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**Pensando a Pandemia:
Perspetivas Filosóficas**

Thinking the Pandemic: Philosophical Perspectives

Róbson Ramos dos Reis
João Carlos Onofre Pinto
Bruno Nobre
Andreas Gonçalves Lind
Ricardo Barroso Batista (Eds.)

In Memoriam

Roque de Aguiar Pereira Cabral, SJ (1927-2021)

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Pensando a Pandemia: Perspetivas Filosóficas

Thinking the Pandemic: Philosophical Perspectives

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[Introdução | *Introduction*]

Thinking the Pandemic: Philosophical Perspectives

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The response to the profound crisis posed by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has demanded the best commitment from the various agents of society and called 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. In this context, the *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia (RPF)* intends to contribute to the philosophical reflection on the challenges posed by the pandemic, publishing original essays that address, from different philosophical perspectives, problematics associated with the crisis we are facing.

The disease caused by the Covid-19 is much more than a mere biological phenomenon, it is a phenomenon that is experienced by concrete human beings in its psychological, social, existential, and spiritual dimensions. Because of the complex nature of this phenomenon, social distance measures that have been adopted to battle the pandemic have had a

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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 have occupied a prominent place. For example, what are the ethical criteria that should guide health professionals when facing 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 difficulty to balance the protection of the citizen's health and the respect for individual rights and liberties. Reflection on this issue is particularly urgent in face of new threats posed by the emerging 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, the way we relate to one another, the way we communicate, teach, and learn. The digitalization of the society has been significantly enhanced in this period and privacy issues have become even more pressing. During the confinement, many citizens begun working remotely, and classrooms were moved 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 and to develop vaccines for Covid-19, which at the beginning exceeded the general expectations, in the course of time, public opinion has been confronted with the impression that science was taking too long to solve the health problem in a definitive way, which could result in a new perception of the limits and possibilities of science. 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.

It is within this complex framework, that *RPF* offers this special volume, with twenty five philosophical contributions that have been distributed among five sections. The first section, *Challenging Metaphysics in Pandemic Times* opens with the article “Between Catastrophes: God, Nature and Humanity.” John Milbank argues that, in the dilemma between controlling the pandemic and the fear of the medicalization of human existence, the tendencies that gave rise to the pandemic and the tendencies that rejoice in total control are identical. The counter position to these tendencies lies in the opposition to liberal mechanization and in the recognition of the ambiguity, announced in the doctrine of creation, that humans are situated spirits, transcendent to nature.

In the essay “L’amour de la vie face a la peur de la mort. Une réflexion sur la crise sanitaire et sa portée métaphysique,” Jean-Marc Ferry and Magali Croset-Calisto argue that, despite the universality of the pandemic, its experience is lived differently between different continents, countries, regions, and even between different socio-cultural groups in the same nation. Despite this disparity, and taking as the target of their research the perception of the pandemic from a privileged slice of the Western world, it is possible to analyze three dimensions of the fragility that threaten the human condition: its relationship with death, its relationship with freedom and, finally, its relationship with authority. For the authors, each of these three dimensions of fragility corresponds to different forms of “revelation” of the human condition that is universal.

In the article “Reconstructing Professional Philosophy: Lessons from Philosophy as a Way of Life During a Time of Crises,” Eli Kramer and Marta Faustino promote a metaphilosophical reflection, arguing that the Covid-19 pandemic unveiled the crisis of current professional philosophy, contrasting it with the new alternative field in academic philosophy: *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (PWL).

In “Resistir’ em Tempos de Pandemia,” Andreas Gonçalves Lind and Bruno Nobre explore Josep Maria Esquirol’s “philosophy of proximity,” which has as its theme the healing of the human person in the concreteness of his life and a critique of scientism. This philosophy promotes the generation of life from our own fragility, a fragility that reveals itself as insurmountable. The authors point out that Esquirol’s approach and his “metaphysics of encounter” can be an opportunity for us to learn how to “resist” in times of pandemic.

Starting the section *Justice and Political Challenges of the Pandemic*, Enrica Caraffini addresses, in “Democracy and Borderline Cases. Covid-19 Emergency,” the question of whether the emergence of the pandemic, which forced governments to drastically interfere in basic interpersonal relations, represents a borderline case capable of being conducted in the current configurations of democracy or, on the contrary, highlights the need for a transformation that gives way to another social system.

In “The Pandemic Capital or ‘The New Gravity,’” Agostino Cera examines the emerging process of a new naturalization that has become evident in the pandemic, that is, the pandemic capital, which can be described in the equivalence between the right of a commercial enterprise to profit from its activity and the right of people to protect their health.

In Ricardo Mejía Fernández’s article, “Implicaciones biopolíticas de la Covid-19. Del pesimismo a la parresia,” the biopolitical implications of the current pandemic are considered. Based on a pessimism confronted with immanent prophetism, which speculates on the positive and utopian effects of Covid-19, the author advocates for an ethics of care of self and others.

In “Filosofia, politica e società ai tempi della pandemia. Agamben e la ‘paranoia della ragione,’” Antonio Di Chiro critically analyzes Giorgio Agamben’s reflections on the current pandemic. The essay shows that such reflections are intrinsically consistent with the thought of the Italian philosopher and that a deeply anti-scientific and paranoid vision is present in it.

In “Theories of Justice Applied to the Pandemic: The Case of Vaccine Distribution,” Ricardo Tavares da Silva addresses the problem of distribution of social goods focusing on the criterial distribution of vaccines against the coronavirus. The article assesses whether the distribution criteria to be adopted should follow the guidelines of a distributive or commutative notion of justice, which is based on the adoption of a collectivist or individualist perspective.

In “Einwanderung in Zeiten von Corona,” Daniel Eugene Sharp examines the problem of the extent of closing borders and limiting international mobility as part of strategies to control the spread of coronavirus. Accepting that restrictive measures are necessary for the protection of public health, the author maintains, however, that a complete closing of borders is not justified and that it is necessary to design important exceptions, especially for refugees and asylum seekers.

Opening the third section *Ethical Issues of the Pandemic*, we start with Fausto Corvino’s article, “The Pandemic and Climate Change: Some Lessons Learned on Individual Ethics and Social Justice,” that correlates the ethical challenges of the pandemic with those of climate change. The

author argues that the individual and social ethical lessons learned in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic may be relevant for examining the challenges related to climate change. The affirmative answer, however, is not unconditional, as lessons learned will need to consider not only the risks and high impact of climate decontrol, but especially the opportunities and benefits of a more sustainable world.

In “When the Face Becomes a Carrier: Ethics, Biopower, and Contagion,” Sarah Horton examines, from a perspective that brings together the approaches of Levinas and Foucault, the problem of what it might mean, in the pandemic context, to see the other as other and not as a virus carrier. The author draws attention to the implications of our protection mechanisms that might end up controlling and making relations with other people impersonal.

In “Le masque en temps de la Covid-19 : ce qu’il donne à penser,” Robby Mandiangu Ngofo addresses the unusual problem posed by the Covid-19 pandemic: the meaning of wearing masks. In addition to debating the beneficial yet restrictive meaning of freedom, the essay highlights the responsibility and hope that are evidenced in the wearing of masks, which are not limited to the protection of oneself, others and the community, but also of the environment.

In “Radically Hopeful Thinking for a Wicked Pandemic Problem,” Benjamin Hole examines the challenges of coping with the devastating impact of Covid-19 based on an elaboration of a notion of radical hope, which is understood as a form of courage capable of balancing the expectation that something good will emerge with the goal of good living.

In the last essay of this section, “Covid-19 and our Duty to Die,” Jose Luis Guerrero Quiñones formulates a challenging thesis. Activity in the human relationship to death and dying may go beyond the control of *timing*, for example, in cases where medically assisted dying is legally regulated. The article argues that the therapeutic conditions associated with the current pandemic may imply a disturbing expansion of this autonomy: the moral duty, not externally imposed, to die to save resources that help others to survive.

Opening the fourth section *Existential Meditations on the Pandemics: Vulnerability, Death and Meaning of Life*, we have the article “Actitudes culturales ante la enfermedad y la muerte. Perspectivas desde la pandemia global,” by Julián Bohórquez-Carvajal, that offers a reflection on the impact of the current pandemic on cultural attitudes towards illness and death. Based on studies of mentalities and metaphor, the author argues that the pandemic phenomena can modify the cultural ways on which

we understand the human finitude, suggesting that the current pandemic configures a basic conceptual transformation in Medicine, whose consequences go beyond a paradigm shift and may have an impact on the human relationship with the natural environment.

In “Antropo-etica della vulnerabilità al tempo del Covid-19,” Maria Chiara De Nardo maintains that the reflections on human vulnerability motivated by Covid-19 needs an adequate elucidation of the concept of vulnerability. The article suggests an analysis based on ethical and anthropological considerations drawn from the works of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. Integrating these classical insights on vulnerability with Marta Nussbaum’s ethical reflections, the article highlights the challenge of reconciling human vulnerability with the tendency to avoid this fundamental aspect of the human condition.

The theme of human fragility is also examined in “La vulnerabilità come ritorno del rimosso e la nuova domanda di senso durante la pandemia da Covid-19,” by Maria Teresa Russo. Working with the notion of the “return of the repressed,” the article examines the way in which the pandemic operated a kind of return of a vulnerability repressed by a techno-scientific optimism. In the author’s reflection, the categories of vulnerability and mortality find meaning as potentially healing and open to the transcendent, representing a provocation to the technocratic mentality by demanding the recognition of the unique value of human existence.

In the essay “What the Plague Tells Me and What it Can’t: Moral Lessons from Two Novels,” Roger López offers a reading of the well-known works of Jack London and Albert Camus about the plague in order to glimpse in their narratives the differences and similitudes with the present circumstances that define the time of our current pandemic.

Luis Fernando Cardona Suárez, in the article “El escotoma cultural en tiempos de pandemia. Una lectura de un fenómeno cultural desde la función simbólica del hombre,” examines the phenomenon of the pandemic based on the analysis of the basic symbolic functions that constitute human existence. From the metaphorical extension of the ophthalmological condition called *scotoma*, the article examines cultural phenomena that emerged with the force of the pandemic: the loss of rituals and statistical panic.

In the final section, *The Emotions of the Pandemic*, Flavio Williges develops, in the article “Em Direção à Compreensão das Emoções na Pandemia: a Solidão e seu Significado Epistêmico”, an analysis of the emotions triggered by the threat of the coronavirus and the distancing measures adopted by authorities around the world. Arguing that transient

emotions felt in the pandemic, particularly loneliness, contributed to the recognition of what is important in our lives, the author concludes that the felt quality of loneliness helps to explain why the pandemic should be seen as a transformative experience.

In “What is it to Lose Trust? Covid-19 Pandemic, Extended Minds and Shared Feelings,” Marcelo Vieira Lopes presents the “loss of trust” as a formal element of the pandemic experience. The notion of trust is described as an extended affective phenomenon, susceptible to (techno) social sharing, whose loss already presents significant impacts on the mental health of the affected population.

In “Life Uprooted. Social and Moral Challenges of Woe,” Noelia Bueno Gómez examines the concept of misfortune (*malheur*), known from the work of Simone Weil. As a social and psychological phenomenon, misfortune possesses tremendous destructive power that, according to the author, can only be partially reversed with a *re-appropriation of itself*, generated by a rootedness in *existence* and in the *world*.

Veronika Bogdanova and Kirill Rezvushkin present, in “Philosophical Practice as a Way to Address the Students’ Existential Problems in the Pandemic,” the results of a sociological investigation with first- and second-year students at an institution of higher education. The study evidenced that during the quarantine period learning lost its semantic basis because the educational system proved incapable of responding to the challenges of reality by failing to take into account internal meanings based on personal values. A solution to this problem would consist in, based on philosophical practice, conceiving education not as a transfer of knowledge, but as an aid to finding personal meaning.

Closing this section as the last of the thematic articles, the text “The Ethics of Social Distance and Proximity in the City,” by Tea Lobo, addresses the instigating problem of fighting the pandemic in the social space of city life. The democratic fight against the pandemic would have to be rooted in an ethic code of conduct against the spread of infectious diseases, not only for individual citizens but also as a structural consideration when establishing frameworks of everyday life in city policies and planning. This requires a new formulation that is called “infraethics,” understood as the generation of urban policies favorable to responsible health practices and above all capable of building environments suitable for physical distance without social isolation.

Finally, the section *Varia* of the present issue includes three articles. In the first contribution, “La modernità cartesiana: un paradigma di interpretazione,” Alfredo Gatto analyses the common idea that Descartes is

considered the father of western rationalism and the thinker who made the *cogito* and the subjective element the cornerstone of philosophical investigation. In his text the author aims to examine the history of this hermeneutic paradigm by signaling the main turning points which transformed that reading into the traditional approach to Cartesian thinking and modern philosophy

In the second article, “Paul Ricœur: traços do religioso numa filosofia sem absoluto,” Gonçalo Marcelo assesses the ways in which Transcendence and the question of God appear in the philosophy of Paul Ricœur. Taking stock of the debate on the theological turn of French phenomenology, the text aims to show the unique position held by Ricœur among the French phenomenology and hermeneutics.

In the last article, “Aportes de la filosofía jurídica al concepto persona,” Juan Manuel Alba Bermúdez reviews the most important and relevant ideas, from ancient times to current thinking, about the concept of person. The philosophical concept of person has a notorious role in the understanding of the human being and in modern debates both in politics, as in law and, of course, in ethics. The aforementioned problem has been studied from very different perspectives; however, the author stresses that many coincide in adopting a metaphysical attitude towards it. Therefore, the author will analyze the ontological and legal implications of the concept of person.

Closing this special issue, we are also very pleased to publish a text in which José Henrique Silveira de Brito renders homage to the work and life of Roque Cabral (1927-2021), who was a honorary member of the *RPF* and one of the most distinguished members of the Portuguese Academia, who passed away this year on June 25, 2021.

Almost 10 years after the end of the Second World War, Werner Heisenberg declared that “For the first time in the course of history man is faced with no more than himself on this earth, he no longer finds any other partner or opponent.” In the second year of the pandemic, can the physicist’s words at least be heard as a question? If illness violently mobilizes questioning, in the face of the planetary experience of a potentially life-limiting disease that arrives with contact and breath (the “invisible poem”), is Philosophy open to recognize the limits of its current categories and tools? It has already been said that the question is not only the enunciation without assertive force of an apprehended thought, but above all an attention that lets appear precisely what has not yet been thought. If our immune system gives silent testimony of the fragile balance of the life process, the return home of our vulnerability, in Annette Baier’s beautiful

image, may well be the indication of how much there is to learn with the question that has been the human experience of the planetary contagious disease. An experience that interrogates what we cannot get around. Our aspiration is that the essays now offered to the public will be up to the *Ineluctable* that dwells in people's shared lives and that Philosophy does not cease to seek.

Desafios Metafísicos em Tempo de Pandemia

Challenging Metaphysics in Pandemic Times

Between Catastrophes: God, Nature and Humanity

JOHN MILBANK*

Abstract

Critical responses to the pandemic have divided between the need to control and defeat it and fears of a new medicalisation of human existence. In the short-term the first response is right, but in the long-term the second. The ideological division on this issue on the left roughly correlates with a relative stress on the power of the market on the one hand or the power of the state on the other. But these are two halves of the same picture: the mechanisation of human life and the artificial rendering of the natural scarce and threatening. The tendencies that give rise to pandemics and those which exult in increasing total control are the same. Resistance can only come from a resistance to liberal mechanising as such. This requires the double sense that we are as spirits located within nature and yet as spirits transcend nature, which the theological doctrine of creation upholds. The challenge is to create a new global consensus and shared metaphysical politics around this legacy.

Keywords: Covid-19, creation, ecology, exception, ideology, medicalisation, nature, pandemic, SARS-CoV-2, spirit.

1. Introduction

The Coronavirus Pandemic has the nature of a genuine ‘event’ insofar as its reality is in excess of our attempts fully to account for it as to its origins, causes, extent or implications.

Nevertheless, just how epochal an event it will prove is not so certain. For some commentators it remains simply a temporary interruption, legitimately requiring an extraordinary but temporary response. For others, it is a sign of a much larger and ongoing ecological crisis. Both these groups tend to welcome a current return to greater levels of state action and public cooperation.

But for still others this extraordinary response is not to be regarded as either just provisional or benign, but as an intensification of existing and sinister political economic processes, tending to both surveillance and mutual isolation.¹

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This contrast is somewhat echoed in terms of spiritual and religious assessments of our current predicament. For many people, the Pandemic is a warning of our disordered human relationship to life on earth; but for dissenters the response to it already implies an overvaluing of life as such which so excessively foregoes risk as to endanger our living of truly worthwhile and meaningful lives, perhaps in preparation for a greater life beyond death.

Let us briefly consider these three controverted dimensions of our current global situation: how truly significant is this crisis? Is it the end of neoliberalism or the intensification of tyranny in the name of emergency? And are we now putting life before money, or instead putting a calculus of death-limitation before the risky pursuit of a truly human existence?

2. Between Catastrophes

First, is it true that ‘nothing will ever be the same again’, or is this just a long drawn-out hiatus, as Alain Badiou has argued?² In a sense this is an old-fashioned occurrence: there have been many pandemics throughout history and this one is comparatively mild. They are just bolts from the blue, merely metaphorical ‘attacks’ by banal natural agents lacking in all meaning. Covid 19, or more properly Sars 2, is just the latest in a series of relatively mild modern plagues whose effect is indeed severe but nonetheless passing. It may intensify certain existing trends towards digitalisation and working from home, and increase the abasements endured by those workers who cannot do that – but that is all. Noone seriously saw this coming and the measures taken against the pandemic are just pragmatic, akin to the measures taken in wartime. A political switch to Keynesian tactics does not therefore indicate any permanent alteration and these tactics have been deployed to defend local capitalism in the face of the suspension of some global linkages. The financial sector has still been prioritised and workers have only been assisted to the degree that the market cannot sustain a total collapse in demand beyond a certain level.

To a degree, Bruno Latour confirms this view by arguing that the Sars 2 crisis is not a ‘dress rehearsal’ for coming ecological apocalypse.³ Again,

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1. See Marco D'Eramo, ‘The Philosopher’s Epidemic’ in *New Left Review* 122 (March/April 2020): 25-28.
 2. Alain Badiou, ‘On the Epidemic Situation’ in *Verso* online at <https://www.versobooks.com>.
 3. Bruno Latour, ‘Is this a Dress Rehearsal’ in *critiq*, online at <https://critinq.wordpress.com>.

it is too old-fashioned for that, as we can see by the fact that it has reinvigorated the role of the nation state and modes of 'biopolitical' control that Michel Foucault identified as being at work ever since the year 1800. Governments have deliberately sought to play the selectively medical role of extending some lives, while they have 'economised' the worth of others which are seen as sacrificially indispensable to the running of the economy and to the sustaining of human life in general. What is more, a typically modern duality of culture versus nature has also been re-invoked: we are supposedly in human solidarity against an alien natural force with which we are 'at war'. But the deeper ecological crisis which we face is not like this: it is first of all a far more general threat which cannot be handled by national agencies alone. But secondly, in this instance it is as if human beings are the 'virus' threatening nature, although nature includes themselves. Just for this reason, meeting this more general threat (climate change, species-decline and so forth) requires a questioning of the nature versus culture divide.

On this view then, the crisis might not change things as much as we think, and it is not all that obviously in a continuum with ecological crisis in general.

There are reasons both to heed this double caution and somewhat to qualify it. It can be contradictory for Badiou to say *both* that no one saw this coming *and* that this is simply yet another in the series of Sars viruses. Just for the latter reason, although no one could have predicted this Pandemic in its precise instance, experts have in fact been warning about the likelihood of pandemics of this kind for years and governments have been variously preparing for them. And while one can compare the current crisis to the one occasioned by Spanish Flu around 1920, vastly increased globalisation and governmentality means that the level throughout the world of an organised suspension of normal life is without historical precedent.

Moreover, recent novel viruses, including this one, cannot merely be seen as acts of God. To the contrary, they usually involve a jumping from wild animals to humans and this has been made more likely by human activity. Not merely a perhaps unavoidable further human penetration into the wild, but a corralling of the wild into more cramped spaces, a reduction of species diversity and of animal development of immunity.⁴

4. Kate Jones, 'Tip of the Iceberg' in *The Guardian* at <https://theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar18>.

Additionally, as Badiou notes, globalisation renders far more likely the meeting of archaic practices like wet markets with ultra-modern communications. Old dangers are vastly compounded by new ones. Therefore, as Latour himself stresses, the Pandemic cannot without obfuscation be understood in terms of a nature versus culture duality. We are not really threatened just by a biological agent; it is only an aberrant agent because its agency is compounded by many levels of human agency both individual and accidental (whether traders at Wuhan market or scientists in laboratories) and networked and habitual (various economic links and political systems, besides different human genetic potentials which have hugely effected the impact of the virus in different places and at different times). Our various human responses will unpredictably affect how long the virus endures and how far it mutates.

For this reason and also because there are likely to be other pandemics in the future, we cannot be sure, even at the merely 'natural' level, whether this crisis is here to stay or not. For the reasons we have outlined, it has indeed both features of a traditional plague and others related to a more recent disordering of human interactions with the natural world. What is more, even if more specifically ecological threats are somewhat different, the current crisis already presents some of the dilemmas that those threats will pose far more acutely: how to balance the need for collective action with the sustaining of human freedom? How to achieve at once a pragmatically needed devolution of action and responsibility to local level and at the same time increase an equally required global coordination and solidarity? What lives to protect and what lives to risk? How to integrate human dignity with natural equilibrium? How to balance survival with what survival is for?

3. Between Politics

The second question is how are we to assess the political responses to the 'great pause' in our current lives? One is naturally inclined to agree with Slavoj Žižek that we should welcome the fact of an increase in human solidarity, even if or perhaps all the more because it has to be exercised sacrificially through human isolation.⁵ It is good that there proves to be a limit to the human tolerance of economism and utility: the stark exception

5. Slavoj Žižek, *Pandemic! Covid 19 Shakes the World* (Cambridge: Polity, 2020).

of Sweden, one of the most modern and secular countries on earth, with households too weak to sustain a retreat, is a negative confirmation of this encouraging reality. In the end, even the current British Tories were obliged to back away from a policy of deliberately slaughtering the old and the sick in order to smoke, if not save, their Brexit Bacon.

Thus hardly anyone agrees with Giorgio Agamben's initial semi-conspiratorial view that Sars 2 was just a particularly virulent flu bug which has occasioned an excessive reaction designed to suspend all normal procedures in the name of a permanent rule by exception.⁶ Though nothing like as dangerous as some once thought, it is nonetheless sufficiently so as to justify the emergency measures taken, unless one has adopted a callous disregard for human existence. Nor is it plausible to think that the ruling powers could really have desired a situation which puts both their own wealth and their own power in all sorts of possible peril.

On the other hand, the view that the crisis indeed provides for both the State and for Capital a convenient suspension of the usual norms is far more plausible. In circumstances of lockdown, the power of the digital giants and of the rising online retailers has been greatly increased. The same applies to the reinforcement of home-working which, by isolating workers from shared solidarity, tends to increase their controllability from afar. The apparent reversal of Fordism here should not disguise from us the way in which this can operate as a covert proletarianization of the professional and lower managerial classes: submitting them more and more to routine procedure. At the same time, the leverage of outdoor workers is not necessarily going to be increased: given the spur of much increased unemployment and the militarised disaggregation and de-unionisation also of these workers, the very opposite may have already ensued.

What is more, despite arguments about the relative virtues of suppression versus herd immunity and of balancing immediately threatened lives versus sustaining the economy, in the end all governments tend to adopt a mixture not mixing of both strategies and to attempt some sort of such balance. If we wanted instead to mitigate these difficult choices, we would have to switch to a totally different political and economic order.

We would at least require the degree of social trust and of central with local coordination that has allowed Democratic and largely Christian South Korea to adopt a policy of wholesale track and tracing, together

6. Giorgio Agamben, 'The Invention of an Epidemic' in *European Journal of Psychoanalysis* at <https://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu>. Also Charles Eisenstein, 'The Coronation' at <https://charleseisenstein.org>.

with selective isolation in order quickly to contain the virus altogether. To a lesser degree, more notably subsidiarist and federalist Germany achieved this far better than the United Kingdom, even if later fell behind over vaccination, due to the EU's overestimation of its pan-state apparatus, however virtuously prompted by a desire to prevent unseemly competition between nations.

More fundamentally, we would have to revisit the entire question of what work is for and how the goals of personally fulfilling and socially beneficial work might require different balances of working alone and together in direct physical proximity. We would have to consider how comprehensively to minimise outdoor dangers, to compensate for them and to provide a real and generous bedrock of security for those threatened with a more precarious existence, including unemployment. Indeed, we would try to remove that precariousness and insecurity altogether by fully recognising the equal social importance and difficulty of more 'basic' tasks like building, transporting, serving and caring. We would come to see that these are 'arts' also and we would seek to render them more so.

Against these criteria one has to conclude after all that the Crisis will probably change little except to intensify existing negative tendencies.

4. Between Philosophies

Behind the current tension on the secular Left as to whether we should welcome the new 'wartime' solidarity engendered by the crisis, or rather bewail the inhibition of liberty that it brings in its wake, one can detect far older disagreements as to whether we are to think of the more alien face of the modern and the negatively dialectical impact of enlightenment in terms of primarily the Marxist alienation of labour on the one hand (as with Badiou and Žižek) or of Weberian bureaucratic control on the other – variously and sometimes alternatively seen as 'Heideggerean' technocracy (Derrida, Nancy and Stiegler) or as Foucauldian biopolitics (Agamben and to a degree Latour). Is Capital the alienated human master agent which only the true agency of Labour can overthrow, or is it rather the case that the problem is the very fantasising in practice of a single agency of control termed the 'State' which attempts to suppress the inherent multiplicity of agency through systems of complex instrumentalisation, surveillance and intrusion into existential and vital levels of human reality? On this account, what we need to liberate is not really unified human labour as the non-alienated human subjectivity, but a

multiplicity of interacting agencies, both human and otherwise. Either human beings should suspend 'operation' and recover a mythical Edenic animality (Agamben) or else engage in a democratic constitutional negotiation with all other natural agents (Latour).

Depending on one's preference either for Marx or for 'the Weberian Left' one may see either promise or else menace in the current crisis.

Yet one could argue that it is possible to synthesize these two perspectives on the negative aspect of the modern. On the one hand, labour is alienated in part because, as John Ruskin saw, materialism as such is unable to envisage a noble and spiritual end for work. On the other hand, the State does not just pursue power for its own sake, it also pursues an alienated power only defined as control because of the loss of a shared spiritual horizon. Within this perspective one can then try more to integrate the Weberian within a qualified version of the Marxist. Just as capitalism needs to render naturally available goods scarce, and to invent new goods in short supply, if it is to sustain competition and profitability, so likewise our entire politics tends to 'economise' both life and other natural realities by rendering them selectively rare and more precarious and by offering relatively exclusive remedies and 'solutions', subject at once to market forces and to bureaucratic regulation. In either case power is increased to the same measure as profit, just as capitalist profit is inseparable from power.

What is sought, in either case, is the empty and narcissistic *libido dominandi*, as diagnosed by Saint Augustine. This is the aim of liberalism in the precise sense of a philosophy predicated on the primacy of the individual will. Ultimately, it is the failure of secular thought to isolate the shared framework of liberalism as the real problem, that leads to the oscillation between alternatively money or power as the villain of modernity. Or else it is admitted that critique does *not* break with the liberal framework. Thus, inverting Victor Orban, Žižek roundly declares that 'Communists, are liberals with a diploma'.⁷ What this ultimately means for him (in a pure Hobbesian/ Lockean lineage) is that the subject in her open freedom is dialectically identical with the open randomness of matter. Obviously this provides us, as Nietzsche saw, with no metaphysical grounds upon which to question the operations of pure power, nor of alienated labour, nor of a seduction by illusory spectacle (since there is no reality behind the Lacanian 'real' of the inaccessibly uncanny spectre of matter-subjectivity),

7. Žižek, *Pandemic*, 46.

nor yet of an ecological domination by human beings over nature, since this domination is, on this account itself the most natural thing of all.

The equally metacritical and metaphysical task would rather be to discover not a dialectical identity between the subject and nature (or *physis* as ‘character’ and so content) but a creative tension between them rooted in their shared participation in a transcendent order upholding the reality both of the spirit and of objectively desirable ends of spiritual expression through work upon matter and interaction with other natural (and to a degree spiritual) agencies.

5. Between Spiritualities

This brings me to the third tension, between those, like Žižek, who celebrate our current concern with life as such and those who, in various degrees like Agamben, warn of our now being reduced to ‘bare life’, which will eventually prove to be no sort of life whatsoever. Interestingly, this debate has its ecclesiastical and theological equivalent: overwhelmingly religious leaders have sanctified the new priority for the medical, but others, and most extremely Rusty Reno, have suggested that this is but an ultimate secular encouragement to see any old life as more important than a fulfilled spiritual one.⁸ Thus they have argued against the shutting of churches and the ending of public worship.

Once again, both sides have a point. It is hysterical to claim that measures adopted in the face of war or plague are really intended in all perpetuity. And because we are embodied creatures, mere living is indeed the basis of more exalted modes of existence. On the other hand, we know very well that wartime emergency measures often do survive, though for good as well as for ill. It is also worryingly evident that churches have often (and especially in the UK) been closed to an unnecessary degree and that they, along with other less utilitarian and more convivial public spaces (including libraries, clubs and pubs) are destined to be the last things to be re-opened, precisely because they are less about bare living and bare economic surviving.

In the longer term, just as we can see how the Pandemic bodes to increase human isolation and lack of real physical contact, thereby favouring a huge increase of ‘divide and rule’, so also we can see how it bodes

8. R.R. Reno, ‘Coronavirus Reality Check’ in *First Things*, April 27th 2020 at <https://www.firstthings.com>.

to increase an over-obsession with the avoidance of danger and an endless and self-internalised quantification of risk from minute to minute, as now much enabled by digital devices. In the cases of motion and transport – of walking, climbing, cycling and sailing – as also with human, including sexual interactions, it is obvious that we do as individuals regard certain risks as constantly worth running – or indeed worth staying at home for. We tend to become more inhibited by them when we look at averages and are provided with ‘solutions’ for their avoidance and minimisation. But all those things are provided through an impersonal aggregation of our lives by the state and the market. It is when we are persuaded to regard ourselves as objects through the gaze of the public spectacle that we cease to live with ourselves as self-positing subjects able spontaneously to sense which risks should be undergone and which avoided – all, of course according to inborn or acquired temperament, which is also part of ‘who we are’.

The reverse side of this alienation from natural risk is the implicit taking on of a massive and generalised risk by combined Capital and Power, which in reality exposes us all to exponentially increased risks of illness, both physical and mental, and ultimately of death all the time. So just as ‘pure power’ in fact depends, like Capital, upon rendering the natural scarce, so also an apparently sanitised removal of individual risk really depends upon an alienation of risk which consolidates it into one collective peril, exactly like a nuclear bomb. Thus rule through the inhibition of risk (‘health and safety’) is really rule through the permanent suspension (in both senses) of a huge axe over all of our heads.

Thus we are only (as Agamben’s work sees) reduced to ‘bare life’ because this life can ultimately be discarded, like the excluded scapegoat outside the gates of the city. For the logic of valuing life as such without risk is not that we *really* value life, but that all life has been economised, subordinated to power and money – even and contradictorily the lives of the powerful and the rich themselves in the end. Liberalism is nihilism and inversion: if only negative freedom matters then this is only the disinhibition of material force and so it is identical with death.

In this context one can also note that Žižek is now after all at one with Agamben in warning against the global cult of ‘Humanitarian’ aid. The supposed purely human distress of the starving, the ecologically immiserated, of refugees and war-victims, is really the distress of human beings deprived of that political succour which, according to Aristotle and Aquinas, is integral to our humanity. This distress is largely produced with their every-day right-hands by the very agents of globalised speculative digital capitalism, like Bill Gates and George Soros, who with their

nocturnal left-hands then seek to placate it in a merely 'ethical' fashion. Their real aims are actually to suppress populist and local resistance to their own globalising regime.

The churches should not then have gone so quiet during this crisis, nor have so readily colluded in rendering sacred spaces invisible.

6. The Interruption of the Interruption

If liberalism is ultimately the problem of a degenerate modernity and the lack of the excess of sacred indicators conserving the 'extra' of Spirit, then how are we to understand the release of locked-up energy with Black Lives Matter and the counter protests it has incited in Europe? However valid the cause (especially with regard to the utter scandal of US policing, welfare and social services) a critical inquiry has to ask whether liberal opinion has turned to this in relief both from the unfathomable cultural/natural of the Pandemic event and from its challenge to the hold of both economic liberalism and cultural hedonism. Here, supposedly, is a merely human and identifiable cause with supposedly clear and available solutions.

The invocations of links to the crisis in terms of the greater susceptibility of the BAME community to the virus are to a degree tenuous, as this is rooted in wider social and likely genetic factors. More esoteric and yet more striking would seem to be the covert switch from one 'biological' topic to another more manageable one, just because it is only quasi-biological and so apparently more 'fixable'. Equally the calls (again however sometimes valid) for sudden and immediate change in all our Western habits everywhere and with regard to everything (especially in Europe and most of all in Britain) would appear to parody the Pandemic requirement for exceptional and manageable emergency. With the difference that *this* sovereign exception seems to be something not exercised over against us but rather by all of us. Once more, this diverts us from something problematically meta-human with which liberalism is complicit, to something more comfortably intra-human which liberalism can readily (it supposes) alter. It is not that racism is not a scourge: it obviously is; but there is an implicit and distracting danger of momentarily thinking that it is *the* scourge.

Thus the 'grotesque' irruption of masked massed protest and some ensuing violence under social distancing should forewarn us about the likely future human capacity to divert itself even from apocalypse by lesser troubles. Nor may the evolution of reasonably justified statue-smashing in the direction of a more general iconoclasm (at least in the British Isles) be

unrelated to the downgrading of all sacred spaces safeguarding the spirit, of which memory composes a large part, in the course of the lockdown. Indeed, an inflated 'anti-racism' seems to proffer itself as the newly sacral iconoclastic counter-religion, the ultimate Protestantism of the West refusing the West as an ancient mouldering idol from start to finish.

Should this current start to become complicit with politicised Islam (and arguably it already is) and should the latter make further incursions into Africa which lies on Europe's southern border, and China make use of all this in the face of a United States reduced to crisis, then the implications for Europe are dire indeed. President Macron is exactly right to see that in the face of these threats Europe must unite to resist radical Islam, prevent excessive demographic incursion from Africa into Europe and intervene politically but helpfully in Africa herself to assist her towards a more constitutional and tolerant future.

7. Conclusion: After Covid

How might our current situation and the above reflections relate to our wider current and future ecological crisis?

Many, including me, noted during the first more pastoral lockdown (the second involved a lot of people pointlessly driving their Beemers round in screaming circles) how nature seems to flourish more without us: birds sing louder, fish return to canals, deer wander more freely and right into the heart of our towns. Others, however, have pointed out how this is in part misleading.⁹ Red Kites miss road-kill, and many more domesticated animals and plants languish without our tending. It is not actually ecological to think in terms of humans over against a single unified natural world: no, we are one of many natural agents and as natural we have a good (even perhaps Biblical and superintending) natural role to play. The point is not the liberal alternative of either dominating or liberating nature, but the communitarian one of getting the right balance between different natural actors and between an open human subjectivity and relatively more fixed natural agencies or 'characters'. They need our free and adaptable nurture; we need their stimulus and content if we are to fulfil ourselves.

9. Adam Searle, 'Resurgent Natures? More than Human perspectives on Covid 19' in *Dialogues in Human Geography*, June 10th 2020 at <https://doi.org/10.1177/2043820620933859>. The renowned Cambridge nature writer Robert Macfarlane has supported this perspective on Twitter.

A good relationship to nature requires us to get into more immediate personal and non-virtual contact with our local environment which needs to be more self-governing and self-sufficient in both ecological and political terms. At the same time, we cannot ignore our essential humanly specific and planetary unity which requires far better international coordination if we are to survive, let alone flourish. This should not be and is unlikely to be some sort of literal world government, directed by personal rulers. On the other hand, global coordination is required and this cannot be just ‘impersonal’, or a matter of fixed rules and procedures if it is to work. There seems to be something here in terms of shared sovereignty and mutual international self-government that is still to be invented, although the EU, for all its imperfections and its increased capturing by neo-liberalism, had already gone part of the way in this direction. But for certain this requires an emergent sense of a global metaphysical culture, a sense of shared global sacrality that alone can secure the place of Spirit and so the dignity of human labour and of all other natural agencies.

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L'amour de la vie face à la peur de la mort. Une réflexion sur la crise sanitaire et sa portée métaphysique

The Love of Life versus the Fear of Death. A Reflection on the Health Crisis and its Metaphysical Significance

JEAN-MARC FERRY *

MAGALI CROSET-CALISTO **

Abstract

The SARS-CoV-2 epidemic, including variants, is global; hence the name "pandemic". However, its experience varies between continents, regions, nations, as well as between socio-cultural groups within the same nation. If we target the population fringe that corresponds to a privileged third of our European capitals, it appears that its "resilience" in the face of the crisis is undoubtedly different from that of the inhabitants of Africa, Asia and South America. This choice will undoubtedly teach us less about humanity in general than about the Western man, city-dweller, graduate of higher education. However, this selective look could teach us about a fragility that threatens the human condition as such, and this, under three aspects: the relationship to death, the relationship to freedom, the relationship to authority. To each corresponds a form of revelation.

Keywords: death, metaphysics, life, love, pandemic, SARS-CoV-2.

Du rapport à la mort, à la liberté, à l'autorité

L'épidémie SARS-CoV-2, variants inclus, est planétaire ; d'où le nom de « pandémie ». Mais son vécu varie entre continents, régions, nations, ainsi qu'entre groupes socioculturels au sein d'une même nation. Si l'on cible la frange de population qui correspond à un tiers privilégié de nos capitales européennes, il apparaît que sa « résilience » devant la crise diffère sans doute de celle des habitants d'Afrique, d'Asie, d'Amérique du Sud. Ce choix nous apprendra sans doute moins sur l'humanité en général que sur l'homme occidental, citoyen, diplômé de l'en-

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seignement supérieur. Pourtant, ce regard sélectif pourrait nous instruire sur une fragilité qui menace la condition humaine comme telle, et cela, sous trois rapports : le rapport à la mort, le rapport à la liberté, le rapport à l'autorité. À chacun correspond une forme de révélation.

1.

Quant au rapport à la mort : c'est une peur bleue de la mort. Beaucoup de personnes, entre 50-70 ans, ont vécu prostrées, mais ce fut aussi le cas chez des 35-45 ans. Pourquoi ? Ces générations appartiennent à une classe que la télévision a mise sous perfusion. Ils ont subi un matraquage du fait des annonces gouvernementales journalières et de leur relai médiatique en boucle, mais aussi en raison des confinements, déconfinements, reconfinements. Certains présentent le syndrome d'enfants battus qui ne comprennent pas ce qu'il leur arrive. En France, des psychiatres et psychologues ont lancé l'alerte à ce sujet, parfois fermement en direction des Pouvoirs publics. C'est comme si les victimes avaient subi de plein fouet le choc d'une révélation brutale : le fait de leur propre mort. Pour gérer l'angoisse qui les assaille alors, il n'y a plus que les contraintes gouvernementales tatillonnes, attestations, stop-Covid et autres. L'angoisse de la mort, c'est cela qui a fait irruption. Sous nos latitudes, peut-être est-ce le refoulé par excellence, devant lequel beaucoup sont démunis. Ils n'ont guère de ressource symbolique ou spirituelle pour gérer la situation d'angoisse métaphysique.

2.

La crise sanitaire a mis également le projecteur sur notre rapport à la liberté et à la soumission. Seconde révélation, après celle de la mort propre : celle de la servitude volontaire. Bien des individus semblent d'abord sensibles aux restrictions pesant sur les libertés matérielles, telles que celle d'aller et venir, de se rendre au restaurant, au cinéma, de sortir de sa région, d'aller librement à la mer ou aux sports d'hiver... Mais ils ne s'alarment pas des atteintes portées à la liberté d'expression et d'information. Serait-ce par crainte d'être taxés de conspirationnisme ? L'anathème est vite lâché contre qui prête l'oreille à des discours dissidents. Pensons aux alertes émanant d'autorités scientifiques ou médicales. Pourquoi risqueraient-elles leur carrière en nous appelant à la prudence, si elles n'avaient la conviction que l'on fait prendre des risques à la population ? Pourquoi ostracise-t-on les lanceurs d'alerte, si qualifiés soient-ils, tandis que les médias *mainstream* tendent à les stigmatiser en tant que

complotistes ? « Complotisme » : voilà la nouvelle arme d'intimidation massive pour contrer la dissidence à l'égard de la doctrine officielle¹. On en fait même parfois un chef d'inculpation parajudiciaire, pour neutraliser les gêneurs, les évincer de postes à responsabilité, etc. Aussi grave, sinon plus encore, est l'indifférence d'une majorité du premier tiers face à ces atteintes sournoises, portées à nos libertés d'information et d'opinion.

3.

Rapport à l'autorité politique et scientifique, enfin. C'est là qu'est patent le clivage entre le premier tiers et les deux autres. Troisième révélation, après la mort propre et la servitude volontaire : la crise de confiance dans l'autorité. Quant à l'application du principe de précaution, on demande pourquoi les Pouvoirs publics sont excessifs, quand il s'agit de prohiber des traitements classiques, éprouvés et peu onéreux, alors qu'ils sont légers, lorsqu'il s'agit d'inonder le marché d'innovations médicamenteuses et vaccinales. L'expertise scientifique n'échappe pas à cette crise d'autorité. De ce côté, on a pu faire valoir que le peuple n'a pas à voter pour statuer sur la vérité ; qu'il faut plutôt en laisser la décision à la « communauté scientifique ». *Mirabile dictu* ! Par insinuation, les partisans de la méthode droite font comme si plébisciter une sommité scientifique non alignée revenait à soumettre la science à une dictature populiste. Mais le danger n'est pas du côté qu'on insinue. En réalité, les gens ne visent pas à substituer leur opinion à la science : ils s'estiment libres d'accorder ou non leur confiance à telle personne plutôt qu'à telle autre. En ce domaine, aucune expertise ne saurait se substituer au jugement de tout un chacun. Aujourd'hui, en France, les gens que l'on dit « ordinaires » ne se fient plus aux gens du « sérail ». Ces derniers ont peu à peu fabriqué des consensus de bocal en s'imaginant constituer seuls l'opinion publique. Nouveaux et dignes promoteurs de la société du mépris... Ils campent sur le conformisme politico-scientifique, sans réaliser la souffrance morale que distille leur bien-pensance. Certains entrent dans les habits du zèle de la méthode scientifique, rejoignant par-là le rang des argousins de la « vérité » et autres idiots utiles aux ennemis de la liberté. C'est qu'en effet cette posture est devenue une menace pour la liberté politique. Notre défi est la liberté d'opinion et d'information. Toute censure est pathogène, porteuse des conflits les plus aigus, singulièrement quand elle se met en marche aux

1. Par exemple, si l'on conteste les chiffres tirés des tests PCR, ou l'existence d'une surmortalité directement causée par le virus lui-même, etc.

noms de la santé et de la vérité. Nous sommes à la croisée des chemins. Face à la collusion d'intérêts, de préjugés et de peurs, aurons-nous la sagesse collective d'ouvrir, pour la première fois sans violence, un chemin de liberté adulte ?

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À cette interrogation qui est aussi une inquiétude, la réponse n'est pas évidente. Plutôt que d'en appeler à une bonne volonté des élites politiques et scientifiques, il serait judicieux de compter sur des forces que l'on suppose capables de combattre cette peur de la mort, dont la propagation, liée à la gestion de la crise sanitaire, crée le terreau propice aux atteintes liberticides. Quelles seraient ces « forces » de salut, sur lesquelles nous pourrions ou devrions compter ?

Face à la peur de la mort, l'amour comme force de vie

Commençons par un lieu commun : l'amour plus fort que la mort. Or, que veut dire « plus fort » ? — Est-ce à dire que l'amour pourrait « vaincre la mort » ? Cependant, la question persiste : qu'entend-on par « vaincre » ?

Souvent, le dialogue s'arrête là. « Vaincre la mort », dira-t-on, est une façon de parler. On sous-entend que la mort n'est certes pas vaincue physiquement par l'amour, puisque, pense-t-on, elle est indépassable. On ne détruit pas la mort, n'est-ce pas ? On la surmonte, plutôt ; et si l'on y met fin, ce n'est qu'en un sens figuré ; par exemple, en faisant triompher une valeur, pourvu qu'elle soit portée par l'amour. Parmi nos ancêtres, certains n'ont-ils pas donné leur vie pour leur patrie, leur famille, leur liberté ? En attestent les monuments aux morts : ils disent de nos héros qu'ils ont fait triompher nos valeurs sur la mort. L'amour de la patrie, de la famille, de la liberté, se serait ainsi révélé plus fort que...

... Que la mort ? — Non ! Plus fort que la peur de la mort.

La peur de la mort. Voilà l'ennemi que combat l'amour de la vie. Le drame est d'actualité, c'est la pandémie SARS-CoV-2 dont le nom surgit comme un monstre. D'aucuns y voient comme une malédiction qui se serait abattue sur le monde, un fléau cosmique, orchestré par des annonces officielles qui maintiennent les populations en haleine, à la cadence des durcissements et relâchements dont le cycle est rythmé par chaque survenue d'une nouvelle tête de l'hydre, au gré des mutations du virus... si bien que des humains se recroquevillent, hantés par le spectre rendu presque visible de leur propre mort. La crise les oblige à la regarder en face ; et, au-delà

de la peur de la mort, à affronter l'angoisse de la mort, une angoisse métaphysique insondable. Elle vient, en effet, de ce que notre mort personnelle, notre propre néant est vécu *ipso facto* comme le néant du monde.

En mars 2020, nous tirions déjà par anticipation la sonnette d'alarme afin d'envisager au plus vite un plan d'urgence psychologique². Car nul n'est armé de la même manière face au virus. Par ailleurs, la prévention a toujours fait ses preuves en matière de santé publique. Il y avait urgence puisque la santé psychique des Français justifiait les inquiétudes, laissant poindre la menace d'une décompensation générale, suite aux crises et fractures sociales déjà fort palpables dans le pays. Or, on le sait pourtant, un pays qui va mal psychiquement, un pays qui n'a pas le moral, est un pays en perdition. C'est pourquoi, il était nécessaire d'envisager des stratégies politiques pour contenir voire juguler le stress généré par la crise sanitaire. Le but ? Canaliser stress, angoisses et anxiété (pulsion de mort et d'autoconservation) pour en faire une force motrice (pulsion de vie). Prévenir plutôt que guérir, tel était l'enjeu. Comment ? Par une batterie de propositions allant de l'information à la prévention, en passant par la réduction des risques et de dommages (RDRD) selon une offre de soin régulière... et remboursée. Concrètement, cela imposait une nouvelle prise en charge publique de la santé psychique (la mesure de chèque-psys étudiants annoncée en février 2020 par le Président relève plus du sparadrap qui ne colle pas que du stoppage de l'hémorragie psychopathologique). Face aux effets de la Covid-19, la nécessité d'une prise en compte et en charge de la santé psychologique des individus apparaissait déjà comme une des priorités. En effet, après l'état de sidération provoqué par le premier confinement (état de choc qui vient suspendre toute possibilité d'acte face au danger), la deuxième vague et ses conséquences ont produit une nouvelle phase : celle de la dissociation. Se dissocier des autres (pulsion narcissique) comme de soi-même (pulsion d'autoconservation) pour mieux résister face à l'adversité, se dissocier pour mieux supporter le trauma et ne pas flancher, s'anesthésier d'une manière ou d'une autre - l'essor des addictions n'est pas étranger au phénomène - pour franchir le gué, « sans savoir ce qui nous attendra après »... Voilà un discours fréquent et récurrent au sein des cabinets de consultations. Nul doute, Thanatos est en action³.

2. M. Croset-Calisto, « Confinement, décrétons l'état d'urgence psychologique », *Marianne*, 27 mars 2020 ; « Confinement : décrétons l'état d'urgence psychologique » (marianne.net).

3. M. Croset-Calisto, « Déconfinement, le spectre d'une décompensation individuelle et sociétale », *Libération*, 24 mai 2020 ; « Déconfinement : le spectre d'une décompensation individuelle et sociétale » (liberation.fr).

À la gestion de la crise sanitaire doit une contribution essentielle la révélation de l'angoisse de la mort — de cette-mort-mienne, disait le poète Rilke. En France, la gestion politique a consisté à prohiber les manifestations de la vie sociale. On n'a pas hésité à supprimer la vie au motif d'épargner des vies, sans balancer entre deux considérations qui pourtant se valent : d'un côté, l'évidence immédiate de ralentir le virus par des mesures telles que la fermeture des lieux de détente et de rencontre ainsi que la suspension des activités qui font la vie des cités ; de l'autre, les effets délétères à terme, pathologies induites, dépressions et suicides, de l'isolement forcé, des couvre-feux et du matraquage des esprits par l'énoncé quotidien de bilans mortuaires.

Irruption de Thanatos dans les mesures bureaucratiques de préservation de la vie ! En France, la gestion sanitaire de la crise reposa sur trois volets liés entre eux : hospitalier, vaccinal, interditif.

La stratégie hospitalière a consisté à subordonner les mesures gouvernementales à la considération des limites et contraintes systémiques pesant sur la prise en charge par les hôpitaux publics des pathologies avancées. Il s'ensuit qu'une considération prioritaire était la saturation des services hospitaliers, en particulier des services d'urgence. En vérité, il s'agit d'un phénomène régulier, en France. Il se répète, chaque année. Le Président Macron en avait d'ailleurs été alerté de façon spectaculaire, télévisée en direct, par un chef de service de Neurologie, avant le déclenchement de la pandémie. En faisant de l'hôpital public le relai prioritaire des agences régionales de santé et des directives du Ministère de la Santé, on a délaissé deux ressources essentielles : d'une part, les cliniques privées et les médecins libéraux ; d'autre part, le maillage exceptionnel du territoire français en officines pharmaceutiques. Si, au lieu de sous-utiliser, voire mépriser ces deux ressources, l'État français avait d'emblée orienté sa stratégie sanitaire sur leur mobilisation, il lui aurait été difficile de garder la main haute sur la doctrine thérapeutique, qu'elle soit médicamenteuse ou vaccinale : les médecins libéraux auraient été libres de proposer des traitements précoces, et de faire progresser les premiers protocoles, tandis que les pharmaciens, spécialistes du médicament, auraient pu gagner sur le corps médical un pouvoir exceptionnel de prescription dosée. Des propositions thérapeutiques auraient pu surgir, ici et là, questionnant ainsi la fixation des esprits sur l'avènement du « vaccin salvateur ».

La stratégie vaccinale procède sans doute de la vision selon laquelle une pandémie appelle une réponse « à l'échelle », propre à « karchériser » le virus et traiter ainsi le fléau en série, plutôt que de mener contre lui une « guérilla » de chaque instant au niveau de chaque patient. Comme la stratégie hospitalière, la stratégie vaccinale implique une relégation du soin

curatif et préventif assorti d'un suivi médical personnalisé et précoce, avec une surveillance de proximité. En l'espèce, elle s'est aussi traduite par une exclusion de traitements médicamenteux simples, éprouvés, peu onéreux, disponibles en pharmacopée ordinaire. Certains médicaments se sont vu refuser, contre toute raison, l'autorisation de mise sur le marché, tandis que l'on encourageait les hôpitaux publics à prescrire un médicament nouveau (le remdesivir) qui se révéla inefficace et même toxique — trahissant par-là une forte dissymétrie dans l'application du principe de précaution... Nonobstant la préférence de groupes pharmaceutiques pour les innovations chères, il est vrai que notre système économique général ne dispose pas à relancer une production peu ou pas rentable, surtout s'agissant de génériques. Au-delà des conflits d'intérêts, le problème est systémique. Sa résolution impliquerait sans doute la nationalisation d'une partie de nos groupes industriels pharmaceutiques, pour autant qu'il en reste, ou, en tout cas, des missions de responsabilité sanitaire, impliquant de la part des groupes des sacrifices commerciaux.

