009). Avrelij o bolezni, recimo, navede te besede:

> Zakaj razkroj duha je kuga, hujša kot okuženost in pokvarjenost ozračja, ki nas obdaja. Saj ta okužuje le živa bitja, kolikor so živa, ona pa človeka, kolikor je človek. (Avrelij 1988, 117)

In še to, kar se je naučil od Apolonija:

> Apolonij mi je odprl vrata v svobodo duha, ki pa imej čvrsto vklado v preudarnosti in si ne jemlji nikoli v ničemer drugega vodnika kot razum [*lógos*]. Dal mi je ključ do nespremenljive ravnodušnosti v bridkem trpljenju, ob izgubi otroka, v hudih boleznih. Bil je mojim očem živ zgled, da se utegne družiti v istem človeku izredna energija z veliko sproščenostjo. (Avrelij 1988, 36)

Do množičnega branja stoiške filozofije, predvsem filozofije v *Dnevniku*, prihaja morda tudi zaradi tega, ker akademsko neizobraženemu človeku ni kdove kako težko razumeti nekaterih osnovnih stoiških filozofskih idej, kljub temu da morebiti popolnoma ne razume metafizično-etične teorije, na kateri je stoicizem utemeljen, ki smo jo deloma že predstavili v študiji in jo še temeljiteje analiziramo v nadaljevanju. Klasični filolog Kajetan Gantar pravi, da se Avrelij sicer navezuje na dediščino, ki zajema vse bogastvo grške nravstvene filozofije od Heraklita in Demokrita do zadnjih izrastkov velikih in malih sokratskih šol, toda ob tem se čuti še posebej zavezanega eni izmed teh šol, in sicer stoicizmu (Gantar 1988, 13). Težko bi našli v antiki kako bolj raznovrstno filozofijo, kot je stoiška. V njej se srečujejo najbolj nasprotujoče si skrajnosti. Utemeljitelji stoe – Zenon, Kleantes in Hrisipos – so prišli iz semitskega Bližnjega vzhoda, zibelke velikih človeških religij. Zato ni nič čudnega, da so že na začetku poleg racionalističnih in materialističnih prvin vnesli v stoicizem tudi pridih nečesa mistično-religioznega (ibid.).

Gantar trdi, da je stoiška filozofija postala sčasoma številnim antičnim izobražencem nekakšno nadomestilo za usihajočo religijo (Gantar 1988, 14). Morda bi podobno lahko trdili tudi danes, le da ta filozofija ne nagovori zgolj izobraženca, temveč ravno tako akademsko neizobraženega človeka. V Rimu se je stoicizem v svojevrstni sintezi postopoma prepojil s starorimskim idealom možatosti in kreposti (*virtus*) in kot tak postal nekakšna rimska nacionalna ideologija (ibid.). Miselni svet cesarja Avrelija je globoko zasidran v stoicizmu, čeprav ima z njegovimi določenimi pojavnimi oblikami le malo skupnega. V njegovih zapiskih ni čutiti teže sistema, temveč življenjsko neposrednost in nevezanost. Asketska strogost do sebe, značilna za stoicizem, je ostala, toda strogost do drugih se je porazgubila in na njeno mesto je stopila vse razumevajoča in vse odpuščajoča človeška dobrota (ibid.).

V študiji želimo prikazati nekatere izmed možnih (proti)argumentov, zakaj bi bilo dobro sprejeti ali odkloniti filozofijo *Dnevnika*, kot se dogaja danes. Seveda nas mora Avrelijeva filozofija, da jo sploh lahko začnemo *spoštovati* oziroma *upoštevati*, v času krize *nagovoriti* – kot nagovarja prav tako mnoge ljudi po svetu, ki se, tudi zaradi vznika modernega stoicizma, o stoiški šoli čedalje bolj izobražujejo. S tem nam lahko morebiti koristi, da postanemo *pogumnejši*, kar je bil že ideal v starem Rimu, se spoprimemo s svojim strahom pred smrtjo oziroma, v prenesenem pomenu, krizo, ga omilimo in začnemo bolj preudarno delovati oziroma poskušati zavarovati življenja, in sicer predvsem z upoštevanjem določenih varnostnih ukrepov, denimo, ukrepa (pravilnega) nošenja mask.

Nekateri (proti)argumenti, zakaj v času krize sprejeti filozofijo Marka Avrelija

1. argument: Avrelij je deloval in razmišljal v času epidemiološke krize (prim. Gilliam 1961). V *Dnevniku* je mogoče opaziti njegovo pisanje o mnogo vrlinah, kar lahko morda pomeni, da je imel te vrline tudi sam. V času epidemije bi si tako pogumni in dobri želeli biti tudi mi, zato bomo spoštovali njegovo filozofijo.

Protiargument: Tudi veliko drugih filozofov je delovalo in pisalo v času različnih kriz, od epidemiološke do okoljske, vojne in tako naprej. Ni pravega razloga, zakaj bi filozofiji *Dnevnika* pripisali prednost, saj vam tudi oni lahko pomagajo postati bolj preudarni. Heidegger je prav tako živel v nemirnih časih, soočiti se je moral z obema svetovnima vojnama, a ni izgubil smisla za govor o človeškosti človeka, *biti tubiti* oziroma *najpomiselnejšem* v našem *pomisljivem času*, torej o tem, da še ne mislimo oziroma se ne ukvarjamo z *mislenjem* (Heidegger 2017, 18–19), če bi ga skušali tako doumeti, čeprav ga po drugi strani nikakor ne gre razumeti poenostavljeno. Filozof Dean Komel trdi, da je to *mislenje* določeno po lastni zadevi, ki ni lastnina tega ali onega prizadevanja, temveč prizadetost od zadeve same, zadeve, ki sicer nosi ime biti, vendar ni niti najmanjšega razloga, sploh pa ne duhovne nadebudnosti, da bi se z njo filozofsko ponašali (Komel 2018, 335). Heidegger je lahko torej filozof, s katerim bi se bilo vredno ukvarjati in ki bi vam lahko koristil morda celo bolj kot Avrelij.

2. argument: Avrelij piše o tem, kako je strah pred smrtjo zelo velik človekov strah, hkrati nam mislec ponudi tudi različne *filozofske vaje*, kako se s strahom spoprijeti in ga postopoma premagovati. Tako na primer zapiše:

> Navadno, toda uspešno sredstvo za preziranje smrti je v tem, da misliš na ljudi, ki so se dolgo krčevito oklepali življenja, in se vprašaš, kolikšno korist imajo pred drugimi, ki so zgodaj umrli. Vsi so že kje pod

> rušo. […] Ozri se rajši na brezno časa za seboj in na drugo brezno, ki je pred tabo, pa povej, kolikšen razloček je med takim, ki je živel tri dni, in drugim, ki je preživel tri rodove. (Avrelij 1988, 68)

Če želimo začeti delovati bolj preudarno in zaščititi določena življenja, potem smo se primorani v krizi spoprijeti s tem strahom, in *Dnevnik* je eden od filozofskih tekstov, ki nam lahko pri tem pomaga.

Protiargument: Strah vas je lahko enega pojava, to pa ne pomeni nujno, da se bojite tudi drugega. Strah vas je torej lahko krizne situacije COVID-19, a iz tega ne izhaja nujno, da vas je strah tudi smrti. Če berete *Dnevnik* zaradi tega, ker bi se radi znebili strahu pred smrtjo, kar bi po vaše pomenilo, da bi se s tem v prenesenem pomenu znebili tudi strahu pred krizo zaradi COVID-19, potem vam na podlagi povedanega, češ da vas je strah zgolj krize, ne pa tudi smrti, *Dnevnik* v času epidemiološkega kaosa morda ne bo najbolj koristil. Zmanjšali bi namreč zgolj strah pred smrtjo, ne pa tudi strahu pred krizo, in bi tako ostali v stanju duševne razdvojenosti.

3. argument: V *Dnevniku* je moč opaziti veliko besed o pomembnosti ohranjanja mirnega duha oziroma duševne pomirjenosti v težkih situacijah. Avrelij piše:

> Življenje ti lahko teče brez sile v duševnem spokojstvu, četudi vse po mili volji kriči zoper tebe, četudi zveri trgajo slabotne ude tvoje telesne odeve. Saj tvoje duše kljub temu nič ne ovira, da si ne bi ohranila spokojnosti, pravilne sodbe o svetu in zmožnosti, da z uspehom uporablja priložnosti, ki se ji ponujajo. (Avrelij 1988, 102)

Naučiti se želimo, kako doseči mirnega duha, zato spoštujemo nauke tega filozofskega dela, saj verjamemo, da nam lahko pri tem pomagajo.

Protiargument: Zakaj upoštevati prav filozofijo *Dnevnika*, če vam lahko pri tem morda celo bolj koristijo druge filozofije, med katerimi so na primer azijske filozofije, ki prav tako veliko govorijo o pomembnosti ohranjanja mirnega duha in opisujejo številne načine, kako ga doseči, celo veliko bolj natančno in na široko, kot to stori Avrelij, saj zajemajo precej več vsebine od *Dnevnika*. Filozofinja Maja Milčinski tako o filozofiji daoizma zapiše, da v skladu z njo idealnega človeka ne gre razumeti, kakor da ni le vedno pomirjen z vsem, pač pa njegov način življenja pomeni tudi življenje samo, resnico in pot sveta (Milčinski 2013, 85), kar je očitno pri daoističnem filozofu Zhuang Ziju, pri katerem lahko preberemo:

> Zato ima tisti z najvišjo modrostjo pregled tako nad daljnim kot bližnjim, tako da se mu majhno ne zdi nepomembno, veliko pa ne pomembno. […] S svojim pogledom prodira v preteklost in sedanjost, tako da za oddaljenostjo preteklega ne žaluje in brez neučakanosti uživa sedanjost, saj uvideva, da čas ne miruje. Raziskal je polnost in praznino, pa se zato ne veseli, če dobiva, niti ne žalosti, če izgublja, saj vidi, da trajnih delitev ni. Razumeva tudi ravno in uhojeno pot, pa zato ni niti vesel svojega rojstva niti nesrečen zavoljo svoje smrti, saj spoznava, da konca in začetka ni mogoče zadržati (Milčinski 2013, 85).

Nekateri (proti)argumenti, zakaj v času krize odkloniti filozofijo Marka Avrelija

1. argument: Avrelij je bil zloben vladar, saj je v svojem imperiju preganjal kristjane in jih dal mnogo pobiti. Če bomo spoštovali njegovo filozofijo, se nam zna hitro zgoditi, da bomo tudi sami počeli zlobna dejanja.

Protiargument: Avrelij je storil tudi mnogo dobrih dejanj. Teoretik Paul Keresztes v članku »Marcus Aurelius a Persecutor?« zapiše, da Avrelij ni bil neposredno odgovoren za pregon kristjanov v cesarstvu, saj naj bi bila za to v večini kriva razjarjena poganska množica, ki je kristjane med drugim okrivila tudi tega, da kot heretiki povzročajo zlo v imperiju, na primer napade drugih narodov in epidemijo (Keresztes 1968). Krščanski teolog in filozof Tertulijan (ok. 155–220) je imel Avrelija celo za zaščitnika kristjanov (ibid., 321), za njegov »sloves« kot preganjalca kristjanov pa so večinoma krivi sodobni zgodovinarji (ibid.).

2. argument: Njegovo filozofijo bi želeli sprejeti, a je, žal, ne moremo, saj se nam nekateri izmed njegovih naukov zdijo preveč preprosti in filozofsko neutemeljeni.

Protiargument: Kot smo povedali, je filozofija Avrelija utemeljena med drugim tudi na stoiški metafizično-etični teoriji. Gantar pravi, da so stoiki delili filozofijo na tri velike veje: logiko, fiziko in etiko (Gantar 1988, 15). Logika je bila zanje vrtna ograja, fizika je pomenila drevje na tem vrtu, etika pa sadje, ki ga to drevje rodi. Avrelij je to vrednotenje le še stopnjeval, in zato o logiki in sorodnih disciplinah (spoznavna teorija, dialektika, gramatika) v njegovih zapiskih skoraj ni besede; le iz samega njegovega stila, ostrih distinkcij med posameznimi pojmi, gradnje stavkov in zapovrstnosti misli lahko zaslutimo, da je to osnovno orodje slehernega misleca suvereno obvladal (ibid., 15–16). V oblikovanje človeka, v negovanje človeške esence v človeku, ki je po svoji energiji brezmejna, je usmerjeno vse Avrelijevo miselno prizadevanje. In tu se mu odpira najpomembnejše področje stoiške filozofije – etika –, ki vodi človeka k srečnosti. Bistvo srečnosti pa je, da človek živi usklajeno, in to v skladu z naravo [*lógos*], z razumsko božansko silo, ki biva v njem (ibid., 17).

3. argument: Avrelijeva filozofija je stoiška filozofija, ta pa je znana po tem, da spodbuja pasivnost. V krizni situaciji ne želimo biti pasivni, zato ne bomo sprejeli te filozofije.

Protiargument: Stoiška filozofija ima, kot je bilo rečeno, pomembno in vsebinsko utemeljeno etiko, ki vsekakor spodbuja tudi k delovanju. Gantar trdi, da je Avrelij velikokrat deloval zelo etično in skušal upoštevati stoiško filozofijo, po kateri te nobena stvar ne spravi iz ravnotežja, če deluješ v skladu z *lógosom*, in na podlagi katere lahko spoznaš enakost vseh ljudi (Gantar 1988, 18). Avrelij je to uresničeval tudi v načinu svojega vladanja, na kar kažejo zgodovinski viri, ki poročajo, da je velikokrat razsojal sužnjem v prid in olajšal postopek za osvoboditev sužnjev, pri čemer lahko vidimo, kako se je stoiška miselnost prepletala z Avrelijevimi državniškimi kompetencami in blagodejno vplivala na reševanje težavnih družbenih in političnih vprašanj (ibid., 19–20). Filozofski cesar tako nikakor ni bil pasiven, temveč se je trudil delovati etično tako v zasebnem kot javnem življenju. Sam pravi:

> Kaj hočeš namreč še več, če si človeku dobro storil? Mar ti ni že samo to dovolj, da si ravnal v skladu s svojo naravo [*lógos*]? […] Kakor so namreč udje zato ustvarjeni, da opravljajo po svojem ustroju svojo naravno službo, tako izvršuje tudi za dobrotljivost ustvarjeni človek – kadar stori dobro delo ali kako drugače pripomore do blaginje –, samo svoj naravni namen in ima že v tem samem svoje plačilo. (Avrelij 1988, 126)

Sklep

V članku smo želeli poudariti pomembnost filozofije in njene vloge, ki jo igra v različnih kriznih situacijah, predvsem v dobi COVID-19. Osmisliti smo želeli vrednost antične stoiške filozofije, in sicer zlasti filozofije Marka Avrelija, ki je tudi v današnjem času v uteho čedalje več tako akademsko izobraženim kot neizobraženim ljudem po svetu. Filozofija tako nikakor ni zastarela in neuporabna. V razpravi smo na podlagi sodobnega dogajanja predlagali, da bi bilo smiselno, da človek s pomočjo uveljavljene filozofije skuša zmanjšati in omiliti svoj strah pred smrtjo oziroma, v prenesenem pomenu, krizo, namesto da sledi svojim (nereflektiranim) metafizično-etičnim pravilom, ki lahko v nekaterih primerih morebiti naredijo več škode kot dobrega. V skladu s stoiško filozofijo bo s tem, ko bo poskušal premagati strah pred smrtjo, postal bolj *preudaren* in morda tudi *notranje močnejši*. Predvsem v kriznih situacijah, ki ga ravno spominjajo na smrt, je pomembno, da čim bolj učinkovito zaščiti svoje življenje in življenje drugih ljudi. Kljubovanje in strah pred določenimi varnostnimi ukrepi, recimo, ukrepom (pravilnega) nošenja mask, se lahko pojavita, saj, recimo, *maska kot poosebljena kriza* spomni človeka na morebitno smrt, zaradi česar se ji želi tako močno izogniti. *Zrenje v masko kot zrenje v krizo je tako morda pogled v lastno končnost*. Vendar po drugi strani, paradoksalno, ravno to neupoštevanje varnostnih ukrepov pomeni, da lahko s tem ogrozi še več življenj in se še bolj približa svojemu koncu.

Zoper naše ideje smo prav tako predlagali število protiargumentov, saj se zavedamo, da ne more naš predlog držati v vseh primerih. Kljub temu smo predlagali, da je to zgolj ena izmed možnih rešitev in nikakor ne edina, kako lahko človek v skladu s stoicizmom postane preudarnejši – o čemer so govorili že tradicionalni filozofi in kar postaja čedalje bolj priljubljeno – in skuša zaščititi življenja, ki mu veliko pomenijo. Čedalje več ljudi se dandanes namreč vrača k antični filozofiji. Na koncu članka pa se je mogoče vprašati, mar ne vlada ta strah pred smrtjo skoraj vedno, ko se znajde človek v krizni situaciji. Ali ne gre včasih morda tudi za občutenje *popolne človeške nemoči*, kot da sam ne zmore ničesar storiti, da bi lahko zmanjšal ali celo odpravil krizo? Kako se mora počutiti bangladeški deček, ves porezan od kovine, v strupenem blatu, na bangladeški obali, ko pomaga uničevati zastarele in neuporabne tovorne ladje iz mnogih razvitih držav ter posledično močno zastruplja okolje in je v nenehni smrtni nevarnosti?[5] Ali se lahko počuti, kot da so ga (ne)razvite države izdale? Ali se mu je smiselno opravičiti, ker smo sami del teh bolj ali manj (ne)razvitih držav, češ da nas je tako strah smrti in eksistencialne krize, v katero je zapadlo človeštvo, in da se počutimo tako nemočne, ker ne vemo, kje bi sploh lahko začeli reševati njegov obupen položaj oziroma obupen položaj, v katerem se je znašlo človeštvo z vsemi drugimi primeri izkoriščanja?

Morebiti naš članek ne analizira zgolj tega, da bi se bilo po stoicizmu dobro spoprijeti s strahom pred smrtjo in ga skušati premagati – morda je nekaj takšnega ravno nujno zavoljo preživetja etičnosti človeštva samega. Mark Avrelij, recimo, pravi, da se je teh reči naučil od Sevéra:

> Sevérus mi je dajal zgled prijaznosti do sorodnikov in ljubezni do resnice in pravičnosti. […] od njega imam pravilno pojmovanje o demokratski državi, kjer velja načelo popolne pravne enakosti in svobode govora, in o monarhiji, v kateri ima svoboda podložnikov večjo vrednost od česarkoli drugega. On mi je vsejal globoko in nespremenljivo spoštovanje do filozofije […]. (Avrelij 1988, 38)

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Medical Workers as the *Pharmakoi* of 2020

The Pandemic in Poland through a Girardian Lens

Paulina Sosnowska

University of Warsaw, Faculty of Education, Mokotowska 16/20, 00-561 Warsaw, Poland

psosnowska@uw.edu.pl

Abstract

The article is an attempt to read the new pandemic situation in the context of René Girard's thought. Unlike some other philosophical comments on the crisis, the author refrains from delivering the general philosophical assessment of the whole gamut of events on political, economic or biological levels. Instead, the purpose of the essay is to put some philosophical-cultural light on the singular, yet chilling phenomenon of extreme social reactions to medical staff in Poland. To fulfill this moderate promise, Girardian anthropological concepts are engaged. The analysis is supported by a historical-cultural description of the Greek institution of a *pharmakos* as a historical memory most apposite for intelligibility of the present. This opens up a wider context of the cultural meaning of medicine.

Keywords: René Girard, scapegoat, *pharmakos*, *mimesis*, plague, medical staff.

Zdravstveni delavci kot *pharmakoi* leta 2020. Pandemija na Poljskem skoz girardovsko lečo

Povzetek

Članek je poskus razbiranja nove pandemične situacije v kontekstu misli Renéja Girarda. V nasprotju z nekaterimi drugimi filozofskimi komentarji o krizi se avtorica odpoveduje splošnemu filozofskemu ocenjevanju celokupnih razsežnosti dogodkov na politični, ekonomski ali biološki ravni. Namen eseja je, nasprotno, filozofska-kulturna osvetlitev edinstvenega, vendar strašljivega fenomena ekstremnih družbenih reakcij glede zdravstvenega osebja na Poljskem. Članek skuša takšen skromni obet izpolniti z uporabo girardovskih antropoloških pojmov. Analizo podpira historično-kulturni opis grške institucije *pharmakosa* kot historičnega spomina, ki je najbolj ustreza za dojetje sodobnosti. To odpira širši kontekst kulturnega pomena medicine.

Ključne besede: René Girard, grešni kozel, *pharmakos*, *mimesis*, kuga, zdravstveno osebje.

1. Introduction

"The owl of Minerva takes its flight only when the shades of night are gathering." (Hegel 2001, 20) It seems that this famous figurative statement from the preface to the *Philosophy of Right* has rarely been more appropriate than in the first months of the year 2020. At the outbreak of the new pandemic, when nobody (including physicians and virologists) knew what we were going to face in the upcoming months or years, some philosophers seemed to have forgotten Hegel's warning.

As early as February 26, Giorgio Agamben published his doubts about the reality of the epidemic, and rushed to disqualify all sanitary measures and limitations as being in utter disproportion to the existing danger. He used the famous Schmittian notion of "the state of exception," duly elaborated upon and extended in his previous academic publications, to express a fundamental distrust of political measures taken with regard to the biological sphere. According to Agamben, the epidemic had been invented by the Italian government for the sake of limiting citizens in their private and public lives. The virus, basically no more dangerous than a seasonal flu, allegedly served as a perfect excuse for the militarization of the public sphere and for introducing rigorous discipline in private lives. The reactions to this diagnosis were prompt. While a day later Jean-Luc Nancy attempted to undermine the biopolitical perspective assumed by Agamben, Roberto Esposito in turn supported it on February 28. The discussion followed for the next few weeks, until March 17, when—three weeks after his first comment—Agamben assumed the floor once again, this time having silently accepted the biological exception of the pandemic. Instead of criticizing the suspension of normality for no reason, he attacked society with his second well-known philosophical concept: that of bare life. In a situation of danger, people reduce themselves to a purely biological condition. The urge for biological survival overwhelms any other human values such as love, compassion, closeness, and reverence for the dead.[1]

When we face such a crisis as this, when the world changes rapidly within

1 The whole exchange of philosophical opinions has been translated into English and collected in the *European Journal of Psychoanalysis* (cf. European 2020). Here, one

weeks, the temptation to give a timely philosophical commentary is almost irresistible. All the more so, if the state of affairs seems to fit perfectly into philosophical concepts. The Foucauldian-Schmittian-Agambenian paradigm of sovereignty, exception, biopolitics, and bare life is the most natural association in this context. And exactly this naturalness makes the philosophical work somehow too easy, premature, and, yes, in a way superficial. We are only months since the first philosophical voice, in the morning of events, still long before the dusk.

That is why, in this article, I have decided to suspend the natural biopolitical philosophical association; by doing this, I shall forgo the desire to deliver a comprehensive interpretation of current events. It is simply too early. Instead, I have decided to contribute to the theme of the "COVID-19 Crisis" in the specific and limited local context of Poland. I am going to make an attempt to shed some light on just one social phenomenon that emerged during the first months of the pandemic: the oppositional social attitudes towards medical staff. The public reactions to physicians were extreme: from heroization and almost sacralization to severe criticism and hostility, even hate.

Let us briefly look at the facts reflected in the Polish media. At the outbreak of the pandemic, the medical staff experienced an enormous social recognition. The language of this recognition was very characteristic. Doctors were called "the heroes of front line of the combat against the coronavirus: 'Power is with us'" (*Gazeta Wyborcza*; March 20). "Artists support doctor superheroes with graphics: 'Thank you doctors!'" (*Polska Times*; May 19). "The courage of the medical staff fighting the virus is more and more publicly discussed. There

more early philosophical contribution to the pandemic must be mentioned: Slavoj Žižek's *Pandemic! Covid-19 Shakes the World* (published in March 2020). Nevertheless, it seems that Žižek, apart from his provocative plea for communism, is quite moderate in his intellectual reaction: he does not propose any sort of philosophical conspiracy theory nor calls for a revolution. What he provocatively calls "communism," is actually a reasonable summons for strong public institutions, social responsibility, cooperation, and solidarity: "The institutional health system will have to rely on the help of local communities for taking care of the weak and old. And, at the opposite end of the scale, some kind of effective international cooperation will have to be organized to produce and share resources. If states simply isolate, wars will explode. These sorts of developments are what I'm referring to when I talk about 'communism,' and I see no alternative to it except new barbarism." (Žižek 2020, 103–104) are more and more voices that say they will become the greatest heroes of our time. They can replace the heroes in the imagination of the young generation" (*Rozrywka.blog*). "Superheroes! Doctors, nurses, paramedics, and other medical staff. Especially in these difficult times, when they sacrifice even more for our lives and health, we are even more thankful. Thanks!" (*Facebook*; March 31). *Dziennik Bałtycki* (March 28) went as far as equating the medical staff with soldiers of the Warsaw Uprising in 1944: "The insurgents did not possess enough weapons, just like medical staff is short of means to fight with the virus." The comparison to the Warsaw Uprising is particularly powerful within the Polish national imagery.[2] Warsaw insurgents are the synonym of heroic soldiers fighting an uneven battle against a hostile, cruel, and revengeful enemy. Being compared to them has to be read as an expression of highest reverence (quite apart from different assessments of the decision itself to launch the uprising). This reverence of doctors was also confirmed with action. Private people and organizations tried to make the warriors' lives easier: restaurants prepared free meals for hospital workers, grocery stores let them go to the head of the line at checkouts, hundreds of people manufactured masks and other supplies for healthcare workers in underequipped Poland.[3]

But around May the media began to deliver different news: they drew our attention to a complete change of atmosphere: "Today's hostility against medics relies on the same mechanisms as immolation in the Dark and Middle

2 It refers to the most tragic moments in the Polish resistance under German occupation during the Second World War. For 63 days, the insurgents led an uneven battle against the occupiers, before they had to surrender. They were mostly the underequipped youth who moved between districts through Warsaw sewers. The losses were enormous: the Germans took bloody revenge on civilians and on the city itself. The number of victims is estimated at over 150,000. The occupiers also bombarded the already affected city and left it literally in ruins (about 80% of the infrastructure was destroyed).

