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Thinking the Pandemics: Philosophical Perspectives

Róbson Ramos dos Reis*Universidade Federal de Santa Maria***João Carlos Onofre Pinto****Bruno Nobre****Andreas Lind****Ricardo Barroso Batista***Universidade Católica Portuguesa***Submission deadline: 30 April 2021**

Since the end of 2019, the world has faced a serious health crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The health crisis, which began to hit China and spread to most of the world's countries, has so far caused more than one million casualties. In the attempt to control the spread of the virus, many of the world's governments have implemented drastic confinement measures whose economic, social, and political effects are devastating.

The response to this profound crisis has demanded the best commitment from the various agents of society and calls upon researchers from the various fields of knowledge to seek solutions to the challenges we face and to reflect on the impact of the pandemic on the various dimensions of human life. Philosophy is no exception. In this context, RPF intends to contribute to the reflection on the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, publishing original philosophical essays that address, from different philosophical perspectives, problematics associated with the crisis we are facing.

It is important to recognize, in the first place, that the pandemic is much more than a biological phenomenon. Covid-19 is experienced in its psychological, social, and existential dimensions by concrete human beings. On the other hand, social distance measures that have been adopted to battle the pandemic have had a disruptive impact on the core of the human experience, characterized by embodied social interactions. In this scenario, new urgent questions regarding the spiritual dimension of the human person, the meaning of life and death, and the human connection with an ultimate source of meaning have been emerging. Philosophy can make an important contribution to the understanding and interpretation of these complex experiences.

Among the many problems associated with the pandemic, ethical issues stand out. For example, what are the ethical criteria that should guide health professionals when faced with the need to decide who has access to basic life support? How to manage the tension between the imperative to protect the most vulnerable members of society and the need to guarantee the economic and financial sustainability of countries, organizations, and families? Important questions also arise in the field of bioethics.

At the political level, the response to the pandemic has led to the suspension, albeit temporary, of many of the practices that govern the life of democratic societies, with the limitation of human rights and freedoms. The adoption of this type of measures demands an in-depth reflection on the role of the State and the difficult

balance between protecting the health of citizens and respecting individual rights. Reflection on this issue is particularly urgent in face of new populisms and nationalisms.

The social consequences of the pandemic are particularly profound. The situation we are experiencing has already had a visible impact on the way we work, relate to one another, communicate, teach, and learn. The digitization of the society has been significantly enhanced. Privacy issues are even more pressing. During the confinement, many citizens began working remotely, and classes were transferred to virtual rooms. All these experiences raise psychological, social, and anthropological issues that can and should also be addressed by philosophers.

In the current pandemic context, science has assumed a major role. Despite the efforts of teams of researchers around the world to find a treatment or vaccine for Covid-19, the results are not as fast as the public opinion would expect, which could result in a new perception of the limits and possibilities of science. The publication of numerous articles on the subject, many of which fall short of conventional scientific criteria, as well as the promotion of treatments that are not scientifically validated, rekindles the problem of the demarcation of science. On the other hand, the uncertainty associated with many of the predictions regarding the evolution of the pandemic poses questions about the limitations of quantitative models in health sciences and about the epistemological limits of multivariable analysis. The problem of discerning between causality and correlation also takes on a new relevance.

Within this framework, RPF invites the submission of original articles that may contribute to a philosophical reflection on issues related to the pandemic situation we are experiencing. Contributions are accepted for each of the following topics: phenomenological and hermeneutical questions; ethical problems; social and political implications; scientific and epistemological challenges. Some research questions are:

- Experience of illness and social isolation;
- Vulnerability, death and meaning of life;
- The emotions of the pandemic: fear, anxiety, confidence, empathy, compassion, longing, nostalgia;
- Moral dilemmas in a pandemic time: freedom vs. safety; economy vs. health;
- Bioethics issues associated with research on Covid-19 and the treatment of infected people;
- Social and economic impact of the health crisis;
- The role of digital technologies in the response to the pandemic;
- Limitation of individual freedoms and rights in times of pandemic;
- Populisms, nationalisms and the weakening of democracy;
- Instrumentalization of the crisis;
- Limitations of quantitative models in health sciences;
- Epistemological limits of multivariable analysis;
- Public perception of the limits of science.

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For more informations: rpf.aletheia@gmail.com