La stratégie interdictive consiste à prétendre gérer la pandémie en suspendant *sine die* la circulation du virus. Elle se traduit par la fermeture des lieux de rencontre, de détente, de restauration, par des dispositifs de protection obligatoire et par des restrictions à la libre circulation des personnes. Elle revêt la forme juridique de décrets instaurant des couvre-feux, confinements, contrôles de police. Elle est gérée à l'aide d'annonces officielles, propres à entretenir la peur dans la population. Cette stratégie favorise des dérives, en particulier des censures pesant sur l'information (jusqu'à peu) « libre », non *mainstream*, celle qui provient d'interventions de médecins et scientifiques hors rengaine ou langue de bois. Au total, la stratégie interdictive est pathogène. Son effet paradoxal est massif. D'abord, elle a figé les consultations « quotidiennes », réduisant de 20% les diagnostics qui auraient permis de traiter les cancers. Ensuite, elle a organisé une psychopathologie de masse, induisant des effets post-traumatiques — par exemple, sur la concentration et la mémoire — ainsi que des dépressions immunitaires et psychiques, des violences familiales et des suicides. Ces pathologies psychologiques mais aussi physiologiques sont une conséquence connue de l'inhibition de l'action. Enfin, la stratégie interdictive jette des groupes sociaux dans la détresse économique, sociale et morale, en rapprochant leur statut de celui d'assistés, même s'il s'agit, en droit, d'indemnisations destinées à compenser la suppression autoritaire d'activités cependant légitimes.

Cette stratégie gouvernementale appelle une critique dont une entrée pertinente est passée à peu près inaperçue. Au lieu de mettre en cause l'autoritarisme des décideurs ou des conflits d'intérêts en jeu au sein de

certaines autorités, nous aimerions ici porter l'accent sur un présupposé, voire un impensé qui marque une mentalité générale dans les milieux économiques, politiques, scientifiques et médicaux. C'est l'idée, au demeurant, à peine consciente, que telle maladie, tel virus, « appellerait » tel médicament spécifique, telle molécule déterminée ; que, pour ainsi dire, chaque virus aurait sa molécule *ad hoc* ; qu'à l'apparition, par conséquent, d'un nouveau virus devrait logiquement correspondre l'invention d'un nouveau médicament ou d'un nouveau vaccin... une sorte d'égocentrisme instrumental. Or, ne vaudrait-il pas mieux considérer que, *a priori*, les molécules, d'un côté, les virus, de l'autre, sont deux données indépendantes l'une de l'autre ? Aucune molécule n'est « faite pour » la neutralisation de tel virus. Notre pharmacopée est déjà très riche. Nous disposons d'à peu près toutes les molécules utiles et les spécialistes savent rechercher ce qui pourrait convenir au traitement de telle affection. A eux revient la fonction d'effectuer la jonction pertinente entre les deux données, en usant, pour ce faire, de leur expérience antérieure et de leur jugement.

Deux facultés intellectuelles entrent en concurrence : l'intelligence analytique et la faculté de juger. Tandis que l'intelligence analytique considère des logarithmes, courbes, projections, valorise l'analyse factorielle et les essais cliniques randomisés, la faculté de juger pèse et évalue ce qui conviendrait ou non, en la situation. La faculté de juger n'est pas exacte au sens requis par l'intelligence analytique. Mais, à la différence de cette dernière, elle permet d'éviter les bourdes en matière de prévision, car elle sait, sur une base réflexive, prédire ce qui est possible et ce qui ne l'est pas. Ici, la critique commence avec une réflexion sur les limites cognitives et opérationnelles d'une méthodologie analytique et sa « technologie droite », pour paraphraser une expression de Husserl. De là, elle introduit à une réhabilitation du soin thérapeutique, préventif et individualisé, face à un traitement de masse, agencé dans l'esprit d'un « tout hospitalier », « tout vaccinal », « tout interdictif ». Une telle stratégie du « tout administré » doit maintenant être interrogée au plus intime de l'esprit qui l'anime. Nous voyons déjà, intuitivement, que cet esprit se positionne aux antipodes de celui qui appelle et épanouit la pulsion de vie.

Supprimer la vie pour sauver des vies : tel est, en la situation de crise, le masque revêtu par la pulsion de mort, thanatos. Dans la « mythologie » freudienne, Thanatos, la mort, est la force cosmique opposée à Éros, la vie. Sigmund Freud avait, à leur propos, parlé d'un « combat de géants immortels ». À l'heure où s'écrivent ces lignes, il semble que Thanatos ait pris le dessus, provisoirement, on l'espère ; que l'angoisse de la mort soit, par endroits, parvenue à paralyser l'amour de la vie. D'Éros et de Thanatos aucun des deux « géants » ne sortira-t-il définitivement vainqueur ? En tous

domaines de la vie civile, cependant, nos sociétés ne progresseront qu'en contenant la puissance auxiliaire de notre confinement actuel : Thanatos, la pulsion de mort ; et, corrélativement, en libérant la pulsion de vie, Éros.

Thanatos s'oppose à Éros, la pulsion de mort s'oppose à la pulsion de vie, comme un couple de forces antagoniques, si bien que ces forces paraissent se combattre autant que s'entretenir mutuellement. À suivre le Père de la Psychanalyse, elles seraient l'une et l'autre essentielles à l'existence, à l'image des forces cosmiques d'attraction et de répulsion dont, en Physique classique, on estimait l'opposition nécessaire à l'équilibre de l'univers. Comment alors traiter l'une sans l'autre, si l'on veut obtenir une image complète ?

Quatre modes d'existence... et d'investissement libidinal

Nous privilégions la dimension anthropologique des forces de la vie, celles que l'on désigne sous les noms de Éros, ou de libido, ou, plus sobrement, d'amour : la pulsion de vie, dirait-on en Psychanalyse, tandis que la Philosophie parle d'une disposition pour la vie. Cette « pulsion » ou « disposition », comment se présente-t-elle ?⁴

Elle s'affirme spontanément sur un mode d'existence ludique : l'amour du jeu sans règles. La confiance dans le réel, charme de la première enfance, y est immédiate, de même que l'adhésion à la vie, mais la réflexivité en est absente. En s'insinuant dans la vie, elle en abstrait des enjeux, des objectifs dont la réalisation donnerait censément sens à l'existence.

Ainsi le mode ludique, propre à la tendre enfance, fait-il place à un intérêt pour le mode d'existence érotique, caractéristique de l'adolescence. L'amour du jeu, simple et immédiat, fait place au jeu de l'amour, avec ses enjeux narcissiques et affectifs. On y fait l'épreuve de la reconnaissance. Les aventures de l'espoir, de la déception, du succès, de l'échec, du dépit, de la satisfaction..., deviennent autant d'occasions de jouer son identité personnelle.

Cette réflexion nous transporte dans des souvenirs d'enfance et d'adolescence. On y revit la sensation de liberté qui nous saisissait, lorsqu'en été à la tombée du soir, nous courions à corps perdu dans les hautes herbes, avec une impression d'immense liberté ; et le chagrin, quand, en fin de journée, il nous fallait prendre congé de nos camarades de jeu. Nous nous pensions inconsolables, tant nous adhérions à l'instant... ; et, plus tard,

4. Les passages qui suivent en italiques sont issus de Jean-Marc Ferry, *Métaphysiques. Le Sens commun au défi du Réel* (Paris: Cerf, 2021), 221-222.

ce sentiment d'étrangeté, lorsqu'au moment de la puberté nous étions submergés par des émotions inconnues. Parfois, la colère montait sans raison, comme si les deux pulsions, désir et repli, amour et haine — Éros et Thanatos, somme toute — s'entrechoquaient dans une confrontation ouverte, comme un baptême du feu.

Venu l'âge adulte, le mode d'existence pragmatique fait de l'amour une affaire : les partenaires de l'amour décident ou non de « faire affaire » ensemble, de lier leur existence, avec un projet matrimonial et patrimonial. L'atteinte des objectifs est affaire de l'existence entière ou de la vie dite « active ». Atteindre ces objectifs conditionne la réussite ou l'échec de la vie. Les adultes vieillissants regardent rétrospectivement le trajet parcouru, se demandent si c'est bien ce qu'ils auraient vraiment voulu ; si, au fond, leur vie est réussie — plus crûment, si elle n'est pas ratée, ou en voie de l'être.

On en vient à la réflexivité d'un mode d'existence philosophique en un sens littéral ; car l'amour, toujours en question, est, à présent, amour de la sagesse, assorti d'une charité critique à l'endroit des erreurs passées. Après l'enfance, suivie de la préadolescence et de l'adolescence, puis de l'âge actif, ce quatrième moment renoue avec la simplicité dans la quête d'une (fin de) vie réussie. La vieillesse est, là, en situation de comprendre la jeunesse. L'amour entre enfants et grands-parents saute la génération intermédiaire des adultes en âge actif. Dans cette relation, l'enfant n'est plus sollicité de faire ce qu'il faut (études, diplômes, etc.) pour « réussir sa vie ». Il est écouté, quant à son imaginaire, jusqu'à pouvoir sans barrière faire entendre ce qui pour lui est la « vraie vie », mérite à ses yeux d'engager son existence.

Quatre modes d'existence, donc : ludique, érotique, pragmatique, philosophique. Ils renvoient respectivement au jeu, à l'amour, aux affaires, à la pensée. Mais pourquoi ces quatre modes, puisque notre propos prétend se centrer sur la force de l'amour ?

Ce que l'on nomme « amour » signifie bien des choses. Le mot amour réfère à tant de valeurs différentes, depuis la passion entre amants, le désir sexuel, la tendresse infinie pour son enfant, l'attachement aux parents, l'adoration de Dieu, le dévouement à l'art, l'ascèse de la recherche, le service de la nation... que toutes ces « choses » peuvent s'accorder au mot « amour ». Justement, l'usage ordinaire du langage invite à envisager qu'au principe de tout engagement puissant l'investissement requis suppose cette force que le langage plus savant de la Psychanalyse a intitulée libido. L'appellation n'est pas réservée à la vie sexuelle. Par exemple, on parle de *libido sciendi*, désir, appétit de savoir, « instinct de connaissance », disait Nietzsche. En toute application, il s'agit d'un appétit motivé par le désir,

tiré par la passion, insufflé par une forme de joie, d'enthousiasme, même, qui embrasse le réel, force de vie et d'amour à la fois.

Une telle force — « instinct », « pulsion », « appétit » — que l'on imagine première, trace ses sillons dans nos espaces d'expérience. Elle se déploie en orientations distinctes : vers le jeu libre qui évoque une ode à la nature ; vers le plaisir sexuel qui exalte les sentiments ; vers l'esprit d'entreprise qui capte l'énergie diurne ; vers l'extase contemplative qui porte à la spiritualité. Le plus souvent, la « vie amoureuse » ne représente qu'un seul mode parmi ces quatre fondamentaux, alors même que le jeu, le sexe, les affaires, la pensée ont besoin à un degré comparable d'une puissance « érotique » au départ. Demandons-nous ce que signifie la force de l'amour, lorsqu'elle s'investit dans le jeu (mode d'existence ludique), la sexualité (mode d'existence érotique), les affaires (mode d'existence pragmatique), la pensée (mode d'existence philosophique). C'est la force qui restaure la confiance et, ce faisant, renforce les identités personnelles face aux épreuves. Un vaste programme entre en perspective, un chantier qu'il n'est pas possible d'engager dans le cadre d'un texte court, et que nous nous permettons de remettre à l'imagination de celles et ceux qui nous lisent ici. Déjà pouvons-nous du moins nous référer à la correspondance qui avait eu lieu, quelques mois avant la prise de pouvoir par Hitler en Allemagne, entre Einstein et Freud. Ces derniers esquissaient notamment la manière dont Éros — afin de conjurer le risque « pantoclastique » de guerre, celui qui détruit tout, jusqu'à l'humanité⁵ même — peut répliquer à Thanatos et le combattre. Comment ? Grâce aux différentes orientations de la libido et selon les quatre modes d'existence esquissés : ludique, érotique, pragmatique et... philosophique. Pour que l'amour de la vie brave la peur de la mort.

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Reconstructing Professional Philosophy: Lessons from Philosophy as a Way of Life During a Time of Crises

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MARTA FAUSTINO**

Abstract

This article reflects on the way the Covid-19 hecatomb has disclosed and unraveled the ongoing crisis of professional philosophy, and suggests some lessons that might be taken from the pandemic, urging academic philosophers to take action regarding the future of their work in philosophy departments and institutions. In the first section of the article, we highlight some lasting criticisms to academic philosophy and explore one particular nasty thorn in the side of philosophers doing the kind of work that might speak to broad audiences facing a crisis of meaning and living: the rush to publish instead of “perishing” without a secure academic position. In the next section, we discuss philosophy as a way of life (PWL) as an alternative nascent field in academic philosophy that, while garnering respect and recognition within the academy, has regained connections with a broader public desperate for ways to chart their own paths of meaningful living, especially when facing a deeply challenged and fractured world. PWL helps address the crises of meaning many in the academy face (both teachers and students) and the absence of rich philosophical reflection and communities in the broader public, which otherwise all too easily fall prey to hucksters, con-artists, and authoritarian and conspiratorial forces. We argue that this kind of wholistic critical development of PWL from the ancient world is designed to enact a prefigurative or *eutopian* politics. We conclude by situating our recommendations into a broader reconstruction of professional philosophy needed at this critical cultural moment.


Keywords: academic professionalism, Covid-19, metaphilosophy, modern stoicism, philosophy as a way of life, the meaning crisis.

1. Introduction

We are in a refrain of crises; the Covid-19 Pandemic has merely swelled the size and scope of the chorus. We have long known that our aggressive impingement on the habits of our fellow


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creatures of mother earth would eventually unleash dangerous microbes against us; that global inequality exacerbated by late stage capitalism and ideological neoliberalism would be poorly equipped to serve a sustainable and fulfilled common humanity; and that the growth of an ideologically sealed authoritarian far right populism and its conspiracy communities could grow wild, while being manipulated, in a social media saturated and focused environment. We have long recognized these problems and myriads of other issues, but because of the current crisis context we cannot distract ourselves with the everyday tasks in our more “normal” life patterns so easily. Despite the attention on our problems and the urgent need to address them, the situation still seems maddeningly unmanageable.

Professional philosophers are all too keenly aware of this layered crisis and have been anxiously writing a mountain of scholarship on the topic. This is no Cassandric exaggeration. A Google Document created to track Covid-19 related philosophical publications, promoted through the well-known Global Philos-L Liverpool Listserv, now stands at 78 pages.¹ The document does not even include the numerous conferences and events that have been held in relation to the pandemic, and led to many of these publications. Early in the pandemic there were notable journal special issues with prominent figures such as Giorgio Agamben and Jean-Luc Nancy engaging in lively, and now infamous, debates,² at the same time that Slavoj Žižek somehow churned out a whole book on the pandemic in the early days of the lockdowns.³ The philosophical work done on the pandemic comes from the whole range of professional philosophy, from logicians making sense of the fallacious logics of pandemic-hoax conspiracy groups, to social and political philosophers exploring the limits of technocratic public health experts.

Underneath this copious amount of work, however, we find a growing sense of inadequacy that long preceded the pandemic. The roots stem in part from an increasing perception of our inability to address the systematic, pervasive, and deeply rooted problems facing us today, and

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1. Jefferey Delvaux and Sahana Rajan, “Covid-19 & Philosophy: Towards a Bibliography,” accessed on February 19, 2020, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/15YkfraGX4wNRUmg3M4WHCyZjLxcbnCmLtZ-YggcKTXy/edit>.
 2. For English translations of the debate, see Giorgio Agamben, “The Invention of an Epidemic,” *European Journal of Psychoanalysis*, February 26, 2020, <https://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/coronavirus-and-philosophers/>; Jean-Luc Nancy, “Viral Exception,” *European Journal of Psychoanalysis*, February 7, 2020, <https://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/on-pandemics-nancy-esposito-nancy/>, Cf. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003150497-4>.
 3. Slavoj Žižek, *Pandemic! Covid-19 Shakes the World* (New York: OR Books, 2020).

of our incapacity to have an impact on modern individual and collective needs and concerns. This sense of inadequacy is coupled with an enduring state of dissatisfaction, frustration, and anxiety towards academic work, which was also propelled and made particularly apparent during the pandemic.⁴ As Jeff Dalvaux, one of the co-authors of the aforementioned Google Document on philosophical work on the pandemic, put it in his introduction to the bibliography:

At the beginning of the pandemic I was disoriented, felt overwhelmed in some respects and underwhelmed in others. To deal with this permanent state of confusion and anxiety, I found myself seeking and finding comfort in the testimonies by other members of the broader philosophical community. It was reassuring to read that professors and students alike were struggling to keep focused, to get work done, were unsettled about the value of their own work, etc.⁵

This sense of disciplinary anxiety about the rightfully concerning situation and the feelings of inadequacy about the value of our disciplinary work are themselves but the manifestation of deeper and far older (perhaps perennial) concerns amongst academic philosophers about the status of the philosophical “discipline.” Since the formal professionalization of philosophy in the late nineteenth century (a process that began in the late Hellenistic period with the arrival of Christian scholasticism), and in the wake of its increasing specialization and scientification in the context of the modern research oriented academy, professional philosophy has been criticized on a variety of fronts, ranging from its loss of identity and legitimacy among the sciences to its vacuity and seeming inability to address making persons and the world markedly better.⁶

This article reflects on the way the Covid-19 hecatomb has disclosed and unraveled the ongoing crisis of professional philosophy, and suggests some lessons that might be taken from the pandemic, urging academic philosophers to take action regarding the future of their work in philo-

4. See Virginia Gewin, “Academic Burnout is Rampant in Academia,” *Nature*, March 15, 2021, <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-00663-2>.

5. Delvaux and Rajan, “Covid 19 and Philosophy.”

6. For example, see: Randall Auxier, *Time, Will, and Purpose: Living Ideas from the Philosophy of Josiah Royce* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2013), Chapter 10, 309-350; Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises From Socrates to Foucault*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Michael Chase, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1995), 264-276; John McCumber, *Time in the Ditch: American Philosophy and the McCarthy Era* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001).

sophical departments and institutions. In the first section of the article, we highlight some ongoing criticisms of academic philosophy and explore one particular nasty thorn in the side of philosophers doing the kind of work that might speak to broad audiences facing a crisis of meaning and living: the rush to publish instead of “perishing” without a secure academic position. In particular, we look at what Matthew Sharpe and Kirk Turner have called the emergence of the “bibliographic academic subject,”⁷ a person who although ironically looking for signs of work being read and cited, gets trapped in a narrow popularity contest that has little relevance except for rarified academic audiences also trapped in this form of subjectivity. In the next section, we discuss philosophy as a way of life (PWL) as an alternative nascent field in academic philosophy that, while garnering respect and recognition within the academy, has regained connections with a broader public desperate for ways to chart their own paths of meaningful living, especially when facing a deeply challenged and fractured world. PWL helps address the crises of meaning many in the academy face (both teachers and students) and the absence of rich philosophical reflection and communities in the broader public, which otherwise all too easily fall prey to hucksters, con artists, and authoritarian and conspiratorial forces. We argue that this kind of wholistic critical development of PWL from the ancient world is designed to enact a prefigurative or *eutopian* politics. While we acknowledge that there are limitations and obstacles to authenticate PWL work in the academy, we take an ameliorative attitude and see room for meaningful reform. In the penultimate section, we draw our attention to three PWL framed experiments that have charted a new path for professional philosophy that can both serve existential fulfillment in the life of the scholar and provide reconnection with their communities. The first two experiments have been particularly successful in reaching out to broader audiences, while the third one has reaffirmed the value of professional philosophy in the higher education classroom. We end the section by acknowledging the need for more PWL projects that directly address our socio-political-ecological situation through *eutopian* politics. While this work will not revolutionarily resolve our crises, we think it plays an essential role in that endeavor. These PWL initiatives, current and to come, that can speak to wider audiences are slowly shifting academic career incentives, all while building new communities of responsible

7. For more, see: Matthew Sharpe and Kirk Turner, “Bibliopolitics: The History of Notation and the Birth of the Citational Academic Subject,” *Foucault Studies*, no. 25 (October 2018): 146-173, <https://doi.org/10.22439/fs.v0i25.5578>.

self-development when the world needs more thoughtful and caring ways of living modeled as lures to others to address the current challenges and the challenges to come. We conclude by situating our recommendations into a broader reconstruction of professional philosophy needed at this critical cultural moment.

2. Career Incentives for an Insular Academic Game

Explicitly since the rise of the Medieval university⁸ (and implicitly since the canonization of “pagan” philosophy in the late Hellenistic period, and its interactions with early Christianity) the growing professional discipline of philosophy has been critiqued by many of its most prominent figures. In fact, Renaissance Humanism itself as a movement can be seen as the reaction to the scholastic “professional” philosophy of the time. Francesco Petrarch famously opined:

I do not give the name ‘philosopher’ to those who are called, to speak fairly, ‘men of the chair’ (*cathedrarios*). For they philosophise in the chair, while in their actions they are unconscious; they give precepts to others and they are the first to be opposed to their own recommendations, to violate their own laws ... It is thus not of these men that I speak, but of true philosophers who, always less numerous, confirm by their acts what they preach: who love and care for wisdom.⁹

At the time of the emergence of the research university proper, Arthur Schopenhauer bitterly complained about the putative vacuity of “university philosophy”: “They start from these and build systems whose contents ultimately amount to mere words. Thus such words are really only soap-bubbles which can be played with for a while, but cannot touch the ground of reality without bursting.”¹⁰ Just a few decades later,

8. For more, see: Juliusz Domański, *La philosophie, théorie ou manière de vivre? Les controverses de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance, avec une Préface de P. Hadot* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, Fribourg Suisse, 1996); Matthew Sharpe and Michael Ure, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: History, Dimensions, Directions* (London: Bloomsbury Press, forthcoming), “Chapter 5: Philosophy as a Way of Life in the Middle Ages,” 127–150.

9. Juliusz Domański, *La Philosophie: théorie ou manière de vivre? Les controverses de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance* (Fribourg: Cerf – Éditions Universitaires de Fribourg, XIII), 94, <https://doi.org/10.1163/24680974-90000390>. Translation courtesy of Matthew Sharpe.

10. Arthur Schopenhauer, “On Philosophy at the Universities,” in *Parerga and Paralipomena*, trans. E.F.J. Payne, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 164.

Nietzsche would express similar concerns and criticize the universities for reducing philosophy to “a means of livelihood”, instead of promoting the *philosophical life* and the emergence of the “philosophical genius”: “The only critique of a philosophy that is possible and that proves something, namely trying to see whether one can live in accordance with it, has never been taught at universities: all that has ever been taught is a critique of words by means of other words.”¹¹ While both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche have a flair for hyperbole in their assessments,¹² when the ground of reality is in turmoil, it is certainly common for philosophers to question whether their work is nothing more than “mere words” and “soap bubbles.”

Since the formalization of the discipline in the last 160 years or so these critiques have increased in frequency, pointing to a variety of issues. Some critics pointed to the early formation of the discipline and the often unintended consequences of treating philosophy as a field with a distinct domain of knowledge that could progressively advance.¹³ Others

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11. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, ed. Daniel Breazeale, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), III: “Schopenhauer as Educator,” §8, 187, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511812101.005>.
 12. It could be argued that Wilhelm von Humboldt’s *Bildung* research university model does not receive a fair assessment by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Based on a humanist educational ideal of self-cultivation and individual self-improvement, it could be seen as a successful disciplinary model of PWL and actually akin to both Schopenhauer’s and Nietzsche’s aspirations. However, a closer look at the arrival of the German Research University (even the University of Berlin) tells a more complex tale of what has far more to do with the emergence of capitalistic economies, scientific professionalization, and individuals as charismatic “geniuses” at the intersections of both, than an exemplary PWL model. Von Humboldt’s vision is of course admirable and rarely understood for its breadth and depth, but his legacy was enmeshed in greater forces in Germany. He highlights the recurrence of PWL within the halls of the modern academy, rather than being the harbinger of a PWL oriented university. For more on the rise of the German Research University, see William Clark, *Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); For more on von Humboldt’s *Bildung* conception of higher learning, see: Wilhelm von Humboldt, “On the Spirit and the Organizational Framework of Intellectual Institutions in Berlin,” in *University Reform in Germany, Minerva* (1970 [1900]). For a deep dive into the relationship between PWL communities and institutions of higher learning see: Eli Kramer, *Intercultural Modes of Philosophy, Volume One: Principles to Guide Philosophical Community* (Leiden, NL: Brill Publishers, forthcoming [November 18, 2021]), *Philosophical Community as an Intercultural Mode of Philosophy – Some Brief Historical Sketches*, 31-99.
 13. For example, see Randall Auxier, *Time, Will, and Purpose: Living Ideas from the Philosophy of Josiah Royce* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2013), Chap. 10, 309-250; Bruce Kuklick, *A History of Philosophy in America, 1720-2000* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003); Bruce

have pointed to the relation between knowledge, power, and value neutral language that dominated (especially U.S.) philosophy during the Cold-War.¹⁴ Yet others have written cynical evaluations of professional philosophy's continued inability to address our perennial crises of meaning and its failure to offer self-reflective ways of living in relation to wisdom, which has been philosophy's vital role for millennia.¹⁵ Most recently some have tried to address this anxiety of relevancy with new positive metaphilosophical approaches and directions for professional philosophy.¹⁶

Despite growing criticism and dissatisfaction, there are little signs of change in the academic world. While the academy keeps chasing its own tail and becomes progressively more insulated in itself, professional philosophers are increasingly trapped in the game of neoliberal education. They need to comply with its wildly competitive rules as a means of their own survival, often to the detriment of their private lives and their physical and mental health. Although rarely stated explicitly in published scholarship, a regular conversation one hears in the circles of those who have found the oasis of a stable job in professional philosophy is that the travails of the job market (and for a lucky few tenure and habilitation) has indelibly shaped them, sometimes for the better and most often for the worst. Burton J. Bledstein has shown how the stresses of achieving academic job security had already worn down a generation of philosophers right as the discipline was beginning to formalize as a profession in the late nineteenth century:

At Harvard in the 1880s, nervous breakdowns occurred frequently. Promising young men wore themselves down through worry and overwork as they

Kuklick, *The Rise of American Philosophy: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1860-1930* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), <https://doi.org/10.1177/004057367903500421>.

14. For example, see John McCumber, *Time in the Ditch*; Louis Menand, "The Humanities Revolution," in *The Marketplace of Ideas* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), 59-92, <https://doi.org/10.1086/341276>.
15. For example, see Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises From Socrates to Foucault*, 264-276; Bruce W. Wilshire, "'The PhD Octopus': William James's Prophetic Grasp of the Failures of Academic Professionalism," in *Fashionable Nihilism: A Critique of Analytic Philosophy* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 31-50; Bruce Wilshire, *The Moral Collapse of the University: Professionalism, Purity, and Alienation* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990).
16. For example, see Robert Frodeman and Adam Briggle, *Socrates Tenured: The Institutions of Twenty-first-century Philosophy*, Collective Studies in Knowledge and Society (London: Rowman and Littlefield International, 2016); Brian Van Norden, *Taking Back Philosophy: A Multicultural Manifesto* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

exhausted themselves in the classroom, anxiously curried the favor of their mentors and patrons, neglected their health, postponed marriages, moonlighted and borrowed money to make ends meet. The victims of such a system, their emotions paralyzed, proceed cautiously and conservatively in all their movements. In 1888, for example, Josiah Royce discovered himself growing dull and indecisive, and he too now “joined the too great army of scholarly blunderers who break down when they ought to be at their best.”¹⁷

More than merely adding stress and anxiety to the lives of scholars, the structure of professional philosophy and the incentives to doing certain kinds of academic work to succeed in the academy, shape the professional philosopher’s very subjectivity.

Matthew Sharpe and Kirk Turner for example have pointed out how the increased pressure of the logics of the neo-liberal higher education system to measure professional disciplinary success through new digital analytics – measuring how many times articles, and journals and publishing houses on a larger scale, are read and cited – has shaped academic subjectivity. They trace the emergence of a new kind of scholar, that we all too commonly find across the academy, especially in philosophy, and feel pressure to become ourselves. They refer to this kind of scholar as the “bibliometric academic subject”:

They would be a figure who pre-eminently writes; who reads so they can write and must write so they can survive in the increasingly competitive markets for tenured or fixed-term academic work. They would be someone who will write only for, and increasingly only read in certain bibliometrically ordained journals – which will attract massive amounts of traffic, and need to institute increasingly prohibitive rates of acceptance and rejection. They would be someone who, independent of what they write upon – from progressive politics to the human genome – will have internalised the notion that ‘good’ or ‘rigorous’ or ‘professional’ or ‘serious’ work is always ‘impact-ful’ work; and that this ‘impact’ is authoritatively measured by the bibliometrical rankings which they need only go online to recall to mind. They would be someone who will always be aware of their status as a ranked competitor with their contemporaries. They may increasingly indeed have ready to hand (*prokheiron*) not only their own h-, i- and sundry citational indexes, but those of potential rivals for positions, promotions, grants or honours. They will above all be a subject acutely dependent for their sense of professional (and thus wider) status on the opinions and citations of others. This citational value, delivered back to them through the oracular portals of

17. Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America* (New York: Norton, 1976), 103.

increasingly traffic-light coded (red, orange, and green) journal and personal ranking sites, will tell them sufficiently the truth about their status, what is to be done and what to be ignored.¹⁸

This highly disciplined academic subject starts being shaped early on in their career. Not only are students in neo-liberal higher education often reduced to consumers and the universities themselves increasingly transformed into businesses with complex marketing strategies:¹⁹ future researchers are increasingly treated as entrepreneurs of themselves, who must adapt to and comply with the rules of a highly competitive market, to which the university is – perhaps above anything else – supposed to prepare them. Young PhD students are thus quickly introduced to the bibliometric surveillance system and strongly encouraged to develop the entrepreneurial competencies and skills they will need to acquire in order to achieve academic success, regardless of their chosen field of study (never mind way of life) – and, of course, including the humanities. They will be taught that they need to *produce*, that is, publish, and that the more they publish the better, even though only publications in the highest ranked indexed peer-reviewed academic journals will count. They will learn what is a quartile, a percentile, a H-index; they will know by heart which journals are indexed in Scopus or Web of Science in their field of expertise; they will study the form and style of articles published in Q1 journals and attend workshops on how to improve the chances of being accepted in them; they will learn how to assess and compare the value of their work through the impact factor of their profiles and work towards raising it; they will be faced with the dramatic reality that only the most bibliometrically adapted will be able to preserve their places in the academy. Significantly, they will be conditioned to believe that this is all one should do and aim at in an academic career, and that all that is not statistically measurable is not worthy academic work.

While this system might perhaps suit the particularities of research in the various sciences, it is obviously highly flawed, limitative, and noxious when it comes to assessing what should be good, valuable, and even impactful work in professional philosophy. This is especially relevant when considering its long-term effects on our very understanding of what

18. Sharpe and Kirk, "Bibliopolitics," 170.

19. On the topic, see the seminal work by Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades, *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy: Markets, State, and Higher Education* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2004).

philosophy is or what a philosophical education should consist of. With bureaucratic, technical, and individualistic concerns dramatically overrunning the wide, holistic, and far-reaching cultivation that has traditionally characterized a proper philosophical education, it is not only academics that are being shaped into a new kind of subjectivity: the very discipline of philosophy is being dramatically transformed and shaped into something that risks becoming unrecognizable in the context of philosophy's long history and diverse traditions.

Perhaps more than anything else it is this disciplining of the academic philosopher that leads to our present dissatisfaction with our work, and to our frustrating inability to respond in an effective and proactive way to global crisis of meaning, such as the one unleashed by the Covid-19 Pandemic. There is a tension between a sense of needing to do more to respond to our situation, while our career incentives focus on publishing for academic citational hits in narrow focused journals almost exclusively read by fellow professional philosophers. It becomes about isolated popularity over substantive content, and especially content that might address and engage with audiences not considered important by the current metric regime. Indeed, professional philosophers often feel pigeonholed into one kind of writing that is well measured in this scheme, "publishing online, citable journal articles in the sanctioned professional format, between 4–12,000 words, plus or minus attendant notes."²⁰ Citations in these works in this sense, both in one's own articles and as one is cited by others, while on the one hand serve a legitimate role "to certify – a powerful means of persuasion – that the particular knowledge-claims proffered by the text are duly certified and traceable back to recognised proof texts or established authorities," on the other hand "announce that their creator is no mere philosophe, litterateur, amateur or 'man of letters,' but a literate member of a select, credentialed professional status group."²¹

This reveals another dimension to how the formation of current professional philosophical subjectivity limits the ways philosophy might

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20. Sharpe and Kirk, "Bibliopolitics," 156. The irony is not lost on the authors that this piece too is part of this genre of writing. That said, we maintain that internal self-critique can be done within this *oeuvre*.
 21. *Ibid.*, 165. Others also seem to play the system to their advantage. For example *The Review of Metaphysics* is part of a constellation of journals that Straussian philosophers regularly cite each other in, both building up individual "hits" for particular article reads and citations, as well as increasing the profile and status of the journals themselves. Like any bureaucratic structure, one can learn to use the system to one's advantage beyond its own limited ends.

be of service to broader audiences, especially during difficult times: The work, to meet the measurement regime of success, becomes focused on building up the image of professionalized legitimacy and expertise, and does not primarily focus on solving problems or engaging in meaningful dialogue with others. Our careers are all too often about making legitimacy for ourselves as part of disciplinary practice and are all too often focused on particular forms of writing that are deemed measurable and relevant by the current metrics regime. While plenty of good scholarship gets done this way, it also limits other kinds of writing and especially other kinds of content that might be appealing and meaningful to non-specialized audiences and all the more crucial during this perilous world moment. It also turns our priorities away from teaching and attending to our students, who are often hungry to question the meaning of their lives and address the challenges of our times.

3. PWL as a Nascent Alternative

While “kvetching” about the profession or overproducing in it are two ways to combat anxiety about professional relevance, we would like to suggest there is a third path (amongst others), which might contribute to reduce academic frustration and bridge the gap between the academy and civil society, while at the same time not falling short of the high quantitative and qualitative standards of academic production. This path incentivizes work that is not focused primarily on speaking to technical academic audiences nor merely furthering their insular discussions. It is also not meant to only appease the institutional administrators who oversee the increasing bibliometric surveillance of professional philosophers, for the purposes of benchmarking how well cited they and their publication venues are, and ranking them accordingly without sense for content. Although still relatively neglected, there are developing ways of building worthy, relevant philosophical work for a variety of different kinds of audiences inside and outside of the academy, to help us increase the impact of our work among the general public and our students, as well as respond more effectively to these and other trying times.

One nascent field of philosophy in particular, PWL, is adept at this work. It emerged under the inspiration of the French philosopher and historian of philosophy Pierre Hadot, who besides being a renowned professor and scholar of ancient philosophy, was also a prominent critic of modern universities who lamented the fate of philosophy in the

academic context and milieu. In his essay “Philosophy as a Way of Life,” Hadot describes the decline of philosophy through the Middle Ages until the formation of the first modern universities, institutions that were and still are “made up of professors who train professors, or professionals training professionals.”²² As a professionalized academic discipline, Hadot argues, philosophy has been progressively reduced to “a purely theoretical and abstract activity,” “a discourse developed in the classroom, and then consigned to books,” “the construction of a technical jargon reserved for specialists,”²³ with little to no impact on the real formation of individuals, which had once been the very heart of philosophical inquiry and practice.

To this decadent state of academic philosophy, Hadot contraposes the originally wider and vital understanding of philosophy, which according to him was conceived as an art of living or a way of life, that is, “a mode of existing-in-the-world, which had to be practiced at each instant, and the goal of which was to transform the whole of the individual’s life.”²⁴ The main trait of this ancient conception of philosophy was its deeply practical, existential, and performative potential and its capacity to transform – rather than merely theorize about – life. As a way of life, philosophy was deeply committed to the global meaning of existence and aimed at no less than wisdom, a state of purity, perfection and tranquility that was accomplished through the daily practice of what Hadot called “spiritual exercises” (and Foucault, in his wake, “technologies of the self”²⁵). Far from a theoretical, abstract, dry, and disengaged discipline, philosophy was a deeply practical and communal activity, the aim of which was to reduce existential suffering and promote free, conscious, meaningful, and flourishing lives.

This notwithstanding, and even though individual flourishing and well-being was the main target and concern of PWL schools in antiquity, they were not mere “egotistic proposals of individual perfection, attained

22. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, 270.

23. *Ibid.*, 270-271.

24. *Ibid.*, 265.

25. Michel Foucault, “Technologies of the Self,” in *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, Volume 1: Ethics, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 223-251, <https://doi.org/10.22439/fs.v0i1.573>. On Foucault’s interpretation of ancient philosophy and its indebtedness to Pierre Hadot, see Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-1982, ed. Frédéric Gros, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2005). On Hadot’s spiritual exercises see his essay “Spiritual Exercises,” in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 81-125.

by the withdrawal of the self and flight from the world,”²⁶ as a typical anecdotal criticism likes to put it. Rather, as several of the exercises – like attending to our present situation, recalling our duties as citizens of the world, finding our place within the cosmos²⁷ – show, the attainment of individual perfection was by no means separable from adopting a cosmic perspective and finding one’s harmonious and integrated place within the whole. In some cases, caring for other human beings and the community was as important as caring for oneself,²⁸ such that PWL has an undeniably strong ethical and political dimension that is missing in most contemporary academic philosophy and can still be relevant for us today. Even though PWL does not provide an empirical recipe for a successful, happy, meaningful life, it thus reorients us on the quest for a wise, good, and just life, communally and individually, well knowing such work will lead us in different directions (with perennial connections) and must be adapted to suit modern circumstances, crises, and concerns.

This peculiar understanding of philosophy has profound implications not only in the determination of philosophy’s aims and scope, but also on its content, practices, literary genres, and audiences, all of which, as we have seen, have become impressively limited and narrow in modern academic scholarship. In Antiquity philosophy was concerned with the good life, addressed common everyday life issues that interested everybody alike, was written and conveyed in deeply performative genres, and included as an essential part of its practices of self-transformation designed to change one’s perception of the world and hence one’s char-

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26. Pierre Hadot, *The Selected Writings of Pierre Hadot*, trans. Matthew Shapre and Federico Testa (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2021), Chapter 15: Models of Happiness Proposed by the Ancient Philosophers, 273.
 27. For more, see: Michael Chase, “Observations on Pierre Hadot’s Conception of Philosophy,” in *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Ancients and Moderns – Essays in Honor of Pierre Hadot*, eds. Michael Chase, Stephen R.L. Clark, and Michael McGhee (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), 262-286, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118609187.ch15>.
 28. Hadot clarifies this point with special reference to Stoicism and Epicureanism: “Let us start with the simplest point. It is evident that, the Stoics, for whom happiness is found in a moral good which involves, as constitutive parts, the dedication to the life of the community, the practice of justice and love towards other men, cannot be presented in this way. But isn’t Epicurean happiness egoistic? It is true that Epicurean serenity and the refusal to get involved in the worries of the City could authorize certain suspicions regarding Epicureanism. But the missionary inspiration of Epicureanism, the considerable role that friendship plays in it and the constitution of communities in which the members help each other spiritually and materially – these are all facts which suffice to refute the representation of Epicureanism as an egoistic form of hedonism.” Hadot, *The Selected Essays of Pierre Hadot*, 273.

acter and way of being. By contrast, academic philosophy has completely “lost the personal and communal aspect of philosophy,” entrenching itself on a “purely formal path, in the search for novelty in itself at all costs” to the point of “producing a discourse that makes itself complicated in order to be original.”²⁹ As already mentioned, it is a discourse that is emptied of substantially relevant content and merely adapted to suit, not the particularities of a given audience, but the formal rules of the rigidly academic and elitist peer-reviewed journal system. As a consequence, philosophy has “progressively distanced itself from the concrete life of humans” and is nowadays addressed “to no one.”³⁰ Even though there have been counter-currents of PWL since the rise of the medieval university, PWL is no longer the dominant paradigm for philosophy in the Western world. Thus, as his work and interviews make clear, for Hadot PWL is not simply a description of the way philosophy was conceived and practiced in Antiquity, but a metaphilosophical model that highlights the flaws of current academic practices and invokes the reappearance of “philosophers in the etymological sense of the word, that is, seekers of wisdom who certainly would not renew philosophical discourse but would search not for happiness – it seems that that is no longer in style – but for a life that is more conscious, more rational, more open to others and the immensity of the world.”³¹

Recent scholarship has done a remarkable job following this thread and arguing for PWL as a valuable alternative to the excessively theoretical, abstract, and insularized way philosophy is practiced in most contemporary universities. John Sellars has made a first attempt to define PWL in metaphilosophical terms and besides arguing for its presence in several philosophers “throughout the history of philosophy,” stressed the idea that this is a model that “can still be taken up today.”³² Michael Ure and Mathew Sharpe carried this effort further and presented a comprehensive account of PWL from Antiquity to Modernity, further reflecting on the relevance of this model for the contemporary world and pointing new directions for PWL today.³³ Michael Chase, a former student of Pierre

29. Pierre Hadot, *The Present Alone is Our Happiness. Conversations with Jeannie Carlier and Arnold I. Davidson*, trans. Marc Djaballah and Michael Chase (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 56, <https://doi.org/10.22439/fs.v0i7.2647>.

30. *Ibid.*, 56.

31. *Ibid.*, 112.

32. John Sellars, “What is Philosophy as a Way of Life?,” *Parrhesia*, no. 28 (2017): 41.

33. Matthew Sharpe and Michael Ure, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: History, Dimensions and Directions* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021).

Hadot and the main translator of his work into English, has made the case for the relevance and urgency of reshaping university philosophy on the basis of this model. Pointing to the failure of most university philosophy departments to respond to crucial and vital questions – such as “What is the meaning of life? How should I live? What is happiness, and how can I attain it?”³⁴ i.e., the questions that legitimately drive genuinely engaged students to pursue philosophical studies in their lives – Chase presents PWL as an alternative to both continental and analytic approaches, defining it as a “third way”³⁵ of doing philosophy with important didactic, pedagogical, and psychagogic advantages to current models. Because it focuses on “the Big Questions”, is expressed in “clear, jargon-free language”³⁶ and promises “not just an accumulation of knowledge or a display of cleverness, but a process of genuine transformation,”³⁷ PWL is more likely to appeal both to philosophy students and to non-specialized audiences from which philosophy has worryingly become progressively detached.

Finally, one of the co-authors of this essay has stressed the singular political relevance of PWL by pointing to the unique political orientation that emerged with the rise of the first PWL communities in the ancient world. Drawing on PWL’s ethical attentiveness to serving others, this view of politics rejected both direct action at the center of political life, as well as state-oriented power games, while also rejecting a-political asceticism. Instead, it created *eutopias*, which Eli Kramer describes as follows:

Eutopias are actualized and forward-looking institutions for the advancement of human dignity and culture. They are “good places” and unlike “utopia” (taken literally) “somewhere.” A *eutopian* politics aims at refining human political life through enacting the “good life” in a smaller place. It does so to proffer a powerful expansion in the broader culture of the recognition of the dignity of others, as well as to provide a luring model of enriched living.³⁸

By attempting to live a good life in different ways, and showing the fruits of that life in practice, different philosophical “schools” in their respective communities could lure others to new ethico-political horizons. One can argue that this approach to politics emerged in the Western World with

34. Michael Chase, “Observations on Pierre Hadot’s Conception of Philosophy as a Way of Life,” 268.

35. Ibid., 280.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., 266.

38. Kramer, “*Principles to Guide Philosophical Community*,” 303.

Plato's Academy: instead of replicating Socrates' role as a public gadfly, which could lead to civil rejection and even conviction, philosophers started to found "schools on the edges of Athens where contemplation and the good life could be cultivated, and where they could be close enough in proximity to the city to lure others to broader ethical horizons."³⁹ As such, these schools attempted to react and respond to the politics of their time by actualizing the good life and luring others to it in a smaller place and on the edge of it, thus reminding the citizens and city dwellers that "the good life was still possible."⁴⁰ They thus enacted what we are calling an *eutopian* politics, which even though operating indirectly – not through revolution or direct political intervention, but through the development of enriched ways of living within small communities – might lead to a transformation of the city or the state:

The philosophical community knows that it has an immediate purpose to determine the beloved community. The determination comes by exhibiting in praxis contrasting, exemplary ways of living from the rest of culture, that are a part of the dynamic process of interpretation of the "better" world available now. It is a transformation of living as a virtue ethics for the rest of culture ... [This may lead to] changes in the state, but the potential transformation of the state, or even the creation of a post-state condition, is the after effect of the work of the philosophical community.⁴¹

Recent political theory has explored an analogous politics for societal reform, what Erik Olin Wright has called the politics of "real utopias"⁴² and anarchist political theorists have called a "prefigurative politics."⁴³ It is the PWL *eutopian* tradition, however – through luring engagement to live better, more responsibly, and more justly – that we believe the experiments described in the next section exemplify. Indeed, PWL enacts prefiguratively a better world that recognizes the dignity of others, by actualizing on a small scale – in writing, classrooms, institutions, and communities –

39. Ibid., 34.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid, 303.

42. For more, see: Erik Olin Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias* (New York: Verso Books, 2010). For an example of a book inspired by "real utopianism," see: Leonard J. Waks, *Education 2.0: The Learningweb Revolution and the Transformation of the School* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2014).

43. For example, see: Paul Raekstad and Sofa Saio Gradin, *Prefigurative Politics: Building Tomorrow Today* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2020).

different, more attentive ways of living. While they are not magic solutions for change, they do exhort people toward “the better.”

Unfortunately, the progressive insularization of philosophy and consequent detachment from the community has caused other initiatives to occupy this original role and place of philosophy in society, be it in the form of self-help publications and workshops, “New Age” movements and other esoteric events and retreats, fashionable coaching and mindfulness programs, or informal blogs, YouTube channels, and other social media, the vast majority of which being developed by non-philosophers, *outside* the academy and, as has been noted, “fulfilling the role that academic philosophers have mostly abandoned – broad thinking in public venues about who we are, where we are going, and who we ought to be.”⁴⁴ It is thus not surprising that during the pandemic and the crisis of meaning that ensued therein, and despite the prolific number of academic publications on the subject mentioned above, it was once again not in philosophy that human communities found comforting words, sensitive directions, or means of coping with this new disruptive situation – even though addressing suffering and providing effective means of consolation and self-overcoming in difficult times has been the very essence of philosophy, not only in Antiquity but in several stages of its history.⁴⁵ Reinventing and recasting the ancient model of PWL has thus been increasingly considered a relevant and urgent task, not only as a means of dissidence and resistance to current tendencies in academic practice,⁴⁶ but also as a means of improving its teaching, outreach, and impact outside the academy, in order to recover philosophy’s wider role in society and thereby prevent its proper field from being taken over by “the hucksters and mass marketers, facile esotericists and obscurantists.”⁴⁷

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44. Robert Frodean and Adam Briggie, *Socrates Tenured: The Institutions of Twenty-first-century Philosophy*, 16. See also Michael Chase, “Observations on Pierre Hadot’s Conception of Philosophy as a Way of Life,” 279.
 45. In this regard, see the special issue of the international journal *Eidos* dedicated to the relevance of recovering the original vocation of philosophy, as expressed in PWL, in times of crisis and beyond: Eli Kramer, Matthew Sharpe, Michael Chase, eds., *Philosophy as a Way of Life in a Time of Crisis*, Thematic Issue, *Eidos. A Journal for Philosophy of Culture* 5, No. 1 (July 2021); No. 2 (forthcoming).
 46. See Marta Faustino, “‘Philosophy as a Way of Life’ as a Practice of Dissidence and Experimentation,” in *Philosophy as Experimentation, Dissidence and Heterogeneity* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, forthcoming [2021]).
 47. Michael Chase, “Observations on Pierre Hadot’s Conception of Philosophy as a Way of Life,” 283.

To a great extent, this task has already begun to be carried out. Indeed, scholars of PWL have not only made PWL a respectful field of academic research, but they have also been successful in showing how PWL is in fact able to bridge the gap between the academy and the wider community, attracting the interest of all kinds of people from all possible backgrounds and social contexts, most of which would otherwise probably feel no inclination towards philosophy as a means to communal and individual betterment. As Michael Chase, Eli Kramer, and Matthew Sharpe have put it in their presentation of a new series on PWL in a leading academic publishing house:

PWL envisages philosophy as potentially having a direct, immediate, and positive impact on the lives of persons of all ages, genders, races, sexual orientations, religions, and political persuasions. Hadot's work points towards the redemocratizing of philosophy, as is shown by the adoption of PWL by people working in nursing, organization and management studies, religious studies, literary studies, ecology and environmental studies, and many extra-academic fields. For example, philosophical coaching and Neo – or Modern Stoicism, a heterogeneous network of people who are adopting Stoicism as a way of life, are very much influenced by PWL literature.⁴⁸

This growing success and appeal of PWL outside the academy would not have been possible if a group of philosophers and scholars would not have attempted to straddle the divide between the academy and the broader non-specialized audiences and, while keeping their safe though highly conditioned positions in the academy, begun combining their academic production with meaningful work specifically designed to address the needs and particularities of the wider public toward good living and a better world. In so doing, they are pushing the borders of what is generally considered good and serious academic work and bringing into question the very meaning of “impactful” outputs in the field of philosophy. As PWL scholars have convincingly been showing, there are ways to incentivize such work as part of a traditional professional philosophy career path that can both meet grueling bibliometric standards, yet move academic philosophy away from seeing its value in such measurements and/or solely in insular technical conversations. PWL is not ideologically tied to continental, analytic, or historic traditions of philosophy, as philosophers as

48. Michael Chase, Eli Kramer, and Matthew Sharpe, “Philosophy as a Way of Life: Texts and Studies,” *Brill*, accessed April 9, 2021, https://brill.com/fileasset/downloads_static/static_forthcoming_pwlcfp.pdf.

diverse as Michel Foucault, Hillary Putnam,⁴⁹ and Richard Shusterman,⁵⁰ have engaged in this nascent field. It is also not ideologically bound to any side in these insular sectarian positions, and can thus focus on other ends. It is not focused solely on methods but in again democratizing the best of philosophy as a critical, enriching, and self-reflective activity. By helping people find meaning and value in living a life in relation to wisdom, just when it's hardest to do so, this kind of work has perhaps scoped out a route for professional philosophy to ensure its continued relevance as a lure to positive, and reflectively guided, cultural transformation. In what follows we shall illuminate this new path for professional philosophy through a group of PWL framed experiments that, while providing greater existential fulfillment to academics and higher education students, are attempting to recover philosophy's potential wider role within its respective communities and the general public through what we have called a *eutopian* politics.

4. PWL Experiments in Professional Philosophy

While there are numerous projects being carried out in this direction, we would like to focus our attention on three PWL experiments, which have been particularly noteworthy in their capacity to re-democratize philosophy and reinvent current forms of outreach, publications, and education in the field of academic philosophy. The first two have been particularly successful both in their capacity to reach out to impressively large audiences, and in their ability to recreate – or at least promote reflection on – career incentives in professional philosophy. Our third example has been particularly compelling in its capacity to support, excite, and empower a very broad range of college and university students, and further legitimize philosophy's value and essential role in higher education as a force to exhort students to meaningful living and service to others. By that process it has also helped shift career incentives to further focus on the philosophical classroom teaching and learning experience as the site for such *eutopian* change.

49. See Hillary Putnam and Ruth Ann Putnam, *Pragmatism as a Way of Life: The Lasting Legacy of William James and John Dewey*, ed. David Macarthur (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674979215>.

50. See Richard Shusterman, *Ars Erotica: Sex and Somaesthetics in the Classical Arts of Love* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1017/9780511791888>.