3 Cf. https://wyborcza.pl/7,75398,25806183,koronawirus-bohaterowie-z-pierwszej-linii.html?disableRedirects=true; https://polskatimes.pl/w-oczach-artystow-lekarze-to-superbohaterowie-tworcy-wspieraja-sluzby-medyczne-niezwyklymi-grafikami/ar/c15-14946740; https://www.spidersweb.pl/rozrywka/2020/04/21/koronawirus-bohaterowie-lekarze-marvel-dc-komiksy-filmy/; https://www.facebook.com/lodzpl/posts/10157511047494864/; https://dziennikbaltycki.pl/lekarki-lekarze-pielegniarki-pielegniarze-laborantki-laboranci-wszyscy-pracownicy-szpitali-to-pierwsza-linia-frontu/ar/c14-14884327. (All accessed on August 27, 2020.)

Ages" (*ONET*; March 30). "Doctors appeal for support. We receive very chilling signals of negative emotions" (*Wprost*; May 4). A doctor's car was vandalized in Wrocław (*Tok.fm*; May 6). The website portal *TVN24.pl* reported a series of hostile acts. Kindergartens were rejecting physicians' and nurses' kids. Neighbors left a written threat to a nurse and 20-year apartment building resident: "Move out. You spread the plague." Other neighbors called the janitor to demand the disinfection of the staircase once the door behind the nurse living there is closed. Grocery stores declared: "We do not cater for nurses and their husbands"; "Medical staff and the infected are kindly asked to refrain from shopping here." "The General Doctors Council (Naczelna Izba Lekarska) is receiving more and more information about bullying and discrimination towards doctors and dentists during the pandemic" (*Polityka zdrowotna*; June 19). The internet is full of unprintable insults. One prominent doctor from Wrocław committed suicide.[4]

I believe that the intellectual context of this astounding polarization can be found in René Girard's work. Such a presentation requires, first, a reconstruction of the basic concepts related to violence in Girard. This has to be done on the basis of systematic analyses of the genesis of the human cultural order, because in Girard, as we will see, the sources of culture are not primarily a question of historical truth, but also, if not foremostly, still relevant anthropological truth. They are not merely connected with the genesis of the human order, but also with its transhistorical laws. These laws make themselves visible wherever a developed civilization becomes conflicted with itself: in times of wars, disasters, and pandemics of all sorts.

4 Cf. https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/tylko-w-onecie/koronawirus-w-polsce-hejt-w-wobec-lekarzy-pielegniarek-i-ratownikow/des0mdw; https://www.wprost.pl/kraj/10322229/hejt-wobec-pracownikow-medycznych-lekarze-apeluja-do-ministra-ziobry-i-policji.html; https://www.tokfm.pl/Tokfm/7,103085,25922204,hejt-na-lekarzy-i-pielegniarki-a-jak-dojdzie-do-zakazenia.html; https://tvn24.pl/magazyn-tvn24/zaraz-nam-tu-syfa-przyniesie-brawa-szybko-umilkly-przyszedl-hejt,266,4651; https://www.politykazdrowotna.com/60755,samorzad-lekarski-trzeba-powstrzymac-szykany-w-zwiazku-z-epidemia-koronawirusa. (All accessed on August 27, 2020.)

2. The logic of violence: mechanism and ritual

A reconstruction of the concept of violence in Girard should begin with a few general remarks that may be helpful in grasping the originality of his approach. First, contrary to both common sense opinions and some scientific views, like structuralism, violence is not founded in difference (Girard 1989, 49). Different skin color, cultural distinctions, ethnic or religious tensions are not the primary soil for the proliferation of violence. The opposite is the case: the similarity of human beings is what facilitates hostility. Violence appears wherever people become more and more alike, i.e., in mutual rivalry for the same object (physical or symbolical). The desire behind the competition makes people similar to the point of being nearly identical; others are just like me, I am like others, and their desire is mine, just like my desire is theirs. The common denominator of desire makes other differences irrelevant. Second, also contrary to both common sense and the philosophical tradition, violence is not irrational (Girard 1989, 2). It is not an expression of a dark, demonic, or biological instinct. It is not, like in Hobbes, a primitive state of nature where everyone is at war with everyone else. This state can be abolished by the political act of ceding one's inborn right for aggression and defense of the sovereign. In Girard, on the contrary, violence is a defense mechanism developed in culture. And as such it is characterized by a specific logic and severe consequences. Third, also contrary to common opinions, especially those shaped in the Christian tradition and the evangelical precept to love one's neighbor, violence is essentially and structurally connected with the religious sphere, it is an inalienable aspect of the sacred.

In simplified terms, it can be said that violence as a rational function of culture is two-staged. While the first stage is of a dramatic and abrupt character, the second stage is usually a mere reflection of the first, the distorted memory of this drama. The first act of violence emerges from the situation, where a human community for some reason can no longer live according to hitherto functioning rules. In order to survive, it has to establish itself anew. In other words, it is a situation of fundamental crisis. It can have natural or external causes (like war, epidemics, or a calamity), but it becomes a crisis only on the societal level; it abolishes settled rules and hierarchies, deconstructing this culture as a “regulated system of distinctions” (Girard 1989, 49). We can cautiously say that, at least to some extent, the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020 was a crisis of this sort: very rapidly people became equal in their vulnerability and fear, which, at least to some degree, suspended certain social rules and hierarchies.

Thus, the objective disaster becomes a crisis through human reactions: at the very moment when the settled order bends and is crushed under the pressure of the circumstances. Such a situation makes people equal in one desire (it can be survival, victory, or pleasure; Girard calls this common unifying desire *mimesis*) and makes the previously functioning rules irrelevant: “it is not these distinctions but the loss of them that gives birth to fierce rivalries and sets members of the same family or social group at one another’s throats” (Girard, 1989, 49). In such a situation, in Girard’s view, culture in convulsion knows only one source of renewal: the transference of this mutual violence upon one individual. The one becomes the victim of a spontaneous, collective murder (or other forms of aggression): “When unappeased, violence seeks and always finds a surrogate victim.” (Girard 1989, 2) This is exactly what happened to Polish doctors once the wave of hope and heroization turned to a wave of suspicion and hate.

Looking for a victim as a remedy for evil emerging from natural causes might seem utterly irrational to objective judgment. But it is rational, if we look at it from the perspective of the logic of culture:

> Men feel powerless when confronted with the eclipse of culture; they are disconcerted by the immensity of the disaster but never look into the natural causes; the concept that they might affect those causes by learning more about them remains embryonic. Since cultural eclipse is above all a social crisis, there is a strong tendency to explain it by social and, especially, moral causes. (Girard 1986, 14)

What is important here, is the rivalry that forms the crowd. And the crowd (or the mob, as Girard often says) is by definition persecutory, it always drives towards a collective murder or the exclusion of a random victim:

> Those who make up the crowd are always potential persecutors, for they dream of purging the community of the impure elements that corrupt it, the traitors who undermine it. The crowd's act of becoming a crowd is the same as the obscure call to assemble or mobilize, in other words to become a mob. (Girard 1986, 16)

Modern crowds rarely form in real public spaces. But the virtual spaces of internet and social media function as a safe forum to express both mimetic rivalry and to direct this violence at one group of victims, in our example, medical staff. The *mimesis* of conflict and rivalry, which at the same time antagonized and unified the community members, now becomes the *mimesis* of unanimity in the choice of the victim. In the specific case of medical staff in Poland, it is exactly the unanimous heroization that prepares the ground for the unanimous victimization. Both distinguish one group as separate from the rest of society and at the same time closer to the source of the crisis itself. The fact that they are first distinguished positively and then negatively does not change the mechanism of victimization itself.

The spontaneous murder (be it real or symbolic) reveals a very important feature of the victim, rarely visible in modern victims: ambivalence. The scapegoat, a randomly chosen surrogate victim burdened with the whole community's guilt, after the spontaneous murder, is, according to the immanent logic of violence, recognized as a savior, a person who averted the crisis: "The scapegoat is only effective when human relations have broken down in crisis, but he gives the impression of effecting external causes as well, such as plagues, droughts, and other objective calamities." (Girard 1986, 43) The culture begins to worship him as a god who saved the community from annihilation or as a god-founder of a new community. The relationship between the persecutors and the victim is reversed. In other words, the scapegoat is transferred into the sacred. "The return to peace and order is ascribed to the same cause as the earlier troubles to the victim himself. That is what makes the victim sacred and transforms the persecution into a point of religious and cultural departure." (Girard 1986, 55) Now, if we return for a moment to our case: it may look like that the stage of sacralization as a result of victimization is lacking in the case of medical staff. But, if we look more closely, we can notice two things: first, that sacralization is replaced by heroization, which still functions as a form, perhaps secularized, of sacralization (heroes = saviors); and, second, that it comes before, not after victimization. Thus, the mechanism is reshaped and inverted: first heroization (instead of proper sacralization), then victimization. The reasons for this distortion of the original mechanism will be clearer later, when we look into the historical changes of the scapegoat function.

The first spontaneous act of violence is the foundation of culture. From that point we can speak of the second stage of violence. Therefore, it must be saved in the cultural memory. This means it will be repeated as a sacrificial ritual: a cyclic feast that commemorates the first act. But it will have to be also described in the myths of that culture. The sacrificial ritual is a cultural practice, a reminder of the first victim, the repetition of *that* event, but in a changed form: the ritual can be both the gory feasts of the Aztecs, like the killing of the Sun-god, the Greek ritual of *pharmakoi*, or the seemingly innocent and nonviolent rites, such as a coronation or a carnival. Nevertheless, the sacrificial religious rituals are the traces of the collective spontaneous murder, scars from the wound in the community. But, thanks to myth and its blurring function, nobody remembers that this wound was self-inflicted.

3. *Pharmakos* and Oedipus

Having explained the general ambivalence of the "primitive" sacred and the parallel ambivalence of victims, we need to concentrate now on the context linking the Girardian sacrifice with the ambiguity of medicine. The perfect source is the Greek ritual of *pharmakos* and the myth of Oedipus. The figure of *pharmakos*, be it in rituals or myths, shows a distant, but visible affinity between ancient institutions, or "primitive" moral imagination, and the very modern events of 2020. It also explains why the hostile reactions were directed against medical workers and not against other groups; in this perspective, it can be read as a cultural reminiscence.

In order to describe the *pharmakos* ritual, however, we need to refer also to sources other than Girard. We know the Greek ritual of *pharmakos* already from James G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, where he describes similar rituals in Marseilles, Athens, and Abdera:

> The Athenians regularly maintained a number of degraded and useless beings at the public expense; and when any calamity, such as plague, drought, or famine, befell the city, they sacrificed two of these outcast scapegoats. One of the victims was sacrificed for the men and the other for the women. The former wore round his neck a string of black, the latter a string of white, figs. Sometimes, it seems, the victim slain on behalf of the women was a woman. They were led about the city and then sacrificed, apparently by being stoned to death outside the city. But such sacrifices were not confined to extraordinary occasions of public calamity; it appears that every year, at the festival of the Thargelia in May, two victims, one for the men and one for the women, were led out of Athens and stoned to death. (Frazer 2009, 450)

Although historians of religion and philologists still discuss the discrepancies in different sources, e.g., as to whether killing was really involved and the variations of ritual in different places and occasions (Bremmer 1983), from our point of view, this is of lesser relevance. What is more important, here, is the dual function of victims. Walter Burkert interprets the above-mentioned expulsions in terms of a purification of the community. He also underscores the parallel between the ritual of *pharmakos* described above and the biblical paradigm for the scapegoat ritual, as described in Leviticus.[5] Although in our eyes Greek habits may seem more barbarian, they play a similar role: the transference of evil beyond human settlement where a clear message of the solidarity of a group and the exclusion of others is sent (Burkert 1982, 48). Girard also sees a basic familiarity between the two: "Strictly speaking, there is no essential difference between animal sacrifice and human sacrifice, and in many cases one is substituted for the other." (Girard 1989, 10)

5 During the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, two goats are chosen and handed to the priest. One is sacrificed for Yahweh in the traditional ceremonial way. Another one is put in the middle of the temple, where all the sins of Israel are placed on its head. The goat is led away into the desert and given over to Azazel (a demon). Frazer's sketch describes an analogous Greek ritual with one difference: here, not animals, but human beings are sacrificed or expelled from the community.

Nevertheless, the Greek custom is bestowed with a specific connotation relevant to our theme. Foremostly, the moral dimension is not rendered in the religious connotation of sin, but set in the medical context. The purification (*katharsis*) achieved is foremostly a form of healing of the whole community. This communal healing, the expulsion of disease, obviously has a moral character; nevertheless, the ritual is seen as a collective *treatment*. As a ritual, it is connected with the Thargelia festival, which is a feast of first fruits, but also a festival of Apollo. Apollo is primarily not a god of sun and light (he becomes the god of the sun only in the 5th century BCE), but a god of pestilence. Most important of his attributes are the bow and arrows: he can heal the plague, but he can also spread it with his weapon. He is a doctor (*iatros*) in the dual, ambiguous, meaning: one who knows how to help cure the disease, but also knows how to infect (Burkert 1996, 145). He is worshipped as a god of healing (he is also the father of Asclepius, the god of medicine), and the disease associated with his power is not an individual illness, but a communal one and is highly contagious. Thargelia is a feast of purification. A *pharmakos* is a personified version of *pharmakon*, a poison and medicine at the same time: an outcast who is identified with the disease, which has spread all over, and who becomes a danger. At the same time, he is a savior who transports this danger out of the city walls:

> The character of the *pharmakos* has been compared to a scapegoat. The *evil* and the *outside*, the expulsion of the evil, its exclusion out of the body (and out of the city)—these are the two major senses of the character and of the ritual. (Derrida 1981, 130)

Is the virtual as well as real heroization and the hate of Polish medical staff a faint resemblance of this logic? I think it is: the community is trying to isolate the medics who, in their view, are at the same time polluted in a medical and, maybe, moral sense. Their isolation is an act of the purification of society. At the same time, they have an ambivalent power: they can spread the pollution, but they can also heal the community, not only by active medical action, but also by means of isolating themselves.

Both the worshipped god and the person sacrificed are bestowed and burdened with the ambivalence Girard was talking about when describing the binate nature of the sacred. The theogonic myth of Apollo confirms this parallel: even Apollo polluted himself by slaying the Cyclops and was banished from Olympus. After killing the Python, he must leave Delphi and seek purification in distant Thessaly (Burkert 1996, 148). "Behind the warrior gods there are always victims, and victims are usually linked to medicine." (Girard 1986, 48) Apart from the differences between Burkert and Girard,[6] in both descriptions the mechanism is similar: "The aggression excited by fear is concentrated on some loathsome outsider; everyone feels relieved by the communal projection of the fury born of despair; as well as by the certainty of standing on the side of the just and pure" (Burkert 1996, 83)—these words could just as well appear in Girard. No matter what origin we accept, the ambiguity of the victim and the sacred is intact: the outcast, both in Burkert and in Girard, is also a savior. What we need to notice, now, is the direction of this ambivalence: we could see in Frazer's description of the *pharmakos* ritual, that the ambivalence of a victim has a temporal direction: he or she is first an outcast, someone of a very low position in the community (a beggar, a criminal), they are identified with the *pharmakon*, understood as a poison, and only after being sacrificed does she or he become a *pharmakon* in the second sense, that of a medicine: they become a savior, a healer, someone in kinship with the god of healing. But, if we move from customs and historical rituals towards myths, the direction changes, or, becomes less straightforward. In myths, the *pharmakoi* are mostly distinguished members of a community, like kings. This is also a step towards the above-indicated inversion of the classical line leading from victimization to sacralization (heroization).

A mythical and tragic depiction of a *pharmakos* is found in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. Oedipus is a king of Thebes, who owes the throne to the great merit he brought to Thebes. Oedipus was the first human being to have guessed

6 Burkert draws attention to a different "primal scene" of violence than Girard: "Instead of deriving ceremonial killing and eating from the hunt, as Burkert does, Girard describes an outbreak of intrahuman violence as the hidden center of social dynamics." (Burkert, Girard, and Smith 1987, 172) Thus, while Girard begins with culture and stresses the social-psychological tension caused by common desire, Burkert points to the roots of violent rituals in the biological background of hunting or even in the ethological situation of a group of animals surrounded by predators, which will give up only, if at least one member of the group falls victim to them.

the riddle of the Sphinx, the monster who brought calamities and unhappiness to the city. After conquering the monster, Oedipus, although he is a stranger, takes over the throne, which ordinarily would have gone to his brother-in-law, Creon. Alas, defeating the Sphinx, does not mean the end of misfortune for Thebes. Now a new and greater danger devastates the city's population. We learn it is a plague that is wreaking havoc, and Oedipus is called to help as one who once proved being capable of reversing fate. The only remedy would be to follow Apollo's order and "drive out the pollution being fostered in this very land" (106–108). We also learn from Creon, who translates the will of the god, that the pollution is of a moral kind, and that it is the slaughter of the previous King, Laius. Apollo, the god of plague, will be a god of healing for Thebes only after the murderer is killed or expelled. However, Oedipus is only willing to follow Creon's advice and find the murderer of Laius. But then comes Tiresias, a prophet who openly accuses Oedipus himself of being the murderer. The rest of the play is the struggle of Oedipus who—as a stranger in this land—finds the accusations absurd. But more and more personae appearing on the scene reveal Oedipus' identity: and eventually he turns out to be the son of Jocasta and Laius, who was sent away as a baby to prevent a prophecy that their son would kill the father and marry his own mother. Oedipus is a parricide and incestualist. The moral scandal he caused is as contagious as pestilence and breeds parallelly to medical disease, at the same time being its identifiable cause. The only cure lies in getting rid of the pollution.

We can see that the line of ambiguity is more complicated here. Oedipus is someone definitely distinguished in the community: he is the king; he is the city's rescuer. At the same time, he is not connate with the community. He is a stranger with an unclear past, he is an abandoned child, he is also handicapped. He is a perfect candidate for the role of a *pharmakos* in its duality of meaning: a savior who easily becomes the source of plague, and, after blinding himself and leaving the city, again the savior whose dead body becomes a relic (*Oedipus in Colonus*). He is "a mysterious savior who visits affliction on mankind in order subsequently to restore it to good health" (Girard 1989, 86). Oedipus is like a human counterpart of Apollo, and, at the same time, a distant prefiguration of the modern medical victim.

4. Historical transformations

At the beginning of this essay, I described the cyclic rhythm of the launch and the renewal of culture. This corresponded to the difference between the spontaneous mechanism of the surrogate victim and the scapegoat ritual. This dual structure has, in Girard's thought, a double function. On the one hand, it is a historical hypothesis: it describes the logic hidden in archaic cultures and "primitive" religious systems. On the other hand, it depicts a model, a transhistorical and transcultural anthropological description of the laws of human culture in general. One can say that the historical, genetic aspect of the scapegoat ritual constitutes a sort of cultural residue.

In the descriptions of historical times and of modernity, there are two possibilities within Girard's thought: first, one can see the history of culture as a returning echo of collective violence, independent from the religious turn Girard saw in Christianity. In this approach, the core can be historically modified, it can be reshaped into stable institutions, but it never disappears. It can always be recollected and repeated in this or that form. Secondly, we have another possibility: Christianity changed our civilization irreversibly. It revealed the violence hidden in myths and, by doing so, it disarmed the mechanism of transference of the collective guilt onto individuals. By the same token, it dismantled the sacrificial ritual by means of depotentialization. But even Christianity and its powerful message was unable to weaken the mechanism of the escalation of tension in mimetic rivalry. It, so to speak, stopped half way: it deprived us of the cultural tools preventing the undue escalation of violence, but it did not prevent violence itself. Both possibilities were developed in Girard's works, creating a very interesting tension in his philosophy of modernity. In the context of this essay, both versions of cultural development prove relevant.

In *Violence and the Sacred* (first published in 1972), where Girard does not yet deal with Christianity as a turning point in the development of culture, and also in *The Scapegoat* (first published in 1982), we come across analyses of the cultural memory of old rituals: they reemerge any time public institutions collapse: "in a conflict whose course is no longer strictly regulated by a predetermined model, the ritualistic elements disintegrate into actual events and it becomes impossible to distinguish history from ritual" (Girard 1989, 109–110).

Cultural evolution brought about a gradual separation between violence and the sacred. On the philosophical level, these changes can already be seen in Plato, who tries to purify myths from violent elements, and postulates censorship in the name of philosophical rationality.[7] The moral ambiguity of gods, the close connection between being saintly and damned, begins to polarize and mythology is gradually cleansed from depictions of violence. It is also the beginning of moral dualism: the gods drive toward pure and fulgent sacrosanctity. Plato's idea of Good is the sacred purified, translucent, unable to hide traces of its gory rituals. The aspect of the sacred, which was bound with violence and guilt, is now separated from divinity: it evolved towards the demonic sphere, becoming monstrous or devilish. This tendency to separate evil from divinities also clouds the logic of collective violence; the meaning of ritual is veiled. This is in congruence with the Derridean analysis of Plato's *pharmakon*: once bestowed with the ambiguity of medicine that can be both healing and poisonous. In *Phaedrus*, the Egyptian god Thoth presents the skill of writing to the king Thamus as a *pharmakon*, a remedy for forgetfulness. Thoth is the god of writing, who knows how to put an end to life, but he can also heal the sick (Derrida 1981, 94)—in this respect, an Egyptian counterpart of Apollo. But the invention of the written word is rejected by the king (representing Plato himself) not because of its ambiguous nature, which makes the effect of the cure uncertain, but because this *pharmakon* is disambiguated and identified as simply harmful, poisonous. In Plato, the ambiguity is transformed into clear-cut oppositions: good and evil, true and false (Derrida 1981, 103).

The historical manifestations of the scapegoat mechanism and ritual are parallel to these conceptual changes. As myth loses relevance, the mystification of violence, along with its separation from the sacred, also becomes weaker. This, of course, does not mean that history does not know the foundational

7 "First, telling the greatest falsehood about the most important things doesn't make a fine story – I mean, Hesiod telling us about how Uranus behaved, how Cronus punished him for it, and how he was in turn punished by his own son. But even if it were true, it should be passed over in silence, not told to foolish young people." (*The Republic*, 378a)

murders and scapegoats. Just the opposite, it is full of them, from medieval pogroms and witch-hunts to staged trials and judicial murders in the 20th century. Nevertheless, together with the transition from sacrificial religion to historical persecutions, the tendency to sacralize victims diminishes, and the sacred disappears from their descriptions: "Medieval and modern persecutors do not worship their victims, they only hate them." (Girard 1986, 38) According to the logic of moral polarization, the defusing of a crisis appears rather as the victory of good over evil, as humbling the devilish. But the ritual does not completely disappear, it is reshaped: the most important elements of the selection of the victim, the ascribing of the hostility of the community to the individual's guilt, and the mimetic unanimity stay intact.

5. The modern *pharmakoi*

Let us, after this long circuitous route, return to the phenomenon of the rapid and abrupt change of social moods towards doctors and other medical staff. In the first stage of the pandemic, the public appreciation for doctors and nurses is enormous. What can be revealing in this context, is the type of discourse used in this recognition stage. First of all, as we have seen, the military language was ubiquitous. We are all at war with an enemy. The enemy is invisible and more dangerous than typical warring enemies. But it has an identity, the problem is that this identity is hidden from us, which makes the enemy sneakier and more insidious. Doctors, paramedics, and nurses are the soldiers; and not even regular strategists (like, e.g., virologists). They are front-line warriors who fight in the most dangerous conditions, constantly risking their own lives and health. Even more so, as the supply of the means of protection is scarce and insufficient. They are heroes, and deserve the highest possible regard from the rest of society (remember, e.g., equating doctors with Warsaw insurgents in 1944, a parallel very forceful in Polish national imagery). But together with this military language, another type of discourse emerges, different, but certainly intertwined with militarization. It is the discourse of pop-culture. Doctors are not only soldiers. They are also superheroes: not only ready for sacrifice, but also equipped with abnormal power. In this way, they are distinguished, they possess abilities regular citizens do not. Internet journalists and pundits speculated of doctors replacing the heroes of the Marvel and DC universes in young people's imagination.[8]

Such a heroization to the point of idolatry can be seen as a secularized version of the transfer to the sacred sphere, as described by Girard. The fact that it is not the result of victimization, but rather precedes it, is connected with the fact that it is not a repetition of the primal mechanism of archaic culture, but a ritual that was transformed and reshaped in history. In Polish historical imagery, the romantic myth is still omnipresent. The long years of servitude after the partitions of Poland (1795–1918) created a powerful romantic trend in culture, especially in literature. Its characteristic trait was a certain sort of messianism. It expressed itself either in the sacralization of the nation itself (Poland as a savior of nations) or in a collective desire for the distinguished individual(s) who could bring redemption to the nation under the foreign yoke (e.g., Napoleon). Poland regained independence in 1918 as a result of WWI, but the messianist tendencies remained, being reshaped by historical circumstances. This romantic strain has been supported by the way history is taught in Poland up to the present day. Unfortunately, such a romantic heroization makes any public discussion and assessment of the heroes difficult and shifts it to narrow academic circles. This means that a more complex and balanced evaluation of the person or groups involved is impossible. It seems that this is what happened with medics at the beginning of the pandemic: they were romantically heroized, superhuman powers were ascribed to them, and the group started to function as mythical figures, or even as phantasms.

As we could see, at some point the heroization turned into evil talk and hate. But, again, one could identify one type of discourse unifying the hostile utterances. The military heroization turned very easily into victimization: doctors and other medical workers turned out to be the bringers of the dangers of the pandemic to the community. The spread of the pestilence could be avoided by an identification of its carriers and by their isolation from society. The tendencies to heroize and victimize proved to be closely related. The urge

8 The Mattel company even marketed this: they are producing action figures of medical staff under the title "Thank you heroes" (*Dadhero.pl*; April 30; https://dadhero.pl/286329,figurki-mattel-z-kolekcji-thankyouheroes-to-lekarze-jako-superbohaterowie; accessed on August 27, 2020).

for a savior is akin to the desire to identify the external or internal enemy, the group responsible for the communal misfortune. And, again, like in heroization, victimization excludes any complex and differentiating discussion, since it is fueled by the *mimesis* of unanimity.

This, no doubt, utmost modern situation reminds us inevitably of the old pattern described by Girard and others in the *pharmakos* figure. Doctors are heroes, because they risk their lives for the community, just like Oedipus did with his overthrowing of the Sphinx. He becomes the king of Thebes, they become superheroes. But then the pestilence does not diminish. The heroes prove inefficient and sometimes their moral condition is also questioned. The community, looking for a victim, picks on the distinguished ones. The mythical and tragic part is over, now the ritual of *pharmakos* is set up. The chosen ones have to be expelled together with the plague they represent. Behind the medical language of the epidemic threat, one can hear the moral justification: doctors are blamed for the mediocre situation in the Polish healthcare system they represent. The sick healthcare system has sick doctors and with a double meaning: sick with the sin of negligence, or greed, and sick as the carriers of the virus. They are blamed for not being able to mend the system and for the fact that they may support it (or even benefit from it). This natural tendency has been supported by the Polish government, which seems content to place responsibility on the doctors' shoulders instead of their own. "Blaming doctors" became a rhetorical strategy and a recurring motif of government announcements.[9]

This recalls the Black Death, the great plague that decimated Europe between 1347 and 1351. The Black Death was often mentioned in the context of the new pandemic. It seems that there are reasons why Girard harked back to this historical event in the analysis of the scapegoat mechanism: it showed the differences between the primitive ritual killing and the historical *pharmakoi*:

9 In June, the Polish government drew back on this social hostility with the proposal of a new piece of legislation, which intensifies criminal responsibility of doctors for malpractice (added to the COVID-19 legislation, the so-called "Shield 4.0"). Cf. https://www.money.pl/gospodarka/tarcza-40-wprowadza-zmiany-do-kodeksu-karnego-lekarze-apeluja-do-prezydenta-o-wstrzymanie-prac-6524281991329409a.html. (Accessed on August 31.)

the plague of the 14th century brought about the most terrible pogroms all over Europe, and the most typical target of these were Jews. The reason is not only that they were social and religious outcasts. They were also often doctors. They could heal, but they could also bring the illness to people: they were accused of poisoning rivers for people to drink infected water (Girard 1986, 1).

We can see that the archaic ambiguity is maintained, but with a distinct qualification. The Greek *pharmakoi* were first the evil ones and then saviors. Oedipus is first a hero, then a scapegoat, then the savior. Doctors are first heroes, then scapegoats. There is no pure sacralization, and, if it appears, it manifests in the different form of heroization. This is, of course, in accordance with what Girard writes about "non-primitive" cultures: they do not worship their victims. Once doctors cease to be heroes, they never become the target of worship, they can only be hated. But, luckily, they are also saved from lynching as a group. It is as if modern culture was just a step "ahead" of the medieval persecutions. In what way? Here, it might be helpful to briefly look at the second possibility of the development of culture in Girard that I mentioned above: since we are children of a mature civilization, which (through Christianity) actually *knows* of the scapegoat mechanism, violence does not necessarily end with sacrifice. Since it is mitigated by institutions, it develops to a certain degree without actually reaching the turning point of an actual or symbolic killing. But this also means that it never completely calms down: the conflict escalates to a certain point without climax, then it is mitigated and smolders beneath the surface of social life. That is why Girard in his last books can say: "Learning that we have a scapegoat is to lose it forever and to expose ourselves to mimetic conflicts with no possible resolution." (Girard 2010, xiv)

There are more than enough reasons to believe that modern culture hides both possibilities outlined by Girard: the return to dark primitive rituals to de-potentialize conflicts and the escalation of conflicts that are mitigated, but not concluded and are, thus, always ready for another escalation. For our topic, it is important that no matter what scenario appears more plausible, the core mechanism, the mimetic rivalry, is untouched.

Let us briefly return to the theme once again: at first, everybody agrees the medical staff are heroes: we could see the spread of the unifying discourse that almost nobody contradicted. Nobody simply spoke of medical staff doing their job well and with dedication. The government neglected measures that could have eased the crisis on a pragmatic level (like, for instance, systematic testing). Medical staff had to be heroized and put into a military context. Only such an exaggeration was able to create unanimity. Actually, it excluded discussions and different opinions on the matter. For example, the acute question of the right to due protection and the obligations of the government. Alas, this positive unanimity, just because it excluded differences, very easily twisted into the opposite. And, again, the new language, the discourse of hostility, was exaggerated and contagious. It never was shared by the majority, but it was popular enough to cause ostracism, anxiety, or even panic. It seems that only stable and functioning public institutions, resistant to collective moods and supported on a governmental level, could have prevented such a hostile turn, and this is precisely what was lacking during the most uncertain months.

Girard's anthropology and philosophy of religion do not offer tools that could facilitate solutions to this problem. Neither do they offer a comprehensive theory that would explain, on every possible level, what has been going on since the early months of 2020. But I believe that it helps us to better understand what happened in our public discourse, even if, for reasons indicated at the beginning, I decided to limit the analysis to only one, but illuminating case of social reactions to medical staff. This can be a paradigm, an example, but also an insight into what is going on in our societies. Such an understanding, certainly, does not prevent mimetic crises, but it sometimes functions as a safety valve, protecting us from the physical culmination of collective violence.

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Innovation Potential of Social Capital in Tourism during the Epidemic of COVID-19

Lea-Marija Colarič-Jakše

Landscape Governance College GRM Novo mesto, Sevno 13, 8000 Novo mesto, Slovenia

lea.colaric-jakse@vsgrm.unm.si

Abstract

The article explores the Slovenian perspective on cooperative networking as a potential for the development of Slovenian tourism. In the competitive times, paradoxically, cooperation between actors in any given field is needed, in order to increase the overall competitiveness of a country in the specific field. However, research indicates that in the case of Slovenian tourism there are two distinct groups. On the one hand, there are actors who are strongly dependent on cooperation and are well aware of it and, on the other hand, there are self-sufficient actors who see the development of integral tourist products as unnecessary or potentially even harmful for their particular interests. Innovation potential and development of social capital are especially important in the perspective of the COVID-19 pandemic and its influence on society as well as on tourism industry in the future.

Keywords: Slovenia, tourism, social capital, integral tourist products, COVID-19.

Inovacijski potencial družbenega kapitala v turizmu med pandemijo COVID-19

Povzetek

Članek raziskuje slovensko perspektivo glede kooperativnega mreženja kot potenciala za razvoj slovenskega turizma. V tekmovalnih časih je, paradoksalno, kooperacija med akterji na vseh področjih potrebna, da bi se povečala celokupna konkurenčnost države na določenem področju. Vendar raziskave kažejo, da v primeru slovenskega turizma obstajata dve različnih skupini. Na eni strani so akterji, ki so v precejšnji meri odvisni od kooperacije in se tega tudi dobro zavedajo, na drugi strani pa so samozadostni akterji, ki razvoj integralnih turističnih produktov vidijo kot nepotreben ali celo ogrožajoč za njihove partikularne interese. Inovacijski potencial in razvoj družbenega kapitala sta zlasti pomembna z vidika pandemije COVID-19 in njenega vpliva tako na družbo kakor na prihodnost turistične industrije.

Ključne besede: Slovenija, turizem, družbeni kapital, integralni turistični produkti, COVID-19.

Introduction

Tourism is one of the most trending economic activities, which became more available to a broader number of people with the development of modern transportation systems and even more popular with the development of information and communication technologies. The latter enable people to exchange their tourist experience for virtual praise, and, on the other hand, are able to promote even the obscure tourist destinations with limited offers and isolated from the economic interest of the majority of tourist agencies and tourists. The economic crisis in the year 2008 significantly damaged tourist economy, but at the same time gave, not only to countries, but also to tourism economy, the opportunity to rethink their interests and strategies in the tourism sector. After a few-year recovery period, the situation worsened in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which again strongly affected tourism industry (e.g., Chang et al. 2020, Gössling et al. 2020). It became rather clear that the only way of restarting and boosting tourism economy lies in cooperation and development of tourist products that are not selling particularities, but the experience of a destination, which includes everything, from history to gastronomy, recreation, and nature. The so-called integral tourist products became a new necessity of tourist industries, especially with regard to tourist destinations that are not at the top of popular destination lists.

Slovenia is, in this perspective, a rather obscure destination, not only on the level of the country as such, but also on the level of local development. In this perspective, our research attempts to answer the question, what are the possibilities for the development of Slovenian tourist economy in the future. The research tries to understand the cooperative networking potential of tourist actors and their ability to create integral tourist products, which would be attractive to tourists.

A brief bibliographical overview

The success of the modern business environment in tourism industry is not based only upon business models, strategies, and planning, but predominantly upon the cooperation among stakeholders in tourism industry, including consumers. However, the value systems of modern tourists change and thus also their desires, expectations, and needs. Modern tourists strive for novelty, the new products, that satisfy their real and imaginary needs. Upon this basis, tourism service providers are directed towards new marketing approaches (Richards and Wilson 2008, 7).

The development of innovation potential, as a starting point for innovative tourism products and services, can be strengthened using different forms of cooperation among service providers (Jamal and Getz 1995). This field was in the past also covered by various researches (e.g., Arnaboldi and Spiller 2011; Ambrož 2006; Ambrož and Veljković 2012). The foundation for social networking in the field of tourism is significantly connected with social capital. Granowetter (1973) and Putnam (1993) are indicating that social capital can be considered as the ability to interlink the ties among subjects on a personal as well as on an institutional level of connectivity. Social capital supports synchronized activities among social actors and various social structures, and consequently contributes to a better functioning of society as a whole (Putnam 1993, 167).

Social capital supports the development of new knowledge, which is the foundation for the development of innovation potential. Actor-Network Theory (ANT) offers cooperative networking as an option in the search for different forms of cooperation networking in tourism. Researchers in this field, among other topics, see potential also in the role of social capital in the development of tourism related networks and cooperation.

Adler and Kwon (2000, 89–115) stress the importance of social networks, social norms, trust, knowledge exchange, and formal institutional frame as important elements of tourism innovation.

Law (1999, 3), as one of the main authors of the Action-Network Theory, based the latter on binary connections (knowledge–power, material–societal, active–passive, etc.). ANT enables a specific approach to scientific and technical innovations on the societal level. Beside Law's aforementioned work, also other authors—for instance: Akrich and Latour 1992; Callon 1999; Callon and Law 1997; Hassard and Law 1999; Latour 1987; Latour 1996; Latour 2005; Law 1999—paid attention to the ANT.

Cooperative networking is not possible without social capital, based on trust among participating social actors, bound by common rules of cooperation on the level of social networks. Social capital is a foundation for the development of knowledge and various competences. The development of competences does not only mean receiving relevant information. Actual learning begins only when individuals understand that their cognitive models do not suffice anymore, in order to resolve existing problems. Thus, they understand that they need to develop new competences and, in order to do so, require new social networks. Social capital, in this aspect, represents the basis for the development of new social networks that will generate new ideas and support the development of new knowledge.

New development models in tourism function according to the same principles as other social models, since they support the relevance of community in the opposition to sole development of tourist economy.

This understanding supports the idea of emphasizing the development of imaginary network regions in tourism ("tourismscapes"). According to Johannesson (2005), the Actor-Network Theory is a very appropriate tool in the explanation of cooperation patterns among stakeholders in tourism. Literature on networking in tourism offers research results that emphasize the importance of networking in the integration of tourist networks (e.g., d'Angella and Go 2009). Dimanche et al. (2010) pay attention to a rearrangement and the classification of existing sources in tourism in the process of developing new tourist products. Della Corte et al. (2012) expose the development of cooperative relations, which is of utmost importance, not only among business partners, but also within competition.

Lazzareti and Petrillo (2006, 57) state that social actors and business partners can be more successful if they provide tourist products, which are diversified, but offered as integral tourist products. Dredge (2006) establishes that social relations are the basis both for cooperation as well as for the understanding of relations among stakeholders in tourism.

Beside social networking, literature on networking and cooperation in tourism provides also the arguments for the importance of formal forms of cooperation, e.g., consortiums or other forms of associations between business partners as well as other common structures enabling cooperation and common activities in the tourist market (Hastings 2008, 43). The combination of different systems and different forms of the organization of production and consumption contributes to a strengthening of the systems of accumulation. This creates a stable and sustainable mixture. In order to achieve this, we need to reduce the importance of Fordist mass production of tourist products, and strengthen the development of post-Fordist production, which emphasizes the role of smaller companies. The latter are in themselves capable of covering different production niches and products that can satisfy diversified needs of tourist consumers. Individualized products are just a step away from the process, which would enable the creation and marketing of integral tourist products (Campos 2014).

The cooperation of different actors in the process of the development of joint products is based on constant innovation and the shaping of new, complex products. In this process, cooperation competences are of utmost importance.

Koutoulas (2004) defines the integral tourist product as a product that is a combination of different individual tourist products and can be of material or non-material nature. Koutoulas (2004, 4) argues that the tourist products can be either perfect tourist products or specific tourist products. An integral tourist product can be represented through the negotiation and synthesis of partial individual tourist needs and the expectations of an individual tourist. This creates an individual and unique tourist experience, based on the supply capacities of tourism service providers (Janković et al. 2011). In this perspective, the individual tourist plays a crucial role by evaluating the tourist products and ranking them according to their personal preferences.

Tourist actors and organizations are developing innovative approaches in all fields of their activities, especially in the field of material tourist products.

The innovation potential can be developed only in the conditions that support, recognize, and reward new ideas as well as provide support for the implementation of these ideas in the practice (Mathews 2009, 9; Ambrož 2009, 147; Ridderstrāle and Nordström 2004, 178). The innovation dynamics in a certain tourist area can be further supported also by cooperation among groups and individuals at all levels (Ridderstrāle in Nordström 2004, 176).

Innovation is successful when actors are involved in all activities and connected with their tasks. In this manner, we can understand also the factors of innovation concerning our research.

In the process of creating innovative tourist products, different organizational structures, such as, civil society, private companies, public companies, small enterprises, and craftsmen, etc., significantly influence not only the process itself, but also its outcomes. These structures, among themselves, create the social capital that is a required precondition for a common creation of innovative tourist products.

Ying (2010, 24) argues—as many other authors—that cooperation is the basic need for a successful development of tourist industry. Co-dependency, small size of actors, diversified market, and spatial separation are factors that compel the desire for cooperation, which can achieve of common goals and lead towards the establishment of a cover tourist organization.

Methodological remarks

Based on the social capital theory and Actor-Network Theory, we formulated the survey with a questionnaire, which was disseminated in the Slovenian tourist environment. The survey was part of a broader research attempting to elaborate an understanding of the developmental potential of Slovenian tourism. In the survey, we included different tourist related organizations and subjects, including local communities, local tourist organizations, tourism associations, tourist information centers, hotels, motels, hostels, restaurants and other dining capacities, museums, tourist agencies, travel agencies, tourist farms, recreational facilities, sport facilities, congress centers, small businesses in tourism industry, medium businesses in tourism industry, big tourist companies, private entrepreneurs in tourism, and wine-cellars. In total, the sample included over 1300 different subjects. We received 218 fulfilled questionnaires appropriate for analysis. Despite the circumstance that the questionnaire's thematic field was much broader, we present below only the basic results relevant to the topic.

Research results

Effective processes of cooperative networking with constant testing create the possibilities for a cooperation of all and for all tourism related structures. Social actors stress the importance of searching for an agreement (unanimity) as well as the need to resolve the conflicts that might occur among them. They state that the process of establishing fruitful interactions is the outcome of a series of previous, unsuccessful interactions and learning processes based upon them. Cooperative networking, according to their opinion, is based on ethical relations among different tourist actors and the need to establish "right" relations to other actors in the field of tourism. Tourist actors believe that they are capable and competent enough to connect to other social actors, and that they can develop common innovative tourist products together. To tourist actors who participated in the survey it is important that everyone, who participates in cooperation networking and in the development of integral tourist products, understands the needs and wishes of customers in tourism. They believe that this knowledge is of utmost importance, in order to satisfy the customers, who can, in turn, themselves be included in the development of integral tourist products.

Tourist actors are aware of the fact that customer evaluations have a direct influence on the improvement of integral tourist products. Additionally, they understand that knowledge and competences of individuals, companies, non-profit organizations, and other structures in tourism industry are the elements with the crucial potential for the development and innovation in the field of integral tourist products. Customers' suggestions are vital both for the development of new tourist products as well as for the improvement of the existing ones. According to the survey, special attention is paid to cooperation in the sense that all participating actors are willing to contribute their professional knowledge needed for new integral tourist products. Survey shows also the importance of workload distribution and project approach in cooperation networking, in order to achieve the desired results. Actors who participated in the survey pointed out the importance of rewarding innovative results, in order to increase further motivation for the finalization of projects resulting in innovative tourist products.

Cooperation is most highly praised among tourist associations, tourist agencies, and tourist information centers. This group is followed by middle-sized tourist companies, congress centers, and dining places. The second group has also the highest median in the sample of tourist structures by activity. Based on the character of their work, these subjects are in need of cooperation with various tourist actors, including customers/tourists. This positively influences their openness for cooperative networking and participation in the development of integral tourist products. The highest potential of cooperative networking is seen among tourist associations, who are, based on their character, the most appropriate organizational type the coordination of interests among different tourist actors.

The lowest interest for cooperation networking can be seen among museums, individual businesses, tourist farms, local communities, and hotels. Their interest in cooperative networking is connected with their line of work as well as with their status, which they have or, rather, would have in the cooperative networking process. The aforementioned actors are not at the core of the networking process and do not have a connective role in it. More or less, they are only providers of specific tourist products and do not participate in the development of new integral tourist products. Upon the basis of research concerning cooperative networking and the use of innovative potential, one can conclude that cooperative networking is not sufficiently developed, since there are actors who do not participate actively in the activity of connecting tourist actors within a certain frame.

Britton (2001, 162) argues that small tourist structures cannot develop sufficiently to participate in cooperative networking and successfully compete with bigger tourist networks. The results of our research indicate that there exists a similar asymmetric relation among tourist structures in the perspective of cooperative tourist networking. These structures (actors) have troubles allocating resources for cooperation, such as integral tourist products, knowledge, competences, marketing, as well as capital. Consequently, they are unable to create stable business models even for themselves.

Social actors who are merging their social capital, on the other hand, strengthen their possibilities to satisfy particular needs, desires, and expectations of tourists in a certain tourist area. By opening distribution channels, they positively influence the interaction with tourists in the processes of transaction and supply of integral tourist products. This further supports the development of integral information systems of tourist supply and demand. Such behavior sustains the education of tourists and creates new tourist marketing niches. Dependency paths created in this way, effectuated by social actors, enable the development of creative, modern and innovative marketing approaches and buttress positive acceptance among tourists. Consequently, social actors create higher-quality promotion of tourist area and tourist products with the usage of webpages, social networks, as well as other information and communication technologies and tools.

Additionally, involved actors encourage the development of effective supply networks, enabling the satisfaction of needs and wishes of tourists. Thus, they develop new market opportunities in their territory. Tourist actors ensure proper coverage of certain tourist territories with integral tourist products, and support effective business processes of all involved tourist actors in the given territory. Joint activity enables the standardization, certification, as well as competitive price and quality assurance of integral tourist products. The opening of new business possibilities is the main motive for tourist actors to participate in the creation of integral tourist products. The possibility to use new business opportunities comes hand in hand with the necessary effective internal organizational processes for all involved actors who participate in cooperative networking. All involved actors should also ensure the consideration of tourists' feedback regarding integral tourist products.

The cooperative networking and innovation potential survey results show a generally low positive attitude towards the idea of knowledge exchange among tourist actors and structures. The most open for such an exchange of knowledge are, according to the survey, tourist associations, hotels, tourist information centers, restaurants, medium sized tourist companies, and wine-cellars. Upon the basis of this perspective, one can assume that they have certain experiences with knowledge exchange, at least at the level of cooperation among tourist structures. On the other hand, tourist actors, such as travel agencies, big tourism companies, individual entrepreneurs in tourism, local communities, tourist agencies, museums, and congress centers, do not appreciate knowledge exchange with other tourist actors and structures. One can assume that such actors do not take part in the development of integral tourist products together with other tourist actors and structures due to a lack of interest in synergy and joint tourist products. The aforementioned actors act independently and as self-sufficient institutions, since they have positive experience in doing so, or do not have the possibility to get involved in innovation processes due to the nature of their structure and work. Among possible reasons for such behavior, one can see also the absence of trust among different actors, which would support knowledge exchange, or the lack of institutional social capital due to self-sufficiency of certain actors.

With regard to innovative integral tourist products, actors, such as tourist associations, small and medium tourist enterprises, museums, tourist agencies, and wine-cellars, assume a positive attitude. They also possess relevant information concerning the questions what kind of integral tourist products would be appreciated by tourists, and how their needs and wishes could be fulfilled. Upon the basis of survey results, one can assume that the aforementioned actors require information as well as business ideas, upon which products could be integrated together into innovative new tourist products.

On the other hand, individual entrepreneurs, local communities, travel agencies, hotels, congress centers, sport facilities, and tourist farms are less keen on innovation regarding tourist products, in order to satisfy the desires and expectations of tourists. These tourist actors often do not have a clear vision of their mission concerning the development of new tourist products, and do not test their ideas in comparison with other tourist actors.

As research shows, 71 % of participating actors agree that there should exist a proper organizational structure, which would enable innovation and the development of new integral tourist products, namely, a consortium for the development and innovation concerning integral tourist products. The remaining 29 % of participating actors reject the need for the establishment of such a structure.

Tourist marketing requires financial expenses, development of personal networks, and sharing of knowledge. However, these are the needed predispositions of success, which are often hardly met by individual tourist actors. If individual actors merge into some kind of a cover structure, they have better possibilities for effective marketing. The survey shows that only 29 % of responding actors participate in such cooperative networks. This further indicates the lack of vision and mission, which would include the development of innovative integral tourist products.

Upon the basis of research results, one can assume that cooperative networking is not sufficiently developed on a systemic level and that Slovenian tourist actors act in the market individually and in an asynchronous manner, which further reduces the encouragement potential and the ability to successfully promote tourist products.

Knowledge, as a factor of social capital, presented as the exchange of knowledge among tourist actors and other tourist structures, and based on mutual trust, is considered to be the way towards cooperative networking in the development of innovative integral tourist products. Based on the regression model, this factor contributes the most to the establishment of cooperative networking. A common vision and mission of tourist actors in certain tourist territories, as well as agreement-based ideas and concepts, contribute to the development of cooperative networking and integral tourist products. The results confirm the findings of Vernon et al. (2005), showing that the lack of agreement among social actors can disturb the realization of long-term goals as well as of cooperative networking as the fundamental precondition for the development of integral tourist products. Our research also suggests that knowledge exchange as a development of information exchange among actors and structures enables successful cooperative networking. This supports the findings of Gray (1989) as well as Ambrož and Ambrož (2014), who argue that broad availability and exchange of information strengthen the agreement among actors as well as enable a common vision in the process of cooperative networking.

An additional element of a successful development of cooperative networking is also the diversity of participating actors. The need for strong partnerships among individuals, businesses organizations, and structures in tourism enables determined and efficient cooperative networking. In this perspective, Jamal and Stronza (2009) argue that the inclusion of a large number of actors is the appropriate way to develop cooperative networking. Actors and structures in the tourist sector developing different forms of social capital create also diversified innovative potential, which is the precondition for the development of integral tourist products. Latour (1987) already established that social actors who are developing the social capital for cooperative networking shall have as much right information as possible, in order to participate in such processes. The right information contributes also to developing realistic expectations of participating actors. A properly organized knowledge exchange in the process of cooperation networking will strengthen this very cooperative networking.

Arnaboldi and Spiller (2010) argue that tourist actors and structures that are strongly diversified among themselves have difficulty to understand the holistic and non-material exchange of knowledge to the degree, which would enable them to create or participate in successful cooperative networks. This makes the need to procure them with sufficient information and facts concerning cooperative networking processes all the more evident.

Upon the basis of the theoretical model, one can assume that the inclusion of tourist actors and structures is an important element of effective cooperative networking. However, the inclusion of tourist stakeholders can, in the empirical testing of the model, be demonstrated as being the weakest variable with the lowest explanatory power of cooperative networking. This contradicts expectations, especially since empirical results of Arnaboldi in Spiller (2010) indicate that this very element is the basic conceptual factor and a normative activation stimulus for the activation of social capital in the process of the development of tourist products. Tourist actors do express the possibility that a proper organization of the inclusion of individual actors could contribute to their decision to participate in cooperative networks. They also recognize the connection between efficient cooperative networking and increasing the possibility of satisfying particular needs and wishes of tourists in specific tourist spaces. One can assume that they are aware that wishes and needs of customers can be fulfilled only by cooperation on the personal as well as on the structural level.

Additionally, the actors included in the survey argue that one of the goals of cooperative networking is to open additional distribution channels, which would positively influence the interaction with customers in the process of purchasing integral tourist products. They consider cooperation networking also as the possibility for a merging of ideas into an integral information system supporting tourist demand and supply. The tourist actors see cooperative networking as an opportunity for high-quality promotion of given tourist territories and products with the use of webpages, social networks, as well as other information and communication technologies. Among the goals of cooperative networking, the respondents see also the development of effective supply structures enabling high-quality realization of tourists' demands and wishes and coverage of certain territories by integral tourist products. Tourist actors support the idea of combining their social capital in the creation of a new vision and mission, as well as in the use of their innovation potential. They also agree that they need to establish such cooperative networks, which would include actors and ideas that are realistic and real. Additionally, they see an added value in educating tourists and developing new business niches. Potential decisions of involved actors enable them to use creative, prompt, and innovative marketing approaches, which support positive experiences and responses from tourists. Tourist actors support the development of effective supply consortiums that would enable quality services and products to satisfy potential customers.

Simultaneously, the actors develop comprehensive coverage of individual tourist territories and provide integral tourist products in the area. They are able to create new business opportunities in given tourist regions or territories. The tourist actors, involved in the survey, understand cooperative networking as an opportunity to effectively use internal organizational processes of all participating stakeholders in a certain territory. Cooperative networking should also contribute to standardization, certification, lower costs, and higher quality, as well as to the excellence of integral tourist products.

The tourist actors covered by the research expose the importance of the inclusion of tourist actors in the innovation processes for integral tourist products, as well as of cooperative networking, which opens new business opportunities in certain territories. The basic precondition for the involvement of tourist actors is a significantly higher level of social capital, founded on the preparedness to cooperate and to use existing connections, in order to achieve common goals, which would be, later on, considered as successful cooperation networking.