The first experiment worth mentioning is Modern Stoicism, a voluntary and non-profitable organization, born in 2012 out of a joint collaboration between academics and psychotherapists, aimed at making Stoic ideas, spiritual exercises, and therapeutic practices largely available, accessible, and useful to the wider public. Modern Stoicism comprises a blog (“Stoicism Today”), an annual public event (“Stoicon”) combined with the now famous “Stoic Week”, and several longer courses (“Stoic Mindfulness and Resilience Training (SMRT)”) that take place at different times throughout the year. Whereas the blog regularly publishes articles, essays, and interviews on modern uses of Stoicism and their application to contemporary life, Stoic Week invites any interested person to “live like a Stoic for a week” and assess the effects of this experience on their life. The experiment lasts seven days, during which the attendees commit themselves to perform a series of daily tasks on the basis of ancient Stoic spiritual practices – including morning and evening meditation, reflection on selected passages from key Stoic sources, a midday exercise and a self-monitoring record – following a handbook with daily guidance and a daily schedule, and a few audio and/or video recordings that are provided beforehand. At the end of the week, a Stoicon event takes place, where the attendees can meet personally, share their experiences, and attend to a series of conferences, workshops, and roundtable discussions on the relevance of Stoicism today.

The success of these weeks, together with the several editions of the SMRT courses have very quickly and by far exceeded the expectations of their founders and organizers. After a first tentative experiment, where surprisingly more than 150 people attended the inaugural Stoic Week, it started to take place every year, and more recently in different parts of the globe simultaneously, with an increasing number of participants in each edition, with a total of more than 20,000 attendees since its inception in 2012. The effects of the experience have also been proven to be highly beneficial for the participants. On the basis of the questionnaires that all attendees complete before starting the week and right after completing it, Modern Stoicism has reported a consistent reduction of people’s negative emotions and improvement of their overall life satisfaction.⁵¹ While these personal and communal benefits are a rare fruit of good and hard academic work, the data collected from these public events are given back

51. See “Research,” Modern Stoicism, accessed April 13, 2021, <https://modernstoicism.com/research/>.

to the academy as the basis of further research on the impact and effectiveness of ancient Stoic practices in the contemporary world. This affords important research on the effectivity of a particular PWL tradition. Since each Stoic Week is dedicated to a different main topic, each edition is varied and complementary both in terms of research material and in their novelty and appeal to recurring participants. Very fittingly, the last 2020 edition was devoted to “Stoicism during a Pandemic: Care for Ourselves, Others and Our World.” With over 1,500 participants, a good percentage of them reported an increase of life satisfaction and positive emotions, as well as a decrease of negative emotions, which are quite significant results when considering the potential benefits of Stoicism during a global pandemic and lockdown.⁵² While this is a clear demonstration of the way the academy can and should be of service to the community, it was probably one of the very few occasions when philosophy was made useful, helpful, and meaningful to the wider public during these unprecedentedly disturbing and challenging times. Even though Modern Stoicism well addresses ethical and therapeutic concerns, it has struggled to serve as a site for *eutopian* politics, as we shall discuss later.

The second experiment we would like to address is more directly connected with the pressures related to academic publishing and provides a compelling demonstration of the way PWL can address the “citational subject” and the bibliometric standards that dominate the academy today. Indeed, an interesting sign that incentives in academic publishing might change and are already starting to shift is the bet that academic publishing houses recently started to make on trade books that, even though still stemming from the academy and reflecting rigorous philosophical work, are explicitly targeted to a broad audience. This is the case for Oxford University Press, which has just launched the trade book series “Guides to the Good Life,” under the direction of series editor Stephen Grimm. They did so after the wild success of William Irvine’s book on Stoicism, *A Guide to the Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy* (2020), which quickly became their ongoing bestseller. Other titles of the series include Nicolas Bommarito’s *Seeing Clearly: A Buddhist Guide to Life* (2020), Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei’s *On Being and Becoming: An Existentialist Approach to*

52. The complete report can be found here: “Report on Stoic Week,” *Modernism Stoicism*, accessed April 13, 2021, <https://modernstoicism.com/report-on-stoic-week-2020tim-lebon-and-greg-lopez/>. On the last SMRT course, also held during the pandemic, in May 2020, see “SMRT-2020-Results,” *Modern Stoicism*, accessed April 13, 2021, <https://modernstoicism.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/SMRT-2020-Results-1.0.pdf>.

Life (2020), and Karen Stohr's *Choosing Freedom: A Kantian Guide to Life* (forthcoming [2022]).⁵³ Another path setter in this direction is John Kaag, author of *American Philosophy: A Love Story* (2016) and *Hiking with Nietzsche: On Becoming Who You Are* (2018), published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, and more recently *Sick Souls, Healthy Minds: How William James Can Save Your Life* (2020), published by Princeton University Press. Not only have Kaag's books been equally extremely successful in terms of public acceptance and sales, but they have also been distinguished with well-known literary prizes and awards, such as the NPR Book of the Year (in the case of the first two) and the Prose Book Award (for which the last one is a finalist in this year's edition).

What explains and justifies this apparent sudden appeal of philosophy among the broader readership is obviously related neither to philosophy (as a discipline) itself nor to the general readers, whose interest in philosophical topics is easily presumable to have long been already there. What distinguishes these books is the way their authors – which are all renowned philosophy professors and/or scholars – managed to challenge the rules of good academic style and, crossing the rigid borders of the academy, presented their accumulated knowledge and expertise in a simple, accessible, and meaningful (though still accurate and rigorous) way, thus making it readable, interesting, and appealing to the general reader. They did so by converting otherwise abstract, dry, and uninteresting theories into philosophies applicable and significant to everyday life, while at the same time sharing their own biographic engagement with them, showing others how philosophical living has changed their own lives and engagement with others. In so doing, they revitalized the psychagogical role of philosophy, engaging their audiences to live more meaningful and ethical lives. In addition, they acted as a *eutopian* politics for academic philosophers, showing in practice the value of another approach to academic work. Even though nearly all great philosophies can and perhaps should be relevantly applied to life and fruitfully adapted

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53. Other titles in the OUP catalogue show a consistent interest in the PWL approach to philosophy in the last decade. See, among others: Roger Teichmann, *Nature, Reason, and the Good Life: Ethics for Human Beings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.1086/664939>; Mike W. Martin, *Happiness and the Good Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Oyvind Rabbas, Eyjólfur K. Emilsson, and Hallvard Fossheim, eds., *The Quest for the Good Life: Ancient Philosophers on Happiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198746980.001.0001>; Michael Bishop, *The Good Life: Unifying the Philosophy and Psychology of Well-Being* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

to suit contemporary challenges and concerns, “philosophies of life” and this general approach to philosophy has traditionally been – and to a great extent still is – “looked down” upon in most universities, as William Irvine has recently pointed out.⁵⁴ This situation has consistently contributed to discouraging professional philosophers from undertaking this kind of work, on the one hand, and to enlarging the gap between the academy and their communities, on the other.

As the most renowned academic publishing houses start prioritizing this kind of books as part of their commercial strategy, however, a new space for different and more holistic kinds of philosophical writing and teaching at the university is beginning to emerge – a space that while granting a wide measurable circulation, does a great deal of important work for broad audiences. Most notably, this work can bring more books into the public that address the need for meaning that cultish authoritarian and/or conspiracy groups feed upon, while hopefully providing the public with more critical reflection tools. John Kaag, one of the successful authors mentioned above, sees this as a responsibility that academics and professional philosophers need to embrace as their task in the near future. As he compellingly put it in a recent interview:

I think that we have the responsibility to see philosophy’s primary task as one of educating, and not educating the smallest possible number of people in order to make philosophical elites, but rather to really see it as a social and political task that philosophy take on: to educate our populace, in the methods, in the history, and also in the potential of philosophical reflection. ... I think that the institution of peer review in philosophy ... and the relation between peer reviewed journals and the accreditation and qualifications of getting tenure, that’s not going to change. But what I think will change is the way that presses, and major academic presses, operate. And I think we, as philosophers, have an opportunity here to penetrate those types of publishing houses, in terms of getting personal, widely read books out, through those presses. Because what those presses really want to do is not to be the gate keepers for our tenure process, but rather publish books that people read, without selling out on philosophical rigor. ... I think that’s a necessary move for the coming years.⁵⁵

54. Cf. “A Guide to the Good Life: An Interview with William B. Irvine,” *Daily Stoic. Ancient Wisdom for Everyday Life*, accessed April 13, 2021, https://dailystoic.com/william_irvine/.

55. John Kaag, Eli Kramer, and James Anderson, “NAB Podcast: John Kaag on Personal, Vulnerable Philosophy and Higher Learning,” *The New American Baccalaureate Project*, accessed April 14, 2021, <https://newamericanbaccalaureate.org/nab-podcast-john-kaag-on->

Even though the most stabilized and institutionalized ways of assessment and evaluation of academic tracks are unlikely to change anytime soon, this widening of the target of major academic presses shows that there are ways of both appeasing the citational monster, via this work, while ameliorating the career focus of the discipline to broader ends, which serve a larger audience in a more proactive, holistic, and effective way. One of the many goals of PWL as a nascent field is indeed to support broader kinds of writing and new ways of luring others to working on cultivating a good, conscious, and just life, and has in some ways already paved the way to incentivize that work within the current professional paradigm, while not being dominated by its form of limited subjectivity.

Finally, there is the Philosophy as a Way of Life Network (PWoL Network), our third example, this time in the domain of the higher education classroom. This PWL experiment is a devoted network of international (but especially US) philosophy faculty and scholars from a variety of kinds of institutions “who research aspects of philosophy as a way of life, share curricula, train one another on key teaching strategies, and support each other as we find new ways to serve our students and the humanities more broadly.”⁵⁶ Through an \$800,000 USD grant from the Andrew Mellon W. Foundation, they run an annual summer workshop on bringing PWL into the higher education classroom and finding “new and higher impact ways to teach these traditions.”⁵⁷ On that basis, they have built a website with a variety of shared resources, such as example syllabi, recommended text lists, classroom assignments and activities, and video content, in a number of global PWL world traditions.

One of their main goals is to demonstrate that PWL orientated classroom instruction can effectively help address the crises of meaning and value many students face as they enter college, especially during the challenging times of the last few years. As Meghan Sullivan, one of its founding members, has noted:

It goes without saying perhaps that we live in a period where many of us find it hard to have sustained, wisdom-seeking conversations with one another about morally fraught issues, specially across political and social divisions. Our students want help learning how to ask hard questions of others and how

personal-vulnerable-philosophy-and-higher-learning/, Cf. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1074029ar>.

56. “Home,” *Philosophy as a Way of Life Network*, accessed April 21, 2021, <https://philife.nd.edu/>.

57. Ibid.

to have better dialogues about foundational questions concerning who we are, how we live, and what we owe to each other. The “way of life” teaching models coming out of these collaborations point a way forward to helping our students develop skills they definitely need in their lives going forward.⁵⁸

To chart this PWL way forward they have brought together professional philosophers deeply devoted to this work of helping students find meaning and dialogue with each other toward positive ends, and that want to build up space within and beyond the discipline (especially across the humanities) for PWL practice in current higher education. Together with Stephen Grimm,⁵⁹ Steve Angle, and Caleb Cohoe, co-leaders of the project, Sullivan has thus gathered “a whole army of other college faculty who were experimenting with new and more rich ways of trying to inspire students to think about these ‘big’ questions of how to live”⁶⁰ – a “gang”, as she calls it, that nowadays sums up to 120 professionals working at the four corners of the world. Ultimately, they are seeking to promote evidenced based educational practices that show that addressing the deep need of students for meaning and dialogue on the challenges of our times toward human flourishing and respect for the dignity of others has deep value for students. In addition, it also serves the goals of the narrowest minded administrators, increasing student success and retention during the first two critical years of undergraduate education. Sullivan has made explicit these aims in the founding of the network:

First, a few years ago, Notre Dame underwent a core curriculum review. As a Catholic university, we’ve always had philosophy courses as a required part of our gen ed program. But the question was posed to philosophy (and everyone who teaches in the core) – why exactly is a philosophical education something every student should get? Philosophy is indirectly valuable (it teaches you to write clearly! to reason logically!) but that doesn’t justify a philosophy requirement specifically; lots of disciplines also teach these skills well. Rather the answer we landed on was more direct – students deserve time, space and help in their education to ask the biggest questions concerning the value and aims of their lives. At Notre Dame at least, we have a certain optimism that students can do hard thinking about the major existential questions and

58. As quoted in Justin Weinberg, “Philosophy as a Way of Life Project Launched with \$800K Grant,” *Daily Nous*, November 1, 2018, <https://dailynous.com/2018/11/01/philosophy-way-life-project-launched-800k-grant/>.

59. As previously mentioned, he is the series editor of the Oxford University Press “Guides to the Good Life” book series.

60. Weinberg, “Philosophy as a Way of Life Project Launched with \$800K Grant.”

come up with provisional answers that will be important to them in their lives going forward. And we all do better if we are aware of theories, arguments and traditions that have helped others with this “soul-making” work in the past.⁶¹

Since they launched the initiative, Sullivan, Grimm, and their team have taken up the documentation task of developing such “soul making” PWL course design from the lessons learned at Notre Dame.

These designs are especially shaped for large scale first year courses for entering students that are “digitally integrated,” “dynamically delivered,” and “pedagogically sound.”⁶² They are meant to help new students navigate why they are seeking a degree, what they want to do with their lives, and how to address the ethical and political crises of our times. In 2020 they launched the design process for three courses at institutions beyond Notre Dame University: “Living a Good Life” at Wesleyan University, “Philosophy as a Way of Life” at Florida State University, and “God and the Good Life” at Boise State University.⁶³ Building off the high level of student satisfaction found in these courses, and their current work demonstrating the relationship between these courses and student retention, the PWoL Network plans to seek further grant funding and convince more colleges and universities that such broad PWL courses for entering students are essential for student success and for the cultivation of more flourishing, conscious, respectful, and just citizens. Indeed, the successful widening of such an initiative to different universities across the globe could contribute in a relevant manner to the constitution of philosophical communities conducive to the kind of *eutopian* politics that was at stake in ancient philosophical schools. While profound *eutopian* practice, such as the frank criticism (*parrhesia*) practiced in the Epicurean Garden, may struggle to find a home in most of higher education, more modest *eutopian* work still certainly has promise within its confines.

The PWoL Network is thus another remarkable PWL initiative that at the same time shows the value of keeping philosophy in general higher education curriculum, demonstrates the essential need for philosophy departments and programming, and legitimates PWL pedagogical research and training by professional philosophers. While the success of

61. Ibid.

62. “Initiative,” *Philosophy as a Way of Life Network*, accessed on April 21, 2021, <https://philife.nd.edu/initiative/>

63. Ibid.

the first two PWL oriented experiments clearly show that there is a relevant space *outside* the academy that can and should be occupied by philosophy, this third experiment illustrates the kind of work PWL can do *inside* the academy to serve students with the perennial value of a philosophical education. Taken together, the three experiments are thus a demonstration of the way PWL can chart a path for professional philosophy to serve cultivating meaningful and rich lives both inside and outside of the academy.

Despite this remarkable and positive work, there is need for further experimentation that directly addresses our socio-political-ecological situation and the need to intervene in it through the kind of *eutopian* politics described above. While there are no large-scale experiments of this sort, there are philosophers and programs worth considering for future models. For example, the PWL scholar Marc-Henri Deroche is a professor at the Graduate School of Advanced Integrated Studies in Human Survivability (*Shishu-Kan*) of Kyoto University, where he devotes his time to exploring the role of contemplative and mindfulness practices in a responsible and necessary ecological mindset for the future.⁶⁴ One might also think of the work of the International School of Philosophy in Leusden, Netherlands, which established a successful contract or agreement between Dutch and immigrant, refugee community members in a small Dutch town. This form of community building across difference was so successful that they were asked to replicate it for the rest of the Netherlands.⁶⁵ Most powerfully, one might think of the work done by the *eutopian* project at the Philosophy, Cosmology, and Consciousness Program of the California Institute for Integral Studies. They clearly define their mission in *eutopian* terms:

Our Philosophy, Cosmology, and Consciousness (PCC) graduate program is dedicated to reimagining the human species as a mutually enhancing member of the Earth community. The heart of the program is its focus on knowledge that is transformative – of ourselves and of our civilization. PCC attracts intellectually engaged individuals who are to varying degrees dismayed by what they see happening in modern societies and who are striving to find meaningful ways to develop their gifts to serve the future of the world.⁶⁶

64. For more, see: Marc-Henri Deroche, “Marc-Henri DEROCHE,” *Staff*, accessed on July 10, 2021, https://www.gsais.kyoto-u.ac.jp/staff/deroche/en_index.html.

65. Cf. Kramer, *Principles to Guide Philosophical Community*, 221.

66. “About the Program,” *Philosophy, Cosmology, and Consciousness*, accessed on July 10, 2021, <https://www.ciis.edu/academics/graduate-programs/philosophy-cosmology-and-consciousness/about-the-program>.

As Dr. Olena Provencher eloquently articulated the fruits of their *eutopian* politics during an interview when she was a Ph.D. student in the program:

This is what I think kind of sets the graduates [of pcc] apart (and the ability to capitalize on it): Giving other people (not only showing it) the opportunity to transform in a singular way (opening to the inside) the treasures that are inside of each of us, and then see the treasures actually present in the world around you ... I can talk of PCC as a sort of grassroots movement, because we are small (it's a really small program) so if even a single person changes themselves, changes the way the processes are happening, thinking processes, emotional processes, happening inside, it is already changing the world. If everybody changes this way than the world must change. But of course, it's not possible on a large scale within any predictable future, so we're only talking about some people being able to do that, [yet] it is already a change.⁶⁷

We see such a robust “grassroots” *eutopian* politics as the next phase of PWL experimentation.

5. Conclusion

The growing interest and developing work in PWL within the academic community is both a symptom of the deepening frustration and dissatisfaction of many professional philosophers as to the impact, relevance, and meaning of their work, and a glimpse of hope towards the reconstruction of professional philosophy and respective restructuring of current metrics, impact measurement, and assessment regimes in the contemporary academy toward more communally and personally meaningful work. Whereas the Covid-19 Pandemic has made the crisis in professional philosophy more apparent than ever, the PWL experiments outlined in this article have shown that there are interesting ways of combining strictly academic outputs with different (less rigid and more holistic) kinds of work that simultaneously open up higher education to broader audiences, appease the enduring anxiety and frustration of scholars, and recover part of philosophy's original role and *eutopian* relevance within the community. A PWL approach to professional philosophy can thus help renew reflection on current evaluation and monitorization systems and recreate career incentives in the academy, in order to overcome part of its

67. As quoted in: Kramer, *Principles to Guide Philosophical Community*, 308.

enduring limitations, promote satisfying academic careers, and serve the world and people's lives more widely and meaningfully, including in times of crises via a *eutopian* politics.

We are of course not saying that PWL is *the* solution for all the problems in academic philosophy, nor that it is flawless or without its own risks, challenges, and limitations. Some of them are even clearly present in the experiments described above. As a relatively recent field of research, practice, and work, both inside and outside the academy, PWL is still wrapped in a series of misunderstandings and preconceptions that prevent it from being more widely accepted and embraced within the academy – and hence more widely disseminated beyond it. Some literary genres and other less conventional forms of transmission of knowledge are still prominently rejected as unphilosophical or not serious or rigorous enough, and there is still the widespread idea that “philosophies of life” are minor philosophies or not even philosophies in the proper sense of the word. This is certainly a difficulty facing the new trade books that are shifting the academic publishing industry. It is a real concern that those works will on the one hand be dismissed by most of professional philosophy as “not serious” or “real” work, and on the other hand that pressures from publishing houses or the desire for fame will make these works indeed trite. More support, programming, training, and field development in departments, faculties, and institutes of philosophy could stem the risks on both ends. While it is important to open the academy to broader and more inclusive forms of writing – which do not by themselves betray philosophical rigor, seriousness, and accuracy – it is also fundamental to form professionals who might be up to the challenge and do not turn PWL into another self-help quackery in the open market.

On the other hand, and as it generally happens with movements that address wider audiences and use the internet and social media as means of promotion and dissemination, certain PWL initiatives might be liable and vulnerable to intromission and appropriation of external agendas which are often hard to identify and especially control. For example, as the Modern Stoicism Movement has grown there has been increasing infiltration about alt-right authoritarian populists who seek to appropriate Marcus Aurelius and Stoic thought to their racist, nativist, anti-women, and/or libertarian, celebration of a putative Western chauvinist heritage.⁶⁸

68. See Donna Zuckerberg, *Not All Dead White Men: Classics and Misogyny in the Digital Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).

While leaders and advocates of Modern Stoicism have sought to fight against such tendencies,⁶⁹ it is a rapidly growing movement with an open organization, with ever new splinter groups that are hard to guide and keep track of. Again, more professional training of nuanced and caring leaders interested in such work could keep tabs and support the movement from becoming an apology for deeply anti-intellectual and anti-philosophical values. In addition, the communal and political dimensions to Stoicism ought to be further integrated into the experimental movement.

Finally, and directly connected to the two previous points, there are difficulties related to the funding of this kind of work. While more financial support would be needed to invest in this nascent field and form more devoted professionals who would help to accredit and dignify the merits of PWL both inside and outside the academy, the mentioned preconceptions and abuses related to ongoing initiatives makes funding agencies and respective evaluation panels frequently look down with suspicion upon innovative and groundbreaking proposals in the field. The PWoL Network is, of course, a sign of hope in this regard. Despite its success, however, it is still nascent in its work, and has yet to have corollate organizations in Latin America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia, all while philosophy and the humanities find themselves increasingly drained of resources in the name of more putatively “career-oriented degrees.” It would thus be important to widen the channels available for funding that would help develop corollate centers and organizations devoted to this work across the world.

In short, these experiments are but first steps in shifting disciplinary standards for a more holistic sense of philosophy’s role in society as a *eutopian* force for renewal. A broader initiative filling out and developing this work, providing oversight and proper training, and boosting PWL’s potential to intervene ethically and politically in our current socio-political-ecological crises is essential for this nascent field to flower. We do not wish to contend that PWL is the only way to overcome the enduring crisis in professional philosophy, but it is certainly both a significant symptom of some of its current deficiencies and limitations, and an illuminative demonstration of meaningful directions to move forward beyond them toward meaningful work. In other words, PWL is itself an ongoing experimentation from which we might learn. While perhaps philosophers will

69. For more, see Matthew Sharpe, “Into the Heart of Darkness Or: Alt-Stoicism? Actually, No,” *Eidos. A Journal for Philosophy of Culture* 2, no. 4 (6) (2018): 106-113, <https://doi.org/10.26319/6921>.

always critically challenge the limits of their own field (as they should), there is no reason why we must keep to how things have been. We can learn from such criticisms and develop an ameliorative path forward for a richer discipline, one that keeps the best perennial lessons of philosophy and reconstructs them for our own context and needs.

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«Resistir» em Tempos de Pandemia

“Resisting” in Times of Pandemic

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BRUNO NOBRE **

Abstract

In 2015, Josep Maria Esquirol sketched his “philosophy of proximity”. Such a philosophy does not seek to attain a propositional, abstract, or purely theoretical truth. According to Esquirol, it is rather about healing the human person in the concreteness of his or her life. More precisely, without wishing to return to ancient metaphysics, Esquirol seeks to «resist» against the nihilistic forces of disintegration of meaning that leads the human being to the experience of nothingness. In our understanding, *La Resistencia Íntima*, the book that earned Esquirol the *Premio Nacional Ensayo 2016*, is prophetic, insofar as the current pandemic context corroborates his “metaphysics of gathering.” Moreover, Esquirol’s philosophy of proximity may teach us how to generate more life from our fragility, which reveals itself as insurmountable.

Keywords: Josep Maria Esquirol, nothingness, pandemic, philosophy of proximity, SARS-CoV-2.


Introdução

D esencadeada no final de 2019 pela nova espécie de coronavírus denominada SARS-CoV-2, a atual crise pandémica alastrou-se aos lugares mais recônditos dos cinco continentes e é acompanhada por uma profunda crise económico-social. É por demais evidente a dimensão global dos impactos desta inesperada crise. Vale a pena mencionar, a este respeito, a observação do epidemiologista Gabriel Leung, para quem a doença poderia ter atingido rapidamente dois terços da população mundial, caso não tivessem sido tomadas medidas no sentido de mitigar a propagação da doença.¹ Esta rápida progressão da pandemia à escala

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mundial mostra-nos como a globalização é uma realidade já presente, com tudo o que tem de positivo, mas também de problemático.

Foram inúmeros os filósofos que procuraram refletir a partir deste novo contexto. Ainda em plena primeira vaga, Slavoj Žižek fez notar como a rápida propagação do vírus afetava de forma muito distinta ricos e pobres. O vírus veio expor as contradições ou, mais precisamente, as injustiças do «capitalismo global» que hoje vigora no ocidente.² Mais ainda, a «ameaça global» ligada a esta crise refere-se, para Žižek, não apenas à pandemia, mas sobretudo à incapacidade do capitalismo em engendrar soluções conjuntas e solidárias a nível global.³ Segundo esta perspetiva, apesar de «estúpido» e desprovido de uma intenção ou finalidade, o vírus veio confirmar que, em tempos de crise, «somos todos socialistas».⁴ Retomando os termos de Maurice Blanchot, Žižek diz-nos que precisamos de encontrar uma nova «humanidade unificada».⁵ São expressões que fazem lembrar as reflexões do Papa Francisco, para quem esta «tragédia global» despertou a consciência de estarmos todos no «mesmo barco».⁶

Alain Badiou e Byung-Chul Han discordam que a pandemia nos tenha feito progredir em direção ao socialismo, ou que tenha despertado em nós a consciência da necessidade de estabelecermos uma «nova forma de comunismo».⁷ Essa seria a opinião de Žižek, para quem a solução para esta crise, como para as crises ecológicas que nos aguardam, só pode ser global: isto é, uma solução implementada por uma organização forte a nível mundial, suficientemente centralizada e poderosa para impor regras a todos os indivíduos e empresas.⁸ Badiou, apesar de também reivindicar

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2. Cf. Slavoj Žižek, *A Pandemia que Abalou o Mundo*, trad. João Moita (Lisboa: Relógio d'Água, 2020), 27.
3. Cf. *ibid.*, 40.
4. *Ibid.*, 80.
5. Cf. *Ibid.*, 90.
6. Papa Francisco, *Fratelli tutti. Carta Encíclica sobre a Fraternidade e a Amizade Social* (Braga: Editorial A. O., 2020), 27, §32.
7. Žižek, *op. cit.*, 85.
8. Cf. *ibid.*, 85, 89.

uma solução de tipo marxista para os problemas atuais, considera que o capitalismo se revitalizou ainda mais com a pandemia, cujas consequências não se traduzem em mudanças significativas no ordenamento político ocidental.⁹ Por seu lado, Han observa como as medidas que aceitamos para controlar a pandemia – os confinamentos, a promoção do teletrabalho e o uso de máscaras – só foram possíveis a partir do «pânico» contra um «novo inimigo». Nesse sentido, não seria tanto o capitalismo a ser posto em causa, mas mais precisamente a «sociedade positiva», na qual se vive sem inimigos. A atual situação de crise pandémica seria, portanto, mais semelhante à experiência da Guerra Fria do que a uma qualquer forma de comunismo.¹⁰ Outra perspetiva foi apresentada por Giorgio Agamben, para quem os confinamentos, a imposição do teletrabalho e a obrigatoriedade do uso de máscaras vieram confirmar a teoria segundo a qual o nosso ordenamento jurídico e económico provém de um «Estado» dito de «exceção». Dessa forma, faz-se de novo presente o fantasma da teoria com que Carl Smith apoiou o nazismo nos anos trinta do século passado.¹¹

Enquanto a maioria destes autores parece sugerir que o vírus tem algo para nos ensinar, Bernard-Henri Lévy sublinha que os vírus são por natureza «estúpidos», «cegos». Os vírus, segundo Lévy, «não existem para contar histórias», não têm «utilidade» alguma, nem podem dar-nos lições sociais.¹² De forma muito assertiva, Lévy parece dirigir, assim, uma crítica aos autores que procuram encontrar «virtudes na coisa».¹³ De facto, na medida em que é desprovido de finalidade, o vírus não nos «diz» que o capitalismo não funciona, nem que a pandemia é o resultado de uma natureza saturada do nosso poder tecnológico. Esta crítica parece-nos justa. Realmente, muito do que se escreveu sobre a crise pode, talvez, resumir-se a meras confirmações forçadas das ideologias que vinham sendo defendidas desde há muito tempo.

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9. Alain Badiou, «La Position D'Alain Badiou, Philosophe, sur la pandémie virale...», *Thau Info*, <http://thau-infos.fr/index.php/courrier-des-lecteurs/75970-la-position-d-alain-badiou-philosophe-sur-la-pandemie-virale>, accessed: 02/08/2021.
 10. Byung-Chul Han, «O coronavírus de hoje e o mundo de amanhã, segundo o filósofo Byung-Chul Han», *El País*, 22 de março de 2020, <https://brasil.elpais.com/ideas/2020-03-22/o-coronavirus-de-hoje-e-o-mundo-de-amanha-segundo-o-filosofista-byung-chul-han.html>.
 11. Žižek, *op. cit.*, 67.
 12. Bernard-Henri Lévy, *Este Vírus que Nos Enlouquece*, trad. João Luís Zamith and André Tavares Marçal (Lisboa: Guerra e Paz, 2020), 48.
 13. *Ibid.*, 56.

Josep Maria Esquirol, professor na Universidade de Barcelona e diretor do grupo de investigação *Aporia*, que estuda a interação da psiquiatria com a filosofia contemporânea, não cedeu a esta tentação. Desse âmbito interdisciplinar poderia esperar-se uma reflexão rápida sobre os efeitos da pandemia e das medidas que acabaram por ser adotadas nas sociedades humanas. No entanto, contrariamente a Žižek, Badiou, Han e Agamben, para Esquirol esse trabalho parece estar ainda por fazer.

Neste artigo, procuramos ilustrar a pertinência da «filosofia da proximidade» de Esquirol no atual contexto pandémico. Num primeiro momento, sugerimos que a crise pandémica e social que hoje atravessamos corrobora a «metafísica do ajuntamento» que o autor propõe em *A Resistência Íntima* (2015). Num segundo momento, identificamos alguns aspetos da sua «filosofia da proximidade» que podem ajudar-nos a atravessar esta crise de forma positiva, resistindo às forças desintegradoras que hoje nos ameaçam.

1. A «metafísica do ajuntamento» em contexto de pandemia

Para compreender a abordagem de Esquirol, é importante começar por situá-la como alternativa à narrativa nietzschiana. De facto, contra a expressão de Nietzsche, *demasiado humano*, Esquirol propõe a procura pelo *mais humano*.¹⁴ Contrariamente a Nietzsche, Esquirol não quer eliminar nem superar a fraqueza que aquele considera como sendo *demasiado humana*. Esquirol integra-a, antes, num dinamismo crescente de vida, pois, para ele, a «debilidade» nem sempre deve ser superada.¹⁵ Assim, Esquirol opõe-se a uma tradição, bem presente no ocidente hodierno, que tende a encarar a fragilidade como um obstáculo à realização humana. Como bem salientou Jean-Louis Chrétien a este respeito, o expoente máximo dessa tradição encontra-se em Nietzsche e na figura do seu Super-homem.¹⁶ Nesse sentido, se a pandemia nos coloca numa situação de profunda fragilidade, parece-nos que a abordagem de Esquirol abre mais e melhores horizontes em relação à narrativa nietzschiana.

14. Cf. Josep Maria Esquirol, *Humano, más humano. Una antropología de la herida infinita* (Barcelona: Acantilado, 2021), 10.

15. Cf. *ibid.*, 8-10.

16. Cf. Jean-Louis Chrétien, *Fragilité* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2017), 251.

1.1. A fragilidade e o ocaso do tecnocientismo

Uma das primeiras sensações com que a pandemia nos confrontou foi a de nos encontrarmos perante uma realidade que não controlamos totalmente, uma realidade que se impôs e que foi capaz de alterar o nosso modo de vida. Mesmo apesar do progresso científico-tecnológico alcançado, que nos permite, por exemplo, viajar pelo ar usando aviões, ir ao espaço, compreender a genética humana e produzir uma série infindável de produtos que desejamos e melhoram a nossa qualidade de vida, a verdade é que o vírus se alastrou sem que ninguém o que conseguisse aplacar. Além disso, o facto de a sociedade, os cientistas e os governos terem sido, pelo menos numa primeira fase, apanhados desprevenidos veio mostrar o carácter não apenas incontrolável, mas também imprevisível do vírus. Nesse sentido, o atual contexto pandémico questiona o paradigma do cientismo moderno, segundo o qual o ser humano seria capaz de prever, controlar e transformar a natureza em seu próprio proveito de forma ilimitada. Como afirma Jean-Luc Nancy a este respeito, a *autossuficiência* foi posta em causa pela pandemia: a *autossuficiência* do «indivíduo, do grupo, do Estado» e até das «autoridades científicas e morais». ¹⁷ De facto, uma das expressões da fragilidade humana manifesta-se agora com o descoroar da crença no cientismo moderno, pois a situação de pandemia que vivemos faz-nos cair na conta de que a realidade não se reduz a uma mera construção subjetiva. O sujeito humano é forçado a adaptar-se, pelo menos em certa medida, a uma realidade objetiva que se lhe impõe.

Vale a pena revisitar, no atual contexto pandémico, a abordagem metafísica de Esquirol, na qual o autor se demarca deliberadamente da «lógica tecnocientífica». ¹⁸ Com efeito, uma das primeiras teses que um leitor de Esquirol poderia sugerir seria a de ver na pandemia uma oportunidade para a desconstrução do cientismo. Esse leitor usaria, certamente, como ponto de partida a fragilidade que se experimenta diante da impotência que o aparato tecnológico revelou face à propagação do vírus.

Para Esquirol, a metafísica aristotélica, baseada nas noções gregas de *dynamis* e *energeia*, foi adulterada pela tradução latina dos termos *potentia* e *actualitas*. Ao traduzir os conceitos gregos dessa forma, a tradição latina passou a subordinar a potência, concebida como privação, ao ato, ao qual

17. Cf. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Un trop humain virus* (Paris: Bayard, 2020), 79-81.

18. Cf. Josep Maria Esquirol, *A Resistência Íntima. Ensaio de uma Filosofia da Proximidade*, trad. Jorge Melícias (Lisboa: Edições 70, 2020), 105.

nada haveria a acrescentar. Assim, a atualidade, que «monopoliza tudo», impõe um paradigma que tende a menosprezar o tempo de passagem, de amadurecimento, de mudança, assim como os estados de carência em que o ser não se manifesta de forma «objetivável», nem «dominável».¹⁹ Enquanto leitor de Heidegger e de Marx, Esquirol lê esta metafísica tecnocientífica como uma «alienação» que consiste no «enfraquecimento do espírito, da personalidade, do si-mesmo», deixando pouco espaço para o domínio do «íntimo».²⁰

Em certo sentido, Esquirol concorda com Nietzsche, nomeadamente quando contrapõe a sua filosofia da proximidade à «abstração desligada da vida».²¹ Com efeito, também Nietzsche quer afirmar a vida imanente que nos habita, opondo-se, por isso, aos ditames da razão gélida que opera no paradigma tecnocientífico. Para Nietzsche, no entanto, a afirmação da vida e a crítica da razão teórico-abstrata traduzem-se na exaltação da força de um Super-Homem completamente autónomo. Esquirol, pelo contrário, opõe à abstração a *proximidade*, que inclui não só a proximidade ao mundo concreto, mas também às pessoas que nos rodeiam.

A «essência da vida humana» expressa-se, segundo Esquirol, na noção de «ferida infinita».²² O ser humano é ferido «pela vida», «pela morte», «pelo tu» e «pelo mundo», na medida em que as experiências fundamentais de «*angústia*», de «*amor*», de «*assombro*», de «*mistério*» lhe mostram que, apesar de se situar no mundo, o seu ser não se esgota na contingência do horizonte espaço-temporal.²³ É nesse sentido que a essência da vida se manifesta como sendo irreduzível à racionalidade tecnocientífica.

Por isso, a condição de fragilidade que caracteriza a pessoa humana – e que, no atual contexto pandémico, experimentamos com uma consciência redobrada – pode desencadear um processo que nos leve a pensar a vida a partir de uma criatividade que não se deixa aprisionar pela «ubíqua monocromia do mundo tecnificado».²⁴ Com o fim desse paradigma que afirma o primado da racionalidade científica, a pessoa humana poderá, então, (*re*)abrir-se à contemplação e ao mistério que constituem a sua vida. Mas, para isso, é preciso *resistir*.

19. Cf. *ibid.*, 103-105.

20. Cf. *ibid.*, 105.

21. *Ibid.* 18-19.

22. Cf. Esquirol, *Humano, más humano*, 12.

23. Cf. *ibid.*, 64.

24. Cf. *ibid.*, 85.

1.2. Resistir como forma de existir

Através da crítica explicitamente dirigida contra o cientismo, próprio da modernidade, é fácil compreender a aproximação de Esquirol às correntes existencialistas contemporâneas. No entanto, enquanto para o existencialismo de teor heideggeriano *existir é projetar-se*, na filosofia da proximidade a tónica coloca-se, sobretudo, no ato de *resistir*. Por outras palavras, em vez de conceber a existência humana a partir das suas incomensuráveis possibilidades, Esquirol considera que *existir* consiste, primeiramente, na resistência contra as «forças de desagregação» do sentido da vida.

Que a resistência seja reação não significa que seja «reacionária». A resistência é reação ante as forças dominantes e desagregadoras. Por isso, abre um espaço livre e criativo. Sim, criar tem que ver com o facto de que algo de novo apareça, mas também com o facto de que este processo comporte uma transformação pessoal, infinita e contagiosa (isto é, interpeladora do outro).²⁵

Nesse sentido, «a filosofia da proximidade» responde «ao niilismo», mas de uma forma bem diferente da de Nietzsche, pois, Esquirol «pretende resistir ao niilismo» acolhendo a fragilidade». Em vez de afirmar a vontade de poder de um Super-Homem, Esquirol convida-nos a resistir com a proximidade de quem se sabe, e se aceita, como *alguém* que é fraco no seu existir.²⁶ Não esqueçamos que dois dos «principais conceitos» da antropologia esquiroliana são «alguém» (ipseidade pessoal) e «intempérie» (em condição de fragilidade).²⁷

Dessa forma, apesar de a resistência íntima se realizar no aquém deste mundo, não se trata, como em Nietzsche, de vencer a fragilidade pela conquista de uma autonomia radical. Para Esquirol, a proximidade expressa-se com o verbo, ou ação, de *cuidar*: cuidar da Terra, dos vizinhos...; verbo este que se opõe ao *dominar* nietzschiano.²⁸

Esquirol descreve esta forma de resistência a partir da experiência – pois não se trata apenas de uma virtude moral, concebida apenas no horizonte categorial – da «fortaleza». Esquirol refere-se a *alguém ferido*, passivamente exposto a circunstâncias difíceis ou indesejadas. A fortaleza

25. Esquirol, *A Resistência Íntima*, 107.

26. Cf. *ibid.*, 28.

27. Cf. Esquirol, *Humano, más humano*, 12-13.

28. Cf. Esquirol, *A Resistência Íntima*, 58.

descreve a situação dessa pessoa frágil que aguenta, isto é, que, apesar de tudo, se mantém «firme» em seu existir.²⁹ A fortaleza encontra a sua força na «esperança» e é a partir desta que resiste à tristeza e à desolação.³⁰ Nesta «resistência humana» não há «derrota definitiva» nem «vitória definitiva», visto que, num mundo finito e limitado como o nosso, nunca deixam de estar presentes as forças desagregadoras do sentido.

Compreendemos, então, o quanto a resistência tem que ver com uma hermenêutica de sentido. Para Esquirol, trata-se de resistir perante as forças desintegradoras do niilismo, para o qual a vida, desprovida de sentido, corre o risco de não merecer ser vivida. Resistir significa, portanto, encontrar um sentido para a existência.

Para alguém de condição frágil, esse sentido só será possível no encontro com os outros, que o transcendem e o complementam neste mundo finito e limitado. A esse respeito, ao descrever o *canto* e a *promessa* como experiências antropológicas, Esquirol mostra como a contingência não implica necessariamente o tédio do absurdo, da falta de sentido, que a racionalidade gélida facilmente pode deduzir e afirmar. Esquirol nota como só quem vive na sua própria autossuficiência poderá experimentar a fragilidade e a contingência do mundo como desprovidas de sentido. Mas a comunhão com os outros e a responsabilidade que nos compromete diante deles levam-nos a fazer a experiência de sentido, não obstante a fragilidade de uma vida que se tece na contingência deste mundo.³¹

1.3. Não somos como ilhas isoladas

Entramos, assim, na perspectiva holística de Esquirol, pois o ser humano não se caracteriza apenas pela sua condição de fragilidade. A experiência da fragilidade ganha sentido num contexto *cósmico*, isto é, no quadro de uma vida ordenada com a proximidade a outros elementos.

Cosmicidade é um conceito cujo significado reúne, com matizes, o que se indica com estes outros termos: *harmonia, equilíbrio, justiça e ordem*. Uma coisa ou uma situação *cósmica* é precisamente aquela em que existe uma boa harmonia. *Cósmico* é antónimo de *caótico, desordenado, desajustado* [...] Cada um de nós é uma cosmicidade e não uma mera adição de órgãos, de funções e de capacidades. Esse todo cósmico é um todo *aberto*, e à abertura

29. Cf. *Ibid.*, 92-93.

30. Cf. *Ibid.*, 94.

31. Cf. Esquirol, *Humano, más Humano*, 45-47. Como afirma Ricœur, corrigindo Nietzsche, o eu atravessado na sua própria identidade pelo outro (cf. *ibid.*, 54).

chamamos *mundo* [...] Por conseguinte, dizer «cosmicidade aberta» é redundante.³²

Como autor pós-heideggeriano, Esquirol não concebe a existência como a atualização de uma determinada essência. *Existência* indica, aqui, «a *maneira de ser* exclusiva do homem». ³³ Contudo, para Esquirol o existente não se confunde com um ser solitário, errante ou perdido neste mundo, qual *Dasein* heideggeriano.

É nesse sentido que Esquirol emprega a «figura da junção» numa antropologia (e metafísica) da vulnerabilidade em que «nós mesmos» não somos independente e separadamente uns dos «outros». Referindo-se explicitamente a Ricœur, Esquirol considera que «a nossa identidade [...] implica a alteridade: um si-mesmo enquanto outro; a nossa alteridade como si-mesmo mais recôndito, como *ipse*, implica a alteridade, a diferença». ³⁴

A atual crise pandémica veio pôr em destaque este elo intrínseco que nos une uns aos outros neste mundo. Por mais paradoxal que possa parecer, o simples facto de termos de usar máscaras para nos protegermos uns dos outros, de sermos obrigados a limitar as nossas saídas de casa, e de agora recebermos a vacina, mostra-nos como estamos indissociavelmente interligados uns com os outros. Por outras palavras, a pandemia torna ainda mais evidente a nossa interdependência, isto é, o modo como a nossa existência tem um impacto na vida dos outros, e vice-versa. Não é apenas por me encontrar numa situação de vulnerabilidade que não sou autónomo. Em qualquer situação, e mesmo que não me dê conta, o outro faz parte de mim – ou, empregando uma terminologia mais clássica, o outro integra a minha própria essência. Por isso, a «metafísica do ajuntamento» manifesta-se, atualmente, sobretudo em dois dos seus aspetos fundamentais: (i) por um lado, vemos hoje como a condição humana é, por natureza, a de fragilidade, e como, não obstante, essa fragilidade não impede necessariamente o horizonte de sentido da vida; (ii) por outro lado, o ser humano não se reduz ao atomismo cientista, nem ao indivíduo radicalmente autónomo, idealizado na figura do Super-Homem nietzschiano.

32. Esquirol, *A Resistência Íntima*, 76.

33. *Ibid.*, 141.

34. *Ibid.*, 142.

2. Como resistir em tempos de pandemia

Como acabamos de ver, a filosofia da proximidade de Esquirol oferece-nos coordenadas importantes para fazermos uma leitura filosófica sobre o momento de pandemia que atravessamos. No entanto, o possível contributo de Esquirol não se fica por aqui. A sua abordagem filosófica é eminentemente prática, como se de uma sabedoria de vida se tratasse. Por isso, seria importante identificar os elementos da filosofia esquiroliana que nos podem ensinar a arte da «resistência» nas condições adversas que vivemos.

A este respeito, é importante recordar que a filosofia da proximidade inclui, tal como a filosofia de Nietzsche, uma forma de resistência ao niilismo, ou seja, a todas as «forças desagregadoras»:

A filosofia da proximidade é também uma resposta ao niilismo, mas bastante diferente da nietzschiana. Pretende resistir ao niilismo aproximando-se da finitude. Em lugar do eterno retorno, o «retorno a casa». Nietzsche poderia dizer que isto não passa de uma vulgar réplica do pior cristianismo. Mas este é precisamente o embate a que há que resistir. Em vez da vontade de poder, a resistência; em vez do super-homem, a proximidade; em vez da afirmação, a «problematização»; em vez do futuro, a memória. Eis aí a lição. Temo-la ao alcance da mão e, talvez por isso, seja, paradoxalmente, uma das mais difíceis³⁵.

O autor ainda não aplicou, pelo menos não de forma explícita, as suas intuições filosóficas ao atual contexto de pandemia. Parece-nos, no entanto, que a sua sensibilidade para com a fragilidade própria da condição humana, especialmente exposta no presente contexto, oferece um enquadramento oportuno para a reflexão filosófica sobre a pandemia e, particularmente, sobre a forma de resistir aos obstáculos com que nos confronta. É esta a tarefa que nos propomos realizar nesta segunda secção do artigo.

2.1. *Regressar a casa; cultivar o jardim*

A pandemia abateu-se sobre a humanidade como uma imensa e inesperada tormenta que nos fez experimentar o carácter precário da nossa existência com uma nova intensidade. Nos países ocidentais, as últimas décadas foram, em geral, prósperas e tranquilas. Os cenários apocalípticos frequentemente esboçados pelo cinema contemporâneo permaneciam

35. Esquirol, *A Resistência Íntima*, 28.

como uma ficção, qual miragem, incapaz de se tornar realidade. E, no entanto, aconteceu o que parecia impossível, pelo menos para muitos de nós. A pandemia alastrou-se como uma enorme onda que foi paralisando as nossas cidades e transtornando as nossas vidas. Os locais que até há pouco nos pareciam seguros transformaram-se em lugares inóspitos, ameaçadores, onde podíamos contrair um vírus do qual pouco ou nada sabíamos. Descobrimo-nos frágeis, vulneráveis, alvos fáceis de um inimigo invisível e em grande medida desconhecido. Neste contexto, a «casa» (*re*)afirmou-se como «refúgio», como o lugar onde podemos abrigar-nos do vírus e respirar livremente, sem a mediação incómoda da máscara que, entretanto, se converteu em adereço obrigatório e indispensável.

Na filosofia da proximidade, a casa afirma-se como um aspeto fundamental do movimento de resistência. A casa é, para o ser humano, um «refúgio» ou um «abrigo». A casa salva-nos. De quê? Em primeiro lugar, da imensidão que nos assusta e esmaga, recordando-nos insistentemente que somos «minúsculos grãos de areia perdidos no oceano do infinito, prontos para o seu iminente desaparecimento-dissolução».³⁶ Diante da imensidão inóspita do universo que habitamos, a casa oferece proteção. É lugar de recolhimento, de acolhimento, de repouso, de tranquilidade. Além de abrigo, a casa oferece-nos, também, um centro: «a casa, como centro, faz com que o mundo não seja nem caos nem dispersão total».³⁷ Finalmente, a casa é o lugar onde regressamos depois de um dia de trabalho ou de uma viagem mais longa. A casa é o lugar onde se volta cada dia, o ponto de chegada e de partida do nosso quotidiano.

A pandemia fez da «casa» o lugar de abrigo por excelência. O telhado, as paredes, as portas e as janelas passaram a separar-nos da hostilidade de um mundo subitamente invadido por um vírus insidioso. É verdade também que, para muitos, a casa acabou por se converter de abrigo em prisão. E uma prisão já não é centro nem lugar de intimidade. É o lugar que confina a nossa liberdade e tolhe os nossos movimentos, e também a nossa criatividade. Casa ou prisão? Este é, porventura, um dos mais cruciais dilemas da pandemia que nos fez permanecer em casa. Viveu bem a pandemia quem soube experienciar a sua casa como lugar de acolhimento e recolhimento, revisitando memórias e fazendo-se abrigo para quem habitava o mesmo espaço. Entrou numa espiral de ansiedade, e até

36. Ibid., 39.

37. Ibid., 41.

de desespero, quem não foi capaz de ver nas paredes da sua casa mais do que as paredes de uma prisão.

A «metafísica da casa» proposta por Esquirol recorda-nos que a casa é mais que um lugar físico delimitado por quatro paredes e um telhado. Com efeito, a casa como lugar de acolhimento é, por excelência, o outro. Eu posso ser lugar de abrigo para o outro, e o outro pode ser lugar de abrigo para mim. «A casa», afirma Esquirol, «é a expressão mais emblemática do amparar e do cobrir para proteger».³⁸ Durante a pandemia, precisamos abrigar-nos do vírus, mas precisamos também abrigar-nos do medo, da insegurança, da ansiedade e do isolamento. E este abrigo não o pode oferecer uma casa com paredes físicas. Este abrigo e conforto só podem ser garantidos pelos abraços e corações abertos de outro ser humano. Como nos recorda Esquirol, «o acolhimento é condição da existência».³⁹ Ou seja, para resistir em tempo de pandemia é preciso encontrar mais do que um abrigo físico. E talvez devamos começar por aceitar o desafio de sermos abrigo para quem procura uma casa.

Não deixa de ser significativo que, durante os longos dias e meses de pandemia, muitos se tenham dedicado a plantar jardins, nas varandas, nos terraços, nos parapeitos de janelas soalheiras. Plantar um jardim e cuidar dele é uma forma de resistência. Como diz o Cândido de Voltaire: «É preciso cultivar o nosso jardim». Nas palavras de Esquirol, «fazer crescer as plantas, cozinhar, bordar, construir móveis..., tudo isso serve para subsistir, mas, além disso, dá à vida uma presença e uma força diferentes das de tantos excessos verborreicos».⁴⁰ Muitos descobriram, durante a pandemia, a sabedoria de plantar um jardim. Porque o jardim é uma forma de resistência diante do caos que tantas vezes varre as nossas vidas.

2.2. *O poder terapêutico da quotidianidade*

O tempo que nos é dado viver é profundamente marcado pela tecnologia, que aos poucos foi invadindo todos os domínios da nossa existência. Não há dúvida de que a tecnologia, em geral, e as tecnologias digitais, em particular, tornam mais fáceis e cómodos muitos aspetos da nossa vida. Mas também lhe roubam profundidade. Os nossos dias correm acelerados de écran para écran, de tal maneira que vamos perdendo a capacidade de

38. Ibid., 47.

39. Ibid., 48.

40. Ibid., 36.

escutar e de contemplar. Temos acesso a enormes quantidades de informação, mas talvez tenhamos cada vez mais dificuldade em descer ao âmago das coisas.

A pandemia mergulhou-nos, ainda mais, no mundo tecnológico. As plataformas de comunicação digital invadiram a privacidade das nossas casas, ao mesmo tempo que ignoram desrespeitosamente a cadência própria dos ritmos pessoais. Mas o tempo de pandemia oferece-nos também a oportunidade de voltar a saborear a profundidade do quotidiano, que aflora nas coisas simples e aparentemente banais que tecem o fluir dos nossos dias. Regressar à simplicidade do quotidiano pode ter um inesperado efeito terapêutico:

Evitemos procurar sempre o extraordinário, admiremos o simples e o lano e aprendamos a apreciá-lo porque, de um certo ponto de vista, é o que há de mais sublime. [...] Apropriar-nos (e não no sentido da possessão) da quotidianidade e da simplicidade da vida, de alguma forma «salva-nos».⁴¹

Aprender a colher da quotidianidade a profundidade que cura não é apenas um luxo para almas contemplativas. É uma forma de resistência. E a alternativa é o tédio, capaz de tornar áridos os dias banais que precisamos viver confinados. Como afirma Esquirol, «as coisas mais elementares talvez estejam já imbuídas do ânimo de responder ou de resistir à escuridão da intempérie. O niilismo não se supera, da mesma maneira que não se supera a finitude: enfrenta-se. Movemo-nos *entre* a proximidade e o abismo, e a proximidade é já uma resposta ao abismo».⁴²

2.3. *Cuidar e amparar*

A «metafísica do ajuntamento» de Esquirol é, na verdade, uma antropologia, na qual o ser humano é compreendido como um ser em tensão entre dois polos indissociáveis. Por um lado, o ser humano descobre-se como um ser frágil e vulnerável, cuja vida é mais resistência à desintegração do que autorealização. Por outro lado, associados à experiência fundamental da vulnerabilidade encontram-se o cuidado, a solicitude e o amparo.⁴³ Ou seja, o ser humano não existe sozinho: existe como «junção»,

41. Ibid., 52.

42. Ibid., 67.

43. Cf. Ibid., 141. Num artigo publicado no Jornal Espanhol El País, Esquirol afirma que o movimento mais radical e mais humano é o de nos cuidarmos uns aos outros. <https://elpais.com/ideas/2020-07-18/josep-maria-esquirol-el-movimiento-mas-radical-y-mas>

no sentido em que agrupa, com outros, os elementos do mundo numa unidade de vida: «o homem é junção porque faz de junção. É o seu modo de ser. Relacionamos, unimos, juntamos. A sua característica ontológica reside no facto de que existe unindo e suturando. É a conjunção, um *e*».⁴⁴ O ser humano é junção, uma junção sempre precária e imperfeita, mas da qual não pode abdicar, porque a nossa fragilidade não pode subsistir sem o outro, que me ampara e que cuida de mim.