Tourism, social capital, and innovation with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic

Social capital and innovation can, in the perspective of the 21st century, be considered as classical concepts. Both concepts are used in numerous contexts, and often figure as “buzzwords,” rather than actual denominators of certain facts, acts, or reality. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has set a new frame to many human activities, especially the ones, which are contact and mobility intensive (regarding tourism see: Gössling et al. 2020). The general application of innovation and social capital, in order to improve tourist experience, has in many cases been connected with new forms of the presentation of tourist products mainly re-defining what is new within the old. However, the pandemic also provides a potential for a different type of tourist innovation (see Higgins-Desbiolles 2020), which could surpass minor changes, incremental improvements, or marketing spins. In many cases, including Slovenia, tourism industry has been given almost a year of a (partially) government supported "time-off," which could and should be used to rethink the importance of tourism as an economic sector, the importance of guest structures and of different guest interests. It is reasonable to assume that certain types of tourism could, and most likely will, lose their importance, e.g., congress tourism. Further, the use of the Slovenian "voucher" system (see Cvelbar Knežević and Ogorevc 2020) showed that there exists an important share of potential tourists, who are willing, but economically unable to ensure for themselves a tourist experience; it also showed that state should, within regulatory boundaries, do more to promote tourism in the national context and the geographical frames of unexploited locations with tourist potential. The exact data regarding the influence of the 2020 pandemic on tourism will be available only after the year 2022, or even later, the following can, therefore, include only preliminary comments based on direct observations, which shall be put to the test in the future. However, an important issue, which strongly emerged at the forefront, is that Slovenian tourist industry, with all its tourist innovation potential, has not yet systematically been following the needs of domestic tourists, because Slovenian tourists have predominantly been directed to foreign destinations. When the non-economic factor affected all the elements of society, it has become clear that regulatory and allocative functions of the state were called for, while the tourist sector did rather little to attract domestic tourists. It has been counting on indirect subsidy and the maximization of its effectiveness by raising the prices of services. This has led to some dissatisfaction and scandals. In June 2020, the Slovenian Tourist Organization published a market research survey connected with its campaign regarding tourism under the COVID-19 conditions (STO 2020). The main aspect can be emphasized as the fact that relations between Slovenian tourist industry and Slovenian tourists are mutually missing, since 42 % of respondents answered that they will participate in Slovenian tourism possibilities only due to government vouchers, and 41 % answered that they will use the Slovenian tourist potential due to the positive and safe COVID-19 situation (STO 2020). Also, the structure of priorities between those who indicated that they will spend holidays in Slovenia and those who will travel abroad differs slightly, which could lead towards raising awareness and the development of new tourist products. The research shows a rather biased understanding of how COVID-19 has changed the perception of tourist habits. On the one hand, only 15 % of people argue that they would like to know more about Slovenia based on the "Moja Slovenija" campaign, but at the same time, on the other hand, 45 % expressed their pride that they live in "such a beautiful country" (STO 2020).

Upon the basis of the aforementioned research, we can say that Slovenia, as a whole, has a lot of unused potential to attract domestic tourists. However, the main circumstance is that the majority of domestic tourism is rather unprofitable. In many cases, it is connected with unrestricted outdoor activities and also mainly covers the needs of the 34 % of respondents who are low on budget (STO 2020). On the other hand, the tourist sector practices in many cases show a high level of disregard for the domestic tourist, their economic status and their potential. This situation calls for a re-evaluation of the role of the domestic tourist after the end of the pandemic and of the economic potential of dispersed tourism, where a more holistic approach to Slovenia as destination should be used and promoted not only abroad, but also to potential domestic tourists.

Under such circumstances, we can regard the COVID-19 pandemic as a test of the tourist innovation potential and of the ability to develop new, integral products, which will be attractive and safe, especially during the post-COVID-19 transitional period. Important preventive measures will not only be the testing and vaccinating of tourists, but also the increase of hygienic standards in the accommodation and gastronomic facilities (especially, the more frequented ones). Even if social distancing should potentially be forgotten, in the period of two or three years, we can, nonetheless, expect a higher appreciation for tourist opportunities with less crowding potential. This provides the development potential for destinations and services that offer unique experiences or wonders. In this manner, we can say that the

Postojna cave will remain what it is, but this might be the opportunity for the Iron cave, the Pekel cave, and others, which are often almost forgotten, although they are no less interesting and visit-worthy. The same logic can also be applied onto the international scale, where less visited countries, such as Slovakia or Romania, can become an interesting substitution for the Czech Republic. The question on the national as well as on the international level remains, however, if relevant actors in the tourism sector are willing and able to provide opportunities and products capable of attracting tourists and creating new tourist experiences, which will, on the one hand, support the national economy and, on the other hand, provide a feeling of health-related safety. Upon the basis of current trends, it seems, at the moment, how everyone hopes that people will not have changed their habits significantly and that the vaccine will have done the miracle, before the necessity of systemic changes regarding services and products becomes apparent.

Conclusions

Tourism economy is one of the crucial service economic activities of the modern world. The economic crisis in the year 2008 gave the tourism the opportunity to reconsider its role and direction for the next cycle of economic growth on the global, national, and local scales. Despite showing high levels of instability in the economic crisis, and even more so during the current pandemic, we can argue that, in the long run, tourism will remain an important element of modern economy and continue to contribute a significant share of the GDP in many countries around the globe. In this perspective, research regarding tourism remains an important element not only in the theoretical, but especially in the empirical realm.

Among the main elements of further development of tourism is the shift from micro (individual) products and services to the integral tourist products, which demand cooperation of various tourist actors. The latter are required to ensure a positive tourist experience through the inclusion and development of integral tourist products. In the modern perspective, we can call them "packages." Such integral tourist products will include various elements and cover different tourist sectors within a single product for an individual tourist (from accommodation to dining, sports, sightseeing, etc.). Such an approach demands a high level of quality assurance among all participating actors as well as a high level of mutual trust and ability for cooperation and networking. In other words, integral tourist products can be beneficial for the tourist economy of certain territories only if all cooperating stakeholders have sufficient capacities in the field of social capital and the ability to offer high-level products on their own.

In exploring the possibilities for a change of the tourist paradigm towards integral tourist products in Slovenian environment, the research was conducted among different types of tourism-related structures and actors. Upon the basis of results, one can observe the difference of perspectives with regard to the organizational type of participating actors. Smaller and general actors have a stronger interest in cooperation and the exchange of knowledge, as well as in cooperation networking, which results in new integral tourist products. On the other hand, bigger and specific actors are much more self-sufficient, self-reliant, and less willing to cooperate in cooperative networks that would result in integral tourist products.

Among the main concerns regarding cooperation, was the question of trust and competence. This indicates the main issues that are not only connected with the tourism sector in Slovenia, but can be generalized. Firstly, many subjects are unable to commit fully to such a project in the fears that they would lose more than gain, which reduces the desirability of such cooperative networking. Secondly, the subjects often believe that they work better than others and that cooperation would bring about a drop in quality or recognition, which would influence their particular business goals.

In general, there exists an awareness among Slovenian tourist actors that only cooperation can further advance the national tourist economy. However, when it comes to their own involvement in such a cooperation, different actors are rather careful and not fully committed, which reduces the potential of integral tourist products to succeed.

Regarding "the new reality" connected with the COVID-19 pandemic, there has already been a resurge in research concerning changes in the development of tourism under the new conditions, and one can assume that this will continue over the next years. Although the COVID-19-related research is in all respects an important element, it seems an understanding of the basic issues of Slovenian tourism is even more crucial. In this perspective, further research in the field of tourism in Slovenia should be oriented towards raising the awareness regarding domestic tourists and their role as customers, as well as towards overcoming the differences between different tourist sectors and perspectives on the development of tourism.

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Mitten im Sturm

Freiheit, Verantwortung und Menschenwürde angesichts der Corona-Pandemie

Holger Zaborowski

Universität Erfurt, Katholisch-Theologische Fakultät, Domstraße 10, 99084 Erfurt, Deutschland

holger.zaborowskihz@googlemail.com

Abstract

The article represents a preliminary attempt at a discussion of some of the fundamental questions, with which humanity finds itself confronted during the still ongoing pandemic of the COVID-19 disease. Although it is at the moment almost impossible to assess the entirety of consequences that have been caused by the incision of the crisis connected with the swift spreading of the novel coronavirus, the measures introduced with the intention of its containment give rise to the problem of individual freedoms and the criteria, which can establish the legitimacy of (political) decisions regarding their permissible limitation. If the pandemic in an essential manner shows that human dignity is denoted by the tension between freedom and safety, it perhaps at the same time and in contrast to the well-established emancipatory comprehension also enables a solidary conceptualization of freedom with regard to other human beings and their plight.

Keywords: COVID-19, crisis, freedom, safety, responsibility, solidarity, dignity.

Sredi viharja. Svoboda, odgovornost in človeško dostojanstvo z ozirom na pandemijo koronavirusa

Povzetek

Članek predstavlja začeten poskus premisleka nekaterih temeljnih vprašanj, kakršna je človeštvu zastavila še vedno trajajoča pandemija bolezni COVID-19. Čeprav trenutno nikakor ni mogoče opredeliti celokupnosti posledic, ki jih prinaša zareza krize, povezane z bliskovitim razširjanjem novega koronavirusa, se spričo ukrepov, vpeljanih z namenom njegove zamejitve, ne moremo izogniti problematiki individualnih svoboščin in kriterijev, kakršni lahko zagotovijo legitimnost (političnega) odločanja za njihovo dopustno omejevanje. Če pandemija na bistven način kaže, da je človekovo dostojanstvo razpeto med svobodo in varnost, tedaj obenem morda omogoča – v nasprotju z utečenim emancipacijskim dojemanjem – tudi zasnovanje pojma solidarnostne svobode z ozirom na drugega in njegovo stisko.

Ključne besede: COVID-19, kriza, svoboda, varnost, odgovornost, solidarnost, dostojanstvo.

1. Mitten in der Corona-Pandemie: Merkmale der Krise

Wir befinden uns jetzt – im Spätsommer 2020 – noch mitten in der Corona-Pandemie und somit mitten in der Krise, die durch diese Pandemie hervorgerufen wurde. Wir wissen noch nicht, wann die Pandemie ein Ende finden wird und wie sich die Krise weiter entwickeln wird. In Deutschland ist eine zerbrechliche Normalität eingetreten. Doch darf man nicht vergessen, dass sich die Situation anderswo – in anderen europäischen Ländern, in den USA, in vielen mittel- und südamerikanischen Staaten, in Indien, in zahlreichen Ländern Afrikas – anders darstellt. Von Normalität kann dort vielfach noch keine Rede sein. Der Sturm tobt noch. Und er kann auch schnell zu uns zurückkehren. Daher ist es noch nicht möglich, zu einer abschließenden Interpretation oder Bewertung dieser Krise zu kommen. Alles, was man jetzt schon zur Deutung dieser Krise sagt, steht unter einem Vorbehalt.[1]

Allerdings kann man so viel bereits sagen: Dieses Jahr 2020 markiert einen tiefen Einschnitt in der jüngeren Geschichte der Menschheit. Die Corona-Pandemie hat weltweit gravierende Konsequenzen. Sie betrifft zunächst die individuelle Gesundheit. Bei nicht wenigen Menschen scheint eine Infektion glimpflich zu verlaufen. Doch gibt es auch problematische, den gesamten Organismus betreffende Verläufe. Neben vielen Menschen, die nicht nur mit, sondern auch an Corona sterben, leiden zahlreiche Menschen unter ernsthaften Langzeitfolgen, über die wir täglich mehr erfahren. Auswirkungen hat die Pandemie auch auf der gesellschaftlichen, wirtschaftlichen, kulturellen, politischen oder religiösen Ebene. Es gab in den letzten Jahren und Jahrzehnten, wenn überhaupt, sehr wenige negative Ereignisse, die die Menschheit in diesem Maße, mit dieser Radikalität und auch mit dieser Geschwindigkeit betroffen hätten. Die Pandemie ist ein Einschnitt von universaler, alle Lebensbereiche betreffender Bedeutung, aber auch ein globales, die gesamte Welt und alle Menschen betreffendes Geschehen. Vergleichbare „Großereignisse“ haben sich viel langsamer entwickelt oder waren in ihren Auswirkungen stärker begrenzt – auf einzelne Regionen der Welt, auf bestimmte Aspekte des menschlichen Lebens oder schlicht weniger bedeutend in ihren Konsequenzen.

1 Vgl., u. a., meine Ausführungen: Zaborowski 2020, 96–112.

Teils sehr gravierende Konsequenzen ergeben sich auch aus den verschiedenen Maßnahmen, mit denen auf die Corona-Pandemie reagiert wurde und wird. Neben den direkten Folgen der Pandemie gibt es vielfältige Nebenfolgen – und darüber hinaus Nebenfolgen von Nebenfolgen, die ihrerseits Folgen zeitigen, also komplexe und oft schwer zu verstehende Ketten von miteinander zusammenhängenden, aufeinander rückwirkenden und teils in Spannungen zueinanderstehenden Folgen. Die Folgen und Nebenfolgen der Pandemie wie auch der Maßnahmen gegen sie geraten erst langsam in den Blick. Dabei zeigt sich, dass nicht nur die Pandemie selbst, sondern auch viele der Maßnahmen, die gegen sie ergriffen wurden und werden, irreversibel sind. Dieser Umstand erzeugt einen enormen Druck auf die politisch Handelnden. Während die Wissenschaft im Modus des wiederholbaren und veränderbaren Experiments verfahren kann, muss die Politik viele Entscheidungen treffen, deren Folgen sie, wenn ein bestimmter Weg sich nicht bewähren und als falsch erweisen sollte, nur in begrenzter Weise, wenn überhaupt, rückgängig machen kann. Die Corona-Pandemie zeigt, welche enorme Verantwortung auf den Schultern politischer Verantwortungsträger und ihrer Beraterinnen und Berater aus Wissenschaft und Zivilgesellschaft liegt. Die Gefahr, zu früh oder zu spät zu handeln oder zu viel oder zu wenig zu tun, ist allgegenwärtig. Selbst wer nach bestem Wissen und Gewissen handelt, kann in die Irre gehen – was im Falle einer globalen Pandemie zu extrem hohen Opferzahlen führen könnte. Damit ist noch nicht von der Problematik gesprochen, dass bestimmte Entscheidungen in der Öffentlichkeit auf Unverständnis stoßen oder nicht angemessen kommuniziert werden können.

Radikalität, Geschwindigkeit, Universalität, Globalität, Komplexität der Ereignisse und ihrer Folgen und Nebenfolgen, Irreversibilität vieler Folgen und Nebenfolgen und die Schwierigkeit, manche Entscheidungen verständlich zu machen und zu kommunizieren, bestimmen somit diese epochale Krise und erklären außerdem die Schwierigkeiten einer moralischen Auseinandersetzung mit ihr.

2. Mitten in der Gefahr: Einschränkungen individueller Freiheiten

Zu den wichtigsten gesellschaftlichen Folgen der Pandemie gehören in liberalen, der Freiheit des Individuums verpflichteten Rechtsstaaten die Einschränkungen elementarer Grundrechte. Seit 1945 hat die westliche Welt derart massive Eingriffe in die Freiheitsrechte der Menschen nicht erlebt: das Reisen wird beschränkt; in vielen Bereichen werden Handel und Wirtschaft auf ein Minimum zurückgefahren; zahlreiche Veranstaltungen dürfen nicht oder nur unter Schutzmaßnahmen und mit entsprechenden Hygienekonzepten durchgeführt werden; viele kulturelle, religiöse oder auch gesellschaftliche Ereignisse werden abgesagt oder können nur digital durchgeführt werden; in Altenheimen oder auch Krankenhäusern werden Besuchsverbote ausgesprochen, so dass alte, kranke oder sterbende Menschen nicht besucht werden können; Schulen, Universitäten und andere Bildungseinrichtungen verzichten auf Präsenzveranstaltungen; das Tragen von Mund-Nasen-Masken ist an vielen Orten verpflichtend; das regelmäßige Desinfizieren der Hände und das Abstands- und Distanzgebot sind zu Routinen geworden. Leicht ließe sich diese Liste fortsetzen. Der Alltag steht seit März 2020 unter Ausnahmebedingungen.

In vielen Ländern Europas sind manche der am tiefsten reichenden Einschränkungen wieder aufgehoben worden. Aber es ist bekannt, dass sich diese, sollte sich die Situation verschärfen und es eine zweite Welle geben, wieder als sinnvoll und notwendig zeigen könnten. Jeder Tag bringt eine neue Einschätzung der Gefahrenlage mit sich – und somit auch eine mögliche Lockerung oder Verschärfung von Maßnahmen gegen die Pandemie. Es wird lange dauern, bis so etwas wie der Status *quo ante*, der Zustand vor der Krise zurückkehren wird – wenn es denn je jene Normalität, an die wir uns gewöhnt hatten, wieder geben wird. Vieles spricht nämlich dafür, dass auch langfristig vieles anders sein wird und dass die Corona-Pandemie zu einer „Zeitenwende“ führen wird, dass man also ein Leben vor der Corona-Krise von einem Leben danach unterscheiden wird. Denn durch sie wurden bestimmte Entwicklungen – von der Digitalisierung im Bildungswesen über die Bedeutung des Online-Handels bis hin zur Rolle des Home-Office und den Folgen, die die Veränderungen im

Arbeitsleben für das Familienleben haben – massiv beschleunigt. Sicherlich wird man nach der Krise auch kritisch nach weiteren Zusammenhängen der Krise – nach den Schattenseiten der Globalisierung, nach den problematischen Folgen jüngerer Reformen im Gesundheitswesen oder nach den Konsequenzen mangelnder europäischer oder globaler Solidarität – fragen. Zunächst hängt aber vieles davon ab, ob es gelingen wird, das Wissen über den Virus zu erweitern und einen Impfstoff oder eine erfolgreiche Therapie zu entwickeln. Solange dies nicht der Fall ist, können wir nicht so frei agieren, wie es uns lieb wäre – und wie wir es gewohnt waren.

In ihrer Ansprache vom 18. März 2020 hat Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel darauf aufmerksam gemacht, wie bewusst ihr das Ausmaß der damals getroffenen Maßnahmen ist:

> Ich weiß, wie dramatisch schon jetzt die Einschränkungen sind: keine Veranstaltungen mehr, keine Messen, keine Konzerte und vorerst auch keine Schule mehr, keine Universität, kein Kindergarten, kein Spiel auf einem Spielplatz. Ich weiß, wie hart die Schließungen, auf die sich Bund und Länder geeinigt haben, in unser Leben und auch unser demokratisches Selbstverständnis eingreifen. Es sind Einschränkungen, wie es sie in der Bundesrepublik noch nie gab. (Merkel 2020)

Anders als der französische Staatspräsident Macron hat sich Merkel keiner martialischen Kriegsrhetorik bedient. Ihre aus diesem Grund viel gelobte Rede ist von Sachlichkeit und Nüchternheit geprägt – und trotzdem ein Dokument persönlicher Betroffenheit. In ihrer Begründung für die Einschränkung der Freiheitsrechte geht Merkel nämlich auch auf eigene biographischen Erfahrungen ein:

> Lassen Sie mich versichern: Für jemandem wie mich, für die Reise- und Bewegungsfreiheit ein schwer erkämpftes Recht waren, sind solche Einschränkungen nur in der absoluten Notwendigkeit zu rechtfertigen. Sie sollten in einer Demokratie nie leichtfertig und nur temporär beschlossen werden – aber sie sind im Moment unverzichtbar, um Leben zu retten. (Ibid.)

Mit ihrer Rede hat Merkel viele Menschen in Deutschland überzeugen können. Die dramatischen Bilder aus Italien und Spanien, die bereits Mitte März 2020 über die traditionellen und die neuen sozialen Medien die mitteleuropäische Bevölkerung erreicht hatten, haben vermutlich ihren Appel an die Bevölkerung unterstützt. Sie hatten bereits im Vorfeld der Rede zu Verhaltensänderungen geführt. Es könnte sein, dass Deutschland bislang deshalb gut die Krise bestehen konnte, weil die Bevölkerung sich lange an die gebotenen Einschränkungen der Freiheit gehalten hat – und zwar nicht aus blindem Gehorsam, sondern aus Einsicht in die Angemessenheit der getroffenen Maßnahmen und aus einem prinzipiellen Vertrauen gegenüber den politisch Handelnden und ihren Beraterinnen und Beratern.

Allerdings müssen Einschränkungen der Freiheit in einem liberalen Rechtsstaat immer sorgfältig geprüft, begründet und transparent vermittelt werden. Merkel hat darauf ausdrücklich aufmerksam gemacht und in minimaler Weise eine solche Begründung geliefert. Sie hat nämlich darauf verwiesen, dass es darum gehe, „Leben zu retten". Mehr war im März 2020 auch noch nicht möglich. Die Politik musste auf Sicht fahren und auf eine weitestgehend wenig bekannte Herausforderung reagieren. Bei allen Differenzen in der Einschätzung der konkreten Gefahrenlage bestand ein breiter Konsens darin, angesichts einer unmittelbaren Bedrohung und der konkreten Gefahr, dass es aufgrund der exponentiellen Verbreitung des Virus zu einer Überlastung des Gesundheitssystems kommen könnte, möglichst schnell, umfassend und effektiv zu handeln. Denn eine solche Überlastung hätte u. a. dazu geführt, dass Menschen, die bei guter Versorgung entsprechend gute Heilungs- oder auch Überlebenschancen gehabt hätten, gar nicht oder nur in begrenztem Maße hätten behandelt werden können. Man kann sich kaum ausmalen, zu welchen weiteren Folgen eine solche Überlastung in einer hochmodernen und hochkomplexen Gesellschaft hätte führen können – oft in Kontexten, die zunächst nicht in den Blick der Öffentlichkeit geraten. So hätten in verschiedenen Bereichen Lieferengpässe entstehen können – nicht etwa, weil es bestimmte Waren nicht gegeben hätte, sondern weil es zu wenige Fahrer gegeben hätte, um diese anzuliefern.

An die Stelle eines Handelns auf Sicht, das möglichst schnell auf konkrete Situationen antworten muss, nicht selten ohne diese in ausreichender Weise zu kennen, ist mittlerweile die Möglichkeit einer tiefer reichenden Reflexion getreten. Wenn auch zum jetzigen Zeitpunkt ein kritischer Rückblick auf die Maßnahmen, die in der Anfangszeit der Krise ergriffen wurden, aufgrund der Tatsache, dass wir uns noch mitten in der Pandemie befinden, nur in beschränkter Weise möglich ist, so kann bereits jetzt darüber nachgedacht werden, aufgrund welcher Art von Entscheidungen und mit welchem Zweck derart umfängliche Einschränkungen der Freiheit, wie sie im März in Deutschland verordnet wurden, möglich sind. Die Auseinandersetzung mit diesen beiden Fragen – der ersten nach den formalen Kriterien von bedingten freiheitseinschränkenden Entscheidungen und der zweiten nach den möglichen Zwecken dieser Entscheidungen – ist insbesondere deshalb notwendig, weil sich, nachdem zunächst die Maßnahmen der Regierung auf sehr breite Akzeptanz stießen, nun in einer klaren Minderheit der Bevölkerung zwar, jedoch verbunden mit medialer und gesellschaftlicher Präsenz ein nicht selten undifferenziertes, manchmal mit Verschwörungsthesen einhergehendes Unbehagen und teils lautstark vorgetragene Kritik an den ergriffenen Maßnahmen regen.

3. Mitten in der Entscheidung: Kriterien legitimer Einschränkungen der Freiheit

Es ist eine triviale, aber heute oft vergessene oder verdrängte Wahrheit, dass auch in einem liberalen Rechtsstaat Einschränkungen der Freiheit nichts Neues oder Ungewöhnliches sind. Als Freiheitssubjekte stehen wir immer in einem Netz von Verpflichtungen. Auch die Verantwortung für konkrete Menschen in unmittelbarer Lebensgefahr und die damit verbundene Einschränkung der eigenen Freiheit ist tief verankert in unseren moralischen Normen und unserer Rechtskultur. Wir akzeptieren in der Regel bereitwillig Einschränkungen unserer Freiheit. Denn meine Freiheit steht in Beziehungen. Ich bin als freies Wesen nie alleine. Es gibt die andere Freiheit, den anderen Menschen, dessen Freiheit ich anzuerkennen habe und für den ich in begrenztem, zunächst und zumeist auf Notsituationen bezogenen Maße auch Verantwortung trage. Ohne Grenzen würde Freiheit daher inhuman werden. Wenn es keine Regeln oder den Einzelnen begrenzenden Pflichten gäbe, würde es mit hoher Wahrscheinlichkeit zu einem Kampf aller gegen alle kommen, und die Macht, der Wille und die Interessen des Stärksten würden zu einer Willkürherrschaft und somit für die meisten Menschen zum Ende der Freiheit führen. Grenzen der Freiheit aus Verantwortung für den anderen Menschen heraus humanisieren das Verhältnis zwischen Menschen und sind überdies die Bedingungen der Möglichkeit von menschlicher, allen Menschen zukommender Freiheit.

Dabei lassen sich zwei verschiedene Formen der Freiheitseinschränkung unterscheiden: Zum einen muss sich der freie Mensch an unbedingt geltende ethische Gebote – wie etwa das Verbot der Folter – halten, die in einem gerechten Staat ihren Niederschlag in Gesetzen finden. Zum anderen gibt es neben den im strengen Sinne unbedingt geltenden ethischen Imperativen auch moralische und gesellschaftliche Gebote, Normen und Konventionen, die ebenfalls die Freiheit beschränken, allerdings in ihrer Geltung kontroverser und auch bedingter sind. Denn viele dieser Pflichten, die in Gesetzen einen verbindlichen Ausdruck finden können, aber nicht müssen, sind in dem Sinne relativ, dass sie von bestimmten Traditionen, Vorlieben, Moden oder auch Kontexten abhängig sind. Sofern es um gesetzlich kodifizierte Pflichten geht (und nicht um Fragen der Höflichkeit, des guten Geschmacks oder moralisch relevanter Bräuche), handeln moderne Gesellschaften sie in demokratischen Prozessen aus wie beispielsweise die Art und dem Umfang der Schulpflicht oder die Pflicht, Steuern für dieses oder jenes in einer bestimmten Höhe zu zahlen. Dabei kann man sowohl beobachten, dass traditionelle Einschränkungen – man denke an die rechtlichen Regelungen zur Eheschließung und Ehescheidung – gelockert oder aufgehoben werden, als auch, dass neue Einschränkungen – hier wären Gesetze, die den Umweltschutz betreffen, zu nennen – eingeführt werden. Manche Freiheitseinschränkungen wurden – wie die Einführung der heute selbstverständlichen Gurtpflicht – oder werden – wie die Einführung eines Tempolimits auf Autobahnen – kontrovers diskutiert und führen dabei zu höchst grundsätzlichen Debatten. Wenn freie Fahrt für freie Bürger gefordert wird, geht es nämlich um wesentlich mehr als nur um das Tempolimit. Zur Diskussion stehen dann auch das bürgerliche Selbstverständnis und das Verständnis der gesellschaftlichen Ordnung und der staatlichen Gewalt – wie umgekehrt manche grundsätzliche Fragestellung oft in Gestalt einer konkreten und anschaulichen Einzelfrage diskutiert wird.