Neste sentido, para Esquirol, o imperativo ético é, ao mesmo tempo, um imperativo terapêutico: «A debilidade do outro faz com que a medicina e a ética tenham um mesmo significado. Cada um de nós é uma sutura que pede atenção por parte dos outros. E ocorre uma prioridade da sutura que é o outro em relação à sutura que sou eu mesmo».⁴⁵

A metafísica do ajuntamento de Esquirol mostra-nos como devemos resistir à desintegração que a pandemia ameaça provocar: não devemos ceder à tentação do isolamento, como se o simples afastamento do outro pudesse curar. Sabemos agora que não é assim. O confinamento pode travar a transmissão da doença, mas as sequelas são desastrosas. O confinamento mantém o vírus à distância, mas, por outro lado, fragiliza a sutura que é o ser humano e sem a qual ele está condenado à desintegração. Resistir em tempos de pandemia só pode significar fortalecer a nossa humanidade, o que acontece quando nos dispomos a amparar o outro na sua fragilidade. Tal não significa, evidentemente, ignorar as regras de distanciamento social, que podem ser, também elas, uma expressão de cuidado para com o outro. Ao mesmo tempo, resistir não é compatível com a resignação de considerar o outro simplesmente como uma ameaça que me desvincula da obrigação de o acolher e amparar. Neste sentido, precisamos de ser criativos para encontrarmos formas de cuidado e atenção que não impliquem formas de contacto físico que ponham em perigo a saúde e a integridade dos outros.

Conclusão

Este artigo pode parecer demasiado ousado. E talvez seja. Atrevemo-nos a imaginar o que Esquirol poderia ter escrito sobre a pandemia, a partir do seu próprio pensamento. Na primeira parte,

humano-es-el-de-cuidarnos.html

44. Esquirol, *A Resistência Íntima*, 150.

45. *Ibid.* 149.

mostramos como o atual contexto pandémico parece corroborar aspetos centrais da filosofia da proximidade, nomeadamente a fragilidade da condição humana e a crítica do cientismo. Na segunda parte, mostramos como a abordagem de Esquirol nos pode ensinar a «resistir» em tempos de pandemia. Foram três os aspetos sublinhados: regressar a casa e cultivar o jardim; o poder curativo da quotidianidade; e, ainda, o imperativo de cuidarmos e ampararmos a fragilidade uns dos outros. Estes três aspetos não esgotam a análise. Poderíamos ter-nos apropriado, também, do apelo que o autor faz a não cedermos ao dogmatismo da atualidade que, nos dias que correm, exerce uma formidável pressão sobre todos nós. Em todo o caso, não era o objetivo deste artigo fazer um levantamento exaustivo da forma como a abordagem filosófica de Esquirol poderia ser aplicada ao atual contexto de pandemia.

Em jeito de conclusão, um último comentário. Nancy e Esquirol referem-se ambos, nas suas mais recentes obras, à expressão nietzschiana «humano demasiado humano». Para Nancy, a pandemia é simplesmente uma manifestação da precariedade da vida humana, e não um castigo infligido pelos deuses, como outrora se pensava. Em vez de serem exógenos às sociedades humanas, os vírus são hoje, em grande parte, compreendidos como sendo endógenos, isto é, o produto dos nossos modos de vida, do nosso ordenamento político, do nosso sistema económico... Para Nancy, o que antes se considerava ser uma manifestação de um poder divino, tornou-se simplesmente «humano, demasiado humano». E, por isso, a forma como enfrentamos o vírus será sempre precária, ou seja, simplesmente humana, demasiado humana. Esquirol não estaria em desacordo com esta perspetiva, mas o seu tom soaria certamente mais esperançoso e a sua abordagem seria provavelmente mais construtiva do que desconstrutiva. Esquirol procuraria corrigir a expressão de Nietzsche, substituindo-a por «mais humano», não fosse a fragilidade o lugar da comunhão entre pessoas diferentes; comunhão a partir da qual um dinamismo crescente de vida poderá sempre surgir. É desse dinamismo que precisamos, sobretudo hoje, nestes tempos de crise que atravessamos.

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Justiça e Desafios Políticos da Pandemia
Justice and Political Challenges of the Pandemic

Democracy and Borderline Cases: Covid-19 Emergency

ENRICA CARAFFINI *

Abstract

Since the primary mode of Covid transmission is person-to-person contact both through respiratory droplets produced by sneezing, breathing, coughing and direct contact with an infecting subject or indirect through hand-mediated transfer of the virus, governments had to limit the contact between individuals to reduce the risk of coronavirus infection. The effect has been a drastic reduction of human interactions, as these were “cut to the bone”. The strict rules the world population has been following, have brought about an urgent debate on the behaviour and regulations that governments have embraced. Fundamental questions about democracy and social theory have been raised by scholars and theorists seeking for a possible answer about why, how and whether the Covid-19 emergency has caused a transformation in a society and, if it is so which are the effects and where are we heading. The paper will be divided in two sections: the former is focused on different perspectives on the impact of Covid-19 and aims to understand whether a western democracy can handle a borderline case like this, or does it have to develop into some other social system. The latter section will focus on what the Covid emergency has been causing in a society and how governments have decided to control and face this situation.

Keywords: Covid-19, democracy, pandemic, political philosophy.

Introduction

In every emergency, society shows the authentic nature of itself, all its strengths and weaknesses. During the current Covid-19 pandemic, the image of the society has changed in because of the harsh and terrible effects that this illness has brought all over the world. Agencies, industries, institutions, schools and every other workplace had to face this virus and find new possible ways to reduce the risk of infection between individuals. From March 2020, all countries all over the world have been living in a state of emergency caused by a virus which spread from China, from Wuhan to the West infecting millions and millions of people, deeply affecting the global economy. All these events have affected not only the economy, but

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also governments and political and public spheres. «Ali Weiwei's macabre deception of Wuhan in March 2020 [...] sees the pandemic as a symptom of a deeper illness that is social and political». Weiwei's statement is the core of this paper, is democracy infected? And due to this fact is it facing a mutation?

Societies from all over the world, found themselves in difficulties forcing them to confront the problem of how protect their citizens in a pandemic like Covid-19, questioning assumptions about human security. Which kind of emergency regulations needed to be enforced, without damaging citizens reducing their life activities? Mostly western democracies have been keeping in mind two fundamental concepts: *human dignity and human security*. They did not collide these two primary principles into one. The asked how strict can the emergency rules be, quickly enacted. Now we must ask has the democratic system mutated into something else and thus, are we still in a democracy?

Many philosophers, theorists and scholars have felt the need to critically analyze the unique circumstances in which all the world has found itself since early 2019. The Covid-19 pandemic presents a fertile ground pursuing an interesting debate on social and political thoughts including the nature and limits of ethical responsibility of the state, personal liberty and collective interests, human dignity and state surveillance.

Emergencies are singular and extraordinary events, situations of extreme vulnerability like wars or medical emergencies, which can be called and set into a *border case scenario*. Border cases are extreme situations in which a system might find itself. These situations, depending on how severe they are, could have a strong impact generating notable consequences in political systems. Therefore, governments found themselves thrown into a rush of events that they had to manage as fast as they could to limit the damage. Border cases are battlefields where *moral dilemmas* line up, discussing fundamental questions on social and political theory that come to light; Coronavirus pandemic is a clear example of a *boarder case*.

The Covid-19 is a disease easily transmitted from person-to-person contact both through respiratory droplets produced by sneezing, breathing, coughing and direct contact with an infecting subject and indirectly through hand-mediated transfer of the virus. Governments from all over the world trying to reduce the risk of coronavirus infection have decided to limit social contact, putting interrelationships under severe regulation. The effect has led to a drastic reduction in human interactions. This limitation has been regulated by strict rules of social behaving aiming to reduce the circulation of people and cut down the infection.

This pandemic has brought about several questions in political philosophy bringing back to light the Foucault's writings on biopolitical securitization. Various philosophers from different parts of the world have felt the need to *think about pandemic*. In this article I will focus my attention on three philosophers who have analyzed this state of exception questioning whether this situation has been leading us to a new reality and if it is so, which changes this border case has determined.

The aim of the paper is to understand whether and how the current global situation has influenced the political system and if it is so which changes have been brought about. To develop this research, I have chosen three main philosophers: Giorgio Agamben¹, Bernard-Henry Lévy², Slavoj Žižek³ who have experienced the dramatic pandemic from different western countries, analyzing the situation and pointing out different perspectives on where western democracies are heading, asking themselves whether a mutation has been happening in the political system and if Covid-19 has infected societies and governments too.

I will divide the research into two sections. In the first one, I will demonstrate different perspectives on the relationship between Covid-19 and democracy analyzed mainly by Agamben, Lévy and Žižek, while in the second and last section, I will focus my attention on where the democracy is going and I will try to give the answer on whether a democracy can remain unchanged, or changing into a lame duck defeated and weakunable to manage ordinary situations.

1. Is democracy infected?

In all centuries, virus and pandemics have brought about deep and significant social effects and changes and the first character which faces a strong mutation is the society itself. Society goes through a notable alteration due to the fact of sudden loss of people.

To provide and reduce the impact of such situation, governments must decide which path to follow, which rules need to be enacted and how strict and coercive they might or should be.

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1. Giorgio Agamben, *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica* (Milano: Quodlibet, Milano, 2020).
 2. Bernard-Henri Lévy, *Il virus che rende folli* (Milano: La nave di Teseo, 2020).
 3. Slavoj Žižek, *Virus* (Milano: Adriano Salani Editore, 2020).

Covid-19 pandemic has led all the world to act quickly, giving concrete and practical answer to defeat such an invisible enemy. Starting from the fact that the primary mode of Covid transmission is person-to-person contact both through respiratory droplets produced by sneezing, breathing, coughing and direct contact with an infecting subject or indirectly through hand-mediated transfer of the virus, governments from all over the world had to reduce the risk of coronavirus infection, limiting the contact between individuals, putting interrelationships under severe regulation. The effect has led to a drastic reduction of human interactions.

The limitation of human interactions caused significant effects in the various social spheres and governments have had to be fast to enact new regulations considering the emergency. From March 2020, several European countries have made the hard choice to enforce a strict containment to limit the spread of the coronavirus.

The strict rules, enforced by western democracies, have had important negative consequences on both social and economic spheres. These consequences have been discussed in terms of moral and political philosophy attracting the attention of various philosophers and theorists.

In this section, I will look at the current pandemic through the lens of three philosophers. I will show three different approaches on the relationship between Coronavirus pandemic and democratic societies. I will analyze how western democratic governments have been facing the so-called state of emergency and to defeat this situation, they had to accept compromises and I ask if these latter have jeopardized the democratic foundation themselves.

From the beginning Covid-19 has been testing political systems all over the world and these have been trying to respond showing both their strengths and their weaknesses.

Coronavirus has been causing huge social difficulties in countries all over the world. Governments have had to face this enemy and try to find solutions to limit and avoid serious effects. As the number of deaths has risen, societies have applied a Foucauldian health policy, marking the emergence of the disciplined society.

Societies, in particular western democracies, have found themselves questioning how they should react to this state of emergency, always considering those fundamental principles which western democracies are based on. What has been happening in western democracies is that governments have had to bring in new laws whose aim was to limit and reduce the tragic effects that Covid-19 has been causing. The political effect has led to a strong and strict enforcement due to the social confinement policy to defeat this

invisible enemy. Before this current pandemic, these confinement measures would have been unthinkable to enact outside war times⁴.

Three important philosophers such as the Italian Giorgio Agamben, the French Bernard-Henry Lévy and the Slovenian Slavoj Žižek have given their critical response to the current pandemic. I have chosen these three authors due to the fact of the *fil rouge* that, I shall say, connect their analysis concerning the political and ethical responsibility of the state under Covid-19.

I will start focusing on Agamben, then Lévy and last, but not least, Žižek. All three have highlighted different aspects of how societies have responded to the pandemic and which kind of implications and consequences we might face in the future of our societies.

Since March 2020, Giorgio Agamben has been sharing his analysis first in newspapers and later in a book called *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica* revoking Michel Foucault's studies on *Discipline and Punish* and *The Birth of Biopolitics*. For Agamben what western democracies are exposed is to a new direction of governance whose aim is to protect and guarantee health care, or better to protect people from death. Society has changed giving strong importance to the safety of its citizen stressing the fact that this choice was taken as a question not only of human security but also of human dignity. But what is important and has attracted the attention of several scholars and theorists is how and which approach has been taken to guarantee all of these needs. For Agamben, what happened was pretty similar to the description that Michel Foucault in his studies on discipline and central power highlighting the strict measures embraced in the seventeenth century to defeat the plague. Foucault introduces his notable concept of panopticism, a discussion of a disciplinary mechanism, a strict confinement, created and adopted in the XVII century to control the pestilence⁵. Giorgio Agamben revokes Michel Foucault and compares the

4. Daminen Bol, Marco Giani, André Blais and Peter John Loewen, "The effect of Covid-19 lockdowns on political support: Social good news for democracy?" *European Journal of Political Research* 60, no. 2 (May/2021): 498.

5. «The following, according to an order published at the end of the seventeenth century, were the measures to be taken when the plague appeared in town. First, a strict spatial partitioning: the closing of the town and its outlying districts, a prohibition to leave the town on pain of death, the killing of all stray animals; the division of the town into district quarters, each governed by an intendant» Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, Sergio Benvenuto, "Coronavirus and philosophers," *European Journal of Psychoanalysis*, <https://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/coronavirus-and-philosophers/>. Agamben was right to see a similarity between the ordinances in the

enforcement of laws that Foucault describes in *Discipline and Punish* and the strict confinement adopted during Covid-19, the so-called lockdown, and all limitations that have been enacted by the government since 2019.

In the modern era, social power has been crucially transformed. From the XVII century, governments have started thinking about a positive procedure guaranteeing and protecting the citizens' life. The concept of life, of being aware of defending people's lives by adopting and enacting securitarian laws has led to a social system based on *biopolitics*. Governmental authority has broken into human life and its aim has been to seek and protect people from death.

The biopolitics involved in the control of human life and this current situation, is a clear example of Foucault's biopolitics. We are going in the direction of a new order of governance called *state of exception*, *stato d'eccezione*⁶.

«Agamben on Biopolitical Securitization and State of Exception. From the perspective of political philosophy, current developments point in the direction of a new order of governance close to what the Italian philosopher, Giorgio Agamben, calls a permanent state of exception»⁷. This approach is a *Foucauldian* one⁸.

According to the Italian philosopher, «the Foucauldian theme of biopolitical securitization has been taken up [...] in the context of state of emergency and has led to an interesting debate»⁹. From the beginning of his work, Agamben wants to point out the connection between politics and epidemic¹⁰. The word epidemic derives from the Greek word *demos*,

XVII century and the Covid-19 restriction. What happened in Italy was similar to what Foucault describes in *Discipline and Punish*. During the months of the strict lockdown, towns and cities were divided in quarters and districts and a citizen could not enter into another part of the town unless he/she had a particular need for work, etc.... The plague or the current pandemic could and can be guidelines of the establishment of a discipline society. These are two border cases, two ways «of exercising power over men, of controlling their relations, of separating out their dangerous mixtures. [...] The plague is the trial in the course of which one may define ideally the exercise of disciplinary power». Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, Sergio Benvenuto, «Coronavirus and philosophers,” *European Journal of Psychoanalysis*, <https://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/coronavirus-and-philosophers/>.

6. Agamben, *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica*, 13-78.
7. Gerard Delanty, “Six political philosophies in search of a virus. Critical perspective on coronavirus pandemic.” LEQS paper, no. 156 (May 2020), <https://www.lse.ac.uk/european-institute/Assets/Documents/LEQS-Discussion-Papers/LEQSPaper156.pdf>.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Agamben, *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica*, 62.

the people as political entity. Thus, pandemic is strictly connected with the politics itself. According to Agamben, this epidemic has become a piece of the politics layout, a part of the political battle field. In other words, I shall say that according to the author, democracy has been and is undergoing a transformation, turning into a *biopolitical securitization regime*. This regime may have transformed even the democratic standards¹¹. «For Agamben, the use of a state of exception as a normal paradigm for government is deeply worrying. It leads to the militarization of the polity and indefinite extension of the state of exception»¹².

Giorgio Agamben describes the western democracies as states of exceptions, which have been turning into discipline societies in which the surveillance is strictly administered by the state.

Another perspective on the current pandemic is shown by Bernard-Henry Lévy in his *Il virus che rende folli*. The French philosopher reflects not only on governments and how they have tried to manage this unique situation, but also on the individuals, main characters of the pandemic.

Firstly, Lévy wants to analyze how societies have spread the news of the coming of the emergency. What happened was a notable and strong stress on the data and how many victims were being killed by the new infection that the world was facing for the first time. The way of communication that societies have chosen has been both very direct and vague. Lots of data and statistical surveys were made and spread all over the world to testify with numbers what was happening. The immediate reaction of these numbers of deaths without any collocation and further information was generating fear and anxiety all over the social communities. People have been living in a paralyzed society, infected by the *fear* epidemic.

Emotions are very difficult to control, and governments know well that they can make people act frantically like being in the throes of madness. This latter is the core of the Lévy's reflection.

This virus is not just a virus which spreads through droplets carried in the air and the touching of contaminated surfaces and brings shortness of breath and difficulty in breathing, but also it brings the human being to a situation of panic and vagueness which causes suffering and isolation. According to Lévy, strict rules which regulate social distancing have changed the social contract at the foundation of democracy. The social

11. Ibid., 83.

12. Delanty, G, "Six political philosophies in search of a virus. Critical perspective on coronavirus pandemic."

contract is no more social but is now *vital*. It seems that individuals are so attached to life that they could lose everything but not their lives¹³. Citizens have decided to renounce liberty in exchange for an anti-virus security. For the French philosopher, such behavior is close to insanity. This act, this submission has shown how attached to life we are, as we have denied even ourselves, our human entity to survive. «Stay home, save lives»¹⁴ is the *mantra* that individuals repeat to themselves. «[S]ettle for a cheap life, woven on thread of absence, hygiene and fear of oneself and others»¹⁵ and I shall say “where we are going to?”.

The last, but not least, philosopher I want to discuss is Slavoy Žižek and his reflection on Covid-19. His analysis can be said to reflect a *left-wing* postmodernism, offering a diametrically opposed reaction to Agamben and Lévy.

Žižek in his work *Pandemic! Covid-19 shakes the world* wants to respond to Agamben’s emphasis on biopolitical subjection. According to Žižek, the current emergency state shows a social disease, the virus of capitalism. «The current crisis is a call to free ourselves from the tyranny of the market»¹⁶. The crisis is real, and we are into it. It is generating social struggle and is a potential turning point between barbarism and communism»¹⁷. This critical condition is a social construction and it is a decisive movement between freedom and authoritarianism.

This situation is seen by Žižek as a fertile ground of opportunity for the reinvention of communism; «barbarism or some form of reinvented communism»¹⁸. Žižek does not totally disagree with Agamben’s point of view, but his final opinion is more optimistic. According to Žižek Covid pandemic has unified countries and people under a global issue creating new bonds of solidarity. Although the nature of the virus seems to separate, isolate Žižek sees hidden developments signs of an alternative political order based on solidarity. The vision offered can be placed in post-capitalistic futures which are based on an antithesis between *barbarism* and *communism*.

13. Lévy, *Il virus che rende folli*, 84.

14. *Ibid.*, 87.

15. *Ibid.*, 87.

16. Delanty, “Six political philosophies in search of a virus. Critical perspective on coronavirus pandemic.”

17. Sylvia Walby, “The Covid pandemic and social theory: Social democracy and public health in the crisis,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 24, no. 1 (2021): 34.

18. Žižek, *Virus*, 72.

It seems under Žižek's interpretation of the current predicament that the world is going through a possible and strong change. The pandemic has been having a strong impact on the social frame, placing seeds of a radical transformation. Žižek shows a positive force, a desire of survival, a human cry from all the countries which determines a strong connection, a bond, a *reinvented communism*.

2. A Border Case: Covid-19 and Democratic Political Systems

After I have showed three different approaches I want to highlight that it is true that something is changing in western political systems. From March 2020, we are all facing, as citizens and individuals, a border case that only science fiction and post-apocalyptic novelists might have thought of. «Covid poses challenges in how social theory addresses the alternative form of society. Covid generates a crisis, it potentially generates a time of a rapid change»¹⁹.

In this section, I will focus my attention on where democracy is going and I will try to answer whether democracy can remain unchanged, without any exposure and defeat and manage not ordinary situations, a *border case*.

The following words by Gerard Delanty underline the core of the research:

[t]he implication of perpetual lockdowns [...] go beyond the concerns of libertarians with personal liberty, for they go to the core of democracy [...]. Democracy however understood is based on the centrality of the public and deliberation and cannot fare well in pandemic situation with emergency government the order of the day²⁰.

Several thinkers have examined this current time wondering on how society has been responding in the state of emergency. Central to the debate was the relationship between science and politics, in particular health emergency and democracy. The debate about alternative forms of society is flourishing. The main object, at the core of the paper, has been and is how strong the pandemic impact was on democratic systems and how we under-

19. Walby, "The Covid pandemic and social theory: Social democracy and public health in the crisis" in «European Journal of Social Theory», 25.

20. Delanty, "Six political philosophies in search of a virus. Critical perspective on coronavirus pandemic."

stand the potential and consequent changes, specifying possible alternatives. The three philosophers that I have chosen to represent three notable and different perspectives have describe their understanding and interpretation of the state intervention. Moreover, they have questioned themselves on whether we are living in a mutation of regimes: varieties of capitalism, of authoritarianism, and as Žižek affirms the crisis will lead to barbarism or communism. «The main line of disagreement is between a libertarian focus on individual freedoms and a statist focus on authoritarian»²¹.

What lead us to think of a possible mutation into an authoritarian society is given by the strong and coercive confinement imposed by democratic order. It might seem that democracies are capable of hiding their fundamental values and turn into something diametrical opposite of it. «[T]he state has been widely seen as impotent in the face of globalization. The pandemic underscores this, but we have seen the fact that the state now holds near total control over populations thanks to the virus [...]. It thus presents the perfect opportunity for a new kind of securitization, bio-security»²².

What Agamben tragically highlights with a unique claim is that «a society that lives in a permanent state of emergency cannot be a free one. We effectively live in a society that has scarified freedom to so-called ‘security reasons’ and as a consequence has condemned itself to living in a permanent state of fear and insecurity»²³.

During this time and under this strict confinement not many individuals have protested and organized demonstrations. It seems that people are prepared to «sacrifice practically everything – normal living condition, social relations, work, even friendship [...] to avoid the danger of falling ill. The *naked life*, and the fear of losing it, is not something that brings men and women together, but something that blinds and separates them»²⁴. This perspective is diametrically opposite from Žižek’s.

Žižek affirms that Covid-19 pandemic has not separated people from each other, but thanks to this emergency, we are facing the same tremendous event sensing a feeling of cohesion and support. These might be the prerequisites of a new political system based on a communitarian and support sentiment. According to the Slovenian philosopher, this might

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.; Agamben, *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica*, 51.

24. Ibid.; Agamben, *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica*, 53-57.

lead to a new communistic society²⁵. «The state of emergencies will come to an end, we can assume, but these technologies will continue and state surveillance will also be given a tremendous boost by the current crisis. But what is the alternative?»²⁶ Could the Covid-19 pandemic open up an alternative social order?

This surveillance administered by the state has implication for social distancing. The limitation of human interaction has brought about many social and political consequences defining a *new kind of social order*, as Agamben argues. «The current health emergency can be considered as the laboratory in which the new political and social devices that await humanity are prepared»²⁷. Agamben's perspective shows us that we are witnesses to an anti-liberal and anti-democratic social life; «the social bond is itself the danger»²⁸.

Although there seems to be a consensus that such policies are the most effective means to reduce the incidence of coronavirus «they also strongly reduce civil liberties, erode social capital and bring about economic insecurity. Hence, whether and how lockdowns affect political attitudes is far from being trivial»²⁹. Covid-19 pandemic puts an unprecedented and unbelievable challenge to established democracies. Governments have faced huge loss of citizens, enforcing strict regulation to reduce and limit possible catastrophes. «Lockdowns are defined as nationwide and strictly enforced social confinement, i.e. citizens are forced [...] to stay home unless they have a valid reason to travel»³⁰.

In order to fight the pandemic, western democracies are deploying the policy logic that has led to the current predicament and how have they responded?

To recall, neoliberalism rests on three pillars: 1) public authority's offloading social responsibility to individuals and their communities, often in the name of democracy; 2) governments' adoption of economic rationality as political

25. Žižek, *Virus*, 72.

26. Delanty, "Six political philosophies in search of a virus. Critical perspective on coronavirus pandemic."

27. *Ibid.*, 10.

28. *Ibid.*, 10.

29. Daminen Bol, Marco Giani, André Blais and Peter John Loewen, "The effect of Covid-19 lockdowns on political support: Social good news for democracy?," 498.

30. *Ibid.*, 500.

common-sense; 3) the use of law enforcement measures to uphold order in precaritized, disintegrating society³¹.

Enduring effects exerted by Covid-19 exposure are subjective economic threats in support for anti-democratic political systems. The existential threats related to the Covid-19 pandemic have led to political consequences, undermining people's support for democracy. «Could it be that Covid-19 is putting an end to the metacrisis of democratic capitalism and opening a path for radical mobilization capable of pressing for systemic change?»³². Anti-democratic political system can be used as a source of compensatory control over a threatening and uncontrollable world, particularly after the perceived failure of democratic institutions in managing the pandemic.³³

The Covid-19 pandemic border case offers a further proof of the fragility of democracy and its inability to ensure a strict security plan. The emergency challenge has shown that large-scale pandemics can jeopardize support for democratic institutions and systems. From the beginning of the pandemic, a crisis has begun to emerge in the ability to govern processes, to act with and in emergencies. Western democracies and beyond, have found themselves faced with an emergency situation that has been very complicated to manage. Governments have often had to do without the legislative power, giving immediate orders and making use only of the executive power of enacting restrictive laws and regulations for health safety. What we have been experiencing is a health emergency which has been showing how governments have not invested in research and in the health institution of the country.

Conclusion

Covid-19 pandemic has already attracted the attention of several noted philosophers. It has raised fundamental philosophical questions concerning the political and ethical responsibility of the state. The way we look at these questions is very much influenced by philosophical positions,

31. Albenaz Azmanova, "Viral Insurgences: Can Capitalism Survive Covid?," *Theory and Event* 23, no. 4 (October/2020): 100.

32. *Ibid.*, 101.

33. Michele Roccato, Silvia Russo, Pasquale Colloca and Nicoletta Cavazza, "The Lasting Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Support for Anti-Democratic Political Systems: A Six-Months Longitudinal Study," *Social Science Quarterly*, (2021): 2198.

since in many cases philosophical ideas have shaped the politics of the pandemic. I have decided to take as an example three important European philosophers: the Italian Giorgio Agamben, the Frenchman Bernard-Henry Lévy and the Slovenian Slavoj Žižek. Thanks to their different perspectives on Covid-19 pandemic, I have drawn a path in which my aim was to point out how the social state has been infected in Covid-19 too and how it has responded to defeat the disease. Although these are singular reflections, I have noted a *fil rouge* that keeps together the different opinions of Giorgio Agamben, Bernard-Henri Lévy and Slavoj Žižek. This helped me to give the first answer to the questions at the core of the article – has the current pandemic had an impact on western democracies? The answer is affirmative. Something is changing, societies have been changing to defeat the invisible enemy. All of them are evoking concepts concerning medical health, crisis but also and most important alternative forms of society.

The Covid-19 pandemic, one of the largest exogenous shock of the century, poses an inherently global existential threat with no delimited enemy. Previous research shows that dramatic events such as pandemics can undermine social order, sparking fear, stigma, and large-scale calls to action. However, they can also inspire acts of unity, compassion and solidarity. These contrasting results are not difficult to reconcile, as we can consider pandemics as exogenous shocks with potentially destabilizing consequences for the status quo. The Covid-19 pandemic has stimulated a stream of studies analyzing its individual and social consequences, mainly, if not exclusively, focusing on its short-term effects. To our knowledge, generalized results in the medium term are still scant³⁴.

Coronavirus is more than just a pathogen threat for human beings, it is also a danger for societies and governments. It is hard to admit that we are now in the suspension of democracy, but what I shall affirm is that we are facing a border case which has been putting western societies to the test and governments have been trying to answer by reducing the emergency. What happened was that due to the fact of an extremely high chance of infection, the first solution was to limit people's movements, enacting strict rules and forcing people to stay home. This limitation of individual liberty puts a strain on the foundations of democracy, main defender of human rights and dignity. Governments have acquired technocratic power over their populations following these enactments, without realizing the discipline described by Foucault. I think Agamben,

34. Ibid., 8.

besides this dramatic response of Covid pandemic, is right by saying that democracy has changed the main goal. What is necessary to achieve is the safety for all the beings, not only guaranteeing something called liberty.

In this article I tried to understand what the causes of an evident weakness of the democratic system are and finally ask myself if democracy can exist in emergency situations such as this one of Covid-19, or if the political system can no longer be called such democracy and is undergoing internal changes tending towards a form of sanitary authoritarianism.

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Pandemic Capital or “The New Gravity”

AGOSTINO CERA*

Abstract

This paper aims to highlight a latent evidence emerging from the pandemic phenomenon: *Pandemic Capital*. By this formula I mean a process of *naturalization* in regards to the equivalence between the right of a commercial enterprise to profit from its activity and the right of people to protect their own health, or, better, *the right to maximize profit* as new *aspirant fundamental right*. This naturalization becomes particularly clear in relation to the question of vaccine patents. The distinction between just (legitimate) profit and maximum profit equates to an updated version of the classic dilemma between *nomos* (law) and *dike* (justice), which in Sophocle’s *Antigone* takes the form of a clash between Kreon and Antigone. Faced with the risk of a legal nihilism, we need to (re)establish a hierarchy of rights that is up to par with our times, namely we must *re-contractualize the social contract*. To overcome the challenges of a globalized world/pandemic society, we need the neo-contractualism of a social contract that includes a “natural contract” as well. The latter is strictly related to the question of an *Open Access Knowledge* as new common good. Knowledge also means power, and as such demands responsibility, particularly from scientists and intellectuals. The idea of a human responsibility – or better, “*fraternal responsibility*” – could therefore represent the basis for a new alliance between *nomos* and *dike* for the sake of the *polis*.


Keywords: just and legal, open access, responsibility, SARS-CoV-2, social contract, vaccine.

Introduction¹

Last April (i.e. April 2020) a friend of mine asked me if I had read a well-known philosopher’s thoughts on the pandemic.² With ostentatious skepticism, I told him that I distrust philosophical thought

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1. On May 5, just I was concluding this paper, I learned that U.S. President Joe Biden had agreed to suspend all patents and other intellectual property related to COVID-19 drugs, vaccines and diagnostics, following a proposal made to the WTO last October by India and South Africa. This is the official declaration as given by U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai: “The administration believes strongly in intellectual property protections, but in service of ending this pandemic, supports the waiver of those protections for Covid-19 vaccines”. Despite Europe’s ongoing lack of enthusiasm for the idea, this is undoubtedly good news; however, it doesn’t make the argument I have tried to develop in the following pages any less timely or urgent.
2. I can now “confess” that the “well-known philosopher” was Giorgio Agamben and

on principle when it tries to make a hermeneutic of ongoing phenomena. Even first-class thinkers have been led astray by such attempts, I added, thinkers I've always trusted as I seek to decipher the current *Zeitgeist*. I mean *Zeitgeist's* groundwork, that is not its epidermal – though flashy – manifestations. To me, the reflections of Günther Anders on jazz and television, and those of Jacques Ellul on the computer – outdated or naïve at the very least – are clear warnings for an overly nonchalant, self-confident philosophy. And if those two failed, it doesn't look so good for me. After laying out these arguments to my friend, I concluded by saying that I wouldn't read that paper on the pandemic, and that I would never try anything of the sort. One year later, however, the following pages are my fifth “philosophical confrontation” with the pandemic phenomenon.³ And, what's worse, I am seriously thinking of writing a little book on the topic. I even have a possible title in mind: *Pandemic Thoughts*.

For reasons of intellectual honesty I felt obliged to begin my paper with this confession of incoherence, this admission of my being “human, all too human”. To justify myself – at least partially – all I can say is that the pandemic phenomenon, despite all caution, skepticism and snobbery, has gradually proved to (also) be an extraordinary *theoretical detonator*. That is to say, one of those “objects” (even *hyperobjects*, according to Timothy Morton's definition)⁴ capable of provoking our thought and presenting it with scenarios that, within a “normal” context, would be hardly discernable. The pandemic has acted as a contrast dye capable of revealing a number of latent evidences and forcing us to deal with them. The following pages

those thoughts were the first attempts of what finally became his pandemic book: *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2020). Despite my appreciation for Agamben's work, I do not agree with his approach in this particular case, not even as an intellectual provocation.

3. The first four in chronological order are: Agostino Cera, “L'ideologia del dato. Ermeneutica e pandemia.” In *Le parole e le cose*². *Letteratura e realtà*, June 8, 2020 (<http://www.leparoleelecose.it/?p=38531>); Id., “Il principio de-responsabilità ovvero del lavarsi spesso le mani.” In: *Le parole e le cose*². *Letteratura e realtà*, October 5, 2020 (<http://www.leparoleelecose.it/?p=39413>); Id., “La società pandemica.” In *Laboratorio dell'ISFP (Istituto per la storia del pensiero scientifico e filosofico moderno)*, XVII, no. 19 (2020): 1–18 (<https://doi.org/10.12862/Lab20CRG.>); Id., “The Pandemic Society.” Video presentation at the Conference: *CoCo I: A New Covid-Reality? Philosophy's Voice In and For the Crisis*, January 20 and 21, 2021 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nc5nvbqLaQ>).
4. According to Morton, the basic features of hyperobjects are: *viscosity, nonlocality, temporal undulation, phasing, interobjectivity*. See Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 1.

aim to provide a sketch of one of these latent evidences: what I have called *Pandemic Capital*.

1. Pandemic Capital

Naturalize = to transform the accidental into the necessary, the reversible into the inexorable. To grant possibility (*dynamis*, *possibilitas*, *potentia*) with the character – even the ontological status – of necessity (*ananke*, *necessitas*). To make contingency a destiny.

To the already long list of new experiences that this last, incredible year has forced upon us (almost all of which we would have gladly done without), a concrete, collective and even quotidian experience should be added, especially considering the last few weeks: the level of naturalization reached by the logic of capital. The pandemic event has made us recognize just how ingrained this logic is, not only in our interpretation of the world, but in our perception of it. In the very way we see (look at) reality. We can no longer remove the lens of this logic because we can no longer perceive it as an accessory (optional, circumstantial, reversible...). The lens feels like our own eyes: natural, organic endowments without which we would be incapable of imagining ourselves. Being deprived of this particular perspective would be akin to blindness. The final outcome of this ingrained, crystalized, infected habit corresponds to the definitive legitimization of interpretive approaches and operative priorities that, evaluated from a different perspective (wearing another lens), would appear if not aporetic, then at least problematic and thus in need of discussion, scrutiny, pondering...before their eventual acceptance.

In this respect, the current global emergency context – something we could call *pandemic capital* – offers us the unprecedented spectacle of a full equivalence between the right of a commercial enterprise to profit from its activity and the right of people to protect their own health. Placed within this context, both seem to be perceived in the same manner, namely as “rights”. That is to say: both are legitimate and claimable, and thus worth protecting. The result of this equivalence is that the right to health has to compromise with the right to profit; the former must give something up (with respect to its full claim) so as not to harm the latter. Precisely because both are conceived and “handled” as rights of equal worth and value *de facto*. Neither of which, therefore, can – has the right to – claim priority over the other or presume to be “more right” than the other.

At a closer look, however, what I've just expressed proves to be the superficial, epiphenomenal and, broadly speaking, "urban" formulation of the real matter at hand. Which is the following. The question is not simply about the right of a business to make a profit from its work in the general sense; it is instead about the *updated* formulation of this right, that is of *the right to maximize profit*. The claim to earning all that it is possible to earn from one's work/investment according to market rules. The emerging claim in search of a definitive legitimization is, therefore, "to renounce nothing of what one could gain from one's own work/investment."

More precisely, the new *aspirant fundamental right* (inalienable and inviolable) is the right to not renounce the maximum possible profit a priori. That is to say: "if my investment of 10 could make me 25, why should I ever be happy with 15 or 18 or 20?" In the abstract, this argument seems perfectly adequate, in the sense that it is fully, impeccably *rational*.⁵ However, the point – and eventual problem – of this abstract, pure (i.e. purely theoretical) formulation lies in the fact that it claims validity no matter what, namely even under a condition such as the following: "in order to maximize my profit, in order for my investment of 10 to become 25 rather than 15 or 18 or 20, I must take into account that a certain number of people (perhaps a considerable number) may eventually lose their lives." In today's day and age, such a condition – i.e. such a specific context for the implementation of that abstractly rational principle – does seem to be a consideration, but not to the point that the basic principle is questioned, that the mechanism is obstructed. It therefore follows from this premise that no condition/situation could put the right to maximum possible profit from one's work/investment up for discussion. The pursuit of such a goal will always appear legitimate, unquestionable. An inalienable right, and thus independent from – indifferent to – any context or circumstance. This is the naturalization phenomenon that I am attempting to highlight.

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5. An anthropological note on the fringes of this consideration. The big *players* of the global economy represent the highest embodiments of the anthropological model raved about by the contemporary avant-garde, those at the helm of the ship. (i.e. the elite). I am referring to the model of the *rational agent*. From the perspective of their *modus operandi*, corporations – insofar as they are "actors" (*agents*) – in many ways represent the prototypes of the kind of humanity cherished by this avant-garde. *Corporations* are – that is, act as – what they would ideally like us to be, to become. In our epoch, economics has turned (also) into pedagogy. Given that economics is the new *paideia*, our idea of *Übermensch* as rational agent corresponds to *homo oeconomicus*. If Lermontov wrote his famous novel nowadays, then he should admit that "A hero of our time" is the trader.

As often happens, the naturalization process (the metamorphosis of a contingency into a necessity) culminates in the production of a taboo. In this specific case, what we are dealing with is the taboo of questioning the right to maximize profit, which has by now become a stone guest in the public discourse, both political and mediatic. The magnitude of this phenomenon is demonstrated by the fact that this taboo is held even by those cultural and political environments which, by their very constitution (identity, history, tradition...), are closer to social issues than economic ones. More clearly: in Europe and beyond, even left-wing forces only occasionally (and halfheartedly) risk objecting that, despite the extraordinary emergency context of the pandemic, big pharmaceutical corporations are organizing the production and distribution of their products – of the “vaccine commodity” – according to a purely commercial logic. Starting with the exclusive ownership of patents.⁶ Such a logic was a north star for these corporations as they stipulated the contracts which are gradually revealing themselves to be a straightjacket for the public institutions who signed them. The timidity of the occasional objections coming from social/socialist inspired forces reflects these forces’ sudden insecurity towards the issues and principles that should instead represent their identity, their legacy, the alpha and omega of their action. This means that even intrinsically social forces are beginning to doubt whether there really is anything to debate about such behavior on the part of economic agents. “Corporations act, that is have the right to act, according to their legitimate interests.” And they always possess such a right, regardless of the context in which they act. In other words, they have a legitimate right to ignore the context. Any context. A corporation’s duties and responsibilities rise and fall with the assumption of its business risk. As Milton Friedman already in 1970 affirmed, “the social responsibility of business is to increase its profits.”⁷

It is striking to observe the level of domestication that the logic of capital – under its newest guise of pandemic capital – has reduced us to. The level of naturalization it has achieved. Profit – that is its maximization

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6. To my knowledge, until now the only two official attempts to question the intellectual propriety of the vaccines are the COVAX Program (led by WHO – <https://www.who.int/initiatives/act-accelerator/covax>), which buys vaccines for poor countries, and the proposal for a patent suspension put forward to the WTO by South Africa and India last October.
 7. See Milton Friedman, “The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits.” In Walther Ch. Zimmerli, Klaus Richter, Markus Holzinger (eds), *Corporate Ethics and Corporate Governance* (Berlin, Heidelberg, New York: Springer 2007), 173–78.

– has become a sort of *analogon of gravity* as we currently perceive it: something inexorable, indisputable, inevitable. A scenario devoid of alternatives. A destiny that, as such, should simply be accepted. As we are seeing, the idea that the right to intellectual property, or the exclusivity of a patent and its “use”, could, in exceptional circumstances, be questioned (limited or even suspended), has become a taboo. A true interdict, which therefore makes a claim to validity even when the health of millions of people depends on the overcoming of such an aspirant inalienable right, when the return to a “normal” life for all of humanity depends on the infraction of such an occult taboo/interdict. As a result, this aspirant human right proves to be built on an inhuman foundation.

On the other hand, this state of things – the establishment of a brand-new common sense – is not accidental, but rather the outcome of a long-term, consciously devised and consistent legislative path which accompanies and supports (i.e. implements) the logic of capital by transforming it into something obvious. Into an epochal givenness. That is to say, by naturalizing it. I am referring to the path that starts with the *Statute of Anne* or *Copyright Act* of 1709-1710 (the birth of copyright) and passes to *The Patent and Trademark Law Amendments Act* or *Bayh-Dole Act* of 1980 (which granted the right to use and commercialize the inventions made by public funding to Universities and non-profit organizations); the TRIPS Agreement (*The Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights*) of 1995 (a legal agreement between all WTO members that establishes minimum standards for the regulation of intellectual property); all the way up to the *Digital Millennium Copyright Act* (DMCA) of 1998, better known as the *Sonny Bono Act* or *Mickey Mouse Protection Act*.⁸ The so-called Open Access Culture has been dealing with these problems and challenges for years, struggling to find the most just/equal (i.e. human) solution for them. I believe that, beyond the methods and solutions themselves, we should at least pay attention to the questions/issues raised by such a culture. As the pandemic is showing, these questions/issues will become more and more urgent within a globalized world, affecting our lives in an increasingly direct way.

Given these considerations, I would like to confirm what I consider to be the focal point of the matter, which does not have to do with the right of

8. For this legislative information, of which I was completely unaware, I am very grateful to Sandro Luce. He had already emphasized this implication of the pandemic phenomenon last June (see Sandro Luce, “La conoscenza ai tempi del Covid19”. In *La Fionda*, June 20, 2020 <https://www.lafionda.org/2020/06/10/la-conoscenza-ai-tempi-del-covid19/>).

so-called *big pharma* to earn from its discoveries or investments. Not only is that right left untouched, it is not even questioned by the current debate or common sense (in this case we are well beyond taboo and interdict). Once the pandemic emergency is overcome and vaccinations become annual and routine, these companies will have a way to earn “adequately” from the sale of their products. After all, even the eventual waiving of the patent, which would allow other industries or institutions to use it (I mean state institutions, or at least on the State’s behalf, and exclusively for public benefit), would not affect the right of these companies to profit. It would only affect the maximization of profit. It goes without saying, in fact, that the waiving of the patent would imply a compensation in royalties, or something similar. This would be an “equitable” figure that the public pays to the private, hopefully in a unitary, unanimous fashion, namely by way of global institutions (such as the UN and WHO), who would finally have the opportunity to be incisive and useful. Such a compensation would indeed enable them to profit, though that profit would be subordinated to the superior good/right of the people’s right to health (in this case: a quick vaccination). Hence its equitableness.

What the corporations don’t want to allow, and what the States – and, ultimately, public opinion itself – aren’t so willing to push for is the renunciation of the speculative variable (or at least its temporary putting aside), that is the logic by which a corporation’s profit must only and always respond to market factors. To this end, according to this logic, the corporation can use the tool of speculation, understood as the exploitation – and even the “construction” – of the best contextual conditions (i.e. the growth of demand) in order to increase profit. In other words, we are talking about the artificial generation of need, that is of scarcity, which produces a *planned pauperism*.

Expressed in a formula, the fundamental question has to do with the *distinction between just (legitimate) profit and maximum profit*. That is to say: whether the current logic of capital still provides for such a distinction or whether it has been completely surpassed; whether, from said logic’s perspective, “just profit” can be anything but “the maximum possible profit.” Or, better still, the question is whether this perspective has spread, pandemically, to the point of having infected and colonized all the others. To the point of having eliminated any possible alternative, thus becoming the new common sense. In other words, we need to establish if an expression like “business ethics” equates to an oxymoron (*a contradictio in adiecto*) or can have a real/concrete meaning.

2. Between *nomos* and *dike*

I am well aware of the enormous topic that such questions recall: the eternal dilemma between “just” and “legal”. This question has to do with humanity itself, with the idea of human being as *zoon politikon*. The archetypical *polemos* between *nomos* (law) and *dike* (justice) is at the heart of timeless works such as Sophocle’s *Antigone*, where it appears as a clash between Kreon – who thinks that “There is no greater evil than lack of rule (*anarkia*)”⁹ – and Antigone, who claims that if the transgression of the law were to equate to a “holy crime”, she would be happy to die in the name of such an act.¹⁰ The very idea of the Rule of Law is based on the overcoming of the Gigantomachy between *nomos* and *dike* (permanently at risk of becoming a dangerous confusion or a dialogue of the deaf), on the renunciation of the utopia of a so-called absolute justice in favor of a more realistic, formal justice (legality).

Over the course of human history, the appeal – more or less instrumental – to a superior/absolute justice has often served – and still serves – as a justification for the setting aside of rights and the introduction of illiberal, despotic, totalitarian methods. In the name of Justice some of the worst injustices have been committed. While aware of this, I believe that in certain objectively exceptional circumstances it becomes necessary to question whether the legal truly does correspond to the just or at least whether the legal is functional to the principle of the just, whether its goal is to move closer to this principle. To pose that question becomes a duty whenever the formally correct proves to be clearly (offensively) not enough, whenever the merely legitimate can no longer satisfy. Because in such cases the legal is unequivocally unjust. In the intertwining of law and justice lies the intertwining of politics and ethics as well.

As said, I don’t want to invoke a vague, dangerous, completely extra-legislative “sense (or even feeling) of justice”. I’m concerned about the risk of a legal/juridical solipsism, so to speak, of legal formalism (or legal positivism) turning into *legal nihilism*: an entirely technical idea of law according to which “justice” means nothing more than procedural correctness. I’m worried about the risk that a hyper-Kelsenian approach to law and right conceals a self-referentiality. Given this risk, I think it would be useful for the law to remind itself – or, better, the *polis* to remind

9. Sophocles. *Antigone*. Translated by Reginald Gibbons and Charles Segal (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 83.

10. *Id.*, 56.

the *nomos* – that it is a means to an end, and as such cannot be entirely founded on itself or justified by itself. This is especially true when procedural correctness detaches itself from reality in dramatic fashion, when it ceases to dialogue with *Lebenswelt*, withdrawing into monologue or soliloquy. If not, law becomes a self-referential and thus sterile *Sprachspiel* (language-game). *Nomos* finds its *arché* and its *telos* outside of itself. This elsewhere to which law should always tend, though probably unreachable, is *dike*, i.e. justice. Justice is – should be – law’s truth. If law ceases to draw inspiration from justice, then it dies, namely it ceases to be the guarantee of the political community. “The people (*demos*) must fight for the law (*nomos*) as for their city wall”,¹¹ wrote Heraclitus (fr. 45). But this is only possible if (until) *demos* recognizes the law as the wall of the *polis*, that is if (until) it recognizes the tension towards justice in the *esprit de(s) loi(s)*.

What’s more, similarly to law, truth dies (i.e. ceases to speak to the hearts of human beings) whenever it fully transforms into *adaequatio* (*omoiosis*, correspondence), that is every time it forgets to be *aletheia* (unconcealment) as well. When that happens, truth turns into mere *orthotes* (correctness), cold procedurality. Into a sterile self-referential practice.¹² Self-reference and solipsism – namely the negation of dialogue and relation – can only lead to a nihilistic outcome.

On the basis of these considerations, the idea that emerges from the distinction between just/legitimate profit and maximum profit seems to be the establishment of a hierarchy of rights, or better: the *(re)establishment of a hierarchy of rights that is up to par with our times*. Especially when faced with unprecedented states of exception such as the global pandemic. Accepting for a moment the legitimate right of a business, in “normal” conditions, to make all the profit it can, with market rules (and formal legality) as the only reference points for its action, that right should become debatable, negotiable and even revocable in the case of objectively extraordinary conditions. In particular, those “all the more extraordinary” conditions when such a right enters into conflict with the people’s right to health.

When these two rights blatantly conflict with each other, the first must give way to the second, acknowledge its priority. It cannot place itself before, nor equal to. Given that such an argument – which in the past would

11. Charles H. Kahn (ed.), *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus: An Edition of the Fragments with Translation and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 58–9.

12. By evoking the distinction between *adaequatio* and *aletheia*, I refer to Heidegger’s classic investigation on truth. On this topic see at least Martin Heidegger, “On the Essence of Truth.” In *Pathmarks*. Translated by William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 136–54.

have fallen under the realm of common sense – seems to have been lost in the mist of our current, crumbling common sense, it may be a good time to explicitly formalize it. More precisely, to contractualize it. Incidentally, this matter is additional proof that we probably need to *re-contractualize the social contract*, that is to re-discuss and redefine certain reasons for and certain principles of our coexistence. For new games there must be new rules. A clearer formalization of the hierarchy of rights would allow us to better confront the situations where these rights irreconcilably clash. When the coexistence of these rights requires the right seen as superior/primary (“more fundamental”) to be amputated (curtailed), there can no longer be coexistence. At that point the coexistence of rights is no longer the goal. The right seen as inferior/secondary (“less fundamental”) must give way, subordinate its own scope to the satisfaction of the primary right. On the basis of such an assumption, and in reference to the matter at hand, a “just profit” would emerge as the possible/pursuable profit after the satisfaction of the (more) fundamental right of the people to their health. If the latter had not been previously protected and guaranteed, the profit would be considered unjust, illegitimate as a result.

Faced with the risk of a hyper-Kelsenism and a consequent legal solipsism/nihilism, I think at least a partial rehabilitation of iusnaturalism (natural law) is necessary. To develop an updated iusnaturalism, one up to the challenges of a globalized world or pandemic society, the classical idea of “natural law” should be put in relation with that of the “common good”, namely with the neo-contractualism of a social contract which by now must also include a “natural contract”.¹³ We increasingly need a *Nomos of the Earth* that is also a *Nomos for the Earth*.¹⁴ The current natural law must also be a law for nature. Along this road it may be possible to re-establish a dialog between *nomos* and *dike*.

3. “Ourselves as Another” (pandemic as teaching)

A further point of reflection suggested by pandemic capital consists in a sort of *historical nemesis*. Beyond any third-world rhetoric, for once “we are the others”, or better, “the others are us as well.” To paraphrase Paul

13. On this topic see Michel Serres, *The Natural Contract*, translated by Elizabeth MacArthur and William Paulson (Ann Arbor (MI): The University of Michigan Press, 1995).

14. Obviously I refer here to the classic: Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*, translated by G.L. Ulmen (New York: Telos Press Publishing, 2006).