Andere Einschränkungen der Freiheit werden von vornherein nur für eine bestimmte Situation festgelegt. So hat Merkel im Zusammenhang mit den Maßnahmen gegen die Corona-Pandemie ausdrücklich von „temporären" Einschränkungen gesprochen, die unter bestimmten, klar definierbaren Bedingungen stehen. Wenn die Bedingungen sich verändern, müssen auch die auf sie zurückgehenden Einschränkungen der Freiheit umgehend aufgehoben werden. In Deutschland ist es daher nach teils kontroversen öffentlichen Diskussionen in vielen Bereichen wieder zu Lockerungen der getroffenen Maßnahmen gekommen – in Anpassung an die jeweilige Gefahrenlage, die sich weiterentwickelt hat, über die man heute mehr weiß als noch Mitte März und auf die man daher jetzt anders – differenzierter oder mit anderen Mitteln – als in den ersten Wochen der Corona-Pandemie reagieren kann. Nichts spricht in einem funktionierenden Rechtsstaat wie Deutschland dagegen, so zeigt sich, dass neue Einschätzungen der Gefahrenlage auch umgehend zu einer Anpassung der getroffenen Maßnahmen gegen die Gefahr führen.

Einschränkungen der Freiheit dürfen dabei nicht willkürlich erfolgen, sondern müssen, nachdem verschiedene Gesichtspunkte erwogen und gegeneinander abgewogen wurden, gut begründet werden, d. h. man muss vorher sorgfältig prüfen, ob eine Einschränkung wirklich angebracht ist und ob sich nicht auf anderem Wege noch besser das angestrebte Ziel erreichen lässt. Jede bedingte Einschränkung der Freiheit sollte eine maßvolle *ultima ratio* darstellen. Auch auf diese Kriterien geht Merkel ein, wenn sie darauf verweist, dass die Entscheidungen der Regierung „nicht leichtfertig" getroffen wurden und daher auf rational nachvollziehbare Gründe zurückgehen. Zudem sollten Entscheidungen, die zu einer Einschränkung der Freiheit führen, transparent gemacht werden – wie ebenfalls in der bzw. durch die Rede von Merkel geschehen ist. Damit sind einige wichtige Merkmale für eine legitime politische Entscheidung, die Freiheit einzuschränken, genannt.

Merkel hat die im März getroffenen Entscheidungen durch ein weiteres Merkmal charakterisiert. Sie hat davon gesprochen, dass diese auf eine „absolute Notwendigkeit" zurückgingen. In der damaligen Situation konnte eine solche drastische Rhetorik auf den ersten Blick angebracht erscheinen. Jedoch erweist sie sich als zutiefst problematisch. Überdies könnte sie für die gegenwärtige Kritik an den Maßnahmen der Regierung zumindest in Teilen verantwortlich sein. Denn der Bezug auf eine *absolute* Notwendigkeit legt nahe, dass man nicht – und das heißt gar nicht, unter gar keinen Umständen – hätte anders oder gar nicht handeln können und dass es somit gar keine wirkliche politische Entscheidung gab. Befanden wir uns tatsächlich in einer solchen Situation? Hätte man zum damaligen Zeitpunkt bestimmen können, dass eine zu „alternativlosem" Handeln führende Situation – was auch immer dies genau bedeuten soll – vorlag, dass es also gar keine Alternative zu den getroffenen Entscheidungen gab? Es wäre vermessen, diese Frage mit einer eindeutig positiven Antwort zu versehen. Dafür wusste – und weiß man immer noch – schlicht zu wenig. Wie das Beispiel Schwedens oder anderer Länder zeigt, hätten auch andere politische Entscheidungen getroffen werden können. Mit dieser Kritik ist kein Urteil darüber getroffen, ob die in Deutschland getroffenen Entscheidungen besser als andere Entscheidungen waren. Sehr vieles spricht dafür, dass sie unter den gegebenen Umständen die bestmögliche Entscheidung waren. Allerdings lag keine „*absolute* Notwendigkeit" vor. Zumindest prinzipiell hätte man Entscheidungen anders oder andere Entscheidungen treffen können – und treffen können müssen.

Genau dies liegt ja in der Logik politischen Handelns. Die Politik folgt nicht physikalischen oder logischen Gesetzen, die mit absoluter Notwendigkeit gelten, sondern stellt eine bestimmte Weise des menschlichen Handelns dar. Dies setzt Freiheit und somit eine ganz andere Ordnung als jene absoluter Notwendigkeiten voraus, wie die Politik nach unserem liberalen Verständnis auch primär der Freiheit des Menschen dient – und nicht umgekehrt die Freiheit dem politischen Raum untergeordnet wird. Wenn man den Freiheitsraum des politischen Handelns durch die Bezugnahme auf eine „absolute Notwendigkeit" beschränkt, um sodann auf dieser Grundlage die individuellen Freiheitsräume der Bürgerinnen und Bürger einzuschränken, so ist dies fragwürdig, und zwar nicht nur, weil es den Tatsachen – den immer noch bestehenden Möglichkeiten eines anderen Handelns – nicht entspricht und Politik auf bloße Verwaltung gegebener Zustände reduziert, sondern auch weil es dazu führen kann, die Suche nach Alternativen zu unterlassen. Denn die Pflicht zu dieser Suche erlischt nicht, wenn die Entscheidung, Freiheit zeitlich begrenzt einzuschränken, getroffen wurde.

Was sich in Merkels Verweis auf eine „absolute Notwendigkeit" zeigt, ist ein Bedürfnis nach Sicherheit, das angesichts der Dimensionen der getroffenen Entscheidungen durchaus verständlich ist. Derart „absolut notwendige" Entscheidungen versprechen allerdings nicht nur Sicherheit, sondern verhindern auch Zweifel an der einmal getroffenen Entscheidung. Da gerade Zweifel aber zu einer je neuen Bewertung der Lage führen, können auch sie als ein wichtiges Kriterium legitimer bedingter Freiheitseinschränkungen gelten.

4. Mitten im Risiko: Menschenwürde und die Spannung von Freiheit und Sicherheit

Angela Merkel hat als Zweck der getroffenen Maßnahmen die Gefahren für viele Menschen und damit den Schutz des menschlichen Lebens genannt. Solche Gefahren rechtfertigen in der Tat ungewöhnliche Maßnahmen. Angesichts der Gefahr, dass viele Menschen leiden und sterben oder chronisch krank werden, kann man von der Mehrheit der Bevölkerung durchaus verlangen, dass sie sich in ihrer Freiheit in gewissem Maße und für eine gewisse Zeit einschränkt, wenn dies dazu führt, dass die Gefahr abgewendet oder zumindest reduziert werden kann, und wenn sicher ist, dass die Nebenfolgen der Maßnahmen gegen die Pandemie nicht größer sind als die möglichen Folgen der Pandemie. Man kann angesichts dieser Gefahren auch wirtschaftliche Nachteile in Kauf nehmen. Der Markt ist nämlich kein Selbstzweck, sondern dem Menschen und seinem Wohl untergeordnet.

Man kann dies noch anders formulieren: Im modernen liberalen Staat nimmt noch nicht einmal die Freiheit einen absoluten Rang ein. Sie ist, wie sich bereits gezeigt hat, begrenzt und insbesondere durch die Beziehung mit anderen Menschen beschränkt. Von absoluter Bedeutung ist die Würde des Menschen und nicht seine Freiheit, so eng auch beides miteinander verbunden ist. Es ist daher die Würde, die in den auf ihre konkrete Bedeutung hin kontrovers diskutierten Worten des Grundgesetztes „unantastbar" ist. Dies bedeutet, dass der Mensch nie auf ein bloßes Mittel für einen außer ihn liegenden Zweck – und sei dieser Zweck noch so bedeutend oder in moralischer Hinsicht wertvoll – reduziert werden darf. Das wäre allerdings der Fall gewesen, wenn man in der Situation der unmittelbaren Gefahr wegen der wirtschaftlichen Konsequenzen oder der gesellschaftlichen und kulturellen Nebenfolgen von Freiheitseinschränkungen eine hohe Zahl von möglichen Opfern der Pandemie in Kauf genommen hätte. In der konkreten Gefahrensituation vor wenigen Monaten scheint die Regierung – mehr kann zum gegebenen Zeitpunkt nicht gesagt werden – zumindest Entscheidungen getroffen zu haben, die nicht *prinzipiell* falsch gewesen sind. Darauf deutet ein breiter Konsens der Expertinnen und Experten hin.

Allerdings sind an dieser Stelle einige Differenzierungen vorzunehmen. Der Schutz des bloßen Lebens ist nämlich kein unbedingtes Gebot. Das mag zunächst erstaunen, doch dürften die folgenden Überlegungen die Plausibilität dieser These zeigen. Viele als positiv zu würdigende politische oder gesellschaftliche Entscheidungen oder auch wissenschaftlich-technische und gesellschaftliche Entwicklungen zeigen nicht nur Vorteile, sondern haben auch einige teils gravierende Schattenseiten. Sie führen beispielsweise unweigerlich dazu, dass Menschen sterben werden. Seitdem es Autos oder Flugzeuge gibt, gibt es auch Verkehrsopfer, d. h. als Gesellschaft sind wir bereit, eine bestimmte Zahl von Menschen unserem Wunsch nach individueller und gesellschaftlicher Mobilität zu opfern. Auch viele Methoden der Energieerzeugung – nicht nur die Atomenergie, sondern auch die Erzeugung von Energie durch das Verbrennen fossiler Materialien – führen zu teils beträchtlichen, aber gesellschaftlich akzeptierten Risiken für Gesundheit und Leben vieler Menschen. Während der Konsum und Besitz vieler Drogen verboten ist, haben wir in Deutschland eine relativ liberale Haltung gegenüber Alkohol und sind, obwohl es gute Gründe für restriktivere Maßnahmen gibt, aus kulturellen Gründen zögerlich, solche Maßnahmen zu ergreifen. Auch medizinische Eingriffe oder die Einnahme bestimmter Medikamente können teils beträchtliche Nebenfolgen haben, die wir in bestimmtem Maße tolerieren, weil uns ihr allgemeiner Nutzen die gegebenen Nachteile in konkreten Einzelfällen zu rechtfertigen scheint. Wenn sich eine bestimmte Weise, sich fortzubewegen, Energie zu erzeugen oder Menschen zu operieren und medizinisch zu behandeln, als zu risikoreich erweisen sollte, sind wir zu einer solchen Toleranz nicht mehr bereit.

In vielen anderen Bereichen nehmen wir ebenfalls Risiken und Opfer in Kauf. Dies ist auch moralisch gerechtfertigt, allerdings, wie mir scheint, unter den folgenden fünf Voraussetzungen: Es ist, *erstens*, notwendig, dass sich das Risiko und die Zahl möglicher Opfer in Grenzen hält, d. h.

etwas könnte zu risikoreich sein, als dass man es erlauben würde, oder etwas könnte sich als zu risikoreich erweisen, so dass man es verbietet. Es bleibt, *zweitens*, notwendig, sich darum zu bemühen, die Zahl der Opfer möglichst gering zu halten, d. h. man darf nicht gleichgültig die Zahl der jährlichen Opfer zur Kenntnis nehmen, sondern muss – z. B. durch eine verpflichtende regelmäßige technische Überprüfung von Fahrzeugen – dauerhaft Maßnahmen ergreifen, um diese Zahl zu reduzieren, und muss auch – wie im Falle der Sperrung einer baufälligen Brücke oder der Freiheitseinschränkungen während der Corona-Pandemie – auf unmittelbare Gefahrensituationen schnell reagieren. Bei den Opfern handelt es sich, *drittens*, um – tragische – Opfer einer allgemeinen statistischen Wahrscheinlichkeit, nicht um von anderen Menschen konkret ausgewählte Opfer (zu Jahresbeginn steht ungefähr fest, wie viele Menschen im beginnenden Jahr im Straßenverkehr sterben werden; es steht aber nicht fest, wer dies sein wird). Außerdem besteht, *viertens*, ein politischer und gesellschaftlicher Konsens, ein bestimmtes Risiko einzugehen und diese Opfer in Kauf zu nehmen, und es ist, *fünftens*, dem einzelnen Menschen zumindest prinzipiell möglich, die eigene Gefahr, zu einem Opfer zu werden, zu minimieren, indem er beispielsweise nicht oder nur in sehr beschränkter Weise am Straßen- oder Flugverkehr teilnimmt, eine Operation oder eine andere Behandlungsmethode verweigert oder keinen Alkohol trinkt.

In welchen Bereichen, aus welchen Gründen und in welchem Maße eine Gesellschaft Opfer in Kauf nimmt oder zu vermeiden sucht, ist eine Frage der Tradition, des oft impliziten gesellschaftlichen Konsenses, religiöser Überlieferungen, kultureller Gewohnheiten, politischer Opportunitätsüberlegungen oder des wissenschaftlichen Erkenntnisstandes. Damit aber zeigt sich, dass die Rettung von Menschenleben kein unbedingtes Gebot ist. Denn ansonsten müsste umgehend vieles, das mit einem Lebensrisiko verbunden ist – von der Nutzung von Autos und Flugzeugen über bestimmte Methoden der Energieerzeugung bis hin zum Konsum gefährlicher Substanzen –, verboten werden. Man würde dann die Politik dem Diktat des bloßen, vor Gefahren sicheren menschlichen Lebens radikal unterwerfen. Dann wäre es umgekehrt auch nur naheliegend, alles dafür zu tun, dass Menschen nicht nur nicht krank werden oder sterben, sondern dass sie möglichst lange sicher und gesund leben können. Damit wären Tür und Tor für allerlei manipulative und freiheitseinschränkende Maßnahmen geöffnet.

Ein Leben in möglichst umfassender Sicherheit – etwa in Gestalt einer „Gesundheitsdiktatur“ – wäre allerdings ein Leben gegen die Würde des Menschen. Gesundheit ist zwar ein hohes, aber nicht das höchste Gut des Menschen. Auf diesen wichtigen Umstand hat der Bundestagspräsident aufmerksam gemacht:

> Aber wenn ich höre, alles andere habe vor dem Schutz von Leben zurückzutreten, dann muss ich sagen: Das ist in dieser Absolutheit nicht richtig. Grundrechte beschränken sich gegenseitig. Wenn es überhaupt einen absoluten Wert in unserem Grundgesetz gibt, dann ist das die Würde des Menschen. Die ist unantastbar. (Birnbaum und Ismar 2020)

Es gibt neben der Gesundheit bzw. dem Leben viele andere Güter, und es ist gerade eine Frage der Würde, ob dem Menschen die Freiheit gelassen wird, in Anerkennung seiner moralischen Pflichten konkrete Güter sowie eine ihm eigene Güterhierarchie zu wählen. Ein der Freiheit verpflichteter Staat kann daher nicht ein relatives Gut wie die Gesundheit oder auch das sichere (Über-)Leben mit absoluter Bedeutung versehen – vor allem, weil auch die Würde des Menschen, so Schäuble lakonisch, nicht ausschließe, „dass wir sterben müssen“ (ibid.). Mit vielen der Gesundheit dienenden Verboten würde nämlich mit der Freiheit der Wahl der eigenen Güter und Güterhierarchien vieles verschwinden, das zu einem würdevollen Leben gehört: von einer möglichst für viele Menschen kostengünstigen Mobilität über die Versorgung mit ausreichend Energie bis zur Freude und zum Genuss, den der Konsum von Alkohol bereiten kann. Oder auf die Situation der Corona-Pandemie bezogen: Verbote, die der physischen Gesundheit vieler Menschen dienen, können zu Folgen führen, die die Freiheit und Würde des Menschen in hohem Maße beeinträchtigen. So sinnvoll auf der einen Seite Besuchsverbote in Altenheimen sein können, so sehr gilt es, die Folgen auch in Betracht zu ziehen, die entstehen können, wenn engste Angehörige – zum Beispiel seit Jahrzehnten verheiratete Ehepaare oder Eltern und Kinder – sich nicht besuchen dürfen oder sterbende

Menschen ohne menschliche Begleitung bleiben. In diesen Konflikten gilt es, den Konflikt verschiedener Grundrechte anzuerkennen, sorgfältig abzuwägen und vor allem kreativ Lösungen zu suchen, die unterschiedlichen Aspekten gerecht werden und verschiedene Aspekte, Interessen und Anliegen miteinander vermitteln. Denn nur selten handelt es sich auch in der Corona-Krise um Dilemma-Situationen, in denen sich ein strenges „Entweder/Oder" zeigt.

In diesen Überlegungen zeigt sich der spannungsreiche Konflikt zwischen Freiheit auf der einen Seite und Gesundheit bzw. Sicherheit des Lebens auf der anderen Seite: Je mehr Freiheit eine Gesellschaft ermöglicht, umso unsicherer wird das Leben für das Individuum. Und je sicherer eine Gesellschaft wird, umso mehr Einschränkungen sind mit der Freiheit verbunden. Maximale Lebenssicherheit – die es ja nie geben wird – wäre mit maximaler Unfreiheit verbunden und umgekehrt. Es gilt daher, Freiheit und Sicherheit in ein menschliches Verhältnis zu setzen – und diese Verhältnisbestimmung auch regelmäßig zu überprüfen. In ein und derselben Frage können liberale Rechtsstaaten dabei zu sehr unterschiedlichen Bestimmungen des Verhältnisses von Freiheit und Sicherheit bzw. Gesundheit kommen. Und ein und dieselbe Gesellschaft mag in einem Bereich eher der Sicherheit den Vorzug geben, wohingegen sie in anderen Bereichen der Freiheit einen Vorzug gibt. Die Frage nach einem angemessenen Verhältnis von Freiheit und Sicherheit lässt sich nämlich nicht abstrakt oder im Allgemeinen, sondern nur vor dem Hintergrund einer konkreten Situation beantworten. Das ist der Grund dafür, dass Verhältnisbestimmungen von Freiheit und Sicherheit höchst kontrovers sind und bleiben. Sie sind alles andere als willkürlich, aber doch mit einer gewissen Bandbreite möglicher Optionen versehen.

Das gilt auch in der Corona-Pandemie und sollte nicht überraschen: Expertinnen und Experten aus Naturwissenschaft, Medizin und Pflege kommen angesichts dieser Pandemie zu teils unterschiedlichen Beurteilungen des gegebenen Risikos und somit zu voneinander abweichenden Empfehlungen. Damit ist noch nichts von den anderen – etwa kulturellen, religiösen, psychologischen oder wirtschaftlichen – Perspektiven gesagt, die auf die Pandemie möglich sind und die ihrerseits zu äußerst variierenden Einschätzungen der Lage führen. Die Politik wie auch der gesellschaftliche

Diskurs steht somit vor der Aufgabe, verschiedene Aspekte zu berücksichtigen, ihre Bedeutung abzuwägen und in konkretes Handeln zu übersetzen. Dabei sollte man sich der Tatsache bewusst bleiben, dass selten die Spannung von Freiheit und Sicherheit zu einem wirklich tragischen Konflikt führt. Die Pflicht, in bestimmten Situationen Masken zu tragen, um dadurch andere Menschen zu schützen, stellt eine nur geringfügige Einschränkung der Freiheit dar, so dass die radikale Kritik, die gelegentlich an dieser Verpflichtung geäußert wird, wenig plausibel erscheint. Gravierender sind die Folgen für bestimmte Unternehmen, Solo-Selbständige oder kulturelle Einrichtungen, denen auf Zeit die Existenzgrundlage genommen wird. Bislang versucht man, die wirtschaftlichen Folgen der Einschränkung der Freiheit teilweise durch staatliche Leistungen zu kompensieren. Das ist nicht immer in einer gerechten Weise möglich. Gerade aus diesem Grund stellt sich die Aufgabe eines gesellschaftlichen Diskurses darüber, wie man die Last der Folgen und Nebenfolgen der Corona-Pandemie gerecht verteilen kann, um wirklich tragischen Folgen zu entgehen. Anders als oft angenommen dürfte die Welt nach der Pandemie nicht gerechter werden; aber sie sollte zumindest nicht ungerechter werden.

5. Mitten unter Menschen: Solidarische Freiheit vom Anderen her

Moderne Gesellschaften sind stark von einer individualistischen emanzipatorischen oder negativen Freiheit geprägt, also von der Freiheit des Einzelnen als Emanzipation von bestehenden ungerechten Einschränkungen etwa durch Traditionen, die sich überholt haben, oder durch Herrscher und Regierende. Dieses Verständnis hat die Entwicklung der modernen liberalen Gesellschaft und eines modernen Verständnisses individueller Rechte maßgeblich geprägt. Aber es gibt noch ein anderes Verständnis von Freiheit, das nach dem Zweck oder Ziel gelungener menschlicher Freiheit fragt. Auch dieses Verständnis hat die moderne Gesellschaft und den freiheitlichen Staat in hohem Maße beeinflusst. In ihm artikuliert sich das Wissen um die Bedeutung eines gerechten und guten Zusammenlebens in Freiheit und somit auch um die Grenzen der Freiheit und die Verantwortung des Menschen. Man kann auch von einem solidarischen Verständnis von Freiheit sprechen, von einer

Freiheit angesichts des anderen Menschen und seiner Not. Um zu vermeiden, dass andere Menschen in Not geraten, oder auch um ihnen aus der Not zu helfen, ist dieses Verständnis von Freiheit notwendig, das weniger vom Ich und seinen Rechten, als vom Anderen und seinen Bedürfnissen ausgeht. Auf die Bedeutung der Solidarität ist Angela Merkel in ihrer Rede im März – und im Juli 2020 auch im europäischen Kontext – ausdrücklich eingegangen. Wenn die Corona-Pandemie eine positive Folge haben könnte, dann jene, dass in ihr das Verständnis von Freiheit als Solidarität wieder in Erinnerung gerufen wird – nicht als Alternative zum Verständnis von Freiheit als Emanzipation, sondern als notwendige Ergänzung. Denn emanzipiert kann man nur sein, wenn man solidarisch bleibt – und umgekehrt.

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UDC: 130.1

Hans-Georg Gadamer

Was ist der Mensch?
(1944)

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In der Tat finden wir wohl bei allen Völkern der Erde, daß sie von dem Ganzen des Lebens eine Vorstellung haben. Es sind das die religiösen Grunderfahrungen, die sich in mythischen Schöpfungen verdichten. Von Göttern wissen, heißt immer schon vom Menschen wissen, wie er im Ganzen seines Daseins ist. Zu aller religiösen Erfahrung gehören Vorstellungen über den Tod und das Sein des Menschen nach dem Tode. Auch der abendländische Mensch beginnt mit mythischen Antworten auf die Frage nach seinem eigenen Sein. Das christliche Abendland hat seine Anschauung vom menschlichen Leben an den Mythos von Schöpfung und Sündenfall angeschlossen. Die Mühe und Arbeit des Menschenlebens wird in diesem Mythos des Alten Testaments auf eine Urschuld des Abfalls vom göttlichen Willen begründet und auf eine Verheißung bezogen, die aus Gnade die Rückkehr in das verlorene Paradies verspricht. Das menschliche Selbstgefühl, das aus dieser mythischen Gestaltung spricht, ist also bestimmt durch das Bewußtsein des Verlustes eines eigenen höheren Seinszustandes. In aller Erniedrigung aber bewahrt sich der Mensch ein Wissen um seine göttliche Herkunft und damit ein Bild von seinem eigenen Wesen: er ist nach dem Bilde Gottes geschaffen.

Es ist nun für das Schicksal des abendländischen Menschen und sein Wissen um sich selbst bestimmend geworden, daß diese maßgebende religiöse Erfahrung in ein ausdrückliches Fragen des Menschen nach seinem Sein umgewandelt worden ist bzw. sich mit ihm verschmolzen hat. Die Philosophie legt die religiöse Antwort aus.

Die Philosophie ist eine Schöpfung der Griechen. Auf griechisch wurde zuerst gedacht, was der Mensch ist: ein Wesen, das Vernunft hat, ein animal rationale. Was bedeutet diese Antwort? Wie ist es möglich, daß sie sich mit der religiösen Antwort verschmilzt, die das Christentum dem Abendlande geboten hat? Die beiden Vorstellungsweisen scheinen schlecht miteinander vereinbar. Das von Gott abgefallene Wesen, das aus eigener Kraft mit ihm keine Versöhnung finden kann, das ist eine Vorstellung, die der griechischen Vorstellung von der Vernünftigkeit des Menschen zu widersprechen scheint. Gewiß liegt auch der Vorstellung von dem vernünftigen Wesen Mensch eine religiöse Anschauung zugrunde, eine Anschauung von Gott. Aber die Vernunft ist selbst das Göttliche im Menschen. Ihr folgen, sie entwickeln und wirksam sein lassen bedeutet die Erhebung des Menschen zur göttlichen Seinsweise.

Plato hat es so gesagt: Die Philosophie strebt an, den Menschen, soweit es angeht, unsterblich zu machen, d. h. aber: dem Sein der unsterblichen Götter anzugleichen. Durch sich selbst also vermag sich der Mensch über sich selbst zu erheben, durch denkendes Anschauen des wahren Seins. Der Weise genügt sich selbst. Er ist autark.

Das ist in der Tat ein äußerster Gegensatz zum christlichen Daseinsbewußtsein, das vom Ungenügen des Menschen, von seiner

Image | Slika 1:
Front cover | Naslovna platnica:
Illustrierte Zeitung Leipzig (*Der europäische Mensch*; 1944)

Insuffizienz durchdrungen ist und sich der göttlichen Gnade bedürftig weiß. Dennoch hat sich in den Jahrhunderten des ausgehenden Altertums die christliche Glaubensüberlieferung mit der griechischen Philosophie aufs engste verbunden, und auf diesem Fundament ruht [32] alles Wissen des abendländischen Menschen von sich selbst. Ein großer Kirchenhistoriker hat, nicht ganz mit Recht, aber doch auch nicht ganz ohne Grund, Augustin den ersten modernen Menschen des Abendlandes genannt.

Es dient der Selbstaufklärung des abendländischen Menschen, wenn er sich fragt, wie diese Verbindung griechischen Geistes und christlichen Glaubens möglich geworden ist. Von beiden Seiten her fand sich Verbindendes, in der christlichen Überlieferung der Gedanke der Imago dei, der Gottebenbildlichkeit des Menschen, im griechischen Denken ein selbst aus religiösem Ursprung stammendes Wissen um die Gebrochenheit des menschlichen Seins und das Beengtsein des Geistes durch den Stoff.