Ricoeur’s famous book, we are truly experiencing “ourselves as another”.¹⁵ The West as a whole is temporarily experiencing a condition that in other parts of the world has for some time now become an established practice: trading, giving away a percentage of one’s own right to health (understood as “collective right to health”, that of the entire community) in order to protect someone else’s right to profit. In other parts of the world, the disturbing scenario I have called legal nihilism (i.e. when “justice” means nothing more than procedural correctness, when *dike* results entirely in *nomos*) equates to an obvious matter of fact. Even an everyday reality.

The best example of this situation – though not the only one – is represented by the use of HIV/AIDS medicine in Africa. The difficulty, for economic reasons, in accessing this medicine for the majority of the African population has produced and continues to produce a dramatic inequality between HIV positives in the Western world and those on the African continent. In the first case, i.e. within the first social-economic framework, HIV positives not only survive the virus but can even conduct a “normal” life. On the contrary, in the second case, i.e. within the second social-economic framework, being HIV positive looks a lot like a death sentence. In these areas, annual victims of the pathology still amount to hundreds of thousands. While this statement could be supported in a variety of ways, the following datum is probably the most vivid: “Ninety percent of the more than 65 million people who contracted HIV/AIDS by 2003 lived in less developed countries. More than two-thirds of the total, some 35 million, were Africans, of whom 15 million already have died.”¹⁶

Contracting AIDS in Africa or in Europe (the West, more generally) means two very different things. What ontologically is the same entity (i.e. disease) becomes two radically different entities (i.e. diseases) when it is lowered into *Lebenswelt* (reality). Different beyond any justification or tolerability. Here we are dealing with one of what anthropologist and activist Paul Farmer – co-founder of the nonprofit health care organization *Partners in Health* (PIH) – calls “Pathologies of Power”.¹⁷ Such a case is further evidence that the most advanced front of biopower and biopolitics is *necropolitics*,

15. Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, translated by Kathleen Blamey (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

16. Brooke Grundfest Schoepf, “Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome in Africa: An Interpretation”. In Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates Jr. (eds), *Encyclopedia of Africa vol. 1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 8–13. By the way, Africa is home to about 15% of the world’s population.

17. Paul Farmer, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor* (Berkeley / Los Angeles / London: University of California Press, 2003).

namely that a brand-new face of life-world (*Lebenswelt*) is “death-worlds”.¹⁸

In recent months many have claimed (not necessarily in good faith) that the pandemic, like any crisis, also represents an opportunity. I generally find this kind of statements to be quite cynical because, as Primo Levi would say, they don’t make a distinction between “the drowned and the saved”, namely because they universalize, absolutize the point of view of the saved by ignoring that of the drowned. As Levi taught us, the latter are doubly humiliated, as even their memory (the last trace of their presence) is drowned. He calls it “the memory of the offence”.¹⁹

However, despite my distrust of this principle, in this case I have decided to make an exception and adhere to it. My personal conception of the crisis as an opportunity is the following. For over a year now we have been getting an idea, at our own expense, of what elsewhere corresponds to a dismal normality. While tragic, the pandemic experience would be dramatically (guiltily) useless if the international community, or at least global public opinion, were to emerge from it spotless and clean, “uninfected” as they were before this unforeseeable transition. If, that is, they refused to consider a problem that we can no longer pretend to ignore. A part of the world lives in a sort of continuous pandemic, a *permanent sanitary state of exception* produced solely by motives of an economic character, or better by the lack of political character. Because if the economy rules supreme, politics is nowhere to be seen.

As Carl Schmitt established in his *Political Theology*, “Sovereign is he who decides on the exception.”²⁰ Well, an act of *human sovereignty*, so to speak – namely an act that, using (forcing) Nietzsche’s famous definition, we could call an example of “Great Politics” – would be to *decide* that such a permanent sanitary state of exception caused by solely economic reasons is something “we” – I mean “simply as human beings” – can no longer tolerate. More clearly: insofar as we can (i.e. we are able to, we are in the real and concrete position to) prevent this state of things, we must prevent it. The so-called Gabor’s Law, according to which “*what can be made, must be made*”²¹, could for once show its positive side as brand-new moral imperative.

18. Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, translated by Steven Corcoran, (Duhram and London: Duke University Press, 2019), 92.

19. Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, translated by Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017), 13–24.

20. Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, translated by George Schwab (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 1985), 5.

21. Günther Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen 2. Über die Zerstörung des Lebens*

4. Conclusion: The imperative of (fraternal) responsibility

These pages aimed to highlight a very peculiar phenomenon within the exceptional framework we are living. I have called it pandemic capital. As seen, it consists in the rise of a brand-new common sense according to which the right to maximize profit stands out as new aspirant fundamental right. Such a situation (i.e. this naturalization process) becomes particularly clear in relation to the question of vaccine patents. As a result, in order to restore a distinction between just (legitimate) profit and maximum profit worthy of the times we live in, I argued for the (re)establishment of a hierarchy of rights that is up to par with our times, namely to re-contractualize the social contract by virtue of a neo-contractualism as sum of social contract and natural contract within a globalized world or pandemic society. These assumptions could also emerge as the basis for a new dialogue – a new alliance – between *nomos* and *dike* for the sake of the *polis* in the form of a *Nomos* of (and for) the Earth.

To wrap up these reflections, that is to make them more concrete, I would like to touch on an epistemic-anthropological question with the topic of “*responsibility*” at its center, namely the benchmark for any dialogue between *nomos* and *dike*. Responsibility as *imputability* (i.e. as the capability to respond to what you do) is indeed the grounds for every legal system and the crucial parameter in designing a “just law”.²² I will focus on a specific type of responsibility: *deontology*, that is *professional responsibility* or, better, *professional ethics*: the capability to respond to what you do as a worker, namely when your doing (i.e. your action) corresponds to your work.

Considering our current situation and the related issues here described, I believe that among the first (the first workers or professional/specialists, in particular) to be held responsible/accountable – those who should most feel the need to speak up and take a stand – are scientists. Particularly scientists involved in processes such as vaccine research. As a “philosophy of technology scholar with a strong continental background” (i.e. inspired by authors such as Heidegger, Ellul, Anders, Jonas...), namely

im Zeitalter der dritten industriellen Revolution (München: Beck, 2013), 17. Günther Anders and Jacques Ellul consider Gabor’s Law the moral imperative of the *technisches Zeitalter* (age of technology), that is the crucial proof that technology represents the current “subject of history”.

22. The Italian formula for imputability – namely what in English equates to “competent to stand a trial” – reads “*capace di intendere e volere*”, that is “to be able to *understand* and to *want*”. This is the precondition for having legal responsibility and thus for trying to establish a just law.

as an “intellectual” and, worse still, as an “Italian (italic) man of letters”, I have often heard the objection that some of my critical positions on our age – i.e. as the age when technology becomes “the subject of history”²³ – simply re-propose, in an updated version, the obsolete “Crocian prejudice” of intellectuals/men of letters towards scientists. This prejudice consists in an epistemic (though anthropological first and foremost) snobbery well summarized by Heidegger’s famous but poor choice of words: “science itself does not think”.²⁴ Charles Snow condemned this same prejudice a half century ago in his famous pamphlet on *The Two Cultures*.²⁵ As a result of this snobbery, it was said, intellectuals look down on scientists, calling them – disparagingly – “technicians”; while admittedly of high rank, scientists are still simply employees on the payroll of commercial institutions (companies, corporations...) whose choices they feel they cannot/must not question. Insofar as they are executors of instructions, technicians (techno-scientists) don’t believe it to be within their jurisdiction to interfere with the environment in which they operate, and on which their research and study depends. This way of perceiving one’s own profession and role, this peculiar professional deontology – or *ethos* – marks the natural distance between “scientists” and “intellectuals”, reiterating the difference in rank between “technology” and “culture”, between *Zivilisation* and *Kultur*.

I personally believe that a palpable distinction between “the two cultures” – i.e. between their representatives – no longer exists, in the sense that nowadays the metamorphosis into “technicians” (i.e. functionaries, executors, men of apparatus, bureaucrats) has as much to do with intellectuals/men of letters as it does with scientists. Both of them have become – i.e. feel to be – specialists endowed with unique professional capabilities (expertise) on which his or her social recognition depends. And, in many cases, these specialists find little wrong with their situation. On the contrary, they seem quite satisfied with the status. The metamorphosis from *Berufung* (vocation) into *Beruf* (profession/job) foretold by Max Weber at the beginning of the last century is by now complete.²⁶ On the other hand, the “death of the intellectuals,” or better their extinction,

23. Günther Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen 2. Über die Zerstörung des Lebens im Zeitalter der dritten industriellen Revolution* (München: Beck, 2013), 271–79.

24. Martin Heidegger, “What Calls for Thinking?” In *Basic Writings (Revised & Expanded Edition)*. Edited by David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1993), 373.

25. See Charles P. Snow, *The Two Cultures* (Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press, 2012).

26. Max, Weber, “Science as a Vocation.” In *Max Weber’s Complete Writings on Academic and Political Vocations*. Translated by Gordon C. Wells (New York: Algora Publishing, 2008), 25–52.

is so obvious as to have become a *cliché*. If half a century ago Snow “condemned” intellectuals as being “natural Luddites”²⁷ (that is prejudicial and unshakeable opponents to the techno-scientific *Weltanschauung*), today we could affirm that those Luddites have turned into strikebreakers. Thus spoke our *Zeitgeist*.

Having said this, I nonetheless believe that the current situation represents a precious opportunity for scientists to do away with this type of prejudice. They are the first to be called by the difficulties we are experiencing, some of which I have tried to highlight here. It is up to them to speak out about the use and purpose of what, at the end of the day, remains the fruit of their work and ingenuity. It is up to them to speak out about a vaccine being treated like any other “product”, about its definitive metamorphosis into “commodity”: an object (entity) endowed with an economic value, or better, entirely reduced to its economic value. If the first voice we should hear is that of scientists, then theirs is also the first silence noticed. The heaviest one.

Ultimately, the current situation is not all that different from the one in which other scientists found themselves not so long ago: physicists with the invention of nuclear weapons. Back then, some – though few, for instance the signatories of the *Franck Report* and *Szilárd Petition*²⁸ – had the courage to take a stance on something that, whether they liked it or not, concerned them; that minority refused to hide behind the excuse of the presumed “non-responsibility of the technician,” of the would-be “innocence of the specialist.” Back then, some realized that such non-responsibility amounted to disinterest and indifference, namely to a culpable irresponsibility. That minority chose not to support the admittedly comfortable idea of a presumed “neutrality” of knowledge, deciding to renounce the refuge (i.e. the privilege) of their own citizenship in the ivory tower. On the contrary, they recognized and claimed that knowledge is always, inevitably, power, and as such demands responsibility. According to Hannah Arendt’s masterful investigation on the human condition, we could affirm that as workers and specialists they were able to make their

27. Charles P. Snow, *The Two Cultures*, 22–9.

28. On June 12, 1945 a group of seven scientists involved in the Manhattan Project (the German physicist James Franck and the Hungarian-American physicist Leó Szilárd, among others) wrote an informal report (i.e. the *Franck Report*) to urging President Truman not to use the atomic bomb (the text can be found here: <http://fissilematerials.org/library/fra45.pdf>). A further attempt, equally unsuccessful, was the *Szilárd Petition* signed by Leó Szilárd and 69 other scientists involved in the Manhattan Project. Its aim was to persuade President Truman to at least inform Japan before using the atomic bomb (the text can be found here: <http://www.dannen.com/decision/45-07-17.html>).

work an authentic *action*, that is to remain *zoon politikon* rather than turn into *animal laborans*.²⁹

As is well-known, one of the greatest criminals of the 20th century appealed precisely to his non-responsibility as a *specialist*³⁰ in order to justify the atrocities he committed. He thus “taught us – the lesson of the fearsome, word-and-thought-defying *banality of evil*”.³¹ Arendt explains it as a “lack of imagination”: “when I speak of the banality of evil, I do so only on the strictly factual level [...] Eichmann was not Iago and not Macbeth [...] Except for an extraordinary diligence in looking out for his personal advancement, he had no motives at all. And this diligence in itself was in no way criminal [...] He *merely*, to put the matter colloquially, *never realized what he was doing* [...] It was sheer thoughtlessness – something by no means identical with stupidity – that predisposed him to become one of the greatest criminals of that period [...] That such remoteness from reality and such thoughtlessness can wreak more havoc than all the evil instincts taken together which, perhaps, are inherent in man – that was, in fact the lesson one could learn in Jerusalem.”³²

Expressed in a formula, this would read: to be responsible (that is to *respond* to what you do), you must *understand* what are you doing. And to really understand what are you doing, you must act also as human being, that is not only as specialist/professional. To paraphrase Feuerbach, we should remind ourselves that, well before being a “specialist”, a scientist (and, obviously, a humanist/man of letter) is “a human being in togetherness with human beings”,³³ and thus his or her first responsibility must be “human”. That is to say, a *human responsibility*. One could call it “*responsabilità fraterna*” (“responsibility for our brothers and sisters” or

29. See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998).

30. *The Specialist: portrait of a modern criminal* is the title of the 1999 documentary by Rony Brauman and Eyal Sivan drawn entirely on the 350 hours of rare footage recorded during the trial of Adolf Eichmann, in 1961, in Jerusalem.

31. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 252.

32. Id., 287–88.

33. In the *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future* (1843), Ludwig Feuerbach, according to his anti-Hegelianism, argued that in contrast to “the *absolute philosopher*” (one who says “*La verité c’est moi*”), “the human philosopher” says: “*Even in thought, even as a philosopher, I am a man in togetherness with men*”. L. Feuerbach, “Principles of the Philosophy of the Future”, In *The Fiery Brook: Selected Writings* (translated by Zawar Hanfi, London, New York: Verso, 2012), 244.

“fraternal responsibility”) as Pope Francis did in his homily in Lampedusa on July 8, 2013 – his requiem for migrants –, entitled *The Holy See*.³⁴

The imperative of fraternal responsibility can represent an updated version of Jonas’ imperative of responsibility. In the name of such a responsibility, a “holy crime” can – and even should – be committed.³⁵

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34. Despite my atheism (or maybe be virtue of my atheistic humanism), I like very much to quote here an expression of the Pope (see Pope Francis, *The Holy See*, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130708_omelia-lampedusa.pdf).
35. Post Scriptum: *Citizen Swartz*. Throughout these pages I have suggested Open Access Knowledge as a potential new natural right, as basic common good, which in turn becomes the backbone for the establishment of an updated social contract (i.e. the sum of social contract and natural contract) within a pandemic society. As a coherent outcome of this premise, in the end I would like to recall the first “Open Access Martyr” (or “martyr of free thought 2.0”, if you prefer), someone who I consider an inspiring model of polites (citizen) in our brand-new globalized polis: Aaron Swartz (1986-2013), The Internet's Own Boy. As known, Swartz was an American computer programmer and political activist (hacktivist) who died by suicide after being denounced and arrested for having illegally downloaded and shared millions of files (i.e. scientific papers) from JSTOR. Given my status of “man of letters or intellectual worker of the 21st Century”, I hold this little tribute to be apt, and I think those who share my professional and existential condition will probably understand why. Hopefully, they will even agree with this choice. In my view, Swartz's gesture legitimately places itself within the tradition of Thoreau's Civil Disobedience. In his Guerrilla Open Access Manifesto (2008), Swartz provides a good explanation of what, more than two thousands years ago, Antigone meant as “holy crime”, something for which she was willing to die. He affirms: “There is no justice in following unjust laws”. And, to complete this already effective explanation, we could add that any law which steps on or ignores fraternal responsibility is an unjust law.

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Implicaciones biopolíticas de la Covid-19: Del pesimismo a la parrhesia

Biopolitical Implications of Covid-19: from Pessimism to Parrhesia

RICARDO MEJÍA FERNÁNDEZ *

Abstract

Covid-19 is, above all, a problem concerning public health and healthcare professionals. This seems totally obvious but not for everybody. However, just beginning the outbreak of the pandemic, in the midst of its deadliest first wave, some renowned intellectuals, such as Slavoj Žižek, speculated in highly idealized and utopian terms about the positive effects that would be unleashed for philosophical and political thought. In this article we try to think the biopolitical implications of this pandemic, especially through a critical pessimism that faces the immanentist prophetism, which is typical of intramundane futurist projects that we read today in political publications. To fulfill our goals, we fully enter into the debate on the pandemic through contemporary authors such as Foucault, Agamben, Fukuyama, Han, and other relevant thinkers. After the *hybris* of the pandemic, we propose an ethics of caring for oneself and others in a *parrhesia* where, what is hidden and biopolitically manipulated, comes to light as a support for the different democratic systems, where Covid-19 must be fought.

Keywords: biopolitics, Covid-19, Foucault, Fukuyama, philosophy, politics, SARS-CoV-2.

1. Introducción: el pesimismo ante la Covid-19

La Covid-19 es, ante todo, un problema concerniente a la salud pública y a los profesionales sanitarios. En eso, que parece a todas luces una obviedad, tendríamos que estar de acuerdo. Sin embargo y apenas comenzando el estallido de la pandemia, en medio de la más mortífera primera ola, intelectuales de renombre –como Slavoj Žižek– pontificaban en términos muy idealizados y utópicos sobre los efectos *positivos* que se desencadenarían para el pensamiento filosófico y político:

Pero tal vez otro virus ideológico mucho más beneficioso se propague y con suerte nos infecte: el virus del pensamiento de una sociedad alternativa, una sociedad más allá del estado-nación, una sociedad que se actualiza en las formas de solidaridad y cooperación global¹.

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¿Cómo se puede emplear una metáfora tan temeraria en pleno aluvión de muertos y hospitales saturados, de países cerrados, de empleos arruinados y casas selladas por la tragedia? ¿Cómo escribir a favor de la propagación de un virus “mucho más beneficioso”², como si el que a la fecha está acabando con la humanidad ya comportase *beneficios*? ¿De qué tipo? ¿Cómo, entonces, presagiar una sociedad mejor; cuando la que todavía no hemos resuelto es la que ahora nos apura y destruye? Desde luego, este tipo de optimismo altamente ideologizado, en el que no solamente los virus sino las desgracias personales *valen* para engrosar el Molok del futuro y un Estado más poderoso, tiene muy poco que ver con la realidad; en especial con aquella de los más perjudicados por este virus extendido por el orbe. De forma un tanto indecorosa, Žižek, que propone como modelo nada más y nada menos que al polémico régimen del presidente chino Xi Jinping, inserta en una línea ascendente –hasta alcanzar el Estado deseado– uno de los acontecimientos más letales de la historia contemporánea; como si se tratase de la escena –entre muchas otras– de una película que, de seguir proyectándose, nos dará el final feliz del triunfo de un comunismo fornido y bien cebado.

Y es que, haciendo honor a la verdad, la pandemia provocada por el SARS-CoV-2 ha motivado una situación de pesimismo generalizado, a diferencia de las visiones que idealizan efectos positivos en la conciencia individual de las personas y en la conciencia colectiva. El ingente número de víctimas graves y mortales, especialmente en los países subdesarrollados; así como el desastroso deterioro de las economías de dichos Estados y de los ciudadanos respectivamente, ha hecho que esta pandemia suponga un punto de inflexión en el pensamiento sobre la historia y los acontecimientos recientes. No faltarán quienes piensen que, ante una pandemia de tal magnitud, la historia no volverá a ser la misma, no solo como su fin sino expresando así la aparición de la necesidad de una *ruptura radical*. En palabras de Jean-Luc Nancy, “hay una especie de excepción viral–biológica, informática, cultural– que nos pandemiza. Los gobiernos no son más que tristes ejecutores de la misma, y desquitarse con ellos es más una maniobra de distracción que una reflexión política”.³

1. Slavoj Žižek, *Pandemic! Covid-19 shakes the world* (London: OR Books, 2020), 39.

2. *Ibid.*, 39.

3. Jean-Luc Nancy, “Excepción viral,” en *Sopa de Wuhan. Pensamiento contemporáneo en tiempos de pandemias*, ed. Pablo Amadeo (Buenos Aires: ASPO, 2020), 29.

2. Ruptura y pesimismo de la historia

Desacierta Žižek. Parece muy precipitado, y hasta trivial, cavilar que a partir de ahora la historia *evolucionará* con total naturalidad a un estadio de mejor perfección; a modo de un Comte valedor de un estadio positivo de la humanidad que arrastra tras de sí todas las barbaries y crímenes obscurantistas del pasado, sin haberlos saldado en su mismidad más que con un tipo de ascenso en el conocimiento científico. Los muertos no son peldaños para alcanzar una conciencia histórica más plena, avanzada y solidaria; los muertos no son medios para algo mejor que ellos; son más bien, en la dignidad humana que se ha pretendido liquidar con su deceso, inconmensurables. Y es que una visión acumulativa de la historia, apresuradamente progresista, nos plantea la imposibilidad tajante (tan difícil de disipar) de hablar de progreso a partir y gracias al sufrimiento humano.

El *profetismo inmanentista*, el cual eventualmente “podría conducir a la reinención del comunismo”,⁴ sobra en estos momentos donde el presente mortífero de la Covid-19 es más fuerte que los futuribles incrustados en el devenir mundano. Mas esto no es de cuño propio, porque lo encontramos en los planteamientos biopolíticos de Gilles Deleuze, cuando, en un pensamiento deudor de Spinoza pero decididamente de lo virtual, se declaraba a favor de “la inmanencia absoluta [la cual] es inmanente a ella misma: no es inmanente a algo ni de algo; no depende de un objeto ni pertenece a un sujeto”.⁵ Giorgio Agamben, a propósito de esta absolutización de la inmanencia, leía en el citado autor que “la idea de inmanencia brotaba de la afirmación spinoziana de la univocidad del ser, contra la tesis escolástica de la *analogia entis* [analogía del ser], según la cual el ser no se dice del mismo modo de Dios y de las criaturas finitas”.⁶ No obsta a lo referenciado la forma mediante la que Michel Foucault abordaba este inmanentismo en la política de Maquiavelo, en cuya maquinización gubernamental “se dan, por tanto, a la vez, pluralidad de formas

4. Slavoj Žižek, “Coronavirus es un golpe al capitalismo al estilo de ‘Kill Bill’ y podría conducir a la reinención del comunismo,” en *Sopa de Wuhan. Pensamiento contemporáneo en tiempos de pandemias*, ed. Pablo Amadeo (Buenos Aires: ASPO, 2020), 21.

5. Gilles Deleuze, “La inmanencia: una vida...”, en *Ensayos sobre biopolítica. Excesos de vida*, eds. Gabriel Gorgi y Fermín Rodríguez (Barcelona: Paidós, 2007), 36.

6. Giorgio Agamben, “La inmanencia absoluta,” en *Ensayos sobre biopolítica. Excesos de vida*, eds. Gabriel Gorgi y Fermín Rodríguez (Barcelona: Paidós, 2007), 68-69.

de gobierno e inmanencia de prácticas de gobierno respecto al Estado, multiplicidad e inmanencia de estas actividades”.⁷

Pensamos que esta postura gubernamentalista de la absoluta inmanencia (no solo perteneciente al liberalismo político), además de ser un justificación indirectamente sádica de tantas experiencias traumáticas y efectos nocivos de un virus, nos parece un disparate porque obvia el sufrimiento atroz de las víctimas, al hacer un pronóstico inequívoco –y, por ende, no análogo– de la historia humana. Es de todo punto palmario que la experiencia vivida con más inmediatez con la Covid-19 ha consistido en que un acontecimiento súbito (como es el caso de una pandemia últimamente desconocida) irrumpe en nuestra historia y quiebra el cúmulo de vivencias pasadas y esperanzas futuras; todo ello sin reconocer las consecuencias de un virus extendido por todo el planeta, por el que se detiene el tiempo vivido tanto del individuo como del colectivo en una suerte de *parón brusco* de la historia. El tiempo se ha quebrado y se ha desfigurado nuestra percepción del mismo. ¿Terminará la historia con la Covid-19? Aunque fue muy censurado por ello, el politólogo estadounidense Francis Fukuyama, en *El fin de la historia y el último hombre* (1992)⁸, describía su punto de vista filosófico como *rotundamente pesimista*, al igual que Émile Ludwig Fackenheim en los años 70 con su obra *La presencia de Dios en la historia*.⁹

Como bien mencionaba el autor al comienzo de su primer capítulo, un argumento teleológico y providencialista de la historia, “después de Auschwitz [...], sería culpable de blasfemia. [...] Después de esos terribles acontecimientos, que ocurrieron en el corazón del mundo moderno, ilustrado, tecnológico”¹⁰ no puede creerse en el dios del progreso. Ese es el dios de la univocidad, mientras que lo que sufrimos con mayor intensidad en esta pandemia es la equivocidad y la inseguridad. La idolatría que, debido a la falta de fe teologal, canjea el misterio de Dios por los logros humanos más relevantes tiene un precio muy alto para nosotros como cristianos. El teólogo Karl Rahner descubría en el cristianismo una especie de pesimismo respecto al optimismo inmanentista de los principales sistemas políticos de la guerra fría, sin que ello equivaliera a un descuido de los compromisos intramundanos:

7. Michel Foucault, “La gubernamentalidad,” en *Ensayos sobre biopolítica. Excesos de vida*, eds. Gabriel Gorgi y Fermín Rodríguez (Barcelona: Paidós, 2007), 194.

8. Cf. Francis Fukuyama, *El fin de la historia y el último hombre* (Bogotá: Planeta, 1992).

9. Cf. Émile L. Fackenheim, *La presencia de Dios en la historia* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 2002).

10. *Ibid.*, 29.

Por supuesto, ese pesimismo se puede trocar en un pretexto para no hacer nada, para consolar a los hombres con la vida eterna, y para ofrecer la vida eterna no sólo como opio del pueblo sino, además, como opio para el pueblo. Pero eso no cambia nada el hecho del realismo radical, que se expresa en este pesimismo así formulado con respecto a la situación de nuestra libertad, es verdadero y en consecuencia no se puede disimular.¹¹

¿Cómo hablar de progreso hoy cuando, debido a la inacción, negligencia o falta de investigación, si no podemos erradicar la Covid-19 están enfermando y muriendo personas a cada segundo que pasa; agravándose la situación de muchas familias, empresas e instituciones? Es muy complicado escribir de futuribles, “cuando pase la pandemia”,¹² como imagina Markus Gabriel; si sigue habiendo riesgo de saturación o hacinamiento en los hospitales. ¿Cómo alabar el progreso *adquirido* cuando este mismo, que había sido divinizado, nos ha traicionado y hemos de volver a conquistarlo? Si bien no se puede comparar en absoluto la presente pandemia con el holocausto antisemita, hay algo que, por lo menos, tienen en común: la debilitación de la confianza en el saber humano, especialmente en la ciencia, convulsionada y ralentizada a la hora de contener no solo la propagación de esta pandemia global sino el retorno a un irracionalismo que se halla en la base de los totalitarismos; muy particularmente del fascismo.

Esto no es algo de factura reciente puesto que el futuro ideólogo nazi Theodor L. Haering, en *Überindividualität in Natur und Geisteswelt*¹³, realizaba una filosofía de la vida individual enaltecedora del irracionalismo durante el régimen republicano de Weimar en Alemania. En dicha publicación y en nombre de la condición inefable de la individualidad, Haering se congratulaba de “nuestra feliz era del irracionalismo”,¹⁴ de manera muy similar al modo en que actualmente se rechaza todo discurso y medida de control o prevención que subordine la libertad individual a la seguridad colectiva frente a la Covid-19. Se está, pues, advirtiendo

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11. Karl Rahner, *Curso fundamental sobre la fe* (Barcelona: Herder, 1979), 140.
 12. Markus Gabriel, “El virus, el sistema letal y algunas pistas para después de la pandemia,” en *Sopa de Wuhan. Pensamiento contemporáneo en tiempos de pandemias*, ed. Pablo Amadeo (Buenos Aires: ASPO, 2020), 134.
 13. Cf. Theodor L. Haering, *Über Individualität in Natur und Geisteswelt. Begriffliches und Tatsächliches* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1926).
 14. Paul Forman, “Kausalität, Anschaulichkeit, and Individualität, or How cultural values prescribed the character and the lessons ascribed to quantum mechanics,” en *Society and knowledge. Contemporary perspectives in the sociology of knowledge and science*, eds. Nico Stehr y Volker Meja (London: Routledge, 2017), 367: “[...] individuum est ineffabile”.

cómo dicho irracionalismo se puede relacionar con el *negacionismo* de la pandemia, en tanto que reacción de ruptura por la que se acredita hasta qué punto se desconfía del progreso científico; habida cuenta que desde Comte habíamos puesto todas nuestras expectativas en los descubrimientos providenciales de las ciencias empíricas. Sin embargo, el racionalismo del progreso que se busca abandonar con ello no es menos sospechoso, lo cual nos vale como crítica a otro totalitarismo que concierne a las más extremas modalidades del comunismo. No en todos los casos puede sostenerse que ha habido progreso histórico, incluso cuestionando la historia como recorrido humano ascendente o como ciencia de hechos objetivos. Así lo escribía Fukuyama:

Nuestros pensadores más profundos han llegado a la conclusión de que no existe eso llamado historia, o sea, un orden con sentido en la marcha de los acontecimientos humanos. Nuestra propia experiencia nos ha enseñado, de igual modo que hay más probabilidades a favor que en contra de que el futuro contenga nuevos males no imaginados [...].¹⁵

No es que Fukuyama crea que ningún mal nuevo no pueda sobrevenir a la humanidad, justamente porque se basa en las crueldades y desgracias ya acontecidas en el siglo XX con las dos grandes guerras mundiales. Estos dos conflictos bélicos truncaron y cortaron de raíz las perspectivas de progreso de la humanidad, en especial de los países occidentales más ricos tanto de uno como de otro signo político. Como bien se puede constatar, “el extremo pesimismo de nuestro siglo se debe, por lo menos en parte, a la crueldad con que se hicieron trizas estas anteriores esperanzas”.¹⁶ Tal y como veremos en el próximo punto, con la Covid-19 se ha puesto en evidencia que la humanidad no estaba preparada para la absoluta impertinencia de esta problemática vírica, poniendo al descubierto la extrema debilidad de unas razones de Estado o totalizantes incapaces de predecirla y en la cual la historia no se antoja como su consabido *cogitatum*: no es que pensemos la pandemia, sino que esta nos obliga a pensar e incluso nos impone los límites de lo pensable. Aparece, pues, el pesimismo de toda razón, no solo filosófica o científica, sino también de toda razón de Estado (convertido en gubernamental). Lo que nos acucia ahora es *la razón de la pandemia* y no la pandemia de la razón, dirigiendo aquella la batuta de lo que podemos o no reflexionar.

15. Francis Fukuyama, *El fin de la historia y el último hombre* (Bogotá: Planeta, 1992), 29-30.

16. *Ibid.*, 31.

3. Lógica vírica y lógica de poder: *bio-política* de la pandemia

Se ha afirmado con notorio atrevimiento que podemos *pensar la pandemia*, si bien no todo lo que se quiere pensar se consigue cabalmente, sobre todo cuando es esta pandemia la que nos va dictando hasta donde podemos llegar con nuestra razón (o razones). Fue Martin Heidegger quien señaló este impase: “Pero quizá el hombre quiera pensar y no lo logre. A la postre, este querer pensar pretende demasiado y, por ello, puede demasiado poco”,¹⁷ como vemos que se está dando con las soluciones políticamente tendenciosas a la pandemia. Por contradictorio que parezca, “el hombre puede pensar en cuanto tiene la posibilidad para ello. Pero esa posibilidad no garantiza todavía que seamos capaces de hacerlo”.¹⁸ Con la pandemia ha sucedido algo relativo a esto: los filósofos *mainstream* aprovecharon los meses de mayor incertidumbre para ofrecer todo tipo de cavilaciones muy llamativas, no por su contribución a la salud colectiva, sino por su trivialidad; todo ello en una suerte de *lógica vírica* cuyo objeto es la Covid-19 pero cuyo fin va más allá de la problemática sanitaria a la que nos enfrentamos:

El coronavirus pone de manifiesto las debilidades sistémicas de la ideología dominante del siglo XXI. Una de ellas es la creencia errónea de que el progreso científico y tecnológico por sí solo puede impulsar el progreso humano y moral.¹⁹

Nos hemos equivocado, como bien sugiere Markus Gabriel. La grandilocuente razón humana, hábil en discursos políticos o no, se ha visto zarandeada por un ente –el SARS-CoV-2– cuyo tamaño es unas 2000 veces más pequeño que el de un ácaro de polvo. He aquí, entre muchos motivos, por qué triunfa el pesimismo a raíz del coronavirus y crea una lógica perturbadora. Así las cosas, lo que nosotros tratamos en este artículo es si dicho pesimismo puede resurgir no solo tras comprobarse –contra Fukuyama– que la historia humana no se acabó con la caída de los grandes sistemas políticos y filosóficos, sino poniendo de manifiesto, tal y como comparece ante nosotros otra vez al ritmo de esta pandemia, cómo se ha paralizado el mundo, cómo se ha creado un distanciamiento social insoportable y, lo

17. Martin Heidegger, *¿Qué significa pensar?* (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 2005), 15.

18. *Ibid.*, 15.

19. Markus Gabriel, “El virus, el sistema letal y algunas pistas para después de la pandemia,” en *Sopa de Wuhan. Pensamiento contemporáneo en tiempos de pandemias*, ed. Pablo Amadeo (Buenos Aires: ASPO, 2020), 129.

que es más notorio, cómo se ha sacudido el presumible orden y progreso al que tanto había aspirado la Modernidad. Empero y aunque este autor opinaba que ninguna ideología fue tan negativa como el *totalitarismo* para generar este pesimismo en los ciudadanos de Occidente, ahora divisamos como un coronavirus globalizado, en su propagación, se hace *transideológico* y *transpolítico*; sin incubarse solamente en un tipo régimen o de sociedad. El virus y el poder no se encastran en un solo lugar aparte ya que, en cierta forma, la experiencia reciente tanto de los epidemiólogos como de los politólogos consiste en que estamos ante un fenómeno de virus y de poder mutuamente *pandemizados*. Esto se nos antoja como la forma más reciente de biopoder, incluso transitando efectivamente como “vigilancia digital” de los cuerpos, tal y como opina Byung-Chul Han.²⁰

Con la auto-comunicación de las sociedades en las redes, nunca antes el biopoder se había movido tanto, con tanta eficacia y con tanta rapidez. *La lógica vírica se ha trabado en una lógica de poder*, de una forma más originaria con respecto a lo sanitario y a lo económico que concierne a esta pandemia. Como sostenía Foucault, “el poder no se da, ni se intercambia, ni se retoma, sino que se ejerce y sólo existe en acto. Contamos, igualmente, con otra afirmación: la de que el poder no es, en primer término, mantenimiento y prórroga de las relaciones económicas, sino, primariamente, una relación de fuerza en sí mismo”²¹. ¿Cómo podríamos definir esta situación de *biopoder* –donde se concita la lógica vírica y la lógica de poder– ya conocida en las epidemias del pasado y que daban lugar a la expulsión, reclusión o vacunación gubernamental de colectivos (y de las ideas peligrosas) para el poder establecido? ¿Por qué se *exceden* tanto las democracias no solo en esta pandemia sino gracias a ella?

20. Byung-Chul Han, “La emergencia viral y el mundo del mañana,” en *Sopa de Wuhan. Pensamiento contemporáneo en tiempos de pandemias*, ed. Pablo Amadeo (Buenos Aires: ASPO, 2020), 101: “La conciencia crítica ante la vigilancia digital es en Asia prácticamente inexistente. [...] Toda la infraestructura para la vigilancia digital ha resultado ser ahora sumamente eficaz para contener la epidemia. Cuando alguien sale de la estación de Pekín es captado automáticamente por una cámara que mide su temperatura corporal. Si la temperatura es preocupante todas las personas que iban sentadas en el mismo vagón reciben una notificación en sus teléfonos móviles. No en vano el sistema sabe quién iba sentado dónde en el tren. Las redes sociales cuentan que incluso se están usando drones para controlar las cuarentenas. Si uno rompe clandestinamente la cuarentena un dron se dirige volando a él y le ordena regresar a su vivienda.”

21. Michel Foucault, *Defender la sociedad. Curso en el Collège de France (1975-1976)* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2001), 28.

Este exceso del biopoder aparece cuando el hombre tiene técnica y políticamente la posibilidad no sólo de disponer la vida sino de hacerla proliferar, de fabricar lo vivo, lo monstruoso y, en el límite, virus incontrolables y universalmente destructores. Extensión formidable del biopoder que, en oposición a lo que yo decía recién sobre el poder atómico, va a desbordar cualquier soberanía humana.²²

El biopoder, en su *hybris* excesiva y extensiva, no es exclusivo de quienes dominan (el Foucault de madurez abogará por concretar este poder), sino que también implica el victimismo personal o de Estado, que constituye otra forma muy virulenta de poder. Es muy preocupante, en la lógica vírica concitada con la del poder, cuando el Covid-19 se *desbiologiza* en demasía (o se biologiza excesivamente según la acepción no-médica de la inmunidad que veremos más adelante en Roberto Espósito) para acabar siendo denotado como un mero *vehículo* del poder; si recuperamos las ideas foucaulteanas que preparan el terreno para la *némesis* de una sociedad apta para dispositivos de seguridad, disciplina y control.²³ Así lo describía Fukuyama, pensando de manera sesgada que la sociedad de control era exclusiva de un tipo de ideologías coincidentes con un tipo de Estado:

Apoyado en un eficiente aparato policíaco, en partidos políticos de masas y en ideologías radicales que querían controlar todos los aspectos de la vida humana, este nuevo tipo de Estado aspiraba nada menos que al dominio mundial²⁴.

A diferencia de lo que pensaba este politólogo hace décadas (el Estado liberal es el fin de la historia), con la pandemia de la Covid-19, el Estado de control y policíaco no se identifica con los regímenes totalitarios *ad usum* sino que, bajo el pretexto higiénico y médico, este se ha acabado por

22. *Ibid.*, 230.

23. *Ibid.*, 38: "Tercera precaución de método: no considerar el poder como un fenómeno de dominación macizo y homogéneo –dominación de un individuo sobre los otros, de un grupo sobre los otros, de una clase sobre las otras–; tener bien presente que el poder, salvo si se lo considera desde muy arriba y muy lejos, no es algo que se reparte entre quienes lo tienen y lo poseen en exclusividad y quienes no lo tienen y lo sufren. El poder, creo, debe analizarse como algo que circula o, mejor, como algo que sólo funciona en cadena. Nunca se localiza aquí o allá, nunca está en las manos de algunos, nunca se apropia como una riqueza o un bien. El poder funciona. El poder se ejerce en red y, en ella, los individuos no sólo circulan, sino que están siempre en situación de sufrirlo y también de ejercerlo. Nunca son el blanco inerte o consintiente del poder, siempre son sus relevos. En otras palabras, el poder transita por los individuos, no se aplica a ellos."

24. Francis Fukuyama, *El fin de la historia y el último hombre* (Bogotá: Planeta, 1992), 32.

extender a las democracias liberales y sociales. Ahora lo que se *totaliza* no es el fascismo o el comunismo en la población sino, *a contrario*, un virus que por su contagiosidad en tantas latitudes se hace *total* y demanda, en el régimen en que se encuentre, medidas excepcionales, coercitivas y de higiene social en nombre de una causa biológica que, por su urgencia y legitimidad científica, permite dominar los cuerpos de las masas a fin de consolidar la hegemonía de poder (con mayor alcance que los titulares ideológicos concretos de este poder).

No ha de asociarse, como hacían las teorías del progreso dieciochescas, “la maldad humana con un estado atrasado de desarrollo social”²⁵, cuando el mismo totalitarismo existió con anterioridad al siglo XX: bástenos con poner el ejemplo de las antiguas monarquías absolutas de Sumeria, Babilonia o Asiria. Hablando con propiedad, no nos hallamos ante el totalitarismo de una razón de izquierdas o derechas sino ante un *totalitarismo vírico* (inseparable de un *totalitarismo de poder*), el cual no solo sirve de arma para estas razones sino que, a la vez, las desarma de toda presunción. Es por ello que nace un nuevo *logos del virus*, excusadamente suyo, que determina nuevos discursos y planteamientos en regímenes ideológicos dispares; obligándoles a hablar y actuar de distinto modo (obedeciendo a la lógica del SARS-CoV-2) con tal de no perder su hegemonía. La política de Estado, a través del vehículo vírico en su discurso y acciones gubernamentalistas, se transmuta en *biopolítica*; como leemos en Giorgio Agamben:

Y cuando, como Foucault ha mostrado, el Estado, a partir del siglo XVIII, comienza a incluir entre sus tareas esenciales el cuidado de la vida de la población, transformándose así la política en biopolítica, es ante todo por una progresiva generalización y redefinición del concepto de vida vegetativa u orgánica (que coincide ahora con el patrimonio biológico de la nación) que este realizará su nueva vocación.²⁶

La biopolítica y las biotecnologías, como se evidencia en la actualidad, se pueden aliar en regímenes antagónicos; si bien lo que hemos vivido ha sido muy extraño para la razón moderna: primero fuimos afectados moralmente por un ente microscópico del cual carecíamos del saber y las técnicas apropiados para combatirlo. Es cierto que Fukuyama

25. *Ibid.*, 33.

26. Giorgio Agamben, “La inmanencia absoluta,” en *Ensayos sobre biopolítica. Excesos de vida*, eds. Gabriel Gorgi y Fermín Rodríguez (Barcelona: Paidós, 2007), 79.

denunciaba que las teorías contemporáneas del progreso habían puesto su acento en la tecnología y la economía, siendo inversamente proporcional al progreso moral e intelectual de los pueblos. Sin embargo –y esto se nos antoja muy sorprendente– se ha notado que, con esta pandemia, ha sucedido peregrinamente lo contrario: la mayor concienciación moral que hemos tenido, al menos escenificada y difundida en los medios de comunicación social, ha sido meridianamente posible *en polémica con el escaso desarrollo biotecnológico inicial sobre este tipo de coronavirus* en la primera ola del contagio.

De hecho, es muy discutible la afirmación de Fukuyama de que “solo se puede hablar de progreso histórico si se sabe hacia dónde va la humanidad”²⁷, lo cual, aun careciendo de *telos* ante el coronavirus que se persigue investigar, no ha sido así debido a que el fin de la humanidad se impuso sobre los fines tecnocientíficos y económicos; precisamente en un primer confinamiento global durante el cual menos se sabía de este minúsculo y contagioso ente.

4. ¿Las democracias se volverán más robustas en esta pandemia?

La lógica vírica es muy osada. Žižek daba la razón al político iraní Iraj Harirchi, viceministro de Salud, cuando admitió que “este virus es democrático y no distingue entre pobres y ricos o entre estadista y ciudadano común”.²⁸ Se ha dicho, quizá muy ingenuamente, que este virus nos hará respetar más la democracia porque se nos quitó el espacio público a través de los confinamientos más estrictos decretados a lo largo de estos meses. Pero ello no nos sustrajo el acceso masivo a las redes de internet. ¿Caminaremos hacia un fortalecimiento de la democracia en el actual contexto pandémico? Creemos que no. También los sistemas democráticos han restringido la vida humana no solo con ocasión de esta pandemia (en una similar lógica vírica), sino cambiando las formas según su adscripción política.

Más que ser incomunicados de las plazas públicas de protesta y expresión ciudadana, a todos –salvando a quienes sufren la brecha digital–

27. *Ibid.*, 34.

28. Slavoj Žižek, “Coronavirus es un golpe al capitalismo al estilo de ‘Kill Bill’ y podría conducir a la reinención del comunismo,” en *Sopa de Wuhan. Pensamiento contemporáneo en tiempos de pandemias*, ed. Pablo Amadeo (Buenos Aires: ASPO, 2020), 25.

se nos confinó en las redes, donde el poder se ejerce con mucha inmediatez y donde arrolla la post-verdad. Como se aprecia, la historia está hecha de involuciones, o más bien, al carecer de una teleología estrictamente inmanente, se torna relativo lo que se puede discernir como un avance o un retroceso. Como ha analizado Roberto Esposito, la búsqueda de la inmunidad podría ser una metáfora biológica tanto de la protección contra las amenazas externas, de una biopolítica que busca disciplinar los cuerpos, como de una inmunidad jurídica (inmunidad de Estado habitualmente) difícil de rebatir y abatir:

En el centro de este pasaje se encuentra el paradigma de inmunidad, al cual es difícil acceder por el lado del *cum*, porque deriva su significado, negativo o privativo, precisamente del término *munus*. Si la *communitas* es aquello que liga a sus miembros en un empeño donativo del uno al otro, la *immunitas*, por el contrario, es aquello que libra de esta carga, que exonera de este peso. Así como la comunidad reenvía a algo general y abierto, la inmunidad, o la inmunización, lo hace a la particularidad privilegiada de una situación definida por sustraerse a una condición común. Esto es evidente en la definición jurídica, según la cual goza de inmunidad –parlamentaria o diplomática– aquel que no se encuentra sujeto a una jurisdicción que concierne a todos los demás ciudadanos por derogación de la ley común. Pero es por otra parte reconocible en la acepción médica y biológica del término, en relación a la cual la inmunización, natural o inducida, implica la capacidad del organismo, de resistir, gracias a sus propios anticuerpos, a una infección procedente de un virus externo. Superponiendo las dos semánticas, la jurídica y la médica, bien se puede concluir que, si la comunidad determina la fractura de las barreras de protección de la identidad individual, la inmunidad constituye el intento de reconstruirla en una forma defensiva y ofensiva contra todo elemento externo capaz de amenazarla. Esto puede valer para los individuos singulares, pero también para la mismas comunidades, tomadas en este caso en su dimensión particular; inmunizadas respecto a todo elemento extraño que pareciera amenazarlas desde el exterior.²⁹

Cuando el discurso sobre la comunidad se convierte en el de la inmunidad se desvía la atención en sentido contrario a la prioridad social de crear lazos comunes y actuar por el bien común, bajo el epígrafe que protegernos sobre todo individualmente –en un “sálvese quien pueda”– de los corpúsculos víricos o ideológicos amenazantes. Está claro que se debe vacunar a la población y que la inmunidad médica es necesaria en el contexto urgente de la pandemia actual. Pero si un totalitarismo de guante

29. Roberto Esposito, “Inmunidad, comunidad, biopolítica,” *Las torres de Lucca* 0 (2012): 104.

blanco y creador de su propia lógica vírica politizada utiliza –al acecho de la democracia– la inmunidad sólo en sentido jurídico, nos enfrentamos a un gran desafío contra las libertades cívicas, aunque objective el problema en la creación, elaboración y distribución de vacunas para prevenir la enfermedad y salvar la vida a la población. Esta se nos antoja, pues, como una situación biopolítica que se presta fácilmente a la equivoicidad o, cuando menos, a la ambigüedad de desnudar la vida humana – como *nuda vita* sospechosamente biológica– de todo lo que pueda resultar una amenaza a la protección inmunitaria del sistema dominante: “[...] la ambivalencia del conflicto biopolítico en curso, en el que la libertad y la felicidad de los hombres se juegan sobre el mismo terreno –la vida desnuda– que señala su sumisión al poder”.³⁰ En esta guisa, el discurso político y el discurso biológico se entretajan de forma ambigua para hacer efectiva esta sumisión a tenor de la objetivación del nuevo coronavirus.

Asimismo y en esta poliédrica objetivación, en las democracias se pueden hacer que las promesas de los planes de vacunación funjan de cebo para su propia inmunización jurídica contra la contestación ciudadana, contra la atención a problemas de salud y sociales más allá de la *covidización* de la política, así como para difundir una imagen de mayor fortaleza gubernamental (que convierten su enrevesado juego de poder y la condición humana en un craso problema biológico, en detrimento de una “vida cualificada” por nuestra dimensión espiritual humana):

De ahí el doble nudo implícito en la dinámica inmunitaria –ya típico de la modernidad y hoy cada vez más extendido en todos los ámbitos de la experiencia individual y colectiva, real e imaginaria. La inmunidad, aunque necesaria para la conservación de nuestra vida, una vez llevada más allá de un cierto umbral, la constriñe en una suerte de jaula en la que acaba por perderse no sólo nuestra libertad, sino el sentido mismo de nuestra existencia –o bien aquel abrirse de la existencia hacia fuera de sí misma a la cual se ha dado el nombre de *communitas*. He aquí la contradicción que he intentado poner de relieve en mis trabajos: aquello que salvaguarda el cuerpo –individual, social, político– es también lo que al mismo tiempo impide su desarrollo. Y aquello que también, sobrepasando cierto umbral, amenaza con destruirlo. Para emplear los términos de Benjamin, se podría decir que la inmunización en dosis elevadas es el sacrificio de lo viviente, esto es, de toda forma de vida cualificada, por razón de la simple supervivencia. La reducción de la vida a su desnuda base biológica. [...] Desde el momento mismo en que el dispositivo inmunitario deviene el síndrome, a la vez defensivo y ofensivo, de

30. Giorgio Agamben, “La inmanencia absoluta,” en *Ensayos sobre biopolítica. Excesos de vida*, eds. Gabriel Gorgi y Fermín Rodríguez (Barcelona: Paidós, 2007), 80.

nuestro tiempo, la comunidad se presenta como el lugar destinado, la forma real y simbólica, a la resistencia frente al exceso de inmunización que nos captura sin cesar.³¹

Si la Covid-19 significa un cebo más para la biopolítica de la sumisión, el sentido de comunidad, con sus valores de convivencia, tolerancia, solidaridad, reconocimiento recíproco, queda expuesta al desmembramiento a merced de la búsqueda febril de la inmunidad de unos antes que otros. Cuando la inmunidad, en su investigación, adquisición o planificación contra este coronavirus, se hace sinónimo de *impunidad* –incluso de las democracias liberales más centristas– tenemos mucho que temer y desvelar. Por ello y según esta biopolítica, tenemos motivos para este temor si, de modo similar a Fukuyama, pensamos que el liberalismo consiste en el fin de la historia.

Criticando a Fukuyama, tampoco la historia ha tendido hacia una mayor democratización de la vida, tal y como se pudo comprobar en el comunismo y el fascismo como restricción y atropello de la participación de las personas (físicas y jurídicas) en la sociedad. Pensamos, por el contrario, que las democracias de izquierda o de derecha, si todavía se acepta esta división maniquea, se declinan en conformidad con un similar *logos vírico* y no a la inversa: en las primeras se justifican comúnmente las restricciones sociales bajo la rúbrica de la defensa del estudio científico epidemiológico, mientras que en las segundas se prefieren los eslóganes y restricciones para frenar más rápidamente los contagios con una mayor limitación externa de las libertades con la predominante finalidad de salvar la economía. Una y otra cosa no son sino distintas pero convergentes lógicas víricas, en las que el coronavirus –como hemos dicho– arma y desarma a la vez a los sistemas políticos y a sus diferentes razones.

4.1. *¿Des-bipolarizar las democracias?*

Creemos que la erradicación de la Covid-19 no solo no beneficia a este contexto sino que se agrava grandemente a causa de la organización y discurso bipolar en las democracias actuales. O izquierda o derecha es el falso dilema de una política beligerante que nos entretiene en un *Juego de Tronos*, en el cual no se acaba de mapear el tránsito de poder más influyente y peligroso que el maniqueísmo pueril que las partitocracias encubren. No obsta afirmar, pues, que este coronavirus ha sido instrumen-

31. *Ibid.*, 105.

talizado como bandera de discusión; con tal de conseguir todo menos su completa contención.

Así pues, se creyó que el *totalitarismo* de la izquierda y el *autoritarismo* de la derecha (Fukuyama hizo esta tendenciosa distinción)³² constituían unas clamorosas amenazas para una continuación lineal y acumulativa de la historia: el segundo todavía permitía rebelión y el disenso, mientras que el primero era más difícil de vencer al anular el criterio personal, es decir, al convertir al ser humano –al ciudadano– en un colectivo impersonal, esto es, una masa informe –llamada vagamente “pueblo”– más cómoda de manejar y vulnerar en su anomía. A diferencia de la violación exterior de las libertades –se mantiene teóricamente que el ser humano individual es libre– por parte de la auto-inmunización de la ultraderecha restrictiva, en los regímenes totalitarios de la izquierda radical no existe una especial posibilidad de progreso en los seres humanos considerados individualmente, porque a estos se les despoja, con mayor o menor discurso populista, de su criterio personal crítico. Mas la historia depende e implica la individualidad personal, de donde dimana la libertad, ya que los pueblos sin los ciudadanos no existen más que como entes de razón.

Por un lado y si, en este contexto pandémico, las democracias más escoradas a la izquierda usan su lógica vírica a fin de vaciar de criterio personal crítico a la población ante el supremacismo de las biotecnologías y las ciencias de la vida, no cabe hablar de ningún tipo de fortalecimiento democrático como fruto de la Covid-19. Estas ciencias y tecnologías no son en absoluto *in-interesadas* y neutras, sino que su producción (o auto-producción) está culturalmente reglada de un lado a otro. No se puede aplacar la crítica porque toda empresa humana, incluidas las ciencias, son perfectibles al estar sometidas a la provisionalidad histórica. No en vano Pierre Bourdieu evidenciaba el “racismo de la inteligencia”³³ de ciertos sectores, no sólo de derechas, sino de la propia izquierda cultivada a la que él mismo pertenecía. De este modo, el “racismo de la inteligencia” consiste, según las palabras del sociólogo francés, en “la forma de sociodicea [*sociodicée*] característica de una clase dominante [la que se autodenomina “élite”] el poder descansa en parte sobre la tenencia de títulos que, como los títulos escolares, se supone que son garantías de la inteligencia y que han ocupado el lugar; en muchas sociedades, [...] para el mismo acceso a posiciones de poder económico, [como] con títulos antiguos

32. Francis Fukuyama, *El fin de la historia y el último hombre* (Bogotá: Planeta, 1992), 36.

33. Cf. Gérard Mauger, “Populisme (2),” *Savoir/Agir* 15 (2011): 85-88.

como los títulos de propiedad y títulos de nobleza”.³⁴ La *sociodicea progresista*, inmunizadora de unas élites aliadas con la ciencia contra el salvajismo fascista, esconde esta suerte de racismo intelectual con la misma voluntad de dominación que se critica en los contrarios.

Conviene que el lector repare por qué se ha de *des-bipolarizar* el sistema democrático para volver a una *res publica* no simplistamente centrista, propia de una política desenfadada y responsable para con todas las implicaciones del bien común y no solamente con el del propio grupo ideológico. No basta lo que está pasando fácticamente, postergando el calado sanitario de esta pandemia. Por otro lado y si en esta pandemia las democracias inclinadas a la derecha sobreponen el factor económico sobre el epistemológico lo que conseguirán, aunque suscriban teóricamente que el ser humano sea libre y pueda conocer la realidad, será dirigir externamente su conducta hacia el consumo y al rendimiento como meta preponderante del proteccionismo o del capitalismo auto-inmunizados.

Desafortunadamente, tanto derechas como las izquierdas buscan auto-inmunizarse jurídicamente, siendo secundario el SARS-CoV-2 como problema que atañe a la salud pública. El virus sigue matando. Aunque la uniformidad autoritaria de la sociedad es común tanto a la derecha como a la izquierda (la izquierda no deja de poseer sus castas epistemológicas), Fukuyama pensó que el totalitarismo izquierdista frenaba todavía más el devenir histórico porque desalmaba al individuo, mientras que la ultraderecha refrenaba a un ser humano que, de todos modos, puede teóricamente rebelarse:

Mientras los primeros [los regímenes de derecha] “dejan intactas las asignaciones existentes de riqueza, poder y prestigio” y “adoran dioses tradicionales y observan tabús tradicionales”, los totalitarismos radicales de la izquierda tratan de obtener “jurisdicción sobre el conjunto de la sociedad” y violan “valores y hábitos interiorizados”. Un Estado totalitario, en contraste con otro meramente autoritario, podía controlar la subyacente sociedad tan implacablemente que era fundamentalmente invulnerable al cambio y a la reforma; por esto “la historia del presente siglo no ofrece razones para esperar que los regímenes totalitarios radicales se transformen”.³⁵

34. Pierre Bourdieu, “Le racisme de l’intelligence,” en *Questions de sociologie*, ed. Pierre Bourdieu (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1980), 264-268.

35. Francis Fukuyama, *El fin de la historia y el último hombre* (Bogotá: Planeta, 1992), 36.

5. Conclusión: la *parresia* como propuesta en un tiempo incierto

¿Qué se puede proponer en un contexto tan delicado e incierto como el actual? ¿El pesimismo al que se refería Rahner conlleva claudicar en estas difíciles horas? Hemos admitido que el profetismo inmanente es un insulto a las víctimas y a la dignidad humana, ya que la Covid-19 ha perturbado el curso de la historia, si bien ya se hablaba –y se estudiaba décadas atrás– de la posibilidad de una pandemia de estas dimensiones globales. Hablar de forma mítica del progreso posible, en medio de la muerte de los más vulnerables, no es la opción a tomar. La historia no se acabará con la Covid-19, ciertamente, ni esto ha sido nuestro hilo argumentativo, sino que pensamos que más vale que nunca una pandemia como esta no nos sea una dispensa para asumir una lógica capciosa, donde se perpetúen las dominaciones y donde la desgracia de enfermar o morir infectados sea lo que menos preocupe e importe.

Un virus, tanto en el plano biológico como funcionando como objetivación para hacer Estados más recalcitrantes en las desigualdades y el dominio de los *infectos ideológicos*, no es nada deseable. En este sentido, admitiendo el pesimismo que intentamos superar (lo cual bien se podría tildar de *realismo biopolítico*), nos hemos de afanar para conseguir la inmunidad médica de la población y desenmascarar las extralimitaciones disciplinarias. Esto será mucho más preferible a profetas a sueldo del totalitarismo, a positivismos –neo-comtianos y también panfletarios– que objetivan la Covid-19, ocultando las intencionalidades y la *Weltanschauung* más decisiva para poder reconducir la historia. No se trata de enarbolar un pesimismo conservador, como el del neohegeliano Fukuyama sino de un realismo biopolítico crítico, que incluso deja un mayor margen de acción a las ciencias para liquidar la pandemia que una postura ambigua que la moldea y la contornea en la *hybris* del poder.

De esta forma, nos recordará Amengual³⁶ que en Foucault –creemos esto que puede servir como complemento al estadounidense– “la pregunta que tom[a] como punto de partida es ‘¿qué somos, y qué somos hoy? ¿Qué es ese instante que es el nuestro?’”.³⁷ Se glosa mucho sobre la Covid-19 y cómo la afrontan los Estados pero ¿qué sucede con cada uno de nosotros? ¿Podemos invertir la(s) lógica(s) víricas imperantes? Al retomar estas

36. Gabriel Amengual, *Hitos históricos de la Antropología Filosófica* (Granada: Editorial Comares, 2020), 193.

37. Foucault, Michel, *Obrar mal, decir la verdad: función de la confesión en la justicia* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2014), 257.

preguntas en plena totalización inmanente de una pandemia en la que estamos a expensas de que se nos prive de toda voz de análisis, crítica o protesta, nos inclinamos por la puesta en práctica de una ética de la *epimeleia heautou* (cuidado de sí mismo) compatible con el cuidado de los demás, en la que “la *parresia*, la apertura completa del propio corazón a otros, que implica una coincidencia exacta entre creencia y verdad [...] es a la vez un ejercicio de la libertad, que abre a un riesgo, por el que se requiere el coraje de la verdad”.³⁸ En conformidad con Frédéric Gros se explica el vocablo heterotópico de “*parresia*”:

Lo cierto es que [...] la noción misma de *parresia* conlleva en tal medida un elogio de la palabra viva que encuentra en la oralidad su elemento natural. *Parresia* es un término griego que alude al hecho de “decirlo todo”. Desde luego, esto puede significar decir cualquier cosa, sin hacer una selección, sin moderación ni freno, pero también, y acaso sobre todo, atreverse a decir lo que nuestra cobardía o nuestra vergüenza nos impiden revelar de inmediato; o, aún más simplemente: expresarse con sinceridad y franqueza. Hablar sin pudor y sin temor. Por ende, puede traducírsele como “hablar franco”, “decir veraz”, “coraje de la verdad”, “libertad de palabra”.³⁹

Puesto que esto no se trata de una simple salida moralista a la pandemia sino de una heterotopía en que, al hablar con franqueza y valentía lo que es y lo que somos⁴⁰ en la misma acción transformadora del mundo, se nos remite a Herder, para quien el hombre era un *ser carencial*, así como a la insignificancia nietzscheana de la vida humana, de suerte que cabe aportar una biopolítica de la *vita activa* (como rubricaba Hannah Arendt) que confiese y denuncie;⁴¹ la cual es de todo punto indiscernible sin la hermenéutica del sujeto como su relevo y su más punzante cuestionadora. En estos tiempos de viralización de los bulos y de gobiernos informativamente opacos o que silencian impudicamente a los disidentes, es oportuna una *parresia* –como actitud y valor– que no alimenta sistemas o libretos de baja política, siendo, por consiguiente, una propuesta a tener en cuenta en este tiempo de pesimismo y desánimo generalizados. En momentos inciertos podemos optar por cuidar y decir la verdad, actuándola políticamente, en una humanidad

38. Gabriel Amengual, *Hitos históricos de la Antropología Filosófica* (Granada: Editorial Comares, 2020), 196.

39. Frédéric Gros, “Introducción,” en Michel Foucault, *Discurso y verdad. Conferencias sobre el coraje de decirlo todo. Grenoble, 1982 / Berkeley, 1983* (Bogotá: Siglo XXI Editores, 2017), 17.

40. Foucault, en su heterotopía de la *parresia*, suponía una ontología de la verdad.

41. Hannah Arendt, *La condición humana* (Barcelona: Paidós, 2016), 277.

enferma y contagiada, en tanto que llamada a la ética política no solo a los gobernantes, a las instituciones públicas o privadas, a los medios de comunicación, sino a cada cual por igual.

Por ello y más allá de la propuesta cosmopolitista de Markus Gabriel,⁴² las democracias sólo alcanzarán su desarrollo si renuncian a una capciosa lógica vírica totalitaria, en la que la ciudadanía pueda prescindir del boletín partidista bipolar que esconde los parentescos entre los titulares del poder y, de ese modo pueda exclamar –en su inquietud de sí– un *parresíaco* “no” a la manipulación y amparar “la vida como bien supremo”.⁴³ En resumidas cuentas y en contraste con esto, ha habido en el cristianismo un rechazo tradicional y contemporáneo del optimismo exacerbado de los proyectos absolutamente intramundanos e inmanentes:

Mediante este “no” al optimismo tanto idealista como comunista del futuro, el cristianismo no sólo cree dar testimonio de la verdad, sino también servir a un “mundo mejor” del más acá. Cree haber ofrecido al mundo suficientes imperativos y obligaciones morales, hasta la responsabilidad ante Dios, hasta el peligro de la culpa eterna. Opina que su pesimismo histórico es, por tanto, el servicio más adecuado para mejorar el mundo aquí y ahora, dado que la utopía según la cual los hombres puedan con sus propios medios construirse un mundo que se mueve en pura armonía, conduce indefectiblemente a mayores violencias y crueldades que las que quisiéramos erradicar del mundo.⁴⁴

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42. Markus Gabriel, “El virus, el sistema letal y algunas pistas para después de la pandemia,” en *Sopa de Wuhan. Pensamiento contemporáneo en tiempos de pandemias*, ed. Pablo Amadeo (Buenos Aires: ASPO, 2020), 134: “Cuando pase la pandemia viral necesitaremos una pandemia metafísica, una unión de todos los pueblos bajo el techo común del cielo del que nunca podremos evadirnos. Vivimos y seguiremos viviendo en la tierra; somos y seguiremos siendo mortales y frágiles. Convirtámonos, por tanto, en ciudadanos del mundo, en cosmopolitas de una pandemia metafísica. Cualquier otra actitud nos exterminará y ningún virólogo nos podrá salvar.”
43. *Ibid.*, 338.
44. Karl Rahner, *Curso fundamental sobre la fe* (Barcelona: Herder, 1979), 139-140.

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Filosofia, politica e società ai tempi della pandemia. Agamben e la «paranoia della ragione»

*Philosophy, Politics and Society in the Time of the Pandemic. Agamben and the
“Paranoia of Reason”*

ANTONIO DI CHIRO*

Abstract

In this essay we will try to analyze the thought of the philosopher Giorgio Agamben on the pandemic. The aim of the work is twofold. On the one hand, we will try to demonstrate that Agamben's positions on the pandemic are not to be understood as mere extemporaneous statements, but as integral parts of his philosophy. On the other hand, we will try to show how these positions are based on a deeply paranoid and anti-scientific vision, since Agamben believes that the effects of the epidemic have been exaggerated by the centers of power in order to create a “state of exception” that allows to crumble social life and to use the fear of poverty as a tool to dominate society. We will try to demonstrate that it is precisely starting from the critique of Agamben's positions that it is possible to rethink a philosophy and a politic to come and a new reorganization of social and intimate relations between human beings.

Keywords: Agamben, biopolitics, Byung-Chul Han, pandemic, reason, SARS-CoV-2, social and political philosophy.

1. Soglia

Hanno destato non poche perplessità gli interventi del filosofo italiano Giorgio Agamben sulla pandemia e sulle misure messe in atto dai vari governi per fronteggiare la diffusione del virus covid-19. Questi interventi hanno finito per produrre un “caso Agamben” che ha avuto un vasto clamore mediatico e hanno innescato un dibattito che ha toccato temi e concetti fondamentali della riflessione filosofica occidentale e ha portato a ridiscutere il ruolo della scienza, della medicina e della politica nelle società globalizzate.

Prima di analizzare gli interventi di Agamben sulla pandemia è opportuno partire dalle conseguenze prodotte dalla diffusione del virus.

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Innanzitutto bisogna sottolineare che ad entrare in crisi è stata non solo la dimensione politica, economica e sanitaria ma anche quella sociale e relazionale in quanto il virus ha messo in luce la fragilità degli esseri umani e ha diffuso nella vita delle persone una sensazione di sgomento, paura e incredulità. Chiusi dentro le proprie abitazioni, confinati dentro le mura delle loro case, gli individui si sono trovati ad essere monadi isolate, attori sociali irrelati senza possibilità di incontro e confronto se non quello digitale. Le relazioni umane hanno lasciato il posto ad algidi contatti on line: senza impegni, date e scadenze il tempo sembra aver perso la dimensione sociale e lo spazio condiviso delle interazioni umane è stato ridotto a una mera dimensione solipsistica. Nelle società ipertecnologiche del ventunesimo secolo, inoltre, ci è voluto molto tempo per riconoscere l'entità del pericolo e i suoi effetti devastanti in quanto il virus ha mostrato una violenza e una celerità di movimento che ha richiesto l'intervento di molteplici competenze, innanzitutto del personale medico e scientifico, ma anche della protezione civile, delle organizzazioni statali, dei sociologi, degli psicologi e soprattutto dei filosofi. Per quanto riguarda questi ultimi, da Nancy a Žižek, da Byung-Chul Han ad Agamben, si sono limitati a vedere nella situazione attuale il banco di prova e di conferma delle loro teorie.

Per Jean-Luc Nancy, l'era nella quale il virus ci ha condotti si presenta come una nuova e sconosciuta realtà con cui dobbiamo fare i conti. Secondo il filosofo francese, «Abbiamo sentito vacillare l'autosufficienza. Quella dell'individuo, quella del gruppo, quella dello Stato oppure di qualche istituzione internazionale, quella delle autorità scientifiche o morali»¹. La pandemia che ha colpito il mondo intero è «sotto tutti i riguardi un prodotto della mondializzazione»² e ha finito per aumentare il divario di classe tra ricchi e poveri, tra le élites che controllano il potere e le masse sempre più estromesse dalla sfera politica, contribuendo ad accentuare le tensioni sociali e le contraddizioni del sistema capitalistico. Inoltre, il virus ha prodotto un'erosione della dimensione sociale in quanto si è passati da un ambito comunitario a uno basato sulla solitudine, l'isolamento e il distanziamento³.

1. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Un trop humain virus* (Paris: Bayard, 2020), p. 79.

2. *Ibid.*, 16.

3. Di Nancy si veda anche "Eccezione virale", in *Antinomie*, <https://antinomie.it/index.php/2020/02/27/eccezione-virale/>. A questo intervento di Nancy ha risposto Roberto Esposito, "Curati a oltranza", in *Antinomie*, <https://antinomie.it/index.php/2020/02/28/curati-a-oltranza/>. Questi interventi, insieme a quelli di altri filosofi, sono usciti anche

Secondo Slavoj Žižek, il virus ha contribuito a mettere in crisi il capitalismo e ci ha spinti a immaginare una forma di società alternativa in grado di superare gli angusti confini dello Stato-nazione e che si può concretizzare nella dimensione comunitaria della cooperazione umana. Il virus costringerà a ripensare e a inventare un nuovo tipo di comunismo, non più basato sul controllo e sulla pianificazione dell'economia da parte dello Stato, ma su una solidarietà globale che permetta di superare la barriera di classe e i confini nazionali e consenta all'umanità di uscire dalla dimensione egoistica propria della società di mercato⁴.

Una posizione contraria a quella di Žižek è quella di Byung-Chul Han. Il filosofo coreano ha sostenuto che il virus fa irruzione in una società esausta e logorata dal capitalismo. Come reazione alla paura e allo spavento prodotti dall'irrompere del virus le frontiere tra gli Stati tornano a chiudersi e si alzano le «soglie immunologiche». In questo senso, il «panico sconfinato dinanzi al virus è una reazione immunitaria sociale, globale a un nuovo nemico. Una reazione immunitaria di rara intensità poiché abbiamo vissuto molto a lungo in una società senza nemici, in una società della positività. Ora il virus viene percepito come terrore permanente». Durante questa pandemia «la società della sopravvivenza mostra un volto inumano. L'Altro è prima di tutto un potenziale portatore di virus da cui bisogna prendere le distanze». Questo implica che, al contrario di Žižek, il virus non abatterà il capitalismo. Nei confronti di quest'ultimo, il virus ha solo una limitata azione frenante. Pertanto, la «rivoluzione virale non avrà luogo. Nessun virus può fare una rivoluzione. Il virus ci isola. Non produce nemmeno un forte senso di comunità. Ora ognuno è preoccupato per la propria sopravvivenza. La solidarietà di prendere le distanze gli uni dagli altri non è solidarietà»⁵.

Per quanto riguarda Agamben, invece, il suo primo intervento, dal titolo *Lo stato d'eccezione provocato da un'emergenza immotivata* è stato pubblicato su *Il Manifesto* il 26 febbraio 2020. All'articolo di Agamben è seguita la risposta di Jean-Luc Nancy, *Eccezione virale* e poi quella di Paolo

sull'*European Journal of Psychoanalysis*: <https://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/coronavirus-and-philosophers/>.

4. Slavoj Žižek, *Virus, catastrofe, solidarietà* (Milano: Ponte alle Grazie, 2020).
5. Byung Chul Han, *La società del virus tra Stato di polizia e isteria della sopravvivenza*, *Avvenire*, 7 febbraio 2020. È singolare, però notare che Byung Chul Han in *La società della stanchezza* (Milano: nottetempo, 2012), 7 aveva affermato che: «Ogni epoca ha le sue malattie. Così, c'è stata un'epoca batterica, finita con l'invenzione degli antibiotici. Nonostante l'immensa paura di una pandemia influenzale, oggi non viviamo in un'epoca virale».

Flores D'Arcais su *Micromega* del 16 marzo, *Filosofia e virus: le farneticazioni di Giorgio Agamben*. Secondo Agamben, i centri nevralgici del potere si sono serviti della situazione di crisi provocata dal virus per sferrare un duro colpo alla democrazia. In tal senso, secondo il filosofo italiano, i danni della pandemia sono stati deliberatamente ingigantiti dai centri del potere per creare uno stato d'emergenza che ha consentito l'abolizione della vita sociale, ha impedito libere riunioni, ha reso possibile il controllo capillare della vita dei singoli, ha utilizzato la paura come strumento di controllo e ha abolito lo studio in presenza sostituendolo con quello online. Lo «stato d'eccezione»⁶, ovvero la sospensione momentanea dell'ordine costituzionale vigente realizzata dal potere che di norma lo assicura, per Agamben ha creato le condizioni per una sorta di complotto basato sull'abolizione del diritto e su un'ipertrofia emotiva fondata sulla paura e ha consentito di inventare una pandemia. Tale invenzione ha abolito non solo la dimensione normativa del diritto ma anche quella sociale dei rapporti tra gli individui. In questo senso, l'epidemia ha assunto un valore politico, in quanto i cittadini si sono affidati alle misure emergenziali dei vari governi e questo ha creato una situazione di matrice hobbesiana basata sull'alienazione da parte degli individui dei loro diritti verso un sovrano assoluto.

Queste osservazioni introduttive, che hanno il compito di inquadrare i confini – alquanto mobili – entro i quali si muove il presente lavoro, ci permettono di instaurare un dialogo critico con le posizioni di Agamben (e degli altri filosofi) senza sminuirle nella loro implicita portata teoretica e soprattutto senza considerarle come mere esternazioni momentanee⁷. Al fine di evitare di imbatteci in queste fallacie, bisogna sgomberare il terreno da un pregiudizio teoretico che potrebbe ostacolare la nostra analisi e che, invece, come avremo modo di vedere, anima gli interventi di Agamben. Occorre evitare di incunearsi nei meandri di quella che potrebbe essere definita la «paranoia della ragione». A tal proposito, è interessante notare che Lyotard aveva parlato di «“paranoia” della

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6. Per quanto riguarda lo stato d'eccezione il riferimento è a Giorgio Agamben, *Stato d'eccezione* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2003). Per un'analisi del concetto di stato d'eccezione si veda Roberto Simoncini, "Un concetto di diritto pubblico: lo 'stato di eccezione' secondo Giorgio Agamben", *Diritto & Questioni pubbliche*, no. 8 (2008): 197-211.
 7. A tal proposito oltre al già citato articolo di Flores D'Arcais, si veda l'articolo di Angelo Cannata, "Coronavirus, anche intellettuali attenti possono perdere 'il senso della realtà'", *Il fatto quotidiano*, (20 marzo 2020), <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2020/03/23/coronavirus-anche-intellettuali-attenti-possono-perdere-il-senso-della-realta/5746004/>.

ragione»⁸, prendendo a prestito quest'espressione da Max Horkheimer⁹. Con questa espressione Lyotard si riferiva al fatto che un'analisi sistemica della società «essendo dotata dei mezzi per farsi realtà, è anche in grado di amministrare le proprie prove. È quella che Horkheimer chiamava la "paranoia" della ragione»¹⁰. Lyotard si riferiva al rischio che una «teoria "critica"»¹¹ della società, come quella proposta dagli autori della Scuola di Francoforte, potesse essere «incorporata alla programmazione della totalità sociale come mero strumento di ottimizzazione delle sue prestazioni» in quanto la «sua aspirazione ad una verità unitaria e totalizzante si presta alla pratica unitaria e totalizzante dei gestori del sistema»¹². Nel nostro caso, con l'espressione «"paranoia" della ragione», trasposta e declinata dall'ambito sociologico a quello teoretico, s'intende, da un lato il fatto che la pandemia che stiamo vivendo sembra aver rivelato l'incapacità dei filosofi di descrivere, comprendere e afferrare un reale sempre più liquido e proteiforme che, tornato in auge e al centro del dibattito filosofico dopo anni di oblio dovuto al postmoderno¹³, sembra beffarsi delle grandi narrazioni. Dall'altro lato, s'intende il tentativo dei filosofi di trovare conferma ai propri sistemi in ogni caso, anche a discapito dell'incontrovertibilità del reale. Alcune analisi filosofiche sulla pandemia, che per ora ci siamo limitati a riassumere, sembrano infatti richiamare alla mente l'immagine hegeliana della Nottola di Minerva, ovvero della filosofia che arriva sempre in ritardo: «Quando la filosofia dipinge a chiaroscuro, allora un aspetto della vita è invecchiato, e, dal chiaroscuro, esso non si lascia ringiovanire, ma soltanto riconoscere: la nottola di Minerva inizia il suo volo sul far del crepuscolo»¹⁴. Quando la filosofia si trova a fare

8. Jean-François Lyotard, *La condizione postmoderna* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2014): 27.

9. Max Horkheimer, *Eclisse della ragione* (Torino: Einaudi, 1969): 151.

10. Jean-François Lyotard, *La condizione postmoderna*, 27.

11. *Ibid.*, 28.

12. *Ibid.*, 27-28.

13. Sul ritorno del reale al centro del dibattito filosofico contemporaneo, nella sua duplice dimensione basata sulla critica al postmoderno e sulla ricerca di un reale perduto, si veda: Maurizio Ferraris, *Manifesto del nuovo realismo* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2012); Alain Badiou, *Alla ricerca del reale perduto* (Milano-Udine: Mimesis, 2015).

14. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lineamenti di filosofia del diritto* (Bari: Laterza) 1965, 17. Sulla «paranoia della ragione» in Agamben si veda l'articolo di Anastasia Berg, "Giorgio Agamben's Coronavirus Cluelessness. The Italian philosopher's interventions are symptomatic of theory's collapse into paranoia", *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (23 marzo 2020), <https://www.chronicle.com/article/giorgio-agambens-coronavirus-cluelessness/>.

i conti con il reale è costretta ad abbandonare l'aura oracolare, iniziatica e misterica perdendo la purezza cristallina che la caratterizzava e finisce, come ricorda Wittgenstein su una «lastra di ghiaccio dove manca l'attrito» e dove le condizioni sono ideali, ma dove non ci si può muovere. Allora v'è «bisogno dell'attrito e di tornare sul terreno scabro»¹⁵. Forse, la situazione di crisi che stiamo vivendo per via della pandemia potrebbe spingerci verso un ri-pensamento e una revisione di concetti e categorie della sfera filosofica e politica che ci permettano di analizzare il reale senza circoscriverlo e limitarlo in gabbie logiche che impediscono di cogliere la molteplicità insita nei fenomeni globali che caratterizzano il nuovo secolo¹⁶.

In questo lavoro procederemo dapprima con una ricostruzione degli interventi di Agamben sulla pandemia per proseguire poi lungo un duplice sentiero: da un lato, illustrare, in contrapposizione alla «filosofia del contatto» proposta da Agamben, l'architettura di una «fenomenologia dei rapporti intimi», ovvero di una dimensione legata al tema del corpo e del volto. Dall'altro lato, ci concentreremo su una disamina dei limiti del discorso di Agamben per quanto riguarda la dimensione politica, cercando di dimostrare come i temi riguardanti i rapporti e le relazioni tra i soggetti umani durante la pandemia non riguardino solo la sfera privata dell'intimità, ma anche quella del vivere comune. Pertanto, nella prima parte del lavoro, le critiche ad Agamben saranno svolte su un piano teoretico, mentre, nella seconda parte, saranno articolate sul versante della filosofia politica. L'idea di fondo è che il filosofo italiano abbia toccato, negli interventi sulla pandemia, dei punti giusti anche se in maniera incompleta e approssimativa e che abbia fornito interessanti spunti per temi e questioni che meritano di essere ampiamente sviluppati e che riguardano sia la dimensione teoretica sia quella politica.

Fatte queste lunghe e doverose premesse, iniziamo il confronto con gli interventi di Agamben.

15. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Ricerche filosofiche* (Torino: Einaudi, 1967): 65.

16. Per un quadro ampio sulla pandemia e sugli effetti del virus si vedano: Donatella Di Cesare, *Virus sovrano? L'asfissia capitalistica* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2020); Carmine Castoro, *Covideocracy. Virus, potere, media. Filosofia di una psicosi sociale* (Roma: Male Edizioni, 2020); Maddalena Bisollo, *Virus emotivo. La pandemia e le nostre emozioni: un libro di filosofia emozionale* (Torino: Pragma Society Books, 2020); Sebastiano Maffettone, *Il quarto shock: come un virus ha cambiato il mondo* (Roma: Luiss University Press, 2020); Giovanni Boniolo, *Il virus dell'idiozia. 7 scritti su covid-19, scienza, intellettuali e cittadini* (Milano-Udine: Mimesis, 2021).

2. «Così non viviamo ma aspettiamo di vivere»

Tutti gli interventi di Agamben sulla pandemia sono usciti online sul sito della casa editrice Quodlibet e poi sono stati raccolti in un volume dal titolo *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica*¹⁷. Il volume comprende sedici interventi, compreso un inedito dal titolo *Il diritto e la vita*. Inoltre, l'intervento del 26 febbraio uscito su Il Manifesto con il titolo *Lo stato d'eccezione provocato da un'emergenza immotivata* compare con un titolo diverso: *L'invenzione di un'epidemia*¹⁸. Nell'*Avvertenza* del volume Agamben introduce i temi da lui affrontati. Gli interventi cercano di far luce «sulle conseguenze etiche e politiche della cosiddetta pandemia e, insieme, di definire la trasformazione dei paradigmi politici che i provvedimenti di eccezione andavano disegnando». Emerge, sin da subito, l'incredulità del filosofo nei confronti della pandemia: «i poteri che governano il mondo hanno deciso di cogliere il pretesto di una pandemia – a questo punto non importa se vera o simulata – per trasformare da cima a fondo i paradigmi del loro governo degli uomini e delle cose»¹⁹. Agamben afferma che «i poteri dominanti» cercano di imporre una «Grande Trasformazione» al fine di attuare uno stato d'eccezione, ovvero «la pura e semplice sospensione delle garanzie costituzionali»²⁰. In questo percorso, il diritto alla salute del cittadino si trasforma in un obbligo di natura giuridica e religiosa. Questo connubio tra l'aspetto religioso della salute e il potere statale è chiamato da Agamben «biosicurezza»²¹ e si basa sulla distanza sociale, sulla separazione fisica e sulla diffusione di un crescente bisogno di sicurezza sanitaria.

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17. Giorgio Agamben, *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2020). Come introduzione al pensiero di Agamben si vedano: Lucia Dell'Aia (ed.), *Studi su Agamben* (Milano: Ledizioni, 2012); Leland de la Durantaye, *Giorgio Agamben: a critical introduction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Alex Murray, *Giorgio Agamben* (London-New York: Routledge, 2010); Adam Kotsko and Carlo Salzani, *Agamben's philosophical lineage* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017); Catherine Mills, *The philosophy of Agamben* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis LTD, 2008); Tom Frost (ed.), *Giorgio Agamben: legal, political and philosophy perspectives* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis LTD, 2015); Carlo Salzani, *Introduzione a Giorgio Agamben* (Genova: il Nuovo Melangolo, 2013).
18. Giorgio Agamben, *L'invenzione di un'epidemia*, in Id. *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica*, 17-20.
19. Giorgio Agamben, *Avvertenza*, in Id. *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica*, 11.
20. Ibid., 12.
21. Ibid., 13.

Nel primo intervento, *L'invenzione di un'epidemia*, Agamben afferma che le misure di emergenza messe in atto dai vari governi per fronteggiare quella che lui definisce «una supposta epidemia dovuta al coronavirus» siano state «frenetiche, irrazionali e del tutto immotivate» e che i media e le autorità hanno creato, diffuso e veicolato un clima di terrore, provocando un vero e proprio «stato di eccezione»²². Secondo il filosofo italiano, due fattori spiegano la tendenza ad utilizzare lo stato d'eccezione come normale strumento di governo. Da un lato, la «militarizzazione» delle aree in cui vi siano soggetti positivi. Dall'altro lato, la sensazione di paura che si è diffusa nella coscienza delle persone. Il primo elemento, ha contribuito a ridurre le libertà del cittadino. Infatti, sono stati fortemente limitati gli spostamenti e abolite del tutto le attività collettive e di gruppo, da quelle di carattere ludico a quelle sportive, fino a quelle concorsuali. Per quanto riguarda il secondo punto, il terrore e l'insicurezza che hanno investito le vite degli individui si sono tradotti «in un vero e proprio bisogno di stati di panico collettivo»²³. La conclusione di Agamben è che «una gigantesca onda di paura» stia attraversando «l'umanità, e i potenti del mondo la guidano e orientano per i loro fini»²⁴. Questo genera un perverso circolo vizioso in quanto il contenimento della libertà attuato dai governi viene accettato in cambio di un desiderio di difesa e protezione che è stato provocato dagli stessi governi che ora agiscono per soddisfarlo.

Questo primo intervento contiene, in sintesi, tutti gli argomenti di Agamben a proposito della pandemia. Gli altri interventi si limitano a fornire delle glosse e delle aggiunte nonché dei presunti chiarimenti in cui il filosofo finirà, in realtà, per ribadire le sue posizioni.

In questi altri interventi Agamben, inoltre, riflette anche sull'idea di contagio e sugli effetti sociali della pandemia. Secondo lui, una delle conseguenze più tragiche del panico creatosi in quella che lui definisce come la «cosiddetta epidemia» è «nella stessa idea di contagio» che «era estranea alla medicina ippocratica»²⁵. In queste poche righe il discorso di Agamben inizia a mostrare il suo lato vulnerabile in quanto egli non spiega perché l'idea di contagio avrebbe dovuto essere presente nella medicina ippocratica, come se questa fosse una sorta di testo sacro e contenesse una rigida e definitiva tassonomia delle malattie e come se quest'ultime

22. Ibid., 17.

23. Ibid., 19.

24. Ibid., 20.

25. Ibid., 21.

fossero entità archetipe non soggette a modificazioni spazio-temporali. La vulnerabilità del discorso di Agamben emerge anche quando egli analizza la «figura dell'untore» riprendendola dalla *Storia della colonna infame* di Manzoni. Secondo lui, «fatte le debite differenze, le recenti disposizioni [...] trasformano di fatto ogni individuo in un potenziale untore, esattamente come quelle sul terrorismo consideravano di fatto e di diritto ogni cittadino come un terrorista in potenza»²⁶. Il problema che Agamben non vede è che le disposizioni non trasformano gli individui in possibili untori, casomai l'esatto contrario: le disposizioni evitano che ogni individuo possa essere un potenziale untore. Il distanziamento fisico che intercorre tra ogni singolo individuo ha il preciso compito di tutelare i soggetti e di impedire la diffusione del contagio. Agamben si limita in questo caso a capovolgere la realtà e il senso effettivo delle misure attuate per prevenire la diffusione del virus in maniera alquanto parossistica. Questo procedimento del filosofo italiano, su cui avremo modo di tornare, sembra ricalcare quello che Marx, criticando Hegel, aveva definito come «misticismo logico», ovvero un processo che trasforma la realtà effettiva, i fenomeni reali e concreti in allegorie e personificazioni di realtà spirituali che se ne stanno occultate dietro di esse: da un lato, il virus, la paura e lo sgomento che regnano tra gli individui; dall'altro lato, «i potenti del mondo», i «poteri dominanti» che cercano di imporre una «Grande Trasformazione». Per ora, possiamo affermare che, esaminando l'arcano di tale edificio speculativo, il pensiero di Agamben si basa sul capovolgimento del rapporto tra soggetto e predicato, tra concreto e astratto, finendo in tal modo per strizzare l'occhio alle teorie paranoiche e complottiste della società che si basano sull'idea rudimentale che dietro ogni evento vi siano poteri forti nascosti nell'ombra che tramano alle spalle degli ignari cittadini²⁷.

26. Ibid., 22-23.

27. Per quanto riguarda la teoria cospiratoria il riferimento è a Karl Popper, *Logica della ricerca e società aperta* (Brescia: La Scuola, 1989), 165: Per Popper tale teoria «consiste nella convinzione che la spiegazione di un fenomeno sociale consista nella scoperta degli uomini o dei gruppi che sono interessati al verificarsi di tale fenomeno (talvolta si tratta di un interesse nascosto che dev'essere prima rivelato) e che hanno progettato e congiurato per promuoverlo». Sulla teoria cospiratoria si vedano anche: Franks Bradley, Adrian Bangerter and Martin W. Bauer: "Conspiracy theories as quasi-religious mentality: an integrated account from cognitive science, social representations theory, and frame theory", *Frontiers in Psychology*, no. 4 (2013): 1-12; Brian L. Keeley, "Of conspiracy theories". *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 96, no. 3 (1999): 109-126; Jeffrey M. Bale, "Political paranoia v. political realism: on distinguishing between bogus conspiracy theories and genuine conspiratorial politics". *Patterns of Prejudice* 41, no. 1 (2007): 45-60; Cass Sunstein and Adrian Vermeule, "Conspiracy theories: Causes and

Agamben ribadisce queste sue osservazioni in un altro intervento del 17 marzo 2020 dal titolo *Chiarimenti*, in cui introduce un diretto riferimento al concetto di «nuda vita». Gli uomini si sono talmente assuefatti a vivere in condizioni di emergenza e non si rendono conto che la loro vita è stata ridotta a una dimensione esclusivamente biologica e ha smarrito ogni aspetto sociale, politico e emotivo²⁸. Il concetto di nuda vita fornisce ad Agamben lo spunto per affrontare la questione del Potere: «Si direbbe che gli uomini non credono più a nulla – tranne che alla nuda esistenza biologica che occorre a qualunque costo salvare, ma sulla paura di perdere la vita si può fondare solo una tirannia, solo il mostruoso Leviatano con la sua spada sguainata»²⁹. Per Agamben, il dispositivo politico che si è imposto nella nostra epoca si basa, dunque, su un connubio tra lo stato d'eccezione e la nuda vita³⁰. Nell'intervento dal titolo *La nuda vita*, testo di un'intervista alla Radio pubblica svedese, egli afferma che «lo stato d'eccezione è il meccanismo che permette la trasformazione delle democrazie in Stati totalitari»³¹. In questa situazione, la nuda vita si basa sul fatto che abbiamo scisso «l'unità della nostra esperienza vitale, che è sempre inseparabilmente insieme corporea e spirituale» in «una entità puramente biologica da una parte (la nuda vita) e in una vita affettiva e culturale dall'altra»³². Altri elementi che costituiscono l'architettura di questo dispositivo politico sono, da un lato, il ruolo svolto dalla medicina e, dall'altro lato il tema della biosicurezza. Il primo elemento è affrontato da Agamben in un intervento del 2 maggio 2020 dal titolo *La medicina come religione*. In esso Agamben afferma che la scienza, e nello specifico, la medicina

cures". *Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 17, no. 2 (2009): 202-227; Ted Goertzel, "Belief in conspiracy theories". *Political Psychology*, vol. 15, no. 4 (1994): 731-742.

28. Cfr. Giorgio Agamben, *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica*, 26-27.
29. Giorgio Agamben, *Riflessioni sulla peste*, in Id., *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica*, 35. Sul concetto di nuda vita in Agamben si veda Carlo Salzani, "Nudità e vita", *Lo Sguardo*, no. 15 (2014): 133-147. Sulla valenza politica del concetto di nuda vita si vedano i lavori di David Kishik, *The power of life: Agamben and the coming politics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001) e Matteo Calarco and Steven De Caroli (eds.), *Giorgio Agamben: sovereignty and life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).
30. Per Agamben il dispositivo è un termine tecnico decisivo nella strategia del pensiero di Foucault e riguarda la manipolazione dei rapporti di forza in vista del dominio e del controllo del potere. Cfr. Giorgio Agamben, *Che cos'è un dispositivo?* (Roma: nottetempo, 2006). Si veda anche Gilles Deleuze, *Che cos'è un dispositivo?* (Napoli: Cronopio, 2007).
31. Giorgio Agamben, *La nuda vita*, in Id., *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica*, 53.
32. *Ibid.*, 54.

sia divenuta la religione della nostra epoca tramite un processo che ha portato la scienza medica a sostituirsi al cristianesimo e al capitalismo e che si è articolato in cinque punti

Il primo punto riguarda il fatto che la medicina prende in prestito dalla biologia i suoi elementi fondamentali e li riduce a una contrapposizione manichea tra «un dio o un principio maligno, la malattia, appunto, i cui agenti specifici sono i batteri e i virus, e un dio o un principio benefico, che non è la salute, ma la guarigione, i cui agenti culturali sono i medici e la terapia»³³.

Il secondo punto riguarda l'onnipervasività della dimensione medica: «la vita intera degli esseri umani deve diventare in ogni istante il luogo di una ininterrotta celebrazione culturale. Il nemico, il virus, è sempre presente e deve essere combattuto incessantemente e senza tregua»³⁴.

Il terzo punto si basa sul fatto che «la pratica culturale non è più libera e volontaria, esposta solo a sanzioni di ordine spirituale, ma deve essere resa normativamente obbligatoria»³⁵. Questo è stato possibile in quanto «la religione di Cristo e la religione del denaro» hanno «ceduto il primato, apparentemente senza combattere, alla medicina e alla scienza»³⁶.

Gli ultimi due punti riguardano la dimensione soteriologica che il cristianesimo ha accantonato e che è stata raccolta dalla medicina.

Se si osserva lo stato d'eccezione che stiamo vivendo, si direbbe che la religione medica coniughi insieme la crisi perpetua del capitalismo con l'idea cristiana di un tempo ultimo, di un *eschaton* in cui la decisione estrema è sempre in corso e la fine viene insieme precipitata e dilazionata, nel tentativo incessante di poterla governare, senza però mai risolverla una volta per tutte³⁷.

Per quanto riguarda, invece, il tema della biosicurezza è affrontato in un intervento dell'11 maggio 2020. La biosicurezza si basa sull'«assoluta cessazione di ogni attività politica e di ogni rapporto sociale come la massima forma di partecipazione civica»³⁸ e sulla sicurezza sanitaria come tema centrale delle strategie politiche nazionali e internazionali. Il

33. Giorgio Agamben, *La medicina come religione*, in Id., *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica*, 70.

34. Ibid., 71.

35. Ibid., 72.

36. Ibid., 73.

37. Ibid., 74.

38. Giorgio Agamben, *Biosicurezza e politica*, in Id., *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica*, 79.

riferimento di Agamben è al libro di Patrick Zylberman del 2103, *Tempêtes microbiennes*, in cui si descrive la creazione di uno scenario incentrato sul «“terrore sanitario”»³⁹ tramite tre punti: la realizzazione di uno scenario artificioso che permette di governare in una condizione di confusione; l'«adozione della logica del peggio come regime di razionalità politica» e, infine, la produzione di «una sorta di civismo superlativo in cui gli obblighi imposti vengono presentati come prove di altruismo e il cittadino non ha più un diritto alla salute (*health safety*), ma diventa giuridicamente obbligato alla salute (*biosecurity*)»⁴⁰. Il paradigma della biosicurezza diventa il nuovo strumento di governo al quale devono sottostare tutte le altre esigenze della vita associata. Tutti gli aspetti che caratterizzano i legami tra gli individui sono sacrificati a questo paradigma: i rapporti sensibili, il volto, l'amicizia, l'amore sono sacrificati in nome di una sicurezza sanitaria che è irreal e artificiosa. Questi aspetti relativi alla dimensione sociale dell'essere umano saranno analizzati da Agamben in altri interventi che non sono contenuti nel volume e che saranno pubblicati online sul sito della casa editrice Quodlibet e su cui ci soffermeremo in seguito.

Per ora possiamo affermare che tutti gli interventi di Agamben che abbiamo brevemente analizzato sembrano pervasi da un sentimento di radicale nostalgia. Questo sentimento anima anche un altro intervento del filosofo, *Quando la casa brucia*, uscito online il 5 ottobre 2020 sul sito della Quodlibet e poi confluito in un volumetto⁴¹. Come è ben noto, a partire dal mondo greco e dai poemi omerici il *nostos* diventa dolore e mancanza per un ritorno impossibile in una casa che si avverte come estranea. Tale *stimmung* produce un senso di smarrimento che da Novalis⁴² sino ad Heidegger è indicato in tedesco con il termine *Heimatlosigkeit*: essere senza patria, essere sradicati⁴³. Tale nostalgia si trasforma in Heidegger in un profondo disprezzo verso la modernità ritenuta espressione dell'e-

39. Ibid., 77.

40. Ibid., 78.

41. Giorgio Agamben, *Quando la casa brucia* (Macerata: Giometti & Antonello, 2020).

42. Novalis, *Frammenti* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1996): 11: «A rigore la filosofia è nostalgia, il desiderio di trovarsi dappertutto come a casa propria».

43. Sull' *Heimatlosigkeit* in Heidegger si veda Antonio Di Chiro, “Dimora, luogo e paesaggio nell'epoca dell'Heimatlosigkeit. Heidegger e la fenomenologia dell'abitare”, in Marcello Tanca, and Silvia Aru (eds.), *Dare senso al paesaggio. Convocare esperienze, immagini, narrazioni*, vol. II, (Milano-Udine: Mimesis 2015): 247-259; Id., “Dalle metropoli ai non luoghi. Forme dell'abitare nell'epoca dello sradicamento”, in *(S)radicamenti*, Società di studi geografici. Memorie geografiche, no. 15 (2017): 837-842; Id., “Il luogo della filosofia. Martin Heidegger e la cartografia del pensiero”, *Pólemos* XI, no. 2 (2018): 77-102.

sistenza inautentica e il filosofo tedesco oppone a tale dimensione una ricerca dell'originario e dell'autentico che configurerà il suo pensiero – e quello dei suoi oracolari epigoni – come un pensiero retrospettivo, ovvero come un pensiero che dopo uno sguardo sconsolato al presente, crede che la verità risieda solo nell'origine⁴⁴. Su questa nostalgia, tipicamente tedesca, del resto, si era espresso già Nietzsche nella *Volontà di potenza*: «La filosofia tedesca nel suo complesso [...] è la più radicale forma [...] di nostalgia finora esistita [...]. Non si è più a casa in nessun posto, si finisce per voler ritornare in quell'unico luogo in cui ci si potrebbe sentire in patria, perché solo lì si vorrebbe abitare»⁴⁵. Se la nostalgia è dunque indirizzata verso il passato, quella che emerge dal testo di Agamben è, invece, rivolta al futuro e si configura come una radicale mancanza, un'assenza che non si riesce a colmare: «L'altra casa, quella che non potrò mai abitare, ma che è la mia vera casa, l'altra vita, quella che non ho vissuto mentre credevo di viverla, l'altra lingua, che compitavo sillaba per sillaba senza mai riuscire a parlarla – così mie che non potrò mai averle...»⁴⁶. Questo sradicamento dovuto all'impossibilità di abitare è connesso ad una altrettanto radicale e costitutiva impossibilità di parlare: «Può dire la verità solo chi non ha nessuna probabilità di essere ascoltato, solo chi parla da una casa che intorno a lui le fiamme stanno implacabilmente consumando»⁴⁷. Sembra che in Agamben questa nostalgia sia, dunque, dovuta all'incapacità di vivere il presente e sia tesa ad anticipare il futuro per scorgervi i segni di ciò che si era profetizzato, come aveva già anticipato Pascal:

Noi non viviamo mai nel presente. Anticipiamo il futuro, troppo lento ad arrivare, come per affrettarne il corso, o ricordiamo il passato, troppo rapido nel passare, come per fermarlo. Vaghiamo, imprudenti, in tempi che non ci appartengono e non pensiamo affatto al solo che ci appartiene. [...] Così non viviamo mai, ma aspettiamo di vivere, e preparandoci sempre ad essere felici finiamo per non esserlo mai⁴⁸.

44. In questa sua ricerca dell'origine Heidegger finirà per isolarsi sempre di più, come un esilio volontario, in un mondo illusorio e mitizzato quale quello della provincia tedesca. Su questo punto si veda Martin Heidegger, *Paesaggio creativo: Perché restiamo in provincia?* In Id., *Scritti Politici (1933-1966)* (Piemme, Casale Monferrato, 1998): 179-183.

45. Friedrich Nietzsche, *La volontà di potenza* (Milano: Bompiani, 1994), 229.

46. Giorgio Agamben, *Quando la casa brucia*, 12.

47. Ibid., 19.

48. Blaise Pascal, *Pensieri* (Milano: Fabbri Editori, 1996), 118-119.

3. Nudità, contatto, volto. Per una fenomenologia dei rapporti intimi

Negli altri interventi usciti online sul sito della *Quolibet* il discorso di Agamben analizza la questione delle relazioni e dei sentimenti umani durante la pandemia. Riteniamo che questa questione costituisca uno degli aspetti più interessanti degli interventi di Agamben sia per quanto riguarda la dimensione intima e privata del soggetto sia per quanto riguarda quella pubblica e che il filosofo italiano abbia fornito validi spunti di riflessione, limitandosi però ad un'analisi parziale e incompleta del tema dei rapporti umani. Già nell'intervento dell'11 marzo 2020 dal titolo *Contagio*, Agamben aveva sottolineato che «L'altro uomo, chiunque egli sia, anche una persona cara, non dev'essere né avvicinato né toccato e occorre anzi mettere fra noi e lui una distanza che secondo alcuni è di un metro»⁴⁹. Questo tema torna anche in un intervento del 5 gennaio 2021, *Filosofia del contatto*. Secondo Agamben, il contatto costituisce un elemento fondamentale dell'esistenza umana in quanto permette al soggetto di conoscere ed esperire se stesso e gli altri: «Noi abbiamo per la prima volta un'esperienza di noi stessi quando, toccando un altro corpo, tocchiamo insieme la nostra carne». In questo senso, il «contatto con un altro corpo è, cioè, insieme e innanzitutto contatto con noi stessi». La preoccupazione di Agamben riguarda l'abolizione del contatto e la sostituzione di quest'ultimo con rapporti a distanza:

Se, come si cerca oggi perversamente di fare, si abolisse ogni contatto, se tutto e tutti fossero tenuti a distanza, noi perderemmo allora non soltanto l'esperienza degli altri corpi, ma innanzitutto ogni immediata esperienza di noi stessi, perderemmo cioè puramente e semplicemente la nostra carne⁵⁰.

Bisogna precisare che il tema del contatto è stato affrontato già in *L'uso dei corpi*. In questo lavoro Agamben collega questo tema a quello della nudità, dell'intimità e della dimensione politica. Secondo il filosofo,

Siamo insieme e vicinissimi, ma non c'è fra noi un'articolazione o una relazione che ci unisca, siamo uniti l'uno all'altro nella forma del nostro essere soli. Ciò che di solito costituisce la sfera della privatezza diventa qui pubblico e comune. Per questo gli amanti si mostrano nudi l'uno all'altro: io mi mostro a te come quando sono solo con me stesso, ciò che condividiamo non è che

49. Giorgio Agamben, *Contagio*, in Id., *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica*, 23.

50. Giorgio Agamben, "Filosofia del contatto" (5 gennaio 2021), <https://www.quodlibet.it/giorgio-agamben-filosofia-del-contatto>.

il nostro esoterismo, la nostra inappropriabile zona di non-conoscenza. Questo Inappropriabile è l'impensabile, che la nostra cultura deve ogni volta escludere e presupporre, per farne il fondamento negativo della politica⁵¹.

Ne deriva che la nudità sia, in quanto intimità (*Innigkeit*), ovvero «un dimorare che si mantiene nel conflitto tra due opposti», una «soglia fra pubblico e privato»⁵². Quello che sembra sfuggire ad Agamben è che tuttavia la soglia, come il toccare, non si limita a unire il dentro e il fuori, ma in alcuni casi divide e separa. Quest'aspetto diventa attuale nell'epoca della pandemia e assume una dimensione fondamentale per quanto riguarda le relazioni umane. Infatti, l'emergenza dovuta alla diffusione del covid-19 ha contribuito ad alimentare ansie, paure e fobie circa i rapporti umani, già di per sé fragili in una società caratterizzata da ostilità nei confronti di corpi estranei. Tale astio ha comportato, da un lato una caccia all'"untore", dall'altro lato una recrudescenza nei rapporti intimi e privati. Agamben prende in considerazione solo l'aspetto inclusivo del toccare e non riflette su quello legato all'esclusione, ovvero basato sulla disgiunzione e sulla divisione. Ed è, invece, proprio quest'ultimo aspetto che riguarda la dimensione del corpo e dell'intimità. Un autore che Agamben cita poco, George Simmel ha coniato un'espressione molto utile per indicare la sfera dell'intimità: «Soziologie des intimen Verhältnisses» («sociologia dei rapporti intimi») ⁵³. Che cosa voleva intendere Simmel con questa espressione? Egli voleva dire che nell'intimità il soggetto, per quanto possa illudersi, di essere libero, è in realtà condizionato dai rapporti sociali che crede riguardino solo la dimensione esteriore e non quella interiore. In questo caso, i gesti segreti e inconfessati, quelli che sembrano affiorare solo quando si è davanti al nudo cospetto di un'altra persona, le carezze, lo sfiorare, il toccare, l'amplesso amoroso e tutte quelle pratiche e quei rituali che riguardano la dimensione erotica, per quanto ci illudiamo possano unirli all'altra persona, in realtà tendono anche ad allontanare. Il punto archimedeo intorno al quale potrebbe ruotare una sociologia dei rapporti intimi, che sfugge completamente ad Agamben, è tutto condensato nella dimensione evanescente del toccare. La messa a nudo

51. Giorgio Agamben, *L'uso dei corpi* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza Editore, 2014), 302.

52. *Ibid.*, 303.