Die griechische Philosophie hat in eigentümlicher Weise die religiöse Vorstellungswelt des frühen Griechentums aufgenommen und ausgelegt. Sie ist in ihren wirksamsten Gestalten keine überlieferungsfeindliche Aufklärung, sondern eine denkende Begleitung und Verwandlung des Mythos. Insbesondere die religiöse Bewegung des 7. und 6. Jahrhunderts, die wir orphisch-pythagoreisch nennen, hat in der klassischen Philosophie eine unmittelbare Umsetzung in den Gedanken erfahren. Diese religiöse Erfahrung weiß von der Hinfälligkeit und Schwäche des menschlichen Seins.

„Tagwesen! / Was ist einer? / Was ist keiner? / Von einem Schatten der Traum / Ist der Mensch.“ So singt Pindar. Der Leib ist das Grabmal der Seele. Befreiung aus den Banden des Leibes ist das Ziel des philosophischen Lebens. So haben die Pythagoreer gedacht, und der platonische Sokrates ist ihnen gefolgt. Das Göttliche der Vernunft ist nicht frei und wirksam im menschlichen Leben. Selbst in seiner höchsten Erhebung, in der philosophischen Anschauung, erreicht es nur auf Augenblicke die Seinsweise der Götter. – So erwächst inmitten des griechischen Lebens eine Art Erlösungsreligion, die dem aufkommenden Christentum den Boden bereitet hat. Durch die fernhintreffenden Sehersprüche Friedrich Hölderlins ist dieser Zusammenhang ins neuzeitliche Bewußtsein gehoben worden. Dionysos und Christus sind von der gleichen Abkunft und Bedeutung.

Auf der anderen Seite könnte der Gedanke der Gottebenbildlichkeit, der im christlichen Schöpfungsgedanken beschlossen liegt, gar nicht gedacht werden ohne die griechische, insbesondere die platonische Philosophie und ihre Lehre von Schein und Sein, von Abbild und Urbild.

Die Überzeugung, daß der Mensch ein vernünftiges Wesen ist, bedeutet also nicht notwendig einen Gegensatz zum Glauben an seine Geschöpflichkeit. Die Vernunft selbst enthält den Bezug auf eine höhere, reinere Vernunft. Der

Mensch sieht sich selbst begrenzt und bezogen auf ein unbegrenztes geistiges Sein. Das ist die Synthese des griechischen Gedankens mit der christlichen Überlieferung, die den mittelalterlichen Menschen geformt hat. Alle Völker Europas leben aus ihr.

Mit dem Beginn der Neuzeit hebt nun eine Bewegung an, die dieses Menschenbild aus griechisch-christlichem Geiste aufzulösen unternimmt. Sie nährt sich selbst aus abermals griechischen Ursprüngen. Wir nennen den

WAS IST DER MENSCH?

VON HANS-GEORG GADAMER

Es scheint zum charakteristischen Sein des Menschen zu gehören, daß er die Frage nach seinem eigenen Sein und Wesen stellt. Kein Wesen sonst bringt sich derart vor sich selbst, daß es nicht bloß dahinlebt, sondern, wie wir sinnreich sagen, sein Leben „führt". Daß wir unser Leben führen, heißt ja nicht nur, daß es unter Menschen verschiedenartige Weisen des Lebensvollzuges, der Lebensführung gibt. Das könnte man von einer Tiergattung auch mit Sinn sagen, wenn man die Verschiedenartigkeit der Lebensbedingungen ihrer einzelnen Exemplare bedenkt. Der einzelne Mensch aber ist niemals bloßes Exemplar seiner Gattung. Er ist Individuum, einmalig und unvertretbar. Wie er sein Leben führt, das ist er selbst. Das also gehört zum charakteristischen Wesen des menschlichen Lebens, daß die Formen unserer Lebensführung von uns gewählt werden. Jede Wahl geschieht im Hinblick auf ein Vorzuziehendes. Die Wahl der Lebensführung ist aber eine Wahl im Ganzen, sie schließt den Vorblick auf das Ganze des Lebens ein. Daraus folgt, daß alle Formen menschlicher Lebensführung schon Antworten auf die Frage nach dem Sein des Menschen sind oder aus solchen Antworten fließen.

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31

Image | Slika 2:
Title page | Naslovna stran:
Hans-Georg Gadamer: „Was ist der Mensch?"

Anfang dieser Bewegung geradezu die Renaissance, d. h. die Wiedergeburt des klassischen Altertums. Ihre kulturelle Daseinsform heißt der Humanismus, eine Entdeckung des Menschen in einem neuen Sinne. Griechische Gedanken werden neu lebendig, und der Begriff der Kultur, den die Griechen geprägt haben, erfüllt das menschliche Selbstbewußtsein mit einem unendlichen Widerklang. Der christliche Gedanke von Sünde und Gnade bindet nicht mehr so völlig, daß nicht das Selbstbewußtsein des Menschen im diesseitigen Bereich eine selbständige Erfüllung suchte. So gewinnen Gestalten des antiken Mythos, die den großen Kulturtaten der Menschen zugeordnet sind, neue symbolische Kraft, z. B. der antike Mythos von Herakles. Dieser Göttersohn lebt ein Leben der Mühen und Arbeit, vom eifersüchtigen Zorn Heras, der Gemahlin des Götterkönigs, verfolgt. Überall, wohin er kommt, tötet er Ungeheuer und beseitigt damit die unheimlichen Wesen einer wilden Vorwelt. Er wird der große Reiniger, der eine Welt menschlicher Ordnung und Sicherheit vollendet. In diesem Mythos spiegelt sich das Selbstbewußtsein des kulturschaffenden Menschen. Antike Fabelüberlieferung und philosophische Allegorie haben nun diesen alten Mythos zum sinnbildlichen Ausdruck eines neuen sittlich begründeten Selbstbewußtseins gewandelt. Herakles wird der Held der Tugend. Er nimmt das Leben der Arbeit und Mühe aus freiem Entschluß an, indem er den Weg des Genusses verwirft: So hat man ihn am Scheideweg dargestellt, wie er den sinnlichen Freuden des Daseins widersteht und den Weg der Tugend geht.

Noch ein anderer Mythos antiken Ursprungs gewinnt in den neueren Jahrhunderten Macht und verstärkt dies neue Selbstbewußtsein des kulturschaffenden Menschen: der Prometheus-Mythos. Prometheus, der titanische Widersacher der olympischen Götter, wird zur Verkörperung der schöpferischen Kräfte des Menschen. Die antike Überlieferung späterer Zeit kennt ihn als den Menschen-Schöpfer. Jetzt sieht sich der Mensch selbst als einen solchen Schöpfergeist. Sein Selbstbewußtsein wird das des Künstlers, des zweiten Machers, des zweiten Gottes, der selbstherrlich und unabhängig seine eigene Welt erbaut. In Goethes Prometheus-Ode spricht sich dies titanische Selbstbewußtsein des Menschen der neueren Jahrhunderte dichterisch überschwenglich aus: „Hier sitz' ich, forme Menschen / Nach meinem Bilde, / Ein Geschlecht, das mir gleich sei: / Zu leiden, zu weinen, / Zu genießen und zu freuen sich, / Und dein nicht zu achten, / Wie ich!" Man kann den Wandel im Selbstbewußtsein des Menschen, der sich hier vollzieht, sehr schön am Sprachgebrauch zeigen. Es ist der Begriff des Genies bzw. der Begriff des Schöpferischen, der zum Kennwort dieses Selbstbewußtseins wird. Genie, der erfinderische Geist des technischen Menschen (man denke an den Ausdruck Genie-Truppen) wird mehr und mehr zum Inbegriff [33] [Pages 34–35: Michelangelo: *The Creation of Adam* (Reproduction)] [35] dieser göttergleichen Fähigkeit des Menschen überhaupt, Neues, Unvorhersehbares, Unerwartetes und unmöglich Scheinendes zu entwerfen. Der geniale Mensch ist der Mensch der Eingebung, des schöpferischen Einfalls, der sich über das allgemeinmenschliche Maß unerreichbar erhebt. Dieser Mensch wird schöpferisch genannt, ein Wort, das erst im 18. Jahrhundert gebildet worden ist und seine Herkunft aus dem christlichen Begriff von Schöpfer und Schöpfung gänzlich vergessen hat. Man hat dieses Menschenbild den Homo faber genannt, den Menschen als Schmied, als Erfinder des Werkzeugs, dem alles, was ist, als

Image | Slika 3:
Front cover | Naslovna platnica:
Vom Wahren, Guten, Schönen (1947)

Stoff und Werkzeug seiner eigenen Schöpfungen dienen muß. Die moderne Naturwissenschaft und der Geist der Technik, die sie zur Anwendung bringt, sind die titanische Schöpfung dieses Menschen.

Die Elemente dieses Menschenbildes sind an sich nicht neu, sie sind griechisch und abendländisch überhaupt. Aber sie bilden dennoch eine neue Figur, die sich in den Rahmen der alten gemeinsamen Menschenvorstellung des Abendlandes nur schwer noch einzeichnen läßt. Goethes Prometheus-

Ode hat nicht zufällig antichristliche Züge. Zwar ist auch nach christlicher Vorstellung der Mensch Herr der Erde und die gesamte Schöpfung seiner Herrschaft übergeben. Aber sie bleibt für ihn eine gegebene Ordnung der Schöpfung, die zu nutzen und zu genießen ihm offensteht, nicht aber bloßer Stoff und Werkzeug seiner Willkür ist. Zwar hält auch die neue Vorstellung vom Menschen an der alten Lehre fest, daß der Mensch das Vernunftwesen ist. Aber was bedeutet diese Lehre jetzt? Was heißt ihm jetzt Vernunft?

Folgerichtig wird Vernunft zum universalen Mittel des schaffenden Willens. Als vernünftige Lösung einer jeden Frage gilt ja jedem die zweckmäßige Lösung, die ökonomische und rationale, die die richtigen Mittel zu finden weiß. Vernunft wird das Vermögen der Mittel. Aber was ist das Maß der Zwecke, und wie wird es ermessen? Im 18. Jahrhundert noch war Vernunft das Vermögen des Unbedingten, d. h. das Vermögen der Zwecke, und Kant begründete das Prinzip der Sittlichkeit etwa auch in der Form, daß der Mensch jederzeit den Menschen nicht nur als Mittel, sondern auch als Zweck ansehen solle. Ein Reich der Zwecke war für ihn die naturrechtliche Gemeinschaft der Menschen. Jetzt aber wird die Vernunft zum bloßen Mittel, sie wird technisch. Sie dient allen Zwecken. Dieser Wandel im Begriff der Vernunft steigert die Idee des Homo faber zu ihrer höchsten Vollendung. Die Vernunft wird das universale Werkzeug des Wesens Mensch.

Damit aber stellt sich dem philosophischen Fragen des Menschen nach sich selbst aufs neue die Frage, was er selbst denn im Grunde ist. Ja, nicht nur die Philosophie, das Leben selbst verlangt nach einer neuen Antwort auf diese Frage. Ist es nicht eben dadurch so dämonisch in sich selbst bewegt worden, daß ihm der richtunggebende und maßsetzende Zweck verging oder kraftlos wurde? Die letzte Gestalt des Geistes, die die bürgerliche Welt als Zweck der „Kultur" ansah, die Bildung, ist fragwürdig geworden, fragwürdig zumindest hinsichtlich ihrer Kraft, das Leben zu gestalten und durchordnend zu beherrschen. Die „ökonomischen" Gewalten erweisen sich als stärker. Aber was ist die Herrschaft dieser ökonomischen Gewalten anderes als die Folge des Fehlens maßgebender Ziele? Es ist ein Aufstand der Mittel, der zu der Herrschaft der Technik – der des Geldes wie der der Maschine – über den Menschen führt, ihre Verselbständigung zu einem dämonischen Eigendasein.

Inmitten dieser aus Schwäche und Blindheit kommenden Führungslosigkeit, in der es die neueren Zeiten umtreibt, hebt sich die Antwort, die Friedrich Nietzsche auf die Frage nach dem Wesen des Menschen gewagt hat, und die auf unübersehbare Weise wiederholt und abgewandelt worden ist, als eine wirkliche und wirkungsmächtige Antwort ab. Sie nimmt ihren Stand in der Mitte des neuzeitlichen Selbstbewußtseins, ja, radikaler als dieses schränkt sie die Leistung der Vernunft nicht bloß ein, sondern stellt ihren selbständigen Sinn überhaupt

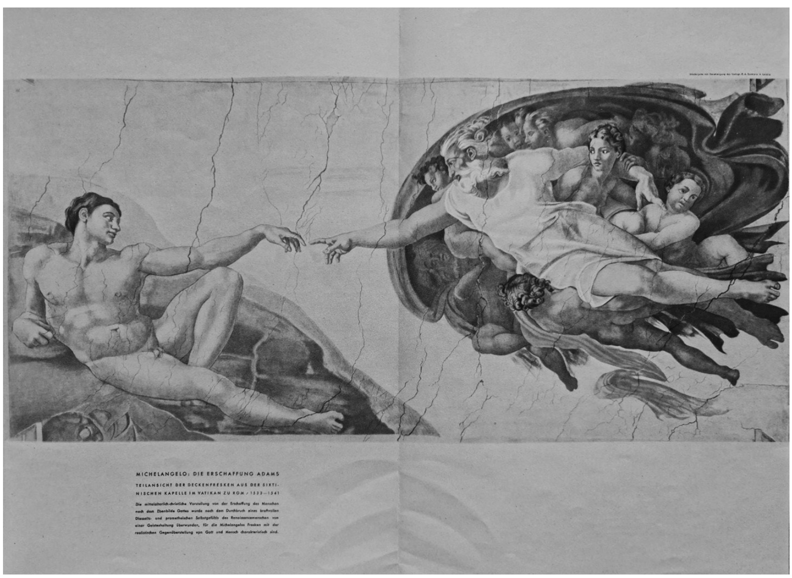

Image | Slika 4:
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Michelangelo: *The Creation of Adam* | *Stvarjenje Adama* (ca. 1512)

in Frage, ihren Anspruch, Seiendes zu bewahren, Sachzusammenhänge sichtbar und beherrschbar zu machen. Die Vernunft ist nicht nur ein Werkzeug des Lebens, sondern auch eine der erfinderischsten und kühnsten Verkleidungen des lebendigen Dranges, eine Kraft des Zurechtmachens des Seins für das Bedürfnis des Lebens, ein Mantel, eine Oberfläche, eine Haut des Unbewußten. Die Entdeckung des Unbewußten als des tragenden Seelengrundes des Bewußtseins ist ein Ergebnis dieser neuen Sehweise. Vernunft, Geist oder wie immer das Vermächtnis des griechisch-christlichen Gedankens lautet, erweist sich als abhängig und sekundär. Was ist das, wovon sie abhängt und dem sie nachgeordnet ist? Die epochale Antwort, die Nietzsche hierauf gab, geht dahin, das wahre Sein überhaupt als Willen zur Macht aufzufassen. Für diese Antwort reif zu machen schien ihm die Aufgabe der Philosophie der mit ihm anhebenden Zukunft. Seit Nietzsche ist uns der Begriff der großen Schaffenden als der wahre Sinn des Menschen vertraut. Nietzsche hat es als das Glück der Zeit empfunden, daß wir Menschen niemanden mehr haben, dem wir Rechenschaft schuldeten, als uns selbst: „Die Menschheit kann von nun an durchaus mit sich anfangen, was sie will." Es ist der Fortfall eines übernatürlichen Herrn, des christlichen Gottes und der Moral, was dieses neue Selbstgefühl verleiht. Zugleich bereichert sich das menschliche Wissen von sich selbst durch das geschichtliche Bewußtsein. „In Hinsicht auf die Vergangenheit genießen wir alle Kulturen und deren Hervorbringungen und nähren uns mit dem edelsten Blute aller Zeiten …, während frühere Kulturen nur sich selber zu genießen vermochten und nicht über sich hinaus sahen."

Indessen hat gerade Nietzsche die Zweideutigkeit dieses Glücks der Zeit tiefer empfunden als sein Jahrhundert. Er erkannte die Notwendigkeit, nach dem Umsturz der moralischen Werttafel der platonisch-christlichen Überlieferung dem Dasein ein neues Schwergewicht zu geben. Der griechisch-christliche Gedanke des Menschen sieht im Menschen das Abbild [36] Gottes oder den Träger der göttlichen Vernunft. Was aber ist für den Menschen, der selbstherrlicher Schöpfer einer Welt sein will, seinesgleichen? Für den Künstler ist, wie man weiß, all sein Erleben Stoff seines Bildens und Formens. Auch die Menschen seiner nächsten Nähe sind ihm Modell. So muß sich auch für den Jünger des Gottes Dionysos das gemeinsame Menschenbild des Abendlandes auflösen. Nicht mehr sieht er in allem, was Menschenantlitz trägt, seines- und Gottes gleichen, sondern auch dies noch, was die Menschen zu sein haben, ist den großen Schaffenden eine Frage ihres Wollens. Nietzsches Forderung von „Zucht und Züchtung" hat hier ihren Ursprung. Die Idee des Übermenschen hat gerade darin ihre Auszeichnung, daß sie etwas ist, das nicht da ist. „Der höchste Gedanke: Der Mensch ist etwas, das überwunden werden soll." Die Seligkeit des Schaffens wird zur Beschwörung eines neuen Gottes gesteigert, den Nietzsche Dionysos nennt. Aber erst im Wahnsinn ist ihm dieser Gott erschienen – als er selber.

Es läßt sich kaum überschätzen, in welchem Grade diese verzweifelte Steigerung des modernen Menschentums der letzten Jahrhunderte, die Nietzsches Philosophie darstellt, allen heutigen Bemühungen um die alte Frage nach der Bestimmung des Menschen zugrunde liegt. Wenn Ludwig Klages etwa im Geist den Widersacher der Seele sieht, so denkt er – freilich nur ein kleines Stück weit – mit Nietzsche, indem er unter Geist das berechnende Vermögen des Menschen versteht. Wenn wir heute die

Image | Slika 5:
Back cover | Zadnja platnica:
Vom Wahren, Guten, Schönen (1947):
"Art and science unite nations." | »Umetnost in znanost povezujeta narode.«

biologischen Erkenntnisse über die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos zu einer Wesensbestimmung des Menschen zu entwickeln suchen, so ordnen wir ebenfalls die alte Bestimmung von Vernunft und Geist diesem neuen Aspekt unter. Der Intellektualismus der von den Griechen geschaffenen Menschenauffassung ist in seiner Überwindung begriffen. Nietzsches Kritik des Bewußtseins ist unausweichlich geworden.

Indessen bleibt die Frage nach dem Menschen dringender denn je. Die alten Formen, sich zu denken, leben neben den neuen Versuchen weiter und erinnern diese an ihre eigene Einseitigkeit. Die Zurückdeutung des menschlichen Wesens in die Seinsform des allgemeinen Lebens bietet ja keine Lösung. Sie mag verständlich machen, warum der Mensch nach seinem eigenen Sein fragt, indem sie antwortet: „Um leben zu können." Aber sie vermag dieses Fragen selbst nicht zu ersetzen oder zu befriedigen. Mag jede Antwort, die der Mensch auf diese Frage versucht, eine Lebensmacht sein, eine Weltanschauung, zu der sich die unbewußten Kräfte seines Wesens erheben – gerade der Kampf der Weltanschauungen, der heute die Menschheit zerklüftet, läßt die Frage nicht ruhen, was der Mensch wirklich ist. Muß es nicht zwischen den verschiedenen Antworten, die heute auf diese Frage erprobt werden, eine mögliche Ordnung geben, eine Rangordnung der Wahrheit und des Wertes? Wenn wir heute die Stellung des Einzelnen in der Ordnung des Volkes denken und aus ihr seine Rechte und Pflichten und seine ganze Würde bemessen, so trennt uns diese Anschauung von

einer anderen, die dem Einzelnen eine anonyme Masse gegenübersetzt oder ihn in ihr aufgehen läßt. Mag jede dieser Antworten noch so sehr Ausdruck eines wirkenden Lebenswillens sein, eines Volkes, einer Rasse, eines geschichtlichen Körpers – die alte Frage nach dem Sein und Wesen des Menschen macht sich im Kampfe solcher Gegensätze erst recht geltend. Wie wir denken, das entspricht nicht nur unserer Art – es will auch der Ordnung der Sachen selber entsprechen; es will wahr sein und seiner Überlegenheit über ein anderes Denken gewiß. Die alte Antwort auf unsere Frage, die Antwort der griechisch-christlichen Überlieferung, mag nicht mehr bindend sein. Die Vernunft – darüber sind wir belehrt worden – ist abhängig, aber sie vermag gleichwohl wahr und wesentlich zu sein.

So liegt es im Wesen des Menschen selbst begründet, daß es eine bindende und verwahrende Antwort auf die Frage: Was ist der Mensch? nicht gibt. Wäre das Wesen des Menschen nichts als Vernunft, die Antwort würde alle Vernünftigen in alle Ewigkeit binden. So aber bleibt die Frage offen in eine Entscheidung gestellt, die wir geschichtlich nennen. Was der Mensch ist, wird niemals offenbar sein, ohne sich immer wieder zu verhüllen. Dennoch aber liegt in solchem Aufleuchten des Wahren der Sinn alles Kampfes und die Würde der philosophischen und geschichtlichen Bestimmung des Menschen. „Es ereignet sich aber das Wahre“ (Hölderlin).

UDC: 130.1

Hans-Georg Gadamer

What is Man?
(1944)[1]

It seems to be part of the characteristics of the being of man that he himself asks the question about his own being and essence. No other being confronts itself in such a way that it not only haphazardly lives, but also, as we ingeniously say, "conducts [*führt*]" its life. The fact that we conduct our lives does not only mean that there are among men different ways of executing and conducting life. One could meaningfully say that about an animal species, considering the variety of the living conditions of its individual specimens. However, a single man is never a mere specimen of the species. He is an individual, unique, and irreplaceable. How he conducts his life, is how he himself is. Thus, the fact that we choose the forms, in which we conduct our lives, belongs

1 The essay "Was ist der Mensch?" appeared for the first time in December 1944 in the German magazine with a hundred years of tradition edited by the publisher J. J. Weber *Illustrierte Zeitung Leipzig* [*Illustrated Magazine Leipzig*]. This special cultural edition, entitled *Der europäische Mensch* [*The European Man*], which was distributed exclusively abroad, was to be the last volume of the magazine after its final regular issue in September 1994 (No. 5041). Only in 1947, the text was republished, with the same pagination, in a compilation made by J. J. Weber, *Vom Wahren, Schönen, Guten. Aus dem Schatz europäischer Kunst und Kultur* [*On the True, the Beautiful, the Good.*

to the characteristic essence of human life. Each choice is made taking into consideration what is to be preferred. The choice of how to conduct ourselves through life is, nonetheless, a choice as a whole; it includes a foresight regarding life as a whole. It follows that all forms of conducting human life are already answers to the question of the being of man or they arise from such answers.

Indeed, we find that all the peoples of the earth have a representation of life as a whole. These are the basic religious experiences that are concentrated in mythical creations. Knowing the gods always already means to know of man how he is situated in the whole of his existence. Representations of death and being of man after death are part of every religious experience. The occidental man also begins with mythical answers to the question of his own being. The Christian occident has bound its view of human life with the myth of creation and original sin. The labor and work of human life in this myth of the Old Testament are based on the original guilt of the fall from the will of God, and refer to the promise of a restoration, by the grace of God itself, of the lost paradise. The self-awareness of man that emerges from this mythical figuration is, therefore, determined by the consciousness of the loss of his own superior state of being. However, in total humiliation man retains a knowledge of his divine origin and therewith an image of his own being: he was created in the image of God.

From the Treasury of European Art and Culture]. The publisher was expropriated in 1948, and three years later the company was finally removed from the German commercial registry. "Was ist der Mensch?" has never been released in any of Gadamer's books or separately published in a journal; it also does not appear within the 10 volumes of his *Gesammelte Werke* [*Collected Works*]—the only exception is an Italian translation included in a volume devoted to Gadamer's views on education and the notion of *Bildung* (cf. Gadamer 2012). The aim of this translation is to make accessible this Gadamer's quest for the occidental interpretations of human self-consciousness, which has until now been almost unknown and in which, for the first time, Gadamer shows, from a theoretical standpoint, not only his early—although implicit—keen interest in Max Scheler's anthropology (particularly Scheler's considerations on the basic historical types of the occidental man's self-perception in accordance with the basic and underlying concept of human history that still have a powerful effectiveness in modern times), but also—at the historical threshold of the imminent ending of World War II—his own concern regarding possible philosophical answers to the question: "What is man?" Cf. especially Scheler 1926 (GW 9, 120–144); 1928 (GW 9, 7–71); 1929 (GW 9, 145–170). All commenting annotations to Gadamer's text are authored by the editor and translator.

Furthermore, it has become decisive for the fate of the occidental man and for his knowledge of himself that this authoritative religious experience has been transformed into explicit questioning of man about his being, or, more precisely, the two have merged. Philosophy interprets the religious answer.

Philosophy is a creation of the Greeks. In the Greek language, it was for the first time thought about what man is: a being who has reason, an *animal rationale*. What does this answer mean? How is it possible that it was merged with the religious answer, which Christianity offered to the occident? It seems that these two ways of representation are almost incompatible. The being who had fallen away from God and who cannot find, by its own strength, any reconciliation with him, is a representation that seems to contradict the Greek notion of the rationality of man. Certainly, the representation of man as a rational being is based on a religious view, a view of God. But reason itself is the divine in man. To follow it, to develop it, and to make it effective means elevating man to the divine mode of being. Plato expressed this thus: philosophy strives, as much as possible, to make man immortal; this, however, means: to equate man's being to that of the immortal gods. Through himself, man can be, therefore, elevated above himself, by thoughtfully contemplating the true being. The wise man is self-sufficient. He is autarchic.

In fact, this is an extreme contrast to the Christian consciousness of existence, which is pervaded by the defectiveness of man, by his insufficiency, and which recognizes man's need for divine grace. Nevertheless, during the centuries of expiring antiquity, the tradition of the Christian faith became closely bound with Greek philosophy, and upon such a groundwork lies all of the occidental man's knowledge about himself. A great historian of the Church, without being quite right, but also not without foundation, once called Augustine the first modern man of the occident.