53. Cfr. Georg Simmel, *Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1908): § 256-304. Di Simmel si veda anche *Il relativo e l'assoluto nel problema dei sessi*, in *Id. Filosofia dell'amore* (Roma: Donzelli, 2001), 91-121.

dell'intimità consente un riconoscimento dell'altro a partire dal gesto semplice della carezza, ovvero dello sfiorare l'altro. Agamben non capisce che servirebbe, nel mezzo di una pandemia mondiale, una *fenomenologia del toccare* basata su un gesto che si limiti a sfiorare l'altro senza toccarlo. Un toccare che non tocchi l'altro. Non toccarlo sarebbe, in questo caso, preservare l'altro, la sua integrità, la sua salute, come afferma anche Jean Luc Nancy in *Noli me tangere* quando ricorda che esiste un «punto in cui il toccare non tocca, non deve toccare per esercitare il suo tocco (la sua arte, il suo tatto, la sua grazia): il punto o lo spazio privo di dimensione che separa ciò che il toccare accosta, la linea che divide il toccare dal toccato e dunque il tocco da se stesso»⁵⁴. Jean Luc Nancy sviluppa una vera e propria fenomenologia del toccare. In *Indizi sul corpo* afferma che

il corpo è l'aperto. E perché ci sia apertura, è necessario che ci sia qualcosa di chiuso, bisogna che si tocchi la chiusura. Toccare ciò che è chiuso significa già aprirlo. E forse non vi è apertura – che per mezzo di un toccare o di un tocco. E aprire – toccare – non è dilaniare, smembrare, distruggere⁵⁵.

Il toccare è consolare, ricomporre, costruire. Toccare consente l'apertura del soggetto verso l'altro. Toccare, toccare se stesso, toccare l'altro aprono lo scenario della conoscenza in quanto permettono di edificare un mondo come insieme di rimandi e di esperienze condivise e consentono la disseminazione del senso. Toccare, però, ci mette anche di fronte all'incompletezza umana, davanti al cospetto del nostro destino, ovvero al fatto che non siamo eterni. Toccare ci mette di fronte alla finitezza estrema. Alla finitezza dell'essere, delle cose e dell'altro. Toccare significa avvertire il peso di ciò che si tocca e sapere che ciò che si tocca non sarà per sempre. Toccare l'altro, nella situazione di emergenza in cui viviamo, è tuttavia diventato impossibile. L'aspetto piacevole e paradisiaco del toccare si è trasformato in un qualcosa di sgradevole e diabolico che sembra rievocare la massima di Jean Paul Sartre («L'inferno sono gli altri») e, come ricorda Agamben, «gli altri esseri umani, come nella pestilenza descritta da Manzoni, sono ora visti soltanto come possibili untori che occorre a ogni

54. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Noli me tangere* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2005), 25. Sulla dimensione del toccare come gesto naturale si veda Jacques Derrida, *Toccare Jean-Luc Nancy* (Genova: Marietti, 2007).

55. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Indizi sul corpo* (Torino: Ananke, 2009): 66. Sul tema del corpo in Nancy si veda Ugo Perone (ed.), *Intorno a Jean-Luc Nancy* (Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 2011).

costo evitare e da cui bisogna tenersi alla distanza almeno di un metro»⁵⁶. In questa dimensione caratterizzata dal rifiuto, dalla paura e dall'impossibilità di toccare l'altro, Agamben lamenta la scomparsa della libertà mortificata sull'altare della sicurezza e, al tempo stesso, la punizione di vivere in una condizione di estrema indigenza. In questa situazione di povertà in cui è stata abolita l'esperienza fondamentale del contatto con l'altro, ci si limita a un semplice guardare l'altro. Qui si rivela, tuttavia, tutta l'intima fragilità del corpo. L'esposizione indifesa del corpo potrebbe diventare la soglia dell'eros, un invito a guardare senza toccare. In tal modo, la dimensione erotica si piega a quella visiva e si apre lo spazio per una nuova forma di libertà. Ad Agamben sfugge che guardare l'altro senza toccarlo significa preservarlo nella sua tenuità. Significa garantirgli una possibilità di vita futura quando l'epidemia sarà passata. Non toccare l'altro, non poter toccare l'altro significa proteggerlo e salvaguardare la sua finitezza estrema. L'amore, lungi dall'identificarsi con il contatto fisico, si trasforma allora in distacco, divisione, commiato. Un distacco che è attesa, speranza, desiderio di riunione, di contatti, abbracci, amplessi, quando lo stato di sospensione dei corpi terminerà. Una fenomenologia dei rapporti intimi, allora, potrebbe basarsi sul non toccare, o meglio su un toccare che esuli dalla dimensione del contatto. Come recita Rainer Maria Rilke nella dedica a Marina Cvetaeva sulla prima pagina delle *Elegie duinesi*: «Noi ci tocchiamo. / Con che cosa? / Con dei battiti d'ali. / Con le lontananze stesse / ci tocchiamo».

Questa fenomenologia dei rapporti intimi non riguarda solo la dimensione privata del soggetto ma anche quella pubblica, ovvero quella relativa alle forme e alle strutture di senso che regolano la vita in comune degli individui. Il passaggio dalla sfera intima del soggetto a quella comune propria della società umana ruota intorno al concetto di volto che, nel discorso di Agamben, finisce per assumere una chiara valenza politica. Infatti, in un intervento dal titolo *Un paese senza volto*, Agamben sottolinea la relazione che intercorre tra volto e potere. Egli afferma che l'uomo «fa del volto il luogo della propria verità», che «il volto è il luogo della politica» e che un «paese che decide di rinunciare al proprio volto, di coprire con maschere in ogni luogo i volti dei propri cittadini è, allora, un paese che ha cancellato da sé ogni dimensione politica»⁵⁷. Sembra strano che un filosofo come

56. Giorgio Agamben, *Chiarimenti*, in *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica*, 26.

57. Giorgio Agamben, "Un paese senza volto" (8 ottobre 2020), <https://www.quodlibet.it/giorgio-agamben-un-paese-senza-volto>.

Agamben, sempre attento alle dinamiche omologanti del Potere, si dimentichi di sottolineare che il volto, consentendo la deiscenza della politica, in realtà apra anche verso una dimensione di controllo e di autoritarismo da parte del Potere. A tal proposito, basterebbe ricordare l'importanza che Lévinas riconosce al volto. Questo gioca un ruolo essenziale nella manifestazione dell'Altro. Se per Lévinas, ogni relazione sociale è riconducibile all'espressione del volto⁵⁸, tuttavia quest'ultimo ha un duplice ruolo nei confronti del potere.

Il volto si sottrae al possesso, al mio potere. Nella sua epifania, nell'espressione, il sensibile, che è ancora afferrabile si muta in resistenza totale alla presa. Questo mutamento è possibile solo grazie all'apertura di una nuova dimensione. Infatti la resistenza alla presa non si produce come una resistenza insormontabile, come durezza della roccia contro cui è inutile lo sforzo della mano, come lontananza di una stella nell'immensità dello spazio. L'espressione che il volto introduce nel mondo non sfida la debolezza del mio potere, ma il mio potere di potere. Il volto, ancora cosa tra le cose, apre un varco nella forma che per altro lo delimita. Il che significa concretamente: il volto mi parla e così mi invita ad una relazione che non ha misura comune con un potere che si esercita, foss'anche godimento o conoscenza⁵⁹.

Il problema riguarda «l'apparenza sensibile del volto» Infatti, «l'apertura permanente dei contorni della sua forma nell'espressione imprigiona in una caricatura questa apertura che fa esplodere la forma. Il volto, al limite della santità e della caricatura, si offre quindi ancora, in un certo senso, al potere»⁶⁰. Il volto, che per Agamben è il luogo in cui la «sublime assenza di segreto della nudità umana si segna in modo eminente»⁶¹, si presta, nella sua indelibata illatenza, all'identificazione, alla tracciabilità e al riconoscimento. Il volto si offre al controllo e si presta ad una politica non di mezzi senza fini ma di mezzi funzionali al mantenimento del Potere⁶². Quest'ultimo, infatti, tramite l'apertura del volto, iden-

58. Cfr. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totalità e infinito. Saggio sull'esteriorità* (Milano: Jaca Book, 2016), 218.

59. *Ibid.*, 203.

60. *Ibid.*, 203.

61. Giorgio Agamben, *Nudità*, in *Id.*, *Nudità* (Milano: nottetempo, 2009), 122. Sul volto come luogo della politica si veda anche, dello stesso autore, *Il volto*, in *Id.*, *Mezzi senza fine* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1996), 76-80.

62. Una critica "politica" al pensiero di Agamben potrebbe partire dalla constatazione che, nel pensiero del filosofo italiano, v'è un'evidente e paranoica ipertrofia del Potere. Quest'ultimo tende a configurarsi come un Moloch anonimo, un Leviatano impersonale, un mostro senza forma. Inoltre, quest'idea del Potere come entità amorfa

tifica, scheda, controlla e trasforma una persona in un «dato numerico» come afferma Agamben nel saggio *Identità senza persona*, aggiungendo che dietro il «dispositivo» che riconosce qualcuno come una persona vi sono «altri uomini, che non vogliono in realtà, riconoscermi, ma solo controllarmi»⁶³. Sorge quindi il dubbio che una politica del futuro, una politica da venire e che si sottragga ai dispositivi di controllo biopolitici, al *Moloch* del Potere, sia una politica dei volti coperti, dei volti estranei. Una politica di identità senza persona in quanto senza volto.

4. Rilievi conclusivi. Per una filosofia e una politica a venire

Gli interventi di Agamben, oltre ad essere contrassegnati, come abbiamo visto, da un'immotivata nostalgia verso il futuro, lamentano la perdita della dimensione sociale propria delle relazioni umane e, al contempo, l'amarrezza per la privazione delle libertà individuali dovute al fatto di vivere in uno stato poliziesco. L'emergenza dovuta al coronavirus ha messo in luce secondo il filosofo la fragilità delle democrazie occidentali e ha rivelato, al tempo stesso, la sempre possibile tentazione autoritaria che si annida nel cuore di queste democrazie. Questo nesso tra la sfera privata dei rapporti umani e la sfera pubblica della politica ci permette di attuare un cambiamento di direzione, a cui abbiamo già accennato in precedenza, per quanto riguarda le critiche agli interventi di Agamben: se nella prima parte del lavoro esse sono state svolte su un piano teoretico, ora saranno elaborate in senso politico.

Innanzitutto bisogna partire dalla constatazione che ad Agamben sfugge un aspetto politico fondamentale. Intento a denunciare eventuali derive assolutistiche, egli non sembra avvedersi che il potere dello Stato si basa sulla sua capacità di disciplinare la vita e soprattutto che, nonostante questa procedura sia rigida e autoritaria, essa deve tuttavia essere riconosciuta dai cittadini. Il patto sociale che origina lo Stato si fonda sul comune interesse verso la vita come un bene da preservare, anche nel caso dell'assolutismo di Hobbes. Del resto, basta ricordare che già Aristotele aveva affermato in un passaggio famoso della *Politica* (1278b, 23-31) che

e indistinta torna in diversi autori post-agambeniani, per esempio in buona parte del discorso di Byung Chul Han, che ipostatizza il concetto di Potere sostituendolo con quello di Società. Si veda, a tal proposito, Byung Chul Han, *La società della trasparenza* (Milano: nottetempo, 2014) e la già citata *La società della stanchezza*.

63. Giorgio Agamben, *Identità senza persona*, in Id., *Nudità* (Milano: nottetempo, 2009), 82.

gli esseri umani creano organizzazioni politiche per salvaguardare la vita e vivere meglio. Ad Agamben, impegnato a lottare contro un chimerico Stato poliziesco, sfugge quindi che le misure messe in atto dai vari governi mondiali siano rivolte a tutelare la vita dei cittadini e non a controllarla in maniera totalitaria. Quello che lui, inoltre, non sottolinea è l'impotenza di questi governi contro «i monopoli di banche e multinazionali»⁶⁴, ovvero il fatto che la pandemia ha contribuito a gerarchizzare il valore delle vite umane acuendo le differenze di classe e svalutando l'essenza del patto sociale. In questo senso, si potrebbe affermare che quella di Agamben è «una necro-tanatopolitica che vorrebbe assumere il suo volto rovesciato, quello della biopolitica affermativa, almeno nel senso dello sprigionamento di energie resistenti come risposta ai dispositivi totalitari e del controllo. Ma essa si configurerebbe sempre come una risposta, una reazione all'abbraccio mortale del potere»⁶⁵. Dunque, se si è visto negli interventi di Agamben «una sorta di invito alla rivolta, alla disobbedienza, al recupero di bios e al rifiuto della riduzione a zoé, allora si deve affermare che non di un sogno vitalistico si tratta (nonostante i richiami al gioco, al gesto senza finalità, alla danza), ma di una sfida aristocratica che implica la bella morte». Agamben «è reazionario. E lo è perché ritiene che il diritto e lo Stato abbiano come paradigma l'annientamento delle forme-di-vita nella loro riduzione a nuda vita, e che da questa cattura – che opera da sempre e per sempre – non ci si possa liberare (a meno che non ci si neghi, diventando inutili e in definitiva morendo)»⁶⁶.

Altri aspetti che Agamben sembra aver ignorato, e che noi riteniamo siano fondamentali per un'analisi filosofica della situazione attuale, sono,

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64. Paolo Ercolani, *Immuni o deficienti? Una risposta ad Agamben*, L'Espresso, 23 aprile 2020, <http://lurtoedelpensiero.blogautore.espresso.repubblica.it/2020/04/23/immuni-o-deficienti-una-risposta-ad-agamben/>.
 65. Francescomaria Tedesco, *“Invocando di vivere, scopro che cerco di morire”*. Giorgio Agamben e la pandemia, MicroMega, 8/2020, 10 aprile 2020, <http://filrasoiodioccammicromega.blogautore.espresso.repubblica.it/2020/04/10/%e2%80%9cinvocando-di-vivere-scopro-che-cerco-di-morire%e2%80%9d-giorgio-agamben-e-la-pandemia/>.
 66. Ibid. Secondo Tedesco l'eroe agambeniano è lo scrivano Bartleby. Quest'ultimo è «scambiato per un eroe dell'ontologia negativa mentre è solo un ostinato che muore senza lottare, rannicchiato accanto alle mura del carcere di New York. Bartleby è, per Agamben, l'altro modo di dirsi della potenza in Aristotele. Una 'potenza' però rinunciataria: di una pallida, imperturbabile mansuetudine, dice Melville» (*ibid.*). Agamben analizza la figura dello scrivano di Melville in *Bartleby o della contingenza*, in Gilles Deleuze, and Giorgio Agamben, *Bartleby. La formula della creazione* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 1993): 43-85. Sull'importanza della figura di Bartleby nel pensiero di Agamben si veda Antonio Di Chiro, “Figure del pensiero agambeniano. Bartleby, potenza, contingenza, irreparabile”, *Lessico di etica pubblica*, X, no. 1 (2019): 87-100.

da un lato, la questione dell'“immunizzazione” nei confronti del virus e, dall'altro lato, il crescente senso di disagio e paura nei confronti dell'altro.

Per quanto riguarda il primo punto, com'è stato sottolineato da Esposito⁶⁷, di fronte alla paura di un contagio di dimensioni mondiali, s'impone l'esigenza di una guerra preventiva tesa a debellare il virus. Purtroppo questo processo di immunizzazione comporta un sacrificio delle libertà civili che la stessa immunizzazione dovrebbe tutelare in quanto al fine di sfuggire al contagio ci si isola e si rischia di finire stritolati nelle spire della propria stretta. I meccanismi di correzione che si adottano per combattere il contagio, per via della loro natura di freni inibitori, rischiano di sortire l'effetto contrario e di assumere una natura totalitaria. Secondo Esposito, in questo caso emerge

il tratto intrinsecamente nichilistico dell'antropologia filosofica: come è tipico di ogni compensazione, la costruzione dell'ordine che essa produce non ha i caratteri di una costruzione positiva, bensì quelli della distruzione di una distruzione, della negazione di un negativo. Ma proprio qui si delinea il possibile esito controfattuale della sua strategia: volendo riparare negativamente il negativo della comunità, essa rischia di consegnarla al niente da cui intende salvarla⁶⁸.

Il tratto negativo di questa antropologia filosofica dell'*immunitas* si basa dunque su un uso della violenza da parte dello Stato. In quanto ordine artificiale, quest'ultimo nel tentativo di rendere neutrale la violenza è costretto ad assumerla dentro di sé e a fare di essa un suo elemento costitutivo, una condizione ineliminabile per la sua sussistenza. Il tentativo di abrogare la violenza culmina in un percorso che rende la violenza stessa una componente ineliminabile dello Stato⁶⁹.

La questione legata all'*immunitas* si allaccia a un altro aspetto che Agamben ha affrontato solo in parte, ovvero quello relativo alla paura che si è instaurata nei confronti dell'umano. La diffusione del virus ha contribuito, infatti, a fare emergere come tratto distintivo della società odierna il sentimento di ostilità nei confronti del proprio simile e i molteplici e quoti-

67. Roberto Esposito, *Immunitas. Protezione e negazione della vita* (Torino: Einaudi, 2002).

68. *Ibid.*, 102.

69. Per una critica alla teoria dell'*immunitas* di Esposito si veda Byung Chul Han, *La società della stanchezza*, 12. Secondo Han il «paradigma immunologico non è compatibile con il processo di globalizzazione. L'alterità, che provocherebbe una reazione immunitaria, contrasterebbe il processo di abbattimento delle barriere (*Entgrenzung*). Il mondo organizzato in senso immunologico si segnala per una specifica topologia. È caratterizzato da confini, frontiere e soglie, da recinti, fosse e muri che impediscono l'universale processo di scambio».

diani episodi di recrudescenza nei confronti di presunti untori dovrebbero spingerci a una radicale interrogazione sulla fenomenologia dell'ostilità e sulle sue diverse declinazioni. A tal proposito, è interessante notare che Byung-Chul Han, riprendendo *L'agonia del potere* di Jean Baudrillard⁷⁰, in *La società della stanchezza* ha delineato una genealogia dell'ostilità basata su una tassonomia del nemico e scandita nei seguenti punti:

- 1) Lupo: è la prima modalità con cui appare il nemico. È un nemico che viene dall'esterno e contro il quale ci si difende innalzando fortezze e barriere.
- 2) Ratto: è il nemico che si combatte tramite l'igiene.
- 3) Scarafaggio: è il nemico che suscita ribrezzo.
- 4) Virus: è lo stadio ultimo della parusia del nemico ed è difficile da combattere perché si annida nel cuore del sistema immunologico. Un virus minaccia la salute del sistema ed è l'Estraneo per eccellenza, colui che va respinto ma va, anche e soprattutto, combattuto per ristabilire lo stato di benessere⁷¹.

Al di là dei tentativi di immunizzazione nei confronti del diverso messi in atto da alcuni paesi⁷², occorrerebbe chiedersi fin dove possa spingersi questo odio e come arrestarlo. Al contempo, bisognerebbe riflettere sugli aspetti legati a quella che Byung-Chul Han definisce «la prassi immunologica» che sembra estendersi «dal piano biologico al sociale fino a coinvolgerlo nella sua globalità» e che si basa su una precisa strategia che consiste nell'attaccare tutto ciò che «è estraneo». L'obiettivo di questo dispositivo «è l'estraneità in quanto tale. Persino quando l'Estraneo non ha alcuna intenzione ostile, persino quando non costituisce un pericolo, viene eliminato in conseguenza della sua alterità»⁷³. Una filosofia in grado di affrontare questa questione dovrebbe smettere di proporre glosse e commenti, di carattere apologetico, nei confronti di concetti triti e ritriti e che non possono più essere usati come strumenti concettuali in grado di spiegare una realtà sempre più complessa. Un pensiero critico che sia in grado di fare i conti con la minaccia del coronavirus dovrebbe ripartire da un discorso in grado di analizzare le strategie di immunizzazione messe in atto dal potere nei confronti dei corpi sociali estranei e, al contempo,

70. Jean Baudrillard, *L'agonia del potere* (Milano-Udine: Mimesis, 2008).

71. Cfr. Byung-Chul Han, *La società della stanchezza*, 17-18.

72. Si veda l'intervista del 18 marzo 2020 a Roberto Esposito di Torbjörn Elensky, "Diario della crisi. Roberto Esposito – Immunitas", <https://www.iisf.it/index.php/attivita/pubblicazioni-e-archivi/diario-della-crisi/immunitas.html>.

73. Byung-Chul Han, *La società della stanchezza*, 8-9.

spiegare l'odio nei confronti del diverso e ri-pensare l'alterità senza doverla inglobare nella dimensione fagocitante della propria identità.

Quello che, in conclusione, emerge dagli interventi di Agamben, è ciò che Husserl, nel secondo paragrafo dell'introduzione alle *Meditazioni cartesiane*, definisce come «la desolazione della nostra situazione filosofica» e la perdita dello «spirito stesso del carattere radicale della responsabilità filosofica». Husserl in questo paragrafo, intitolato *Necessità di un nuovo cominciamento radicale della filosofia*, afferma anche che la «frammentazione della filosofia attuale, con la sua disordinata operosità ci dà da pensare». Inoltre, sottolinea il fatto che, invece che

avere una filosofia dotata di una vita unitaria abbiamo una letteratura filosofica che cresce a dismisura ma che è quasi priva di ogni coerenza: al posto di un serio confronto tra teorie contrastanti, che proprio nella contrapposizione mostrano la loro coappartenenza interna, il loro essere accomunate nelle convinzioni fondamentali e nell'inamovibile fiducia in un'unica filosofia, abbiamo un citarsi e un criticarsi apparenti che hanno solo la parvenza di un genuino filosofare l'uno con l'altro e l'uno per l'altro⁷⁴.

Quello che manca per Husserl è «l'unità di uno spazio spirituale»⁷⁵ in cui le singole filosofie possano collaborare. A partire da questo luogo bisognerebbe interrogarsi sull'indigenza della filosofia e tornare all'esercizio rigoroso del pensiero evitando facili ricette, banalità pseudo teoretiche e formule oracolari.

Una filosofia e una politica a venire, ovvero in grado di fare i conti con la situazione di emergenza e di crisi dovuta alla diffusione del coronavirus dovrebbero fondarsi su tale spazio spirituale. Esso sarebbe il luogo proprio di una riflessione critica sull'indigenza del tempo presente, che sia in grado di evitare la «paranoia della ragione» e che sappia non solo interrogarsi sulle mancanze della nostra epoca e sull'incapacità di affrontare il nemico invisibile che ha minacciato le nostre vite, ma anche e soprattutto sulla possibilità di un pensiero rivolto non, come nel caso di Agamben, a un distopico futuro immaginario ma al tempo in cui siamo e in cui viviamo.

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74. Edmund Husserl, *Meditazioni cartesiane e Lezioni parigine* (Brescia: La Scuola, 2017), 76-77.

75. *Ibid.*, 77.

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Theories of Justice Applied to the Pandemic: The Case of Vaccine Distribution

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Abstract

The problem of the distribution (in a broad sense) of the coronavirus vaccines – concerning the criterion by which the beneficiaries of the vaccine are selected – constitute a particular case of the general problem of the distribution of social goods. For this reason, it is necessary to discuss whether the selection criterion to be adopted is that of commutative justice or that of distributive justice and, consequently, whether the approach to the problem must follow an individualist perspective or a collectivist perspective, such as it happens regarding the general problem of the distribution of social goods. Therefore, problem of the distribution of the coronavirus vaccines is still a problem of social justice. In this essay, I will rehearse an application of each of these criteria to the problem at hand.


Keywords: commutative justice, coronavirus vaccination, Covid-19, distributive justice, pandemic, SARS-CoV-2, social justice, theories of justice.

1. Social justice

What is the outcome of the application of some of the main theories of justice to the problem of the distribution of the vaccine against Covid-19? My focus will be on theories of social justice, that is, the various conceptions of ‘social justice’. I purposely add the adjective ‘social’ to distinguish them from moral theories of justice. The ‘justice’ to which I will refer is justice thought of in a context of life in society.

Of course, what is ‘society’ (or, perhaps preferably, what is ‘cooperation’) is open to discussion. And, I believe, it is precisely this divergence that underlies the different proposals of social justice: depending on whether one is more individualistic or more collectivist in clarifying this concept, one will be more fond of one theory or another.

For individualists (who end up adopting a liberal notion of ‘social justice’), society is nothing more than the place where individuals meet to

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exchange and establish mutually profitable relations: it is just a market (in a broad meaning of the term). For collectivists (who end up adopting a communitarian notion of ‘social justice’), society is an entity that, although formed by individuals, is autonomous from them, going beyond the mere sum of them (it is, using a familiar expression to legal thinkers, a collective person).

The same conclusion as to what ‘social justice’ is can be reached, not by the means of the definition of ‘society’, but by the means of the definition of ‘individual’. That is what Michael Sandel, a communitarian, does in works such as *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*. Sandel considers that his opponents – the most radical individualists, such as Novick, but also the moderate ones, like Rawls – start from a wrong notion of ‘person’, which “undermines” their understanding of ‘social justice’: there are no individuals outside the social context, only as parts of the whole.

Individualists tend to think of the individual as an end in itself and, as such, to instrumentalize social cooperation (for the benefit of the individual). Collectivists tend to see social cooperation as an end in itself and to instrumentalize individuals (for the benefit of the collectivity). To be softer in words, for individualism, individual interest is insurmountable and, for collectivism, individual interest must be sacrificed in order to benefit collective interest.

2. Standards of justice

The discussion about what social justice is is a discussion about how to “distribute” the benefits and burdens of life in society, but in a broad sense of the term ‘distribution’. This ‘distribution’ is not the distribution of what the collectivists/communitarians speak, associated with the notion of ‘distributive justice’. It is, as a starting point to the discussion, a fiction: the fiction that the benefits and burdens arising from cooperation are “waiting”, on standby, ready to be delivered to someone (as in a warehouse waiting for shipment). The problem is then to identify the recipients of the shipment, according to a criterion. Distributive justice itself is only one of the conceivable criteria.

Against this “distributive” understanding of ‘social justice’, is, among others, Robert Nozick, a radical individualist/liberal, in works such as *Anarchy, State and Utopia*. This author distinguishes between historical entitlement principles of justice and patterned principles of justice, to defend the former and criticize those who advocate the latter.

Historical entitlement principles of justice are those automatically realized upon past facts (they have a history behind them). Typical history: *A* explores a land and automatically becomes the owner of the produced goods; then, *A* exchanges these goods for others, becoming now the owner of the latter; finally, he may even donate the goods (originally or derived) acquired.

Patterned principles of justice are those expressed by a general formula, such as ‘to each according to *x*’. From there, the discussion will be about what this ‘*x*’ is, which will be the pattern of justice. They aim to answer the question ‘How should society structure itself in such a way as to distribute the benefits and burdens that result from it in a just way?’: any “distributive” understanding of ‘social justice’ entails patterned principles of justice, so for Nozick it must be rejected.

Nozick intends to preserve the individual from his instrumentalization by social cooperation. The author argues that there is no problem to be solved concerning the “distribution” of benefits and burdens arising from such cooperation: the problem of justice is already solved from the outset because there are already previous legitimate right holders, namely property rights (by original acquisition or by transmission), so that a subsequent “distribution” will be illegitimate itself, being nothing more than a subtraction of individual assets, violator of rights. The history of a certain property right “makes justice by itself”, without the need for further interventions.

It is worth noting that, for Nozick, those who work on a particular resource will have their income naturally (provided that they do not harm rights already acquired), following the Lockian theory of the extension of property over one’s own body, and that those who acquire property from others legitimately (notably, by way of an exchange; but it may be by donation or succession; illegal detentions are kept out) keep it also naturally.

Strictly speaking, Nozick is no longer talking about justice. If one thinks he is really talking about justice, then one is incorrectly identifying justice and legitimacy. I think his path is a different one: Nozick tries to solve the problem of social benefits and burdens belonging, precisely, through legitimacy, not justice. Nozick goes so far in his ultra-individualism that he ends up leaving the social domain: his description is that of the isolated individual, in a relationship only with the natural world (whose resources he exploits for himself). But, against Nozick’s conception, I would say that it is not social justice that arises from rights; rights arise from social justice.

It should be noted that it is perfectly possible to maintain the preservation of the individual from instrumentalization by social cooper-

ation within a “distributive” understanding of ‘social justice’: one may argue that it is just (deserved) that benefits from social cooperation be attributed to individuals according to their (individual) contribution and that, therefore, social goods are not available to an alleged collectivity to attribute them according to a ‘distributive justice’ standard.

Those who contribute the most deserve to receive more: one should be paid exactly for what one has done for society. The specific formula for justice will be ‘if *A* has provided *x*, then *A* should receive according to *x*’. Taking away from those who yield more in order to distribute to those who do not deserve would be an injustice. In fact, still according with this view, there isn’t such entity, the ‘collectivity’, to whom rights and duties can be attributed: distribution constitutes, after all, a theft (even a violent one). Here, there is ‘distribution’ in a broad sense but there is no distribution in terms of ‘distributive justice’: the pattern defended is that of commutative justice¹.

Nozick also ends up advocating that there isn’t any collectivity, since the alleged Minimal State advocated by him, modeled on Locke’s Security-State, is not even a true State, because it is nothing but a private security company with the monopoly of that activity and of the entire clientele. Nozick’s civil state is not really different from the state of nature.²

3. Commutative justice vs distributive justice

Any patterned theory of justice has to make a choice: has to choose between two concepts of ‘justice’, concerning how the benefits and burdens of life in society will be attributed (‘distribution’ in a broad sense)³. And

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1. In agreement with this, David Miller in *Principles of Social Justice* (p. 233): “as already indicated, I do not share the view held by several recent political philosophers that justice is always egalitarian”, since “what is due to a person (...) may require an unequal distribution, particularly when the relevant criterion of distribution is some form of desert”.
 2. The approach to the problem through legitimacy and not justice is not exclusive to individualism. A collectivist may also say that cooperation benefits are subject to co-ownership, with each participant in the cooperation having its share of these gains, with no “decision” to be made in terms of just “distribution”. That is G.A. Cohen’s view in *Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality*, where he applies Locke’s notion of ‘self-ownership’ to advocate Marxist principles.
 3. David Miller, for instance, in *Principles of Social Justice* (right from the beginning of the book), follows this distributive perspective of ‘social justice’: “when we talk and argue about social justice, what exactly are we talking and arguing about? Very crudely, I

each one of them requires (re)structuring society, as guidelines are being advanced on how it should be organized.

Let us see, then, the two (true) options on social justice. There is divergence as to what the definition of ‘social justice’ is within a minimum common understanding: using Aristotelian terminology (and conceptual), principles of social justice are either principles of commutative justice (this is the individualism/liberalism view) or principles of distributive justice (this is the collectivism/communitarianism view, such as Sandel’s). In between, there are hybrid positionings (such as Rawls’).

Remembering, in Aristotle, commutative (corrective) justice principles regulate exchanges and compensation for losses, with its arithmetic measure of equality between gain and loss, and distributive justice principles regulate the division of social goods, with its geometric measure of proportion, that is, of equality between *ratios* (aiming to equalize, to obtain equal final situations from unequal initial situations)⁴.

The divergence may be summed up to this: if justice, in the context of life in society, should be understood as ‘frontal justice’, in which participants in social cooperation emerge in a relationship of contraposition, and measured in terms of ‘What is the just reaction to the fact before me?’ – it is the individualistic/liberal conception –, or as ‘lateral justice’, in which participants in social cooperation emerge on the same “side”, and thought of as a comparison (with what is happening with the ‘neighbor next door’) according to the principle of equality – it is the collectivist/communitarian conception.

Let us try to apply each one of the two conceptions to the case of the coronavirus vaccine’s distribution⁵. First of all, the problem of social justice arises at least in two different perspectives. The first one is the perspective of those who make the vaccine (available): the individualis-

think, we are discussing how the good and the bad in life should be distributed among the members of a human society”.

4. For an in-depth analysis of these two concepts, I suggest Izhak England’s “Corrective and Distributive Justice”.
5. Of course, problems of distributive justice (*lato sensu*) related to the coronavirus and COVID-19 are prior to the vaccination problem. As Sridhar Venkatapuram recalls in “How Should We Allocate Health and Social Resources During a Pandemic?” (315), “the ethical or fair allocation of limited ICU beds, ventilators, and protective equipment rose to prominence in the media and scientific journals early on in the pandemic”. And the author already observed that “concerns are also being expressed around equity related to the future distribution of treatments or vaccines, both domestically and globally, which are currently being researched and developed”.

tic-liberal approach is the one behind the free marketing of the vaccine by several private entities (and, in fact, a coronavirus vaccine market has already been formed) – the merit (talent and effort) of those who developed the vaccine must be remunerated –; the alternative would be for States to appropriate the vaccine as their own, because it is a common good, and simply distribute it to citizens, without private profit⁶. The other one is the perspective of those who benefit from the vaccine: and the approach that seems to be prevailing, in fact, is the collectivist-communitarian, according to which citizens do not have to pay for the vaccine, freely provided by States – with equal access to the vaccine, it will be guaranteed that this access is universal (no one is left behind) –; the alternative would be for everyone to pay for the vaccine.

The communitarian criterion (especially relevant when the goods to be distributed are limited or even scarce), as I said before, is that of equality: everyone receives the same, even if, dividing the few goods to be distributed, almost nothing is given to each one. Of course, the same principle of equality requires that unequal situations must be unequally treated: distribution must be unequal if there are reasons to discriminate. Following the *ratio* of distributive justice, unequal distribution will serve to equalize what is not initially equal.

Hence, if there are inequalities to be considered in the distribution of the vaccine, priorities should be established, assuming that vaccines are limited or even scarce (at least, in the short term). And, also assuming that the purpose of vaccination is to immunize each citizen (albeit in order to reach herd immunity), then the most vulnerable – to use an expression dear to care ethics – to infection/disease should have priority⁷. Those are the most immediately in need of vaccine (the so-called ‘risk groups’: the elderly, health professionals on the ‘front line’, patients with certain

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6. This is the perspective defended by Jason Nickerson and Matthew Herder in “COVID-19 Vaccines as Global Public Goods”. Alberto Giubilini, in “The Ethics of Vaccination”, goes even further and asserts that herd immunity is a public good.
 7. Obviously, when the advocates of care ethics talk about vulnerabilities, and already in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, they do not limit themselves to talking about the direct vulnerability to infection, disease and its consequences, but they already include vulnerabilities arising from the social circumstances surrounding those direct vulnerabilities. It is precisely in this context that Sridhar Venkatapuram, once again in “How Should We Allocate Health and Social Resources During a Pandemic?” (319), states that “the extent of this new vulnerability varies enormously across individuals and social groups according to their existing vulnerabilities” and that “vulnerability to COVID-19 disease and to other diverse harms has disproportionately increased for certain individuals and social groups, within and across countries, numbering in the billions”.

pathologies, etc.), confirming the communitarian understanding that the criterion of distributive justice is that of attribution according to needs.⁸

Criteria such as priority of registration or non-criteria such as that of sortition will be left out (the latter may be the only one left when goods remain scarce but no one is in greater need than the rest). The former is admissible but only according to the *ratio* of commutative justice: in private access to the vaccine, perhaps the “whoever arrives first” rule is the correct one.

4. Rawls

Both hypotheses as to what social justice is seem appealing: we hardly deny calling ‘justice’ any of these conceptions. Hence, John Rawls’ theory of justice (and, with it, his theory of society⁹), exposed mainly in *A Theory of Justice*, is appealing, a theory one may call ‘mixed’ or ‘individualistic-collectivist’ (better known as ‘egalitarian liberalism’)¹⁰. It aims to avoid the worst of both worlds: on the one hand, it prevents merit associated with commutative justice from being completely eliminated (with full equality of wealth); on the other hand, it prevents unreasonable inequalities in wealth, also associated with commutative justice.

According to Rawls, participants in social cooperation must have their individual freedoms secured, and equally secured (first principle of justice: all individuals have the maximum rights, freedoms and guarantees that they can have equally), in an individualistic/liberal fashion. One cannot simply cut the motivation associated with the possibility of receiving according to contribution, so freedom is given to private initiative and private wealth, as long as the resulting economic and social inequal-

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8. Norman Daniels, in *Just Health: Meeting Health Needs Fairly* (142), although in the context of applying Rawls’s theory to the health care domain, argues, precisely, that it is unjust not to take into account the difference in risk of becoming ill (in general). In their 2019 paper “Pandemic Disease, Public Health, and Ethics” (800), Maxwell Smith and Ross Upshur wonder if “fairness may require that special attention be given to particular individuals or populations that are vulnerable due to biology, social disadvantage, or another form of disadvantage”.
 9. As João Cardoso Rosas points out in *Concepções da Justiça*, the idea of society as a system of cooperation aimed at the good of those who participate in it is the first element of Rawls’ theory.
 10. Edmundson, in *John Rawls: Reticent Socialist* (particularly, in chapter 8), for instance, even argues (the stability argument for socialism) that Rawls’ principles – or, at least, the kind of social organization its realization requires – are socialist.

ities ensure that those who have less are left with more (second principle of justice, first requirement, known as the ‘principle of difference’) and assuming that the contribution was made in the exercise of a social position or function in relation to which there is equal opportunity of access (second requirement).

As might be seen, the second principle of justice, the one which allows inequalities, from the outset close to the individualistic/liberal conception, already includes a collectivist/communitarian conception of ‘social justice’, since personal wealth is only justified to the extent that it can be redistributed to correct asymmetries (including the ones created with that personal wealth).¹¹

It is interesting to note that Rawls’ entire discourse on justice turns out to be a discourse on equality. Even in the first principle of justice: there, what Rawls emphasizes is the equality of freedoms and guarantees given the equality of relevant characteristics of individuals (rationality – instrumental, in terms of seeking the most effective means to achieve the objectives pursued – and reasonableness – the ability to have a conception of justice). On the other hand, the benefits of private initiative are still seen as inequalities (even if justified), which must be redirected (by taxes, fundamentally) to the correction of inequalities. And only the equal opportunity of access to social positions or functions from which economic inequalities arose can justify them.

This equal opportunity of access to social positions or functions must be real and not merely formal, which implies correcting, here too, inequalities in accessing the access opportunities (with the establishment of new inequalities, justified under the second principle: one will immediately think about access to education and professional qualification). Thus, there ought to be positive discrimination favoring those who were born in unfavorable conditions in order them to be able to access social positions or functions in equal terms. Rawls’ justice is, therefore, in essence, corrective justice (distributive justice arises to correct commutative justice, which, in the short, medium and long term, generates inequalities).

11. The first principle of justice takes precedence over the second. This seems to indicate that, if all individuals have few assets, the individualist/liberal conception of ‘justice’ is the one that should exclusively govern social interactions. Only when there is accumulated wealth – arising from the functioning of the market – does it make sense to mitigate the rule of commutative justice with the collectivist/communitarian conception of ‘justice’. We do not want some of us to be far richer than the others but we do not want either to be all poor.

Returning to the case of the coronavirus vaccine, applying a hybrid theory such as Rawls's (not necessarily Rawls' theory; and Rawls did not, himself, made any consideration in the health domain) has the following consequences. On the one hand, the pharmaceutical industry can market vaccines and make a profit, provided that part of that profit is channeled (by taxes, at the outset) to benefit those who are in need (and provided that the pharmaceutical industry is available to all on equal terms). On the other hand, individuals can acquire the vaccine by their own means, provided that they channel part of their wealth (by taxes, again) to fulfill other's needs – namely, in order the State to acquire the vaccine for those who cannot purchase it individually – and provided that the labor market is available to all on equal terms.¹²

5. Pros and cons

Rawls' theory has other elements that make it attractive. One of them has to do with the criterion of justice used: the two principles of justice set out above are those that would result from a hypothetically agreement between all of us (social contract theory), as entities endowed with instrumental rationality and reasonableness, in case we knew that there are differences and inequalities but did not know if we would benefit or not from them (original position, in which the hypothetical contractors are “covered” in a veil of ignorance). In truth, the characteristic of reasonableness (remembering, the ability to form a conception of justice) is present, not in the contractors, but in the pre-contractual conditions in which they find themselves (the veil of ignorance): contractors need only to use their rationality.¹³

From the combination of the instrumental rationality of the contractors (who seek the best way to maximize the satisfaction of personal interests) with the reasonableness of the initial conditions, one must conclude that the maximin decision rule would be the one followed by the contractors: if they do not know their social “positioning” and do

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12. Of course, States will purchase vaccines with past taxes, using new taxes to finance future expenses. I am ignoring this time lag to illustrate the *ratio* behind the second principle.
 13. Hence Paul Ricoeur's objection: the principles of justice are already pre-determined in the conditions of the original position. The criterion presented by Rawls, less than a true criterion of justice, is a clarification of what the author means by 'social justice', which, having its merits, does not fulfill its function of identifying the principles of justice.

not want to take any risks, it is rational to assume they belong to those who don't benefit from the existing differences and inequalities and choose the system that maximizes the minimum of social goods that each one has (the same decision-making rationality underlies the so-called 'dilemma of the prisoner'). Other decision criteria are set aside: the satisfaction of personal interest rule, the maximization of the satisfaction of the majority's interest rule – the so-called 'principle of general utility' – and even the maximization of the satisfaction of the majority's interest without individual cost – the so-called 'Pareto's optimality'.

Rawls' theory of justice is procedural: one does not reach the principles of justice in its substance – *qua* the principles of justice – but through a procedure – just because they are the result of such procedure. Sandel strongly criticizes this aspect of Rawls' theory. The problem is this: even if the principles resulting from the hypothetical agreement are the principles of justice, they did not arise as such, as principles of justice (with that status), only as a result of a decision-making process (with this procedural status). We still need to confront them to what we think to be the principles of justice (to our intuitions) to confirm that they really are the principles of justice.

Rawls does not deny this need. That is why he resorts to the method of reflective equilibrium as a criterion of truth (about the principles of justice): we confront the principles of justice resulting from the agreement with the intuitions about justice that we possess and, at the same time, "we guess" the principles of justice that would result from the agreement based on our intuitions. It is a coherentist method (perhaps, circular).

Of course, some of us have individualistic/liberal intuitions, others collectivist/communitarian intuitions and others both: the problem of clarifying what social justice is begins right at the level of intuitions. Perhaps Rawls is saying that the principles of justice he has reached are the ones that best match the different intuitions "at stake."

Rawls also presents arguments. The main argument is the 'lottery argument': those who have less talent (and less work capacity) and those born in disadvantaged conditions are not responsible for this, so it becomes unequal (unfair, then) the "distribution" of social benefits according to contribution, because the (quality and quantity of) of the contribution depends, precisely, on talent (and effort) and, from the outset, on market access. This inequality (injustice) must be corrected. The social benefits that comes from natural benefits (which are casual) are not deserved.

Nozick's objection to Rawls' argument is strong: it may be true that social benefits that derive directly or indirectly from natural benefits are not

deserved but from that does not follow that others should take advantage of these natural benefits. And since the benefits from the contribution must belong to someone, let them belong to those with the natural talents, not to those who do not have them. According to Nozick, everyone has a legitimate ownership over himself, even if he doesn't deserve it. Everything else will be an extension of that ownership. I rather say that one gets paid for the exercise of talents, not for mere ownership: and that is fair.

Nozick is also right in another objection to Rawls' theory. My interpretation of this objection is as follows. Although Rawls appeals to our intuitions about what is fair and argues in terms of justice, the criterion underlying Rawls' thinking is, as the maximin rule denounces, an efficiency criterion: it is a question of identifying the best possible combination of "distribution" of social benefits and burdens in order to have as much satisfaction as possible for all participants in social cooperation. Rawls' theory of justice, even if it is a theory of justice in the result, is, on its grounding, in fact, a theory of efficiency. Thus, it is very close to the consequentialist conception of 'justice'.

6. Consequentialism

The conceptions of 'social justice' presented so far have in common the consideration that justice is intrinsic. The consequentialist conception is a totally different one: "distribution" is just depending on its consequences (being good or not), not by itself. It might be the case that what some consider to be intrinsically just is also just for a consequentialist. But this will be casual, not because the "distribution" is intrinsically just.

Of course, one must know whether the consequences are good for individuals or for the collectivity. We return to the fundamental divergence, which opposes individualism to collectivism. And, of course, one will have to determine the pattern of goodness: it may be well-being (or happiness; or pleasure) – hedonism – improvement – perfectionism – life, health, so forth.

Even if the consequential perspective is not quite right, it reminds us to look at the common good as a whole and not only by the "eyes" of justice. Perhaps justice, whatever the model adopted, will have to be sacrificed to common good all things considered.

For instance, one may argue that risk groups should have priority in the coronavirus vaccination to relieve pressure on hospitals, especially if they are at maximum capacity. On the one hand, this consequentialist solution

will only casually coincide with the distributive justice solution seen above. On the other hand, the level of pressure on hospitals is one factor that must be considered in the decisions to be taken regarding the administration of the vaccine, even if it does not concern intrinsic criteria of justice.

7. The capability approach

Finally, I would like to make a brief reference to the so-called ‘capability approach’ as a theory of social justice (thinking in Martha Nussbaum’s work, among others, namely her *Frontiers of Justice*). Comparing to Rawls’ theory of justice, the reference to equal opportunities is replaced by the reference to equal capabilities (what one can do and be) and the reference to equality in benefits is replaced by equality in functioning (realization of those capabilities). The purpose of the principles of justice is not so much to correct the differences in opportunities (of access to positions and functions) and wealth (resulting from the exercise of these positions and functions) but, moreover, to correct differences in capabilities and differences in the exercise of these capabilities (functioning). The poverty we want to avoid with cooperation is also the poverty of dignity of our lives. The ‘capability approach’ constitutes an expansion of Rawls’ theory of justice far beyond the domain originally thought by the author¹⁴.

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Einwanderung in Zeiten von Corona

Immigration in a Time of Corona

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Abstract

After the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, most states enacted new measures to constrain international mobility. By May 8th, 2020, more than 93% of the world's population lived in states with special entry bans and more than three billion lived in countries whose borders were almost completely closed to non-citizens. Can such measures be justified? If so, would this undermine the open borders view? This paper examines these questions. It argues, first, that, although short-term entry bans and other similar measures designed to protect public health can be justified, these bans need to be designed with a number of exemptions, in particular, for asylum seekers and refugees. Even in times of pandemic, completely closed borders are indefensible. It argues, second, that although extreme versions of the open borders position may have difficulty accepting this conclusion, other versions of the position can consistently justify special entry restrictions.

Keywords: asylum, Covid-19, freedom of movement, immigration, open borders, SARS-CoV-2.

I. Einleitung

Nach dem Ausbruch der Covid-19-Pandemie haben zahlreiche Länder neue Beschränkungen der Reisefreiheit durchgesetzt. Am 8. Mai 2020 wohnten mehr als 93% der globalen Bevölkerung in Ländern mit Sondereinreiseverboten und mehr als drei Milliarden Menschen in Ländern, in denen die Grenzen für Nichtstaatsbürgerinnen fast komplett geschlossen waren.¹ Solche *Sondereinreisebeschränkungen*,

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1. Andrea Salcedo, Sanam Yar und Gina Cherelus, „Coronavirus Travel Restrictions,

wie ich sie nennen werde, können viele unterschiedliche Personengruppen, die aus – oder einreisen wollen, betreffen: Touristinnen, Einwanderinnen, Flüchtlinge, Asylsuchende, Einwohnerinnen, die sich, wenn die Einreisebeschränkungen in Kraft treten, nicht im Territorium ihres Heimatstaats aufhalten, und Familienangehörige, die in unterschiedlichen Staaten leben. Sondereinreisebeschränkungen gehören zu den konsequentesten und am häufigsten durchgesetzten Corona-Maßnahmen. Sie werfen wichtige ethische Fragen auf.

Dieser Aufsatz beschäftigt sich mit den Fragen, inwiefern Sondereinreisebeschränkungen gerechtfertigt sein können und ob ihre erfolgreiche Rechtfertigung Folgen für die allgemeine Debatte über die Ethik der Einwanderung hat. Der erste Teil (II bis IV) geht den Fragen nach, ob sich solche Maßnahmen rechtfertigen lassen und welche Maßnahmen zu weit gehen, um vertretbar zu sein. Es wird argumentiert, dass zwar eine zulässige Rechtfertigung für kurzfristige Einreiseverbote und andere ähnliche Maßnahmen vorgebracht werden kann, diese Rechtfertigung jedoch viele Arten von Sondereinreisebeschränkungen, die Staaten durchgesetzt haben, nicht begründen kann. Covid-19 kann den Ausschluss von vielen Gruppen, insbesondere Asylsuchenden und Flüchtlingen, nicht legitimieren. Covid-19 ist auch kein Grund, Einwanderinnen längerfristig auszuschließen. Komplett geschlossene Grenzen sind in Zeiten der Pandemie unvertretbar, auch wenn sich einige Sondereinreisebeschränkungen begründen lassen.

Der zweite Teil (V) beschäftigt sich mit den theoretischen Auswirkungen dieser Antwort. Wenn Staaten ihre Grenzen wegen Corona teilweise schließen dürfen, bedeutet das, dass die bekannteste philosophische Position in der Einwanderungsdebatte, die für offene Grenzen argumentiert, falsch ist? Auf den ersten Blick scheint eine bejahende Antwort plausibel zu sein. Denn wie kann es sein, dass ein Staat seine Grenzen schließen darf, ohne im Besitz des Rechts auf Ausschluss zu sein, das ihm von Befürworterinnen von offenen Grenzen prinzipiell abgesprochen wird? Wenn ein Staat seine Grenzen wegen Corona schließen darf, weswegen könnte er auch unter anderen Umständen Einwanderinnen ausschließen? Dagegen wird argumentiert, dass es Varianten der Offene-Grenzen-Position gibt, die mit Sondereinreisebeschränkungen kompatibel sind. Das Argument für Sondereinreisebeschränkungen ist weder abhängig von einem allge-

Across the Globe“, *The New York Times*, 16. Juli 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/article/coronavirus-travel-restrictions.html>.

meinen Recht auf Ausschluss, noch ist es unter normalen Umständen anwendbar. Eine Erklärung, warum dies so ist, werden die Bedeutung und die Voraussetzungen der Offene-Grenzen-Position deutlicher machen.

II. Grenzen und Mobilität in Zeiten von Corona – ein Überblick

Bevor man der Frage nachgehen kann, ob Sondereinreisebeschränkungen gerechtfertigt sein können, muss man einen Überblick über die verschiedenen Maßnahmen, die Staaten beschlossen haben, gewinnen. Daher beginne ich mit einer Beschreibung der bisher verabschiedeten Sondereinreisebeschränkungen.

Eine der am häufigsten durchgesetzten Maßnahmen ist das *Einreiseverbot*, das heißt eine Verordnung, die die Einreise ins Territorium eines Staates verbietet. Die zahlreichen Einreiseverbote, die Länder durchgesetzt haben, sind unterschiedlich geregelt. Erstens kann ein Einreiseverbot einen größeren oder kleineren Umfang haben: Es kann die Einreise aus einem bestimmten Land oder aus mehreren Ländern betreffen oder allgemein gelten. Kurz nach dem Ausbruch des Coronavirus in China haben viele Staaten die Einreise aus China verboten. Als sich Covid-19 weiter ausgebreitet hat, haben viele Länder ein quasiuniversales Einreiseverbot verhängt. Zweitens erlauben solche Einreiseverbote normalerweise bestimmte Ausnahmen. Die häufigsten davon betreffen den internationalen Handel und zurückkehrende Einwohnerinnen. Die Liste von Gruppen, die ausgenommen sind, kann aber variieren.