The question how this bond between the Greek spirit and the Christian faith became possible contributes to the self-understanding of the occidental man. On both sides, one can find something that coalesces with the other: in the Christian tradition, the notion of the *imago dei*, the idea of man in the image of God; in the Greek thought, the knowledge, which itself has a religious origin, regarding the brittleness of human being and the restriction of spirit by matter.

In a specific manner, Greek philosophy adopted and interpreted the world of religious representations of the early Hellenism. In its most effective configurations, it is not an anti-traditional enlightenment, but a thoughtful accompaniment and transformation of the myth. Particularly, the religious movement of the 7th and 6th centuries, which we call Orphic-Pythagorean, experienced an immediate transposition in the classical philosophical thought. This religious experience was aware of the fragility and weakness of human being.

"Creatures of a day! / What is man? / What is he not? / He is / the dream of a shadow."[2] Thus sang Pindar. The body is the tomb of the soul. Liberation from the bonds of the body is the goal of a philosophical life. This is what the Pythagoreans had thought, and the Platonic Socrates followed them. The divinity of reason is not free and effective in human life. Even in its highest elevation, in philosophical contemplation, it can only temporarily achieve the mode of being of the gods. — Thus, in the midst of Greek life, a kind of religion of salvation arose, which had prepared the ground for emerging Christianity. Friedrich Hölderlin's far-reaching clairvoyant sayings raised this correlation into modern consciousness. Dionysus and Christ are of the same descent and have the same meaning.

On the other hand, the notion of the image of God, which is encompassed in the Christian idea of creation, could not be thought without Greek philosophy, especially without Platonic philosophy and its teachings concerning appearance and being, image and archetype.

The conviction that man is a rational being, thus, does not necessarily contradict the belief in his creaturehood. Reason itself contains a reference to a higher, purer reason. Man sees himself as limited and related to an unlimited spiritual being. This is the synthesis of Greek thought with Christian tradition, which came to shape the medieval man. All the peoples of Europe have drawn vitality from it.

With the beginning of the modern age a movement arises, which attempts to detach this image of man from the substrate of Greek-Christian spirit. Once again, it is itself nourished by the Greek origins. We call the beginning

2 Pind., *Pyth*. 8.94-95. The English translation cited according to: Verity 2007.

of this movement the Renaissance, namely, the rebirth of classical antiquity. Its cultural form of existence is called humanism, a discovery of man in a new sense. The Greek thoughts come to life anew, and the concept of culture that the Greeks coined fills human self-consciousness with an infinite echo. The Christian thought regarding sin and grace is no longer ultimately binding to the degree that man's self-consciousness would not seek an independent completion in the immanent realm. Thus, the figures from ancient myths that are associated with great cultural deeds of man gain new symbolic power, e.g., the ancient myth of Heracles. This son of god lives a life of labor and work, haunted by the jealous wrath of Hera, the consort of the god king. Wherever he goes, he kills monsters, thus eliminating the uncanny beings of a wild primeval world. He becomes the great purifier who accomplishes a world of human order and security. This myth reflects the self-consciousness of man who creates culture. The ancient fable tradition and the philosophical allegory have transformed this old myth into a symbolic expression of a new morally founded self-consciousness. Heracles becomes the hero of virtue. He accepts the life of work and labor by free choice while rejecting the path of pleasure: thus, he was often depicted at the crossroads, resisting sensuous delights of existence, and following the path of virtue.

In the subsequent centuries, yet another myth of ancient origin gained power and strengthened this new self-consciousness of man as the creator of culture: the myth of Prometheus. Prometheus, the titanic adversary of the Olympic gods, became an embodiment of the creative powers of man. The ancient tradition of the later era recognizes him as the creator of man. Now, man sees himself as such a creative spirit. His self-consciousness becomes that of an artist, of a second maker, of the second God, who builds his own world autocratically and independently. In Goethe's ode "Prometheus,"[3] this titanic self-consciousness of

3 It should be considered that during those years Gadamer analyzed Goethe's "Prometheus" on several occasions. This is the case of his conference in Leipzig in 1944, which was presented four years later—for the 60th birthday—to Kurt Steinmeyer, director of the Humanistisches Gymnasium Philippinum at the time. This conference was originally published as "Die Grenzen des Titanischen. Prometheus – Pandora [The Limits of the Titanic. Prometheus—Pandora]" in Gadamer's brief and little-known book *Vom geistigen Lauf des Menschen: Studien zu unvollendeten Dichtungen Goethes* [*On the Spiritual Path of Man: Studies Regarding Goethe's Unfinished Poems*], devoted

man belonging to the modern centuries expresses itself in poetic exuberance: "Here I sit, forming men / In my image / A race to resemble me: / To suffer, to weep, / To enjoy, to be glad — / And never to heed you, / Like me!"[4] The change in the self-consciousness of man accomplished here can be shown very well in the use of language. The concept of genius, that is, the concept of creator, becomes the keyword for this self-consciousness. The genius, the inventive spirit of the technical man (think of the expression "military genius"), is increasingly becoming the epitome of this godlike ability of man in general to project something new, unpredictable, unexpected, and seemingly impossible. The ingenious man is a man of inspiration, of creative insight, who unattainably

to the unfinished poetic works of Goethe (cf. Gadamer 1949d, 9–27). In the same year of 1949, Gadamer travelled to Argentina, in order to attend the First National Congress of Philosophy, which took place in Mendoza between March 30 and April 9. Later that year, the text was translated into Spanish as "Prometeo y Pandora" and appeared in print form in the volume *Goethe, 1749 – 28. Agosto, 1949*, edited by Alfredo Dornheim and published at the Faculty of Philosophy and Literature of the University of Cuyo (cf. Gadamer 1949a). The text on the spiritual way of man was republished in German language by Gadamer in 1967 in the second volume of his *Kleine Schriften* [*Short Writings*] (cf. 1967, 105–135), and in 1993 in the ninth volume of his *Gesammelte Werke*, entitled *Ästhetik und Poetik II. Hermeneutik im Vollzug* [*Aesthetics and Poetics II. Hermeneutics in Effectuation*] (cf. GW 9, 81–93). An English translation, entitled "The Limits of Titan Power," was published in 1994. Shortly before the end of World War II, between March and April 1944, Gadamer also delivered a conference in Lisbon entitled "Prometheus und die Tragödie der Kultur [Prometheus and the Tragedy of Culture]," which was published in German two years later in the journal *Die Wandlung* [*Transformation*] (cf. Gadamer 1946) and reproduced in a *Festschrift* dedicated to Rudolf Bultmann's 65th birthday (cf. Gadamer 1949c). In 1949, this text was republished in its original language in *Anales de Filología Clásica*, journal of the Faculty of Philosophy and Literature of the University of Buenos Aires (cf. Gadamer 1949b). In this Argentinian institution, on April 17, Gadamer read the aforementioned text in French. Many years later, Gadamer readdresses Aeschylus' *Prometheus* in his conferences "Die Erfahrung des Todes [The Experience of Death]" and "Angst und Ängste [Anxiety and Fears]" (cf. Gadamer 1993b, 84–94; 189–200). I prepared a revised critical edition of Gadamer's essay "Prometeo y Pandora," which should be published in the Argentinian journal *Boletín de Estética*, no. 53, (Research Program on Philosophy of Art at the Centre of Philosophical Research [Centro de Investigaciones Filosóficas, CIF]—National Council of Scientific and Technical Research [Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas, CONICET], Buenos Aires).

4 Translation of "Prometheus" (ca. 1772–1774) by M. Hamburger cited according to: Goethe 1994, 31.

rises beyond the common human measure. Such a man is called creative, a word only formed in the 18th century, whose origin from the Christian concept of creator and creation has been entirely forgotten. This image of man was called *homo faber*, man understood as a blacksmith, as an inventor of tools, to whom everything that exists must serve as material and tool of his own creations. The modern natural science and the spirit of technology, which leads science to application, are the titanic creations of such a man.

The elements of this image of man are in themselves not new; they are altogether Greek and occidental. But they nevertheless constitute a new figure that can hardly be inscribed into the framework of the ancient common representation of the occidental man. It is no coincidence that Goethe's ode to Prometheus possesses anti-Christian traits. Although man is, according also to the Christian representation, depicted as Lord of the Earth and the entire creation surrendered to his dominion. However, for him, it remains a given order of the creation, which cannot be, even if readily open for his use and enjoyment, merely material and tool of his arbitrariness. Although also the new representation of man adheres to the old doctrine that man is a rational being. However, what does this doctrine mean now? What does reason mean to him now?

Consequently, reason becomes the universal means of the creative will. For everyone, the rational solution to each question is the purposeful—the economical and the reasonable—solution, which is capable of finding the proper means. Reason becomes the faculty of means. But what is the measure of ends, and how can it be measured out? In the 18th century, reason was still the faculty of the unconditional, i.e., the faculty of ends, and Kant founded the principle of morality also in such a form that man should at all times behold [other] men not only as a means, but also as an end. For him, the jusnaturalistic community of men was a kingdom of ends. But now reason becomes a mere means, it becomes technical. It serves all ends. This change in the concept of reason raises the idea of *homo faber* to its highest fulfilment. Reason becomes the universal tool of the human being.

Thus, however, to man's philosophical questioning about himself the question regarding his own grounds is posed anew. Yes, not only philosophy, but life itself also demands a new answer to this question. Has life not been so demonically changed within itself that ends, which give it direction and which set its measure, have vanished or have become powerless? The last configuration of spirit, education [*Bildung*; cultivation], which the bourgeois world considered as the end of "culture," has become questionable at least with regard to its strength to shape life and to master it in an orderly manner. The "economic" powers prove to be stronger. But what does the rule of these economic powers consist in, if not in the consequence of the lack of measure-setting ends? The uprising of the means leads to the domination of technology—both, that of money and that of the machine—over man, to its emancipation into an autonomous demonic existence.

In the midst of this lack of guidance, resulting from weakness and blindness, by which modern times are troubled, the answer, which Friedrich Nietzsche dared to give to the question of the essence of man, and which has since been repeated and modified in countless ways, rises as a real and effectful one. This answer takes its place at the center of modern self-consciousness, however in a much more radical way than the latter: it does not only restrict the achievement of reason, but also utterly questions its autonomous sense, its claim to safeguard what is, to make factual relationships visible and controllable. Reason is not only a tool of life, but also one of the most inventive and audacious disguises of the urge to live, an ability for preparing one's being for the needs of life, a coat, a surface, a skin of the unconscious. The discovery of the unconscious as the fundamental basis of consciousness is a result of this new way of thinking. Reason, spirit, or whatever the legacy of the Greek-Christian thought might be called, turns out to be dependent and secondary. Yet, what does reason depend on and to what is it subordinated? The epochal answer that Nietzsche gave ultimately leads to the consideration of true being as the will to power. For Nietzsche, the task of future philosophy beginning to arise with himself seemed to be to prepare for this answer. From Nietzsche onwards, we have been familiar with the concept of the great creator as the true sense of man. Nietzsche felt that it was the good fortune of the age that we men no longer have anyone else to whom we would owe an account, but ourselves: "henceforth mankind can do with itself whatever it wishes."[5] The

5 English translation by R. J. Hollingdale cited according to: Nietzsche 2005b, §179. Cf. also: KSA 2, §179, 457, 10.

disappearance of a supernatural Lord, of the Christian God and morality gives this new sense of self. At the same time, human self-knowledge enriches itself through historical consciousness. “With respect to the past we have enjoyment of all the cultures there have ever been and of their productions, and [we] nourish ourselves with the noblest blood of every age […], whereas earlier cultures were capable of enjoying only themselves, with no view of what lay outside.”[6]

However, precisely Nietzsche felt the ambiguity of this fortune of the age more deeply than his own century. He recognized the necessity to give a new emphasis to existence after the overthrow of the moral values of the Platonic-Christian tradition. The Greek-Christian thought sees the image of God in man or sees him as the bearer of divine reason. But what could equal the man who would like to become the autocratic creator of a world? For the artist, as we know, all his experience is the material of his shaping and forming. His closest fellowmen can, for him, become also a model. Thus, also for the disciple of the God Dionysus the common image of the occidental man must dissolve. He no longer sees in everything that bears a human face what would equal him and God; for the great creators, however, even who men should be becomes a question of the will. Herein lies the origin of Nietzsche's demand for “discipline and breeding [*Zucht und Züchtung*].” The idea of the *Übermensch* has its distinction in the circumstance that it is something that is not there. “The highest thought of life: the human is something that is to be overcome.”[7] The bliss of creation is raised to the invocation of a new god whom Nietzsche calls Dionysus. But only in madness did this god appear to him—as he himself.

It can hardly be overestimated to what extent this desperate rise of modern humanity during the past centuries, which Nietzsche's philosophy represents, lies at the bottom of all today's attempts to address the old question of the determination of man. When Ludwig Klages, for instance, in the spirit

6 Ibid.
7 Gadamer is here paraphrasing the chapter entitled “Vom Krieg und Kriegsvolke [On War and Warrior-Peoples]” from *Also sprach Zarathustra* [*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*]. Here, cf. translation by G. Parkes in: Nietzsche 2008, §10. Cf. also KSA 4, §10, 60, 1–3.

recognizes the antagonist of the soul, he is thinking—albeit only a little further—with Nietzsche, because he understands the spirit as man's calculating faculty. When today we attempt to develop biological knowledge regarding the human place in the cosmos into the determination of the essence of man, we also subordinate the old determination of reason and spirit to this new aspect. The intellectualism of the human conception elaborated by the Greeks is within the process of its own overcoming. Nietzsche's critique of consciousness has become inevitable.

Nevertheless, the question of man remains more pressing than ever. The old forms of thinking oneself continue to live alongside the new attempts and remind them of their own one-sidedness. The reinterpretation of the essence of man into the mode of being of a universal life offers no solution at all. It may explain why man questions his own being by answering: "In order to be able to live." But it cannot replace or satisfy this questioning itself. Each answer, with which man tries to respond to this question, may be a vital strength, a worldview, towards which the unconscious forces of his essence rise—precisely the struggle among worldviews that today tears mankind asunder does not allow the question of what man really is to subside. Yet, should there not exist a possible order among the diverse answers to this question that are being tried out today, a hierarchy of truth and value? When, today, we think about the position of the individual within the order of people, and upon it assess the rights and duties and the whole dignity of the individual, we withdraw from another view, which counterposes the individual to an anonymous mass, or which allows the former to dissolve within the latter. No matter how much each of these answers may be the expression of an effective will to live, of a people, of a race, of a historical body—the old question about the being and essence of man becomes in the struggle of such opposites all the more valid. The way we think does not only correspond to our own kind—it also wants to be in accordance with the order of things themselves; it wants to be true and certain of its superiority over other thinking. The ancient answer to our question, the answer of the Greek-Christian tradition, may no longer be binding. The reason—this much we have learned—is conditioned, but it nevertheless seeks to be true and essential.

Thus, in the essence of man itself lies the source that there exists no binding and preserving answer to the question: What is man? Should the essence of man be nothing but reason, the answer would bind all rational people for all of eternity. However, this leaves the question open for a decision that we call historical. What man is will never be revealed without hiding itself again and again. Nevertheless, the sense of all struggle as well as the dignity of philosophical and historical determination of man lie in such an illumination of the true. "Truth will come to pass." (Hölderlin)[8]

The German original edited and translated into the English language by Facundo Bey[*]

8 Gadamer is here citing Hölderlin's poem "Mnemosyne" (ca. 1803). English translation by E. L. Santner quoted according to: Hölderlin 1990, 273.

[*] Facundo Bey

Instituto de Filosofía "Ezequiel de Olaso"—Centro de Investigaciones Filosóficas / Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (INEO-CIF/CONICET), Miñones 2073, C1428ATE, Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, Argentina | Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad del Salvador, Tucumán 1845, C1050AAK, Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, Argentina

Orcid ID: 0000-0002-9449-0463
Web of Science ResearcherID: B-1795-2019

facundo.bey@gmail.com

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Hans Georg Gadamer

Kaj je človek?

(1944)[1]

1 Sestavek »Was ist der Mensch?« je prvič izšel v decembru leta 1944 v nemškem časopisu s stoletno tradicijo, ki ga je izdajala založba J. J. Weber, *Illustrierte Zeitung Leipzig* [*Ilustrirani časopis Leipzig*]. Posebna kulturna številka z naslovom *Der europäische Mensch* [*Evropski človek*], namenjena za izključno distribucijo v tujini, je bila sklepni zvezek časopisa po zadnji redni številki v septembru leta 1944 (št. 5041). Besedilo je bilo, z nespremenjeno paginacijo, ponatisnjeno v založnikovem zborniku *Vom Wahren, Schönen, Guten. Aus dem Schatz europäischer Kunst und Kultur* [*O resničnem, lepem, dobrem. Iz zakladnice evropske umetnosti in kulture*]. Založnika so leta 1948 razlastili in ga tri leta kasneje izbrisali iz nemškega trgovskega registra. Besedila Gadamer ni nikdar več objavil, ne v kateri od svojih knjig ne v posebni revijalni publikaciji; ni ga mogoče najti niti znotraj 10 zvezkov filozofovih *Gesammelte Werke* [*Zbrana dela*]; edina izjema je italijanski prevod, kakršen je bil vključen v izbor Gadamerjevih spisov o izobraževanju in ideji omike (prim. Gadamer 2012). Namen pričujočega prevoda je predstavitev Gadamerjevega iskanja zahodnih interpretacij človekove samozavesti, ki je doslej bilo skoraj popolnoma nepoznano in s katerim se s teoretskega stališča prvikrat pokaže ne samo Gadamerjevo – sicer zgolj implicitno – zgodnje zanimanje za antropologijo Maxa Schelerja (zlasti za Schelerjeve razmisleke glede temeljnih zgodovinskih tipov samo-dojemanja zahodnega človeka in glede osnovnega koncepta človeške zgodovine, kakršni ostajajo učinkujoči tudi v sodobnem času), ampak obenem – na zgodovinskem pragu bližajočega se konca druge svetovne vojne – njegovo lastno prizadevanje z ozirom na možne filozofske odgovore na vprašanje: »Kaj je človek?« Prim. zlasti Scheler 1926 (GW 9, 120–144);

Zdi se, da karakteristični biti človeka pripada, da postavlja vprašanje po lastni biti in bistvu. Nobeno drugo bitje si sicer tako ne predoča, da ne živi zgolj tjavendan, temveč da, kakor tenkočutno rečemo, svoje življenje »živi«.[2] Da živimo svoje življenje, ne pomeni, da med ljudmi poznamo raznolike načine izpolnjevanja oz. preživljanja življenja. To bi lahko smiselno rekli tudi za kakšno živalsko vrsto, če pomislimo na raznolikost življenjskih pogojev njenih posamičnih primerkov. Posamični človek nikdar ni zgolj eksemplar svoje vrste. Je individuum, enkraten in nenadomestljiv. Kakor živi svoje življenje, tako je on sam. Torej h karakterističnemu bistvu človeškega življenja spada, da si sami izbiramo forme našega preživljanja življenja. Sleherna izbira se godi glede na to, čemu dajemo prednost. Izbira preživljanja življenja je izbira v celoti, vključuje vnaprejšnji pogled na celoto življenja. Iz tega sledi, da so vse forme preživljanja življenja že odgovori na vprašanje po biti človeka ali da iz takšnih odgovorov pritekajo.

Dejansko pri vseh narodih Zemlje ugotavljamo, da imajo predstavo o celoti življenja. Gre za temeljne religiozne izkušnje, ki se zgoščajo v mitičnih stvaritvah. Da vemo za bogove, pomeni vselej, da vemo za človeka, kako biva v celoti svojega prebivanja. Vsej religiozni izkušnji pripadajo predstave o smrti in o biti človeka po smrti. Tudi zahodni človek pričenja z mitičnimi odgovori na vprašanje po svoji lastni biti. Krščanski Zahod je svoj nazor o človeškem življenju naslonil na mit o stvarjenju in izvirnem grehu. Trud in delo človeškega življenja se v tem mitu Stare zaveze utemeljujeta na prakrivdi odpada od božje volje in se navezujeta na božjo obljubo [*Verheißung*], ki obeta vrnitev v izgubljeni paradiž po milosti. Človeško občutje samega sebe, ki govori iz tega mitičnega uobličenja, določa torej zavest o izgubi lastnega višjega bitnega stanja. V vsem ponižanju si človek ohrani védenje o svojem božjem poreklu in s tem podobo svojega lastnega bistva: ustvarjen je po božji podobi.

1928 (GW 9, 7–71); 1929 (GW 9, 145–170). Pojasnjevalni, uredniški opombi (št. 1 in 4) sta v poglavitnih potezah povzeti po komentarjih Facunda Beya k angleškemu prevodu besedila. Zaznamuje ju oznaka »*Op. ur.*«, medtem ko so opombe prevajalca opremljene s pripisom »*Op. prev.*« *Op. ur.*

2 V izvirniku: »[…] sein Leben ‚führt'«. »Leben führen« je v nemškem jeziku ena od ustaljenih, t. i. »feste Verbindungen«, zvez glagola in samostalnika, ki tvorita novo stilno stopnjevano, privzdignjeno enoto, na katero se Gadamer opre, da bi poudaril smer, usmerjenost življenjskega toka. *Op. prev.*

Za usodo zahodnega človeka in za njegovo védenje o samem sebi je torej postalo določilno, da se je ta merodajna religiozna izkušnja spremenila v izrecno človekovo spraševanje po lastni biti oz. se je z njim spojila. Filozofija razlaga religiozni odgovor.

Filozofija je stvaritev Grkov. Po grško so najprej mislili, kaj je človek: bitje, ki ima um, *animal rationale*. Kaj ta odgovor pomeni? Kako je mogoče, da se spoji z religioznim odgovorom, ki ga je krščanstvo ponudilo Zahodu? Zdi se, da sta oba predstavna načina med sabo [bolj] slabo združljiva. Od boga odpadlo bitje, ki se po lastni moči z njim nikakor ne more spraviti, to je predstava, kakršna se zdi nasprotna grški predstavi o človekovi umnosti. Zagotovo tudi predstavo človeka kot umnega bitja osnavlja religiozni nazor, nazor o bogu. Toda um sam je to božje v človeku. Slediti umu, razvijati ga in mu dopustiti, da učinkuje, pomeni dvig človeka k božjemu bitnemu načinu. Platon je rekel takole: filozofija si prizadeva, kolikor je mogoče, napraviti človeka nesmrtnega, to pa pomeni: primeriti ga biti nesmrtnih bogov. S samim sabo se človek torej zmore dvigniti čezse, z miselnim zrenjem resnične biti. Modri zadošča sam sebi. Avtarkičen je.

Dejansko je to skrajno nasprotje krščanski zavesti obstoja, ki jo prežema človekova nezadostnost, njegova insuficienca, in ki ve, da potrebuje božjo milost. Vendar se je krščansko versko izročilo v stoletjih pojemajoče starožitnosti najtesneje povezalo z grško filozofijo, in na tem fundamentu počiva vse védenje zahodnega človeka o samem sebi. Velik zgodovinopisec cerkve je, ne popolnoma upravičeno, toda tudi ne povsem brez osnove, Avguština imenoval prvega modernega človeka Zahoda.

Samo-razjasnjenju zahodnega človeka služi, če se vpraša, kako je bila mogoča takšna povezava grškega duha in krščanske vere. Povezujoče je najti na obeh straneh, v krščanskem izročilu misel o *imago dei*, človekovi enakopodobnosti z bogom, v grški misli pa tudi sámo iz religiozne izkušnje izhajajoče védenje o krhkosti človeške biti in utesnjenosti duha s snovjo.

Grška filozofija je samosvoje sprejela in razlagala religiozni predstavni svet zgodnjega grštva. V njenih najučinkovitejših upodobitvah ne gre za nikakršno pojasnjevanje, ki bi bilo izročilu sovražno, temveč za miselno spremljanje in spreminjanje mita. Zlasti religiozno gibanje sedmega in šestega stoletja, ki ga imenujemo orfično-pitagorejsko, se je v klasični filozofiji neposredno prestavilo v misel. Takšna religiozna izkušnja ve za zapadlost in šibkost človeške biti.

»Enodnevnice! Kaj pa je ‚nekdo'? In kaj ‚nihče'? Sen sence / je človek.«[3] Tako poje Pindar. Živòt [*Leib*] je grobnica duše. Osvoboditev iz vezi, spon živôta je cilj filozofskega življenja. Tako so mislili pitagorejci, in platonski Sokrat jim je sledil. Božanskost uma ni svobodna in učinkovita v človeškem življenju. Tudi v svoji najvišji povzdigi, v filozofskem zoru, le na trenutke dosega bitni način bogov. – Tako sredi grškega življenja izrašča neke vrste odrešitvena religija, ki je pripravila tla prihajajočemu krščanstvu. Z daljno zadevajočimi preroškimi reki je Friedrich Hölderlin to sovisje dvignil v novoveško zavest. Dioniz in Kristus sta enakega porekla in pomena.

Na drugi strani pa misli o človekovi enakopodobnosti z bogom, ki tiči v krščanski stvaritveni misli, nikakor ni mogoče misliti brez grške, zlasti platonske filozofije in njenega nauka o videzu in biti, podobi in prapodobi.

Prepričanje, da je človek umno bitje, torej ne pomeni nujno nasprotja veri v njegovo ustvarjenost [*Geschöpflichkeit*]. Um sam vsebuje odnos do višjega, čistejšega uma. Človek se ima za omejenega in se navezuje na neomejeno duhovno bit. To je sinteza grške misli s krščanskim izročilom, ki je oblikovala srednjeveškega človeka. Vsi evropski narodi živé iz nje.

Z začetkom novega veka se pričenja gibanje, ki si zada, da bi to podobo človeka razpletlo od grško-krščanskega duha. Sámo se prav tako napaja iz grških izvorov. Začetek tega gibanja imenujemo kar renesansa, tj. ponovno rojstvo klasične starožitnosti. Njena kultura oblika bivanja se imenuje humanizem, odkritje človeka v novem smislu. Grške misli na novo oživé, in pojem kulture, ki so ga oblikovali Grki, brezkončno odmeva v človeški samozavesti. Krščanska misel o grehu in milosti torej ne zavezuje več tako popolno, da človekova samozavest ne bi iskala samostojne izpolnitve v tostranskem območju. Tako zadobijo liki antičnega mita, ki jih pripisujemo k vélikim kulturnim delom ljudi, novo simbolično moč, npr. antični mit o Herakleju. Božji sin živi življenje muk in dela, preganja ga ljubosumni bes Here, soproge kralja bogov. Povsod, kamor pride, pobija pošasti in tako odstranjuje grozna bitja nekakšnega divjega pred-sveta. Postane veliki očiščevalec, ki dovrši svet človeškega reda in zanesljivosti. V tem mitu se zrcali samozavest človeka, ki ustvarja kulturo.

3 Slovenski prevod Braneta Senegačnika nav. po: Pindar 2013, »Osmi pitijski slavospev«, v. 94–95. *Op. prev*.

Antično bajeslovno izročilo in filozofska alegorija sta ta stari mit preobrazila v simbolični izraz nove, nravno utemeljene samozavesti. Heraklej postane junak vrline. Življenje dela in truda sprejme po svobodni odločitvi, s tem ko zavrne pot užitka: predstavljali so ga na križišču, kako se upre čutnim radostim bivanja in gre po poti vrline.

Še drug mit antičnega izvora se omôči v novejših stoletjih in krepi novo samozavest človeka, ki ustvarja kulturo: Prometejev mit. Prometej, titanski nasprotnik olimpijskih bogov, postane utelešenje človekovih ustvarjalnih sil. Antično izročilo poznejšega časa ga pozna kot stvaritelja človeka. Zdaj človek vidi sebe kot takšnega stvariteljskega duha. Njegova samozavest postane samozavest umetnika, drugega napravljalca, drugega boga, ki samopašno in neodvisno gradi svoj lastni svet. V Goethejevi odi o Prometeju[4] takšna titanična

4 Opozoriti velja, da je v tistem času Gadamer večkrat analiziral Goethejevo pesnitev »Prometej«. Takšno je denimo njegovo leipziško predavanje v letu 1944, ki ga je štiri leta kasneje podaril – za 60. rojstni dan – tedanjemu ravnatelju Humanistične gimnazije Philippinum Kurtu Steinmeyerju. Predavanje je bilo prvič objavljeno z naslovom »Die Grenzen des Titanischen. Prometheus – Pandora [Meje titaničnega. Prometej – Pandora]« v Gadamerjevi manj znani knjižici *Vom geistigen Lauf des Menschen: Studien zu unvollendeten Dichtungen Goethes* [*O duhovni poti človeka: Študije o nedokončanih Goethejevih pesnitvah*] (prim. Gadamer 1949d, 9–27). Istega leta je Gadamer potoval v Argentino, kjer se je udeležil Prvega narodnega filozofskega kongresa, ki je med 30. marcem in 9. aprilom 1949 potekal v Mendozi. Nekaj kasneje je besedilo v španskem prevodu z naslovom »Prometeo y Pandora« izšlo v zborniku *Goethe, 1749 – 28. Agosto, 1949*, ki ga je uredil Alfredo Dornheim in ki ga je objavila Fakulteta za filozofijo in književnost Univerze v Cuyu (prim. Gadamer 1949a). Sestavek o človekovi duhovni poti je Gadamer ponatisnil tako leta 1967 v drugem zvezku svojih *Kleine Schriften* [*Kratki spisi*] (prim. 1967, 105–135) kot leta 1993 v devetem zvezku svojih *Zbranih del*, naslovljenem *Ästhetik und Poetik II. Hermeneutik im Vollzug* [*Estetika in poetika II. Hermenevtika v izvrševanju*] (prim. GW 9, 81–93). V angleškem prevodu je besedilo izšlo leta 1994 z naslovom »The Limits of Titan Power«. Pred koncem druge svetovne vojne, med marcem in aprilom 1944, je Gadamer v Lizboni predstavil predavanje »Prometheus und die Tragödie der Kultur [Prometej in tragedija kulture]«; objavljeno je bilo dve leti kasneje v časopisu *Die Wandlung* [*Preobrazba*] (prim. Gadamer 1946) in ponatisnjeno znotraj svečanega zbornika ob 65. rojstnem dnevu Rudolfa Bultmanna (prim. Gadamer 1949c). Leta 1949 je izvirnik tega besedila izšel v reviji Fakultete za filozofijo in književnost Univerze v Buenos Airesu *Anales de Filología Clásica*; na tej argentinski ustanovi je Gadamer namreč 17. aprila istega leta predstavil njegovo francosko različico. Mnogo let kasneje se je Gadamer povrnil k Ajshilovemu *Prometeju* v spisih »Die Erfahrung des Todes [Izkustvo smrti]« in »Angst und Ängste [Tesnoba in strahovi]« (prim. Gadamer 1993b, 84–94; 189–200). *Op. ur.*

samozavest človeka novih stoletij spregovarja s pesniško zanesenostjo: »Zdaj tu sedim, gnetem / ljudi po svoji podobi, / rod, ki bodi kot jaz, / da bo trpel in ihtel, / užival in se veselil / in tebe preziral / kot jaz!«[5] Spremembo v samozavesti človeka, ki se tu izvrši, lahko lepo pokažemo že pri rabi jezika. Gre za pojem genija oz. pojem stvariteljskega, ki postane oznaka takšne samozavesti. Genij, iznajditeljski duh tehničnega človeka (pomislimo za izraz inženirske enote [*Genie-Truppen*]), vse bolj postaja skupni pojem bogu enake sposobnosti človeka nasploh, da zasnavlja novo, nepredvidljivo, nepričakovano in navidez nemogoče. Genialni človek je človek navdiha, stvariteljske domislice, ki se nedostopna dviguje nad splošno človeško mero. Takšen človek je poimenovan ustvarjalen, z besedo, ki so jo tvorili šele v 18. stoletju in ki je povsem pozabila svoje poreklo v krščanskem pojmu Stvarnika in Stvaritve. To podobo človeka so poimenovali *homo faber*, človek kot kovač, kot iznajditelj orodij, ki mu mora vse, kar je, služiti kot snov in orodje za njegove lastne stvaritve. Moderno naravoslovje in duh tehnike, ki jo uporablja, sta titanična stvaritev tega človeka.

Elementi takšne podobe človeka na sebi niso novi, so grški in zahodni nasploh. A vseeno tvorijo novo figuro, ki jo je komajda mogoče še zarisati v okvir stare skupne predstave človeka Zahoda. Goethejeva oda o Prometeju nima protikrščanskih potez po naključju. Sicer je tudi po krščanski predstavi človek gospodar Zemlje in celotno stvarstvo je predano njegovi vladavini. Toda zanj ostaja dani red stvaritve, na razpolago mu je, da ga rabi in uživa, in ni gola snov in orodje njegove samovolje. Sicer se tudi nova predstava človeka drži starega nauka, da je človek umno živo bitje. Toda kaj zdaj pomeni ta nauk? Kaj mu zdaj pomeni um?

Um potemtakem postane univerzalno sredstvo ustvarjalne volje. Kot umna rešitev slehernega vprašanja vsakomur velja namenska rešitev, ekonomična in racionalna, ki zna najti prava sredstva. Um postane zmožnost sredstev.

5 Izvirnik: »Hier sitz ich, forme Menschen / Nach meinem Bilde, / Ein Geschlecht, das mir gleich sei, / Zu leiden, zu weinen, / Zu genießen und zu freuen sich, / Und dein nicht zu achten, / Wie ich!« (Goethe 1960, 328.) Pesnitev »Prometej« je verjetno nastala leta 1774, leta 1785 jo je prvič natisnil F. H. Jacobi. Slovenski prevod Frana Albrehta nav. po: Goethe 1966, 17. Nekoliko drugače, bolj dobesedno bi se prevod lahko glasil: »Sedim tu, oblikujem ljudi / po svoji podobi, / rod, ki naj mi bo enak: / da trpi, da joče, / da uživa in se radosti, / in ne pazi nate, / kakor jaz!« *Op. prev*.

Toda kaj je mera smotrov, in kako naj jo izmerimo? V 18. stoletju je bil um še zmožnost brezpogojnega, tj. zmožnost smotrov, in Kant je princip nravnosti utemeljil tudi tako, da naj človek na človeka slehernikrat ne gleda samo kot na sredstvo, temveč tudi kot smoter. Kraljestvo smotrov je bila zanj naravnopravna skupnost ljudi. Zdaj pa um postane golo sredstvo, postane tehničen. Služi vsem smotrom. Sprememba v pojmu uma stopnjuje idejo *homo faber* do njene najvišje dovršitve. Um postane univerzalno orodje bitja človek.

S tem se filozofskemu spraševanju človeka po samem sebi znova postavi vprašanje, kaj on sam pravzaprav je. Da, ne samó filozofija, življenje sámo zahteva novi odgovor na to vprašanje. Ni natanko zaradi tega postalo takó demonično v sebi vzgibano, da mu je pošel ali se ošibil smoter, ki daje smer in postavlja mero? Zadnja podoba duha, ki jo je meščanski svet videl kot smoter »kulture«, omika [*die Bildung*], je postala vprašljiva, vprašljiva vsaj z ozirom na moč, da oblikuje življenje in ga urejevalno obvladuje. »Ekonomske« sile se izkažejo za močnejše. Toda kaj je gospodovanje takšnih ekonomskih sil drugega kot posledica umanjkanja merodajnih ciljev? Gre za upor sredstev, ki vodi k vladavini tehnike – tako denarja kot stroja – nad človekom, to je njena osamosvojitev za demonični lastni obstoj.

Sredi takšne, iz slabosti in slepote prihajajoče brez-vodstvenosti, znotraj katere krožijo novejši časi, se odgovor, kakršnega si je na vprašanje po bistvu človeka drznil [dati] Friedrich Nietzsche in kakršen se na nepregledne načine ponavlja in preobraža, vzdiguje kot dejanski in učinkujoči odgovor. Stoji sredi novoveške samozavesti, da, radikalneje od nje ne zameji samo dosežka uma, temveč postavlja pod vprašaj njegov samostojni smisel nasploh, njegovo zahtevo, da bi obvaroval bivajoče, da bi naredil zadevna sovisja vidna in obvladljiva. Um ni samo orodje življenja, temveč tudi ena od najbolj iznajdljivih in drznih preoblek žive sle, sila prirejanja biti za potrebe življenja, plašč, površina, koža nezavednega. Odkritje nezavednega kot nosilnega temelja zavesti je rezultat tega novega načina gledanja. Um, duh ali kakršnokoli drugo ime, nadeto dediščini grško-krščanske misli, se izkažejo kot odvisni in sekundarni. Kaj je tisto, od česar je [um] odvisen in čemu je podrejen? Epohalni odgovor, ki ga je na to podal Nietzsche, gre v smeri, da je resnično bit nasploh dojel kot voljo do moči. Naloga z njim pričenjajoče se prihodnosti se mu je zdela, da filozofijo napravi zrelo za takšen odgovor. Od Nietzscheja nam je pojem vélikega ustvarjalca znan kot resnični smisel človeka. Nietzsche je občutil kot srečo časa, da mi, ljudje, nimamo nikogar [drugega] več, ki bi mu bili dolžni polagati račune, kakor nas same: »Človeštvo lahko odslej počne sámo s sabo, kar hoče.«[6] Gre za propad nadnaravnega gospodarja, krščanskega Boga in morale, kar podarja takšno novo samoobčutenje. Človeško védenje se hkrati samo po sebi obogati z zgodovinsko zavestjo. »Glede na preteklost uživamo vse kulture in njihove proizvode in se hranimo z najbolj plemenitimi cvetovi vseh časov …, medtem ko so prejšnje kulture zmogle uživati samo same sebe in niso videle čezse.«[7]

A natanko Nietzsche je dvosmiselnost takšne sreče časa občutil globlje kot njegovo stoletje. Prepoznal je nujnost, da je po preobratu moralične tabele vrednot platonsko-krščanskega izročila prebivanju treba dati novo težo. Grško-krščanska misel vidi v človeku odsliko boštva ali nosilca božje umnosti. Toda kaj je enakopodobno človeku, ki hoče biti samopašen stvaritelj sveta? Za umetnika je, kot vemo, vse njegovo doživljanje snov njegovega omikanja in formiranja. Tudi ljudje njegove najbližje bližine so mu model. Tako se mora tudi za privrženca boga Dioniza skupna človeška podoba Zahoda razpustiti. Nič več ne vidi v vsem, kar nosi človeški obraz, česa sebi ali bogu enakega, temveč je tudi to, kar ljudje morajo biti, velikim ustvarjajočim vprašanje njihovega hotenja. Nietzschejeva zahteva po »vzgoji in vzreji« ima tu svoj izvor. Ideja nadčloveka se odlikuje ravno po tem, da je nekaj, česar [še] ni. »Najvišja misel: človek je nekaj, kar je treba prevladati.«[8] Blaženost ustvarjanja se stopnjuje do zaklinjanja novega boga, ki ga Nietzsche imenuje Dioniz. Toda šele v omračitvi se mu je ta bog prikazal – kot on sam.

Komaj lahko ocenimo, do katere mere je to obupano stopnjevanje modernega človeštva zadnjih stoletij, kakršnega prikazuje Nietzschejeva filozofija, osvojilo vsa današnja prizadevanja glede starega vprašanja po določitvi človeka. Če, na primer, Ludwig Klages [1872–1956] v duhu vidi nasprotnika duše, potem misli – seveda samo za majhen korak – z Nietzschejem, s tem ko z duhom razume človekovo preračunljivo zmožnost. Če danes biološka spoznanja o položaju

6 Prim. tudi prevod Alfreda Leskovca v: Nietzsche 2005a, 378. *Op. prev.*
7 Prim. tudi Nietzsche 2005a, 377–378. *Op. prev.*
8 Prim. slovenski prevod Janka Modra v: Nietzsche 1984, 53. *Op. prev.*

človeka v kozmosu skušamo razviti kot bistveno določilo človeka, uvrščamo tudi staro določilo uma in duha pod novi aspekt. Intelektualizem dojemanja človeka, ki so ga ustvarili Grki, je zajet v njegovi prevladi. Nietzschejeva kritika zavesti je postala neizogibna.

Medtem je vprašanje po človeku postalo bolj neodložljivo kot kadarkoli prej. Stare forme, kako misliti sebe, ob novih poskusih živijo naprej in jih spominjajo na njihovo lastno enostranskost. Vzvratno tolmačenje človeškega bistva v bitno formo splošnega življenja seveda ne ponuja nikakršne rešitve. Morda zna raztolmačiti, zakaj človek sprašuje po svoji lastni biti, s tem ko odgovarja: »Da bi zmogel živeti.« Toda tega spraševanja samega ne zmore nadomestiti ali zadovoljiti. Naj bo sleherni odgovor, ki ga človek skuša dati na to vprašanje, življenjska moč, svetovni nazor, h kateremu se vzdigujejo nezavedne sile njegovega bistva – natanko boj svetovnih nazorov, ki danes razdira človeštvo, ne pusti mirovati vprašanju, kaj človek dejansko je. Ali ni tako, da mora med različnimi odgovori, ki jih danes glede tega vprašanja preizkušamo, obstajati nekakšen možen red, razporeditev glede na resnico in vrednoto? Če danes položaj posameznika mislimo v ureditvi ljudstva in iz njega premerjamo njegove pravice in obveznosti in njegovo celotno plemenitost, potem nas takšen nazor ločuje od nekega drugega, ki posamezniku zoperstavlja anonimno množico ali pa ga razblinja znotraj nje. Naj bo sleherni od teh odgovorov še tako zelo izraz učinkujoče življenjske volje, ljudstva, rase, zgodovinskega telesa – staro vprašanje po biti in bistvu človeka se v boju takšnih nasprotij šele zares uveljavlja. Kako mislimo, to ne ustreza samo naši vrsti – odgovarjati želi tudi redu zadev samih; želi si biti resnično in gotovo svoje nadmoči nad drugačnim mišljenjem. Stari odgovor na naše vprašanje, odgovor grško-krščanskega izročila, morda ni več zavezujoč. Um – tako smo bili poučeni – je odvisen, vendar zmore biti tudi resničen in bistven.

Tako je v samem bistvu človeka utemeljeno, da ni zavezujočega in ohranjujočega se odgovora na vprašanje: Kaj je človek? Če bistvo človeka ne bi bilo nič drugega kot um, bi odgovor za večno zavezoval vse umne ljudi. Tako je vprašanje odprto postavljeno v odločitev, ki jo imenujemo zgodovinska. Kaj je človek, se nikdar ne bo razodelo, ne da bi se vselej znova zagrnilo. Vseeno se v takšnem zasijanju resničnega razgrinja smisel vsega boja in plemenitost filozofskega in zgodovinskega določila človeka. »[…] dogaja pa se / Resnica« (Hölderlin).[9]

Prevedel Aleš Košar

9 Izvirnik: »[…] es ereignet sich aber / Das Wahre.« (»Mnemosyne«; Hölderlin 1953, 202) Prevod (fragmenta) pesnitve »Mnemozina« Friedricha Hölderlina nav. po poslovenjenju Nika Grafenauerja v: Hölderlin 1978, 103. Prim. tudi Hölderlin 2006, 206. *Op. prev*.

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Announcement | Obvestilo

UDC: 172

Polona Tratnik

Égalité

V kontekstu pandemije COVID-19 so se nekatere države znašle v katastrofalni situaciji, ko se je bilo medicinsko osebje primorano soočati z vprašanjem pravične oziroma ustrezne razporeditve zdravstvenih virov, ki so bili bolj omejeni kot v običajnih razmerah. Za orientacijo glede ravnanja medicinskega osebja v okoliščinah krizne zdravstvene oskrbe je marca 2020 Italijansko društvo za anestezijo, analgezijo, oživljanje in intenzivno nego (SIAARTI) izdalo seznam priporočil in etičnih razmislekov za boljšo

Polona Tratnik

Nova univerza, Fakulteta za slovenske in mednarodne študije, Mestni trg 23, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenija

polona.tratnik@fsms.nova-uni.si

Égalité je umetniško-raziskovalni projekt avtorice članka v procesu nastajanja. Najavljen je bil na razstavi *Živi objekt* v Mestni galeriji Ljubljana (2. 9. 2020–1. 11. 2020). Razstava rezultatov projekta je predvidena v marcu 2021 v Galeriji 001 (v sklopu Kulturnega centra Tobačna 001). Za strokovno svetovanje pri projektu se avtorica zahvaljuje prof. dr. Bojani Beović.

informiranost kliničnih zdravnikov kritičnih pacientov COVID-19 (Vergano et al. 2020a, Vergano et al. 2020b), nato je več znanstvenih skupin po svetu objavljalo znanstvene članke, v katerih so podale konkretna priporočila za ravnanje v kriznih situacijah. Oblikovali so se triažni principi in kriteriji za krizno oskrbo, ki so bili sicer delno že formulirani pred desetletjem za scenarij pandemije gripe in njej podobnih bolezni (Bayer et al. 2011, White et al. 2009), v marcu leta 2020 pa so bili posodobljeni za okoliščine COVID-19. Kot marca 2020 povzema skupina raziskovalcev (Emanuel et al. 2020), je prvo vodilo v pandemiji COVID-19 pri odločanju glede tega, kdo dobi zdravstvene vire, maksimiranje koristi. Pri tem gre za dve vodili: ohraniti čim več življenj – ta kriterij ima absolutno prednost – in ohraniti največ življenjskih let. Zdravniki naj bi se pri odločanju za zdravljenje naslonili tudi na oceno pacientove bodoče kvalitete življenja. Stara vodila, ki so temeljila na enakosti, so bila postavljena v ozadje. Načelo, ki pravi: »Kdor prej pride, prej dobi,« ni bilo priporočeno, naključen izbor pa zgolj v primeru, kadar imajo pacienti enako prognozo. Pomembno vodilo pri izboru je promocija in nagrajevanje instrumentalne vrednosti pacienta, namreč v smislu, da ima prednost tista oseba, ki koristi drugim – predvsem so tu mišljeni zdravstveni delavci. V razpravah so raziskovalci izpostavljali prioritete kriterijev, spodbujali zdravstvene delavce v prvih vrstah k smotrnemu ravnanju in jih pomirjali z nagovorom, da je etično tudi odvzeti zdravstveno oskrbo pacientu, če jo zagotovijo drugemu z bolj obetavno prognozo.

Pandemija COVID-19 nas je kot družbo prisilila v ponoven razmislek o razsvetljenskih načelih in o možnostih njihovega družbenega uresničevanja. Ko Tzvetan Todorov povzema razsvetljenska načela, v skladu z njimi misel o svobodi in univerzalnosti opredeli takole: »vsi ljudje pripadajo isti vrsti in imajo kot takšni pravico do enakega dostojanstva« (Todorov 2006, 205). Osnovo je definiral Jean-Jacques Rousseau: »[D]ružbeni sporazum med državljani ustvari tako enakost, da se vsi obvežejo pod istimi pogoji in morajo uživati iste pravice.« (Rousseau 2001, 37)

Projekt *Égalité* tovrsten razmislek o naši družbi kot razsvetljenski in demokratični izziva v današnjih razmerah ter dileme, s katerimi se je doslej soočala medicinska stroka, ki jih je omejevala predvsem na medicinske parametre, poglablja in naslavlja na širšo družbo.

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Manuscript Submission Guidelines

The journal *Phainomena* welcomes all submissions of articles and book reviews in the field of phenomenological and hermeneutic philosophy, as well as from related disciplines of the humanities. Manuscripts submitted for the publication in the journal should be addressed to the editorial office, the secretary of the editorial board, or the editor-in-chief.

The journal is published quarterly, usually in two issues. The tentative deadlines for the submission of manuscripts are: March 31, for the June issue; August 31, for the November issue.

The submitted manuscript should preferably be an original paper and should not be concurrently presented for publication consideration elsewhere, until the author receives notification with the editorial decision regarding acceptance, required (minor or major) revision(s), or rejection of the manuscript after the concluded reviewing procedure. After submission, the contributions are initially evaluated by the editorial office and may be immediately rejected if they are considered to be out of the journal's scope or otherwise unfit for consideration. The ensuing process of scientific review, which can—provided that no additional delays occur—take up to 3 months, includes an editorial opinion and a double-blind peer review by at least two external reviewers. The articles that do not report original research (e.g.: editorials or book reviews) are not externally reviewed and are subject to the autonomous decision of the editor-in-chief or the editorial board regarding publication. When republishing the paper in another journal, the author is required to indicate the first publication in the journal *Phainomena*.

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The manuscripts submitted in the MS Word compatible format should not exceed 8,000 words (ca. 50,000 characters with spaces) including footnotes. The submission should include a separate title page with the author's full name, academic qualification, institutional affiliation(s), and (email) address(es), bibliography of referenced works at the end of the main body of text, and an abstract of the article (accompanied by up to 5 keywords) in the language of the original as well as in English translation (100–150 words).

The contributions should be formatted as follows: Times New Roman font style; 12 pt. font size; 1.5 pt. spacing (footnotes—in 10 pt. font size—should, however, be single spaced); 0 pt. spacing before and after paragraphs; 2.5 cm margins; left justified margins throughout the text. Instead of line breaks please use internal paragraph indentations (1.25 cm) to introduce new paragraphs. Do not apply word division and avoid any special or exceptional text formatting (e.g.: various fonts, framing, pagination, etc.). Footnotes and tables should be embedded using designated MS Word functionalities. Do not use endnotes. Notes should be indicated by consecutive superscript numbers placed in the text immediately after the punctuation mark or the preceding word.

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The author of the paper is required to adhere to the author-date source citation system according to the rules of *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Within the in-text parenthetical reference the date of publication immediately follows the quoted author's name, the indicated page number is separated by a comma, e.g.: (Toulmin 1992, 31); (Held 1989, 23); (Waldenfels 2015, 13). The bibliography list at the end of the text should include all referenced sources in alphabetical order of the authors' surnames, as in the following example:

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Toulmin, Stephen. 1992. *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Waldenfels, Bernhard. 2015. "Homo respondens." *Phainomena* 24 (92-93): 5–17.

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Revija *Phainomena* sprejema prispevke in recenzije s področja fenomenološke ter hermenevtične filozofije in tudi sorodnih disciplin humanistike. Za objavo predlagane rokopise naj avtorji naslovijo neposredno na uredništvo, tajnika uredniškega odbora ali glavno urednico revije.

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Naslov, podnaslov in poglavja rokopisa je potrebno pisati **krepko**, medtem ko se za poudarke in vstavke tujih izrazov ali fraz ter za naslove navedenih knjig in revij uporabljajo *ležeče črke*. Z dvojnimi narekovaji – v tipografski obliki, značilni za izvirni jezik besedila – se označuje naslove člankov, objavljenih znotraj revij ali zbornikov, in dobesedne navedke. Enojni narekovaj naznanja gradivo, znotraj navedka označeno z dvojnimi narekovaji. Daljši navedek (40 ali več besed) je potrebno izločiti v samostojen odstavek z dodatnim desnim zamikom (za 1,25 cm) in s prazno vrstico nad in pod njim (brez narekovajev, velikost pisave 10 pik). Izpuste iz navedkov, njihove prilagoditve ali vrivke vanje označujejo oglati oklepaji.

Obojestransko stični pomišljaj se praviloma uporablja za nakazovanje številskega obsega (npr. 99–115) ali časovnega obdobja (npr. 1920–1970), medtem ko obojestransko nestični pomišljaj naznanja prekinitev miselnega toka ali vrinjeni stavek (npr.: »[…] tako – denimo – Aristotel pravi […]«). Podaljšani obojestransko stični pomišljaj (—) je značilen (predvsem) za angleški jezik. Stični vezaj (-) se lahko, v skladu z ustaljeno rabo, zapisuje med sestavnimi deli zloženk, pri kraticah ipd.

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Samo izjemoma je mogoče, po vnaprejšnjem dogovoru z glavnim ali gostujočim urednikom revije, uporabiti drugačne načine navajanja.

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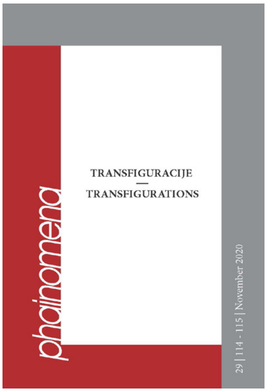

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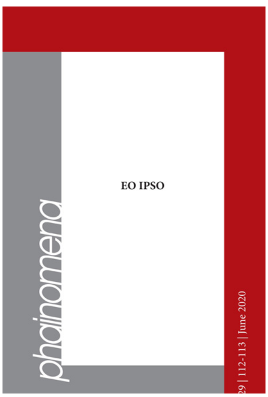

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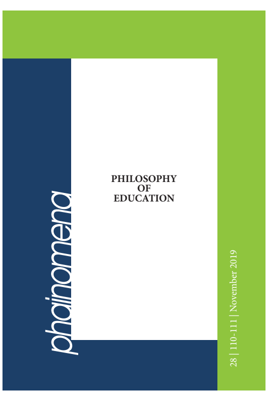

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