Einreiseverbote sind oft mit einer weiteren Maßnahme, dem *Flugstopp*, verknüpft. Ein Flugstopp meint in diesem Kontext ein Verbot von Flugverkehr oder eine allgemeine Flughafensperrung. Wie auch Einreiseverbote kann ein Flugstopp für Flüge aus bestimmten Regionen, Ländern oder universal gelten und verschiedene Ausnahmen erlauben. Im Gegensatz zum Einreiseverbot reguliert der Flugstopp nicht die Einreise in das Territorium selbst, sondern ist *ein Mittel* des Eintritts. Wie wir sehen werden, ist es wichtig, speziell dieses Mittel zu regulieren, da die internationale Ausbreitung der ersten Welle von Covid-19 eng mit dem internationalen Flugnetz verknüpft war.² Im Prinzip ist die Regulierung der Einreisemethoden einfacher zu rechtfertigen als der Ausschluss von

2. Kevin Linka et al., „Outbreak dynamics of Covid-19 in Europe and the effect of travel restrictions“, *Computer Methods in Biomechanics and Biomedical Engineering* 23, no. 11 (2020): 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10255842.2020.1759560>.

Menschen. Diese Unterscheidung ist aber in der Praxis nicht eindeutig. Ein Flugstopp kann ein *De-facto-Einreiseverbot* bedeuten, wenn keine andere praktische Möglichkeit vorhanden ist, um aus einem bestimmten Staat in einen bestimmten anderen einzureisen.

Darüber hinausgehend haben Staaten vorgeschrieben, *unter welchen Bedingungen* und *mit welchen Pflichten* Personen in ein Land einreisen dürfen. Das typische Beispiel für eine *bedingte* Einreise ist, wenn bestimmte medizinische Auflagen erfüllt werden müssen, beispielsweise ein negativer Covid-19-Test, um einreisen zu dürfen. Ein Beispiel für *Pflichten*, die oftmals mit der Einreise verbunden sind, ist die Quarantäne. Solche Maßnahmen sind einfacher zu rechtfertigen als Einreiseverbote. Die Quarantänepflicht schließt niemanden von vornherein aus, sondern sie reguliert nur, was *nach der* Einreise zu tun ist.

Andere Corona-Maßnahmen betreffen nur bestimmte Kategorien von Menschen, die sich längerfristig im Staatsgebiet aufhalten wollen. Die drei wichtigsten dieser Maßnahmen sind das *Einwanderungsverbot*, die *Einschränkung des Asylsystems* und die *Härtefallaufnahme-Aussetzung*. Nach dem Corona-Ausbruch haben mehrere Länder nicht nur das Einreisen verboten, sondern auch die Bearbeitung bestimmter Arten von Visa pausiert oder ihre Einwanderungsbehörden kurzzeitig geschlossen. Ein Einwanderungsverbot unterscheidet sich von einem Einreiseverbot insofern, als dass es nur Menschen, die sich längerfristig im Staatsterritorium aufhalten oder sich für bestimmte Arten von Visa bewerben möchten, betrifft. So hat z. B. der frühere US-Präsident Donald Trump bis Ende 2020 die Möglichkeit der Bewerbung für verschiedene Visaarten ausgesetzt.³

Am 17. März 2020 setzten die Internationale Organisation für Migration (IOM) und der Flüchtlingskommissar der Vereinten Nationen (UNHCR) das globale Härtefallaufnahme-Programm („Resettlement“) vorübergehend aus.⁴ Der entscheidende Grund dafür war, dass viele teilnehmende Staaten das Programm schon ausgesetzt hatten und dass es wegen Flugstopps keine Möglichkeit gab, Flüchtlinge ins Zielland zu

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3. Sarah Pierce und Jessica Bolter, *Dismantling and Reconstructing the U.S. Immigration System. A Catalog of Changes under the Trump Presidency* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2020): 9-13. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/us-immigration-system-changes-trump-presidency>.
 4. UNHCR, „UNHCR und IOM setzen Härtefallaufnahme (Resettlement) wegen Corona vorübergehend aus“, UNHCR.org, 17. März 17 2020. <https://www.unhcr.org/dach/de/40871-unhcr-und-iom-setzen-haertefallaufnahme-resettlement-wegen-corona-voruebergehen-aus.html>.

bringen.⁵ Das Reisen stellte zu dieser Zeit auch eine Ansteckungsgefahr für Flüchtlinge dar. Obwohl die Aussetzung am 18. Juni aufgehoben wurde, haben viele Staaten nur langsam wieder angefangen, Flüchtlinge aufzunehmen.⁶ Trotzdem wurde im Jahr 2020 eine historisch niedrige Anzahl von Härtefallaufnahmeplätzen für Flüchtlinge angeboten.

Auf ähnlich negative Weise wirkte sich die Covid-19-Pandemie auf das globale Asylsystem aus. Mehrere Staaten haben die Pandemie als Vorwand benutzt, um Asylsuchende illegal abzuschieben. Griechenland deportierte beispielsweise mit Hinweis auf Covid-19 zahlreiche asylsuchende Menschen zurück in die Türkei.⁷ Noch extremer ist die Lage in den Vereinigten Staaten. Am 20. März erteilten die Centers for Disease Control (CDC) eine Direktive, die das Asylrecht an der Südgrenze *de facto* abschaffte.⁸ Die Direktive ermächtigte die Einwanderungsbehörde, Asylsuchende schnellstmöglich und ohne rechtsstaatliches Verfahren zu deportieren. Solche Maßnahmen – die Abschaffung des Asylprozesses und die Politik, Asylsuchende nicht über die Landesgrenze zu lassen oder abzuschieben – schränken das Asylsystem ein und könnten im Extremfall als *De-facto-Asylverbote* ausgelegt werden. Solche Maßnahmen sind aber nicht die einzigen politischen Maßnahmen, die Asylsuchende treffen. Flugstopps und Einreiseverbote kennen oft keine Ausnahmen für Asylsuchende. Die Konsequenz solcher Maßnahmen ist, dass viele Menschen ihre Staaten oder unsichere Zwischenstationen nicht mehr verlassen können.

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5. Man muss hier zwischen zwei Fragen unterscheiden: (1) ist es moralisch vertretbar für UNHCR ihre Härtefallaufnahmeprogramme kurzzeitig zu pausieren? (2) ist es moralisch vertretbar für Staaten ihre Härtefallaufnahmeprogramme kurzzeitig zu pausieren? Auch wenn die Antwort auf die erste Frage ‚ja‘ wäre (weil es wegen Flugstopps keine Möglichkeit gab), ist meiner Meinung nach die Antwort auf die zweite Frage ‚nein‘. Einige europäische Länder haben Härtefallaufnahme Flüge während der Pandemie relativ problemlos durchgeführt.
 6. UNHCR, „Joint Statement: UN refugee chief Grandi and IOM’s Vitorino announce resumption of resettlement travel for refugees“, UNHCR.org, 18. Juni 2020. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2020/6/5eeb85be4/joint-statement-un-refugee-chief-grandi-ioms-vitorino-announce-resumption.html>.
 7. Florian Schmitz, Alexia Kalaitzi und Burcu Karakas. „Neue Beweise für illegale Abschiebungen von Griechenland in die Türkei“, *Deutsche Welle*, 21. Mai 2020. <https://www.dw.com/de/neue-beweise-f%C3%BCr-illegale-abschiebungen-von-griechenland-in-die-t%C3%BCrkei/a-53523933-0>.
 8. Lucas Guttentag, „Coronavirus Border Expulsions: CDC’s Assault on Asylum Seekers and Unaccompanied Minors“, *Just Security*, 13. April 2020. <https://www.justsecurity.org/69640/coronavirus-border-expulsions-cdcs-assault-on-asylum-seekers-and-unaccompanied-minors/> Die Direktive ist trotz des Regierungswechsels derzeit noch in Kraft.

III. Können Sondereinreisebeschränkungen gerechtfertigt sein?

Der letzte Abschnitt hat einen Überblick über die verschiedenen Sondereinreisebeschränkungen gegeben. Nun stellt sich die Frage, ob einige dieser Sondereinreisebeschränkungen aufgrund der medizinischen Lage gerechtfertigt sein können. Wenn ja, welche? Die nächsten zwei Abschnitte werden sich mit dieser Fragestellung beschäftigen. Erst wird diskutiert, welche Bedingungen erfüllt sein müssen, um solche Maßnahmen zu rechtfertigen. Danach werden wir uns mit der Frage beschäftigen, welche Sondereinreisebeschränkungen diese Bedingungen (nicht) erfüllen.

Bevor wir uns dieser Frage widmen, muss ich vorausschicken, dass ich im Folgenden die weitverbreitete Annahme, dass Staaten ein fast uneingeschränktes Recht besitzen, ihre Grenzen zu kontrollieren, nicht teile.⁹ Wenn diese Auffassung zulässig wäre, würde dies zur Folge haben, dass es Staaten jederzeit freistünde, Sondereinreisebeschränkungen einzuführen. Folgt man diesem Ansatz, dann stellen die Sondereinreisebeschränkungen, die während der Covid-19-Pandemie erlassen wurden, kein neues moralisches Problem dar, da punktuelle Einreisebeschränkungen generell akzeptiert werden. Meiner Meinung nach ist dieser Ansatz nicht nur falsch, sondern er lenkt auch von einer wichtigen Frage ab, nämlich welche Rolle die Gefahr, die von der Covid-19-Pandemie ausgeht, bei einer Rechtfertigung der Sondereinreisebeschränkungen spielen kann. Deswegen werde ich versuchen, eine Rechtfertigung der Sondereinreisebeschränkungen ohne diese Annahme zu finden. Ob mein Versuch gelungen ist, wird im fünften Abschnitt diskutiert.

Meiner Ansicht nach können Sondereinreisebeschränkungen gerechtfertigt sein, wenn vier Bedingungen erfüllt sind: Erstens müssen sie die *vitalen Interessen* der Bewohnerinnen des Staates schützen. Zweitens müssen die Sondereinreisebeschränkungen ein *effektives* Mittel darstellen, um die vitalen Interessen der Bevölkerung zu schützen. Drittens dürfen keine mildereren Maßnahmen zur Verfügung stehen, die diese Interessen vergleichbar gut schützen würden. Viertens dürfen die Kosten dieser Maßnahmen nicht untragbar hoch sein. Wenn diese Bedingungen erfüllt sind, können Staaten den Ausgeschlossenen eine legitime Begründung für

9. Vgl. Andreas Cassee, *Globale Bewegungsfreiheit. Ein philosophisches Plädoyer für offene Grenzen* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2016): 27-8; Wellmans Aufsatz in Christopher Heath Wellman und Philip Cole, *Debating the Ethics of Immigration: Is There a Right to Exclude* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

ihren Ausschluss liefern, nämlich dass es ohne Sondereinreisebeschränkungen unmöglich wäre, andere vor der Covid-19-Gefahr erfolgreich zu schützen. Ich werde diese Bedingungen in Bezug auf Einreiseverbote und Flugstopps diskutieren.

1. *Vitale Interessen*

Sondereinreisebeschränkungen können gerechtfertigt sein, wenn sie *vitale Interessen* der Bewohnerinnen des Staates schützen.¹⁰ Ein *vital*es Interesse ist ein Interesse, das genügend Gewicht hat, um einem anderen eine Pflicht aufzuerlegen.¹¹ Der Grund für diese Bedingung ist, dass Menschen ein starkes Interesse an der Reisefreiheit haben und daran, sich in anderen Staaten aufhalten zu können, und diese daher nicht aufgrund trivialer Gründe eingeschränkt werden darf.

Es ist klar, dass Covid-19 einige solcher vitalen Interessen berührt. Covid-19 ist eine lebensgefährliche Krankheit, die schwere Komplikationen zur Folge haben kann. Größere Ausbrüche können die öffentliche Gesundheitsinfrastruktur schwer belasten. Die sozioökonomischen Auswirkungen von Covid-19 können ebenfalls massiv sein. Besonders stark sind die Auswirkungen auf den Arbeitsmarkt, aber die sozialen Aspekte von Covid-19 sind auch ernst zu nehmen. Lockdown-Maßnahmen schränken das soziale Leben der Menschen stark ein. Der Mangel von persönlichem Kontakt und sozialem Umgang hat eindeutige negative Auswirkungen auf das Wohlbefinden der Menschen¹² und die psychische Gesundheit.¹³ Darüber hinaus hat die Pandemie die soziale Ungleichheit verstärkt.¹⁴

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10. Ich verwende „Bewohnerinnen“ statt „Bürgerinnen“, weil Staaten auch die Pflicht haben, Nichtbürgerinnen zu schützen, die sich auf dem Territorium des Staates befinden und dort leben.
 11. Für eine Diskussion der sogenannten „interest theory“, siehe Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986): 166. Der Begriff der „vitalen Interessen“ kommt bei Raz nicht explizit vor. Was als „vital“ angesehen wird, kann verschieden interpretiert werden.
 12. Kimberley Brownlee, *Being Sure of Each Other. An Essay on Social Rights & Freedoms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).
 13. Abi Adams-Prassl et al., „The Impact of the Coronavirus Lockdown on Mental Health: Evidence from the US“. <https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.57997>.
 14. Michael Marmot und Jessica Allen, „Covid-19: exposing and amplifying inequalities“, *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health* 74, no. 9 (2020): 681-682. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/jech-2020-214720>.

Man könnte einwenden, dass diese Bedingung zu streng ist und dass Covid-19 nicht vitale Interessen betreffen muss, um Sondereinreisebeschränkungen zu rechtfertigen. So könnte man meinen, dass es schon genügen würde, wenn es viele kleine negative Auswirkungen auf mehrere Menschen hätte, weil man solche kleineren Schäden aggregieren sollte. Zudem könnte man argumentieren, dass Staaten die Interessen von Staatsbürgerinnen, auch wenn sie objektiv weniger wichtig sind, priorisieren dürfen.¹⁵ Obwohl ich dieser Überlegung skeptisch gegenüberstehe, möchte ich sie hier nicht gänzlich unbeachtet lassen. Ich versuche allerdings, mit meiner Rechtfertigung der Sondereinreisebeschränkungen so wenig kontrovers wie möglich zu sein, weil ich gerne eine Rechtfertigung anbieten will, die Migrationsphilosophinnen mit verschiedenen theoretischen Vorannahmen mittragen können. Alle Seiten in der Debatte könnten meine strengere Bedingung, dass Sondereinreisebeschränkungen die vitalen Interessen der Bewohnerinnen des Staates schützen müssen, *als hinreichend* akzeptieren. Es ist jedoch unklar, ob Philosophinnen, die für offene Grenzen plädieren, eine abgeschwächte Bedingung (gemeinsam mit den anderen Bedingungen) als hinreichend akzeptieren können.

2. *Effektivität*

Sondereinreisebeschränkungen sind nur gerechtfertigt, wenn sie diese Interessen auch *effektiv* schützen. Es stellt sich nun die Frage, ob Flugstopps und Einreiseverbote diese effektiv schützen können. Drei Arten von Studien deuten auf eine bejahende Antwort hin.

Erstens gibt es Studien zur Ausbreitung der Pandemie. Die Verbreitung von Covid-19 korreliert stark mit dem Muster des globalen Flugverkehrs. Linka et al. schließen daraus, dass die uneingeschränkte Freizügigkeit in Europa die Verbreitung von Covid-19 bedeutend beschleunigt.¹⁶ Zweitens gibt es Studien, die versuchen, die Auswirkungen von bestimmten Einreiseverboten gegenüber China zu quantifizieren. Eine Studie über Australiens Einreiseverbot schließt daraus, dass die Reisebeschränkungen hocheffektiv waren und einen größeren Ausbruch verhindert haben.¹⁷

15. Für eine Kritik dieser Ansicht, siehe Javier Hidalgo, *Unjust Borders: Individuals and the Ethics of Immigration* (London: Routledge, 2018): 39-45.

16. Linka et al., „Outbreak dynamics of Covid-19“.

17. Valentina Costantino, David Heslop und Chandini MacIntyre, „The effectiveness of full and partial travel bans against Covid-19 spread in Australia for travellers from China“, *Journal of Travel Medicine* 25, no. 5 (August 2020). <https://doi.org/10.1093/jtm/taaa081>.

Drittens gibt es Studien, die quantifizieren, was passieren würde, wenn Einreiseverbote aufgehoben werden. Eine Studie über die kanadische Provinz Neufundland und Labrador zeigt, dass, nachdem Covid-19 in einer bestimmten geografischen Region eliminiert wurde, das Aufheben der Sondereinreisebeschränkungen einen weiteren Ausbruch des Virus herbeiführen kann.¹⁸ Diese Studien zeigen einen deutlichen Effekt von Einreiseverboten und Flugstopps und liefern zufriedenstellende Belege dafür, dass es sich hierbei um effektive Maßnahmen zur Eindämmung des Virus handeln kann.

Reisebeschränkungen sind aber keine Wunderwaffe. Es ist im Normalfall nicht möglich, mit Reisebeschränkungen Covid-19 komplett einzudämmen. Bestenfalls können sie die Verbreitung verzögern und die Höhepunkte der Pandemie etwas abschwächen. Zudem sind Reisebeschränkungen ohne weitere Eindämmungsmaßnahmen normalerweise ineffektiv.¹⁹ Es ist in der Anfangsphase einer Pandemie damit zu rechnen, dass Covid-19 ohnedies zu einem früheren oder späteren Zeitpunkt importiert wird und sich dies nicht verhindern lässt. Nachdem das Virus importiert worden ist, müssen andere Schutzmaßnahmen getroffen werden.

Weiters ist die Effektivität der Reisebeschränkungen von der aktuellen Situation des Landes abhängig. Die hauptsächliche Funktion der Reisebeschränkungen in der Anfangsphase der Pandemie ist, Staaten etwas Zeit zu geben, um andere Maßnahmen durchzusetzen. Nachdem es zu einem größeren Ausbruch in einem Staat gekommen ist, verliert diese Maßnahme an Bedeutung. Staaten, die Reisebeschränkungen erließen und die gewonnene Zeit nicht dazu nutzten, um weitere Maßnahmen zu treffen, können ihre Reisebeschränkungen nicht rechtfertigen. Ein Beispiel hierfür sind die USA, die 2020 zwar Reisebeschränkungen, aber wenig Eindämmungsmaßnahmen durchgesetzt haben. Wenn eine lokale Epidemie schon eingedämmt ist, kann es sinnvoll sein, Sondereinreisebeschränkungen beizubehalten, um einen Rückimport des Virus (und neuer Varianten) zu verhindern. Beispiele hierfür sind Neuseeland sowie Neufundland und Labrador²⁰, wo das Virus eine Zeit lang eliminiert

18. Kevin Linka et al., „Is it safe to lift Covid-19 travel bans? The Newfoundland story“, *Computational Mechanics* 66.5 (2020): 1081-1092. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00466-020-01899-x>.

19. Matteo Chinazzi et al., „The effect of travel restrictions on the spread of the 2019 novel coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak“, *Science* 368 (2020): 395-400. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aba9757>.

20. Linka et al., „Safe to lift“.

oder zumindest fast eliminiert war. Aber in anderen Staaten, so wie den meisten EU-Staaten, sieht die Lage ganz anders aus: Sie sind von der Situation Neuseelands leider weit entfernt. Es gibt für solche Fälle weniger Studien und mehr Unsicherheit über die Auswirkungen der Sondereinreisebeschränkungen. Eine Sache ist allerdings klar: Je weniger Mobilität und persönliche Kontakte, desto besser ist dies aus Sicht der Pandemiekontrolle. Dieses Prinzip gilt sowohl für die interne als auch für die internationale Mobilität.

3. *Alternativen*

Einreiseverbote und Flugstopps sind als Maßnahmen treffsicher. Sie haben Auswirkungen auf viele Menschen, die faktisch ein niedriges Risiko darstellen. Deswegen sind sie nicht zu rechtfertigen, wenn mildere Maßnahmen bereitstehen, die fast ebenso effektiv sind. „Milder“ bedeutet, dass die Maßnahmen die Interessen der Einreisenden weniger stark berühren, weil sie zum Beispiel weniger restriktiv sind. Wenn solche Maßnahmen zur Verfügung stehen, dann ist die zusätzliche Beschneidung der Rechte von Einreisenden unlauter, da von diesen ein unverhältnismäßig großer Beitrag verlangt wird, um die Ausbreitung von Covid-19 zu verlangsamen.

Gibt es solche milderen Maßnahmen? Teilweise ja. Die bekanntesten Alternativen zu Einreiseverboten und Flugstopps sind Screenings an der Grenze bzw. an den Flughäfen und verpflichtende Quarantäne. Diese Maßnahmen funktionieren am besten, wenn sie gleichzeitig implementiert werden. Aber diese milderen Alternativen haben im Vergleich zu Einreiseverboten und Flugstopps einige Nachteile. Laut einer Studie übersehen Entry-Screening-Maßnahmen mehr als die Hälfte der Covid-19-Infizierten, weil die Inkubationszeit dieses Virus besonders lang ist.²¹ Weiters ist es unwahrscheinlich, dass Einreisende die Quarantäne immer befolgen. Die Einhaltung der Auflagen ist in diesem Fall schwer zu kontrollieren und ebenso schwer zu exekutieren. Schließlich übersehen diese Alternativen überdies, dass das Reisen selbst ein Übertragungsrisikofaktor ist. Es ist deswegen nicht klar, ob Screenings und Quarantäne als *allgemeine* Alternativen zu Einreiseverboten und Flugstopps, insbesondere für Hochrisikoregionen, effektiv genug sind. Sinnvoller ist es, Einreiseverbote, Flugstopps, Screenings und Quarantäne gemeinsam als Teil einer

21. Katelyn Gostic, „Estimated effectiveness of symptom and risk screening to prevent the spread of Covid-19“, *Elife* 9 (2020): e55570. <https://doi.org/10.7554/eLife.55570>.

größeren Strategie zu benutzen. Wie später noch argumentiert werden wird (II), ist jedoch ein *prinzipielles* Einreiseverbot moralisch unvertretbar, weil bestimmte Gruppen einen Anspruch haben, in ein Staatsterritorium einzureisen.

Der wichtige Punkt ist aber, dass, wenn es wirksame Alternativen zu z. B. Einreiseverboten gibt, welche die Interessen der Einreisenden weniger stark beeinträchtigen, diese milderer Maßnahmen statt Einreiseverboten durchgesetzt werden sollen. Es scheint mir aber plausibel, dass es solche Alternativen nicht immer gibt.

Eine andere Alternative wäre, strengere Eindämmungsmaßnahmen, wie beispielsweise strengere Regeln im Staatsterritorium oder für Risikogruppen, durchzusetzen. Es ist aber nicht nur unklar, wie effektiv diese Alternativen sind, weil Lockdown-Maßnahmen nicht immer so erfolgreich wie erwartet sind. Diese Strategie bedingt, die Verantwortung, Covid-19 unter Kontrolle zu bringen, mehr auf die Bewohnerinnen zu verschieben. Das scheint unfair zu sein, da dies den Bewohnerinnen mehr abverlangt als den Einreisenden.²²

4. *Kosten*

Zuletzt muss man die Kosten der Einreiseverbote und Flugstopps, also die Interessen der verschiedenen Gruppen, die solche Maßnahmen betreffen, in die Überlegungen miteinbeziehen. Erstens müssen wir zur Kenntnis nehmen, dass solche Maßnahmen Kosten für die Bewohnerinnen verursachen. Migration und Tourismus sind aus wirtschaftlicher Perspektive für Staaten von enormer Wichtigkeit. Der globale Tourismus ist eine Billionen-Euro-Industrie, von der viele Länder abhängig sind. Migrantinnen bringen wirtschaftlich viel Gewinn²³ und sind ein wichtiger Teil des gesamten Wirtschaftssystems von fast allen europäischen Staaten. Moderne Volkswirtschaften sind auf die Einwanderung angewiesen, um genügend Arbeitskräfte in bestimmten Wirtschaftssektoren zu haben. Die Bürgerinnen haben auch starke Interessen, sich mit Touristinnen und Migrantinnen assoziieren zu können. Insbesondere haben Bürgerinnen

22. Vielleicht ist es nicht unfair, wenn andere Staaten *auch* ähnliche Lockdown-Maßnahmen durchsetzen. Dann müssen alle ähnliche Kosten tragen, auch wenn der Lockdown von Staat A die Bewohnerinnen von Staat A anders betrifft als die Bewohnerinnen von Staat B.

23. Michael A. Clemens, „Economics and emigration: Trillion-dollar bills on the sidewalk?“, *Journal of Economic perspectives* 25, no. 3 (2011): 83-106. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.25.3.83>.

ein Interesse, sich mit ihren im Ausland lebenden Familienangehörigen zu treffen und gemeinsam leben zu können. Die negativen Auswirkungen auf die Bewohnerinnen, zu denen die Einreiseverbote führen, sind nicht zu unterschätzen.

Zweitens sind Einreiseverbote für die Menschen, die in ein Land einreisen wollen, belastend. Wir müssen hier zwischen Touristinnen und Migrantinnen unterscheiden. Im Normalfall ist das Bedürfnis, in ein Land frei einreisen zu können, bei Migrantinnen stärker gegeben als bei Touristinnen. Es ist dementsprechend weniger problematisch, Touristinnen für kurze Zeit mit einem Einreiseverbot zu belegen.

Im Fall von Migrantinnen ist es komplizierter. Es gibt laut den Verteidigerinnen der offenen Grenzen *generische* Interessen, frei reisen sowie ein – und auswandern zu können. Mit dem Begriff „*generische* Interessen“ sind Interessen gemeint, die *alle* Migrantinnen gleichermaßen haben und die bei fast jeder Einwanderungssituation im Spiel sind. Zum Beispiel haben alle Menschen ein Interesse daran, sich alle zur Verfügung stehenden Lebensoptionen offenzuhalten²⁴ und nicht mit ungerechtfertigtem Zwang ausgeschlossen zu werden.²⁵ Wie später diskutiert wird, scheint es plausibel, dass das Interesse der Bewohnerinnen, Covid-19 einzudämmen, gegenüber den generischen Interessen überwiegen kann. Das ist besonders plausibel, wenn die Einschränkungen nur kurzzeitig sind, was bei Sondereinreisebeschränkungen der Fall sein kann. Aber je länger solche Maßnahmen in Kraft bleiben, desto schwieriger wird es, sie zu rechtfertigen, weil sie die Interessen der Einreisenden dann stärker betreffen.²⁶

Wichtig ist aber, dass solche Maßnahmen nicht für alle Migrantinnen gleichermaßen gelten dürfen. Die Tatsache, dass es legitim sein kann, Migrantinnen mit einem ausschließlich generischen Interesse von der Einreise abzuhalten, bedeutet eben nicht, dass es zulässig wäre, *alle* Migrantinnen auszuschließen. Zudem gibt es *spezifische* Gründe, weswegen Menschen ein Interesse daran haben, ein – und auswandern

24. Kieran Oberman, „Immigration as a Human Right“, in *Migration in Political Theory: The Ethics of Movement and Membership*, hg. v. Sarah Fine und Lea Ypi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016): 32-56.

25. Michael Huemer, „Is There a Right to Immigrate?“, *Social Theory and Practice* 26 (2020): 429-61.

26. Alec Walen und Bashshar Haydar, „The ethics of a pandemic are not those of a ‘new normal’“, *CAPX*, 12. Mai 2020. <https://capx.co/the-ethics-of-a-pandemic-are-not-those-of-a-new-normal/>.

zu können. Wie mit diesen umgegangen werden sollte, wird im nächsten Abschnitt diskutiert.

In diesem Abschnitt wurden vier Bedingungen vorgestellt, die Sondereinreisebeschränkungen erfüllen müssen, um gerechtfertigt zu sein. Es wurde argumentiert, dass Flugstopps und Einreiseverbote unter gewissen Umständen diese Bedingungen erfüllen können. Um Missverständnisse zu vermeiden, müssen drei Punkte präzisiert werden. Erstens habe ich argumentiert, dass Staaten Sondereinreisebeschränkungen durchsetzen *dürfen*, und nicht, dass sie sie durchsetzen *müssen*. Obwohl mir die These, dass sie in vielen Fällen durchgesetzt werden müssen, plausibel scheint, ist sie nicht ein unerlässlicher Teil meines Arguments. Staaten können verschiedene Strategien wählen, um Covid-19 einzudämmen. Hierbei ist es wichtig, klarzustellen, dass ich nur argumentiert habe, dass die vier oben genannten Bedingungen *zusammen hinreichend* sind, um Sondereinreisebeschränkungen zu rechtfertigen, aber nicht *notwendig*. Um die Notwendigkeit zu beweisen, bräuchte man eine längere Auseinandersetzung mit der Thematik, weil es möglicherweise andere Argumente für Sondereinreisebeschränkungen, die ich nicht diskutiert habe, geben könnte. Für meine Zwecke genügt es jedoch, eine plausible Rechtfertigung der Sondereinreisebeschränkungen, die alle Seiten in der Einwanderungsdebatte akzeptieren können, anzubieten. Drittens habe ich nicht argumentiert, dass bestimmte Sondereinreisebeschränkungen eines bestimmten Landes gerechtfertigt sind. Stattdessen habe ich versucht, Kriterien darzulegen, um solche Maßnahmen zu evaluieren.

IV. Die Grenze dieser Rechtfertigung

Im letzten Abschnitt wurde argumentiert, dass Einreiseverbote und Flugstopps wegen Covid-19 manchmal gerechtfertigt sein können, wenn sie die relevanten Bedingungen erfüllen, was manchmal der Fall ist. Das bedeutet aber nicht, dass alle Sondereinreisebeschränkungen, die Staaten durchgesetzt haben, gerechtfertigt sind. Dieser Abschnitt beschäftigt sich mit der Frage, welche Krisenmaßnahmen diese Bedingungen nicht erfüllen und deswegen nicht zu rechtfertigen sind.²⁷ Besonders wichtig

27. Genauer gesagt werde ich argumentieren, dass die genannten Maßnahmen nicht alle vier hinreichenden Bedingungen erfüllen. Weil ich nur argumentiert habe, dass diese hinreichend sind, kann ich natürlich nicht ausschließen, dass es alternativ dazu eine andere Rechtfertigung gibt. In der folgenden Diskussion versuche ich aber,

ist der folgende Punkt: Ausgeschlossen zu sein, betrifft Einreisende unterschiedlich. Es kann daher ungerecht sein, bestimmte Gruppen von Einreisenden wegen Covid-19 auszuschließen, obwohl es eine Rechtfertigung gibt, einige Sondereinreisebeschränkungen zu implementieren.

1. *Asyl and Flucht*

Asylsuchende und Flüchtlinge haben ein starkes Interesse daran, in einem anderen Land einen sicheren Zufluchtsort zu finden. Dieses Interesse ist stark genug, dass es ungerechtfertigt ist, sie nicht einreisen zu lassen oder sie abzuschieben. Die Einschränkungen des Asylsystems und die Aussetzung der Härtefallaufnahme sind daher nicht vertretbar.²⁸

Werfen wir einen genaueren Blick auf die Einschränkungen des Asylsystems, um diesen Punkt deutlicher zu machen. Push-Backs, illegale Abschiebungen und das Aussetzen von Asylbeantragungsmöglichkeiten erfüllen keine der oben diskutierten Bedingungen. Die negativen Konsequenzen der Einreise von einigen Asylsuchenden sind minimal. Es gibt keinen Beweis dafür – trotz der Propaganda der Rechtspopulisten, dass Asylsuchende eine große Covid-19-Gefahr darstellen würden. Umgekehrt ist es jedoch extrem gefährlich, Asylsuchende abzuschieben. Push-Backs drängen Menschen, die in Not sind, in äußerst gefährliche Situationen und verletzen das Recht auf Asyl. Solche Maßnahmen sind genauso unmoralisch, wenn sie nach dem Grenzübertritt oder auf dem Mittelmeer passieren. Covid-19 ist kein Grund, Menschen einen fairen Asylprozess zu verwehren.

Um das Restrisiko, dass Asylsuchende Covid-19 verbreiten könnten, zu minimieren, kann es mit alternativen Maßnahmen, wie zum Beispiel Quarantäne in einer sicheren Unterkunft, weiter reduziert werden. Mit „sicherer Unterkunft“ ist nicht gemeint, dass Staaten Asylberechtigte festnehmen dürfen. Asylberechtigte festzunehmen, wie es in vielen Staaten üblich ist, ist schon unter normalen Umständen eine höchst problematische Praxis.²⁹ Derzeit ist sie noch problematischer, da das Risiko, sich mit Covid-19

klarzumachen, weswegen diese Maßnahmen schwer zu legitimieren sind.

28. Patti T. Lenard, „Seeking Asylum During the Pandemic: On Why Borders Must Remain a Little Open“, *CIPS Blog*, 22. April 2020. <https://www.cips-cepi.ca/2020/04/22/seeking-asylum-during-the-pandemic-on-why-borders-must-remain-a-little-open/>.
29. Amy Nethery und Stephanie J. Silverman, *Immigration Detention: The Migration of a Policy and Its Human Impact* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

zu infizieren, bei inhaftierten Personen äußerst hoch ist.³⁰ Die Tatsache, dass Menschen auch während der Pandemie abgeschoben werden, hat schwerwiegende Folgen und ist eine unvermeidbare Praxis. So trugen die in den USA durchgeführten Abschiebungen von Asylsuchenden, die sich während der Inhaftierung mit dem Virus infiziert hatten, zur Verbreitung von Covid-19 in Mittelamerika bei.³¹ Ein alternatives Modell, das zum Teil in Spanien³² und Portugal³³ am Anfang der Pandemie angewendet wird, besteht darin, die Einwanderungshaftanstalten zu räumen und Migrantinnen und Asylsuchenden temporär den Staatsbürgerinnen gleichzustellen.

Ähnlich lautet das Argument gegen die Aussetzung der Härtefallaufnahme. Mehrere Millionen von Menschen, die als Flüchtlinge anerkannt sind, wohnen seit Jahren oder sogar Jahrzehnten in unsicheren Unterkünften bzw. Flüchtlingslagern. Sie brauchen dringend einen sicheren Aufenthaltsort. Die Gefahr, in der sie sich in diesen Lagern befinden, ist für sie durch die Covid-19-Pandemie nochmals gestiegen. In den Lagern gibt es wenig medizinische Versorgung, zudem führte Covid-19 zu logistischen Problemen in den Flüchtlingslagern, in denen die Flüchtlinge jetzt teilweise von Hunger und Unterernährung bedroht sind. Die globale Staatengemeinschaft ist deswegen als *Kollektiv* auch während der Pandemie moralisch dazu verpflichtet, diesen Menschen eine sicherere Unterkunft zu bieten.³⁴ Der einzige Grund, die Härtefallaufnahme *kurzzeitig* auszusetzen, ist, wenn es darum geht, Flüchtlinge vor dem Risiko einer Covid-19-Infektion zu schützen, beispielsweise wenn kein sicheres Transportmittel zur Verfügung steht. Dies kann aber keinen Grund darstellen, Menschen längerfristig in unsicheren Flüchtlingslagern leben zu lassen.³⁵

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30. Lauren Lyons, „Incarceration, Covid-19, and Emergency Release: Reimagining How and When to Punish“, *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* 30.3 (2020): 291-317.
 31. Emily Kassie und Barbara Marcolini, „How ICE Helped Spread the Coronavirus“, *The New York Times*, 7. Juli 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/10/us/ice-coronavirus-deportation.html>.
 32. Magda Majkowska-Tomkin, „Countries are suspending immigration detention due to coronavirus. Let’s keep it that way“, *Euronews*, 29. April 2020. <https://www.euronews.com/2020/04/29/countries-suspending-immigration-detention-due-to-coronavirus-lets-keep-it-that-way-view>.
 33. Aimee Percy, „Portugal is treating migrants as citizens amid the Covid-19 crisis. Other countries must follow“, *The New Federalist*, 20. April 2020. <https://www.thenewfederalist.eu/portugal-is-treating-migrants-as-citizens-amid-the-covid-19-crisis-other?lang=fr>.
 34. David Owen, *What Do We Owe to Refugees* (Cambridge: Polity, 2020).
 35. Mein Argument geht hier von der Annahme aus, dass Staaten kollektiv dazu verpflichtet sind, Flüchtlinge zu schützen. Diese kollektive Pflicht ist meiner Meinung nach nicht eine rein humanitäre, sondern eine *Gerechtigkeitspflicht*. Um diese Pflicht

Härtefallaufnahmen sollten deswegen keineswegs aufgrund von Covid-19 ausgesetzt, sondern ganz im Gegenteil erweitert werden.³⁶

2. Staatsbürgerinnen und Bewohnerinnen

Asylsuchende und Flüchtlinge haben ein starkes Interesse daran, in irgendeinen anderen Staat einzureisen. Andere Menschen, die sich derzeit nicht auf dem Staatsterritorium ihres Herkunftslands befinden, haben ein starkes Interesse daran, in einen *bestimmten* Staat einzureisen. Flugstopps und Einreiseverbote haben dazu geführt, dass viele Staatsbürgerinnen, die sich beim Ausbruch der Pandemie nicht in ihrem Heimatstaat befunden haben, an anderen Orten gestrandet waren. Obwohl Staaten für einen kurzen Zeitraum den Flugverkehr pausieren können, um die gesundheitliche Sicherheit ihrer Bewohnerinnen zu gewährleisten, dürfen sie nicht die Rückkehr der eigenen Staatsbürgerinnen verbieten. Dies zu tun, würde das Rückkehrrecht verletzen. Hier können aber zwei Fälle unterschieden werden: Im Ausland lebende Staatsbürgerinnen sowie jene Menschen mit Doppelstaatsbürgerinnenschaft, die an ihrem derzeitigen Aufenthaltsort leben, sind weniger von Einreisebeschränkungen und Flugstopps betroffen als Staatsbürgerinnen, die keinen zweiten Aufenthaltsort haben, und gestrandete Touristinnen. Beide Gruppen haben ein Interesse daran, aufgrund ihrer Verbundenheit und Verbindungen zu jenem Land, dessen Staatsbürgerinnenschaft sie innehaben, und zu den Menschen, die dort leben, eine Rückkehrmöglichkeit zu haben. Die faktische Situation der Gestrandeten kann jedoch zuweilen prekärer sein,

zu erfüllen, müssen Staaten nicht nur das Non-Refoulement-Prinzip respektieren, sie müssen auch ihren gerechten Anteil tun, um Flüchtlinge zu schützen. Und das bedeutet oft, dass sie Flüchtlinge aufnehmen müssen. Obwohl diese Pflicht eine kollektive ist, stimme ich David Owen („Refugees, fairness and taking up the slack: On justice and the international refugee regime“, *Moral Philosophy and Politics* 3, no. 2 (2016): 141-164. <https://doi.org/10.1515/mopp-2016-0001>) zu, dass Staaten dazu verpflichtet sind, für andere Staaten, die ihre Pflicht nicht erfüllen, einzuspringen. Deswegen lehne ich die konventionelle Ansicht, dass Staaten nicht verpflichtet sind, an Härtefallaufnahmeprogrammen teilzunehmen, ab. Wenn Staaten Härtefallaufnahmen wegen der Pandemie pausieren, verschärft das eine bereits existierende Form der Ungerechtigkeit Flüchtlingen gegenüber.

36. Natürlich stellt sich die Frage, wie diese Aufgabe fair verteilt werden kann. Für eine Diskussion, siehe Owen, *What Do We Owe*, Kap. 4. Eine weitere Frage ist, ob ein Staat die Aufnahme von Flüchtlingen aussetzen darf, wenn er die Aufnahme von Flüchtlingen finanziell unterstützt. Es scheint mir nicht unplausibel, dass es Umstände geben könnte, unter denen diese Handlungsweise gerechtfertigt sein könnte. Ich lasse aber die Frage in diesem Aufsatz offen.

da ihre Rechte von jenem Staat, in dem sie sich gerade aufhalten, nicht immer effektiv geschützt werden. Staaten haben deswegen eine besondere Pflicht gegenüber diesen Menschen, ihnen eine Heimkehrmöglichkeit, zum Beispiel einen Repatriierungsflug, anzubieten.

Auf ähnliche Weise gehört der Fall der ansässigen Ausländerinnen behandelt. Obwohl einige Länder, wie beispielsweise Japan und China, diesen verboten haben, in das Land zurückzukehren, gibt es hierfür keine gültige Rechtfertigung. Die Interessen von Ausländerinnen, die längerfristig im Staatsterritorium leben, sind normalerweise die gleichen wie die von Staatsbürgerinnen. Sie sind *Mitglieder* der Gesellschaft³⁷ und haben demnach ein starkes Interesse daran, zurückkehren zu können.

3. *Einwanderung*

Covid-19 ist kein Einwanderungsproblem und es ist falsch, es als ein solches darzustellen. Das allgemeine Problem ist der Kontakt mit infizierten Personen, egal, woher sie kommen, und unabhängig von ihrem Aufenthaltsstatus. Aber die Ausbreitung von Covid-19 kann regional unterschiedlich sein. Es kann deswegen Sinn machen, das Einreisen von Einwanderinnen aus hart getroffenen Regionen kurzfristig zu pausieren. „Kurzzeitig pausieren“ bedeutet, dass Staaten Visa für Menschen aus diesen Regionen nicht permanent ablehnen sollten. Es bedeutet, dass das Ausgeben von Visa temporär pausiert oder verschoben werden darf. Solche Maßnahmen sind aber schwieriger zu rechtfertigen als Einreiseverbote für Nichtmigrantinnen. Staaten dürfen deswegen nur in extremen Fällen solche Einreiseverbote verhängen. Erstens habe ich bereits argumentiert, dass Einwanderungsverbote schwerer zu rechtfertigen sind als das Einreiseverbot, weil Einwanderinnen oft stärkere Interessen als Touristinnen haben. Das verändert, wie Alternativen, wie z. B. Quarantäne und Exit – und Entry-Screenings, gegen Einreiseverbote bilanziert werden sollten.

Auch wenn das Einreiseverbot vertretbar wäre, da die potenziellen Schäden von Covid-19 genügen würden, die *generischen Interessen*, die jeder Mensch an Freizügigkeit hat, zu überwinden, muss man hier für bestimmte Gruppen von Migrantinnen, die spezifische Interessen haben, eine Ausnahme machen. Ein Beispiel hierfür (aber nicht das einzige) sind ausländische Familienmitglieder, die von ihren Familien durch Sonderreisebeschränkungen getrennt sind. Nicht nur sie, sondern auch ihre

37. Joseph Carens, *The Ethics of Immigration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013): 158-172.

Familienmitglieder, die bereits Staatsbürgerinnen sind, haben ein starkes Interesse daran, mit ihren Familien zusammenkommen zu können.³⁸ Sie sollten deswegen von den Einreise – und Einwanderungsverboten ausgenommen sein.³⁹ Schließlich kann das Restrisiko, dass Einwanderinnen Covid-19 verbreiten könnten, mit alternativen Maßnahmen minimiert werden. Staaten können für Einwanderinnen aus dieser Gruppe Screenings und Quarantäne anwenden, statt die Einwanderung zu verbieten.

Ich habe argumentiert, dass viele Maßnahmen, die Staaten durchgesetzt haben, schwer zu rechtfertigen sind. Einschränkungen des Asylsystems und die Pausierung der Härtefallaufnahmen sind moralisch inakzeptabel. Das auch Bürgerinnen und ansässige Ausländerinnen betreffende Einreiseverbot sowie die Flugstopps verletzen das Recht auf Rückkehr. Weiters müssen das Recht auf Familienleben und das Recht auf Einwanderung so weit wie möglich respektiert werden. Trotz dieser substanziellen Ausnahmen kann es für Staaten aufgrund der Corona-Pandemie legitim sein, ihre Grenzen zu kontrollieren und Menschen, die keine Sonderinteressen daran haben, einzureisen, temporär auszuschließen.

V. Offene Grenzen und Sondereinreisebeschränkungen

Ich habe argumentiert, dass manche Sondereinreisebeschränkungen gerechtfertigt sein können. Hat diese Position Folgen für die allgemeine Debatte über Einwanderung in der politischen Philosophie? Auf den ersten Blick scheint eine bejahende Antwort plausibel zu sein. Insbesondere erscheint es einleuchtend, dass die Konklusion, dass Staaten aufgrund der Corona-Pandemie ihre Grenzen teilweise schließen dürfen, mit der Offene-Grenzen-Position nicht zu vereinbaren ist.

38. Mathew Lister, „Immigration, Association and the Family“, *Law and Philosophy* 26, no. 6 (2011): 717-745. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10982-010-9083-9>.

39. Wie Ferracioli argumentiert, sind Familienbeziehungen nicht die einzige Art von Beziehungen, die moralisch relevant sind. Laura Ferracioli, *Family migration schemes and liberal neutrality: A dilemma*, *Journal of Moral Philosophy* (2016): 13.5: 553-575, <https://doi.org/10.1163/17455243-4681056>. Obwohl viele (aber nicht alle) Länder (einige Arten von) Familienmitglieder(n) von ihren Einreiseverboten ausnehmen, sind andere Arten von Beziehungen, so wie nicht verheiratete Paare, oftmals nicht ausgenommen, obwohl ihre Interessen denen von Familienmitgliedern ähnlich sind. Megan Specia, „Couples Separated by Europe’s Travel Bans Fight to Be Reunited“, *The New York Times*, 8. Juli 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/08/world/europe/couples-separated-eu-travel-ban.html>.

Es ist wichtig, gleich zu Beginn klarzustellen, dass die Offene-Grenzen-Position keine homogene Position ist, sondern viele verschiedene Sichtweisen vereint, die unterschiedliche Argumente verfolgen, um darzulegen, dass sich Menschen im Normalfall frei bewegen sowie ein – und auswandern dürfen und dass es in den meisten Fällen unzulässig ist, sie davon abzuhalten. Um die Frage genauer zu diskutieren, werde ich in zwei verschiedene Positionen unterscheiden: Dies ist zum einen die libertäre Position, die davon ausgeht, dass es eine starke Annahme hinsichtlich negativer Freiheit und gegen staatlichen Zwang gibt,⁴⁰ und zum anderen die liberale Position, die davon ausgeht, dass es aufgrund der starken positiven Interessen seitens Migrantinnen ein Menschenrecht auf Einwanderung gibt.⁴¹ Vertreterinnen dieser Positionen geben zu, dass es kein *absolutes* Recht darauf gibt, Grenzen zu übertreten. Sie räumen *im Prinzip* ein, dass die Bewegungsfreiheit unter gewissen Umständen eingeschränkt werden darf. Die Frage, die sich hier jedoch stellt, ist, ob diese Position philosophisch konsistent beziehungsweise mit den Sondereinreisebeschränkungen, die während der Covid-19-Pandemie erlassen wurden, vereinbar ist.

Diese Frage kann auf zwei Arten präzisiert werden. Erstens könnte man fragen, warum Staaten ihre Grenzen schließen dürfen, wenn, wie manche Verfechterinnen von offenen Grenzen meinen, diese kein Recht dazu haben, Einwanderinnen die Einreise zu verweigern. Wenn es nicht im rechtlichen Zuständigkeitsbereich eines Staates liegt, seine Grenzen zu schließen oder zu kontrollieren, warum hätten Staaten in Pandemiezeiten dennoch das Recht, dies zu tun? Es scheint, als ob die Befugnis, die Grenzen zu schließen, das Recht von Staaten auf Grenzschießung voraussetzt, das diese jedoch laut den Verfechterinnen von offenen Grenzen gar nicht besitzen. Zweitens müsste danach gefragt werden, ob es möglich ist, dass die Verfechterinnen von offenen Grenzen gleichzeitig *akzeptieren*, dass Staaten ihre Grenzen aufgrund der Covid-19-Pandemie schließen, und es *ablehnen*, dass Staaten ihre Grenzen aus vielen anderen Gründen, beispielsweise um ihre Arbeitsmärkte oder „Kultur“ zu verteidigen, schließen. Verfechterinnen der offenen Grenzen müssen erklären, weshalb sich das Argument für Sondereinreisebeschränkungen nicht zu stark verallgemeinern lässt.

40. Huemer, „Right to Immigrate“.

41. Oberman, „Immigration“.

1. Die Voraussetzungen für Sondereinreisebeschränkungen

Der Gedanke hinter der ersten Fragestellung ist folgender: Sondereinreisebeschränkungen setzen gewisse Rechte seitens der Staaten in Bezug auf ihre Grenzen voraus. Die Verfechterinnen von offenen Grenzen lehnen es aber aufgrund ihrer Überzeugungen ab, dass Staaten solche Rechte haben. Daraus folgt, dass sie Sondereinreisebeschränkungen ablehnen müssen. Um diese Problematik überzeugend zu machen, muss man zuerst präziser beschreiben, welche Rechte aufseiten der Staaten für Sondereinreisebeschränkungen eine konkrete Voraussetzung sind. Es folgt ein erster Versuch:

1. Sondereinreisebeschränkungen stellen einen Ausschluss von Menschen, die ins Staatsterritorium einreisen möchten, dar.
2. Der Staat kann nur Menschen ausschließen, wenn er bereits im Besitz des Rechts auf Ausschluss ist.
3. Verfechterinnen von offenen Grenzen sprechen den Staaten dieses Recht ab.
4. Deshalb können die Verfechterinnen der offenen Grenzen Sondereinreisebeschränkungen nicht akzeptieren.

Diese Argumentation ist nicht so überzeugend, wie es auf den ersten Blick scheint, weil die zwei Schlüsselbegriffe – das „Recht auf Ausschluss“ und „offene Grenzen“ – unterschiedlich interpretiert werden können. Es gibt drei Möglichkeiten, auf das so formulierte Argument zu antworten.

Erstens ist, wie bereits erwähnt wurde, Covid-19 kein Grund, Menschen *permanent* oder *längerfristig* auszuschließen. Staaten dürfen niemandem aufgrund der Covid-19-Pandemie die Einreise sowie eine längerfristige Aufenthaltsmöglichkeit untersagen. Ein Staat darf in Zeiten der Pandemie höchstens verbieten, dass man *derzeit* seine Grenzen passiert. Einem Staat könnte jedoch, ohne dass sich daraus ein Widerspruch ergibt, das Recht zugesprochen werden, zu regulieren, wann und unter welchen Bedingungen Menschen ins Staatsterritorium einreisen dürfen. Dies bedeutet nicht, dass Staaten dadurch das Recht haben, Menschen *permanent* auszuschließen. Demzufolge setzen Sondereinreisebeschränkungen kein Recht auf Ausschluss voraus. Dieses Argument ist aber nicht ganz zufriedenstellend. Die Differenzierung zwischen dem Recht, Menschen permanent auszuschließen, und dem Recht, zu regulieren, wann und unter welchen Bedingungen man einwandern darf, ist schwer präzise vorzunehmen. In einigen Fällen kann die Umsetzung der beiden Rechte die gleichen Folgen haben. Der wichtige Punkt ist aber,

dass es moralisch relevant ist, wie lange Sondereinreisebeschränkungen in Kraft sind, denn ein vorübergehendes Pausieren der Einwanderung ist nicht das Gleiche wie eine permanente Aussperrungspolitik.⁴²

Es gibt einen zweiten Einwand gegen das oben genannte Argument. Der „Hohfeldsche Status“ des Ausschlussrechts könnte verschieden sein. Laut Oliviero Angeli kann man das Recht auf Ausschluss und das Recht auf Einwanderung kompatibilistisch interpretieren, wenn man ersteres als ein Recht, etwas moralisch Schlechtes bzw. etwas, das gegen eine moralische Pflicht verstößt, zu tun, versteht.⁴³ Das Recht, etwas entgegen einer moralischen Pflicht, die man hat, zu tun, bedeutet nicht, dass man diese moralische Pflicht nicht hat. Es bedeutet, dass der Rechtsinhaber „bei der Ausübung seines Rechts nicht gehindert werden darf und zwar selbst dann, wenn die Ausübung des Rechts gegen moralische Pflichten verstößt.“⁴⁴ So verstanden widerspricht das Recht auf Ausschluss dem Recht auf Einwanderung nicht. Staaten sind moralisch dazu verpflichtet, Einwanderinnen aufzunehmen. Wenn Staaten dies nicht tun, würden sie zwar gegen ihre Pflichten handeln, wofür sie auch kritisiert werden können, dennoch dürfte man sie in ihrer freien Entscheidung, ihre Pflichten zu vernachlässigen, nicht einschränken. Angelis Verständnis von dem Zusammenhang zwischen diesen zwei Rechten ist jedoch umstritten.⁴⁵ Er interpretiert das Recht auf Einwanderung als eine rein moralische Angelegenheit ohne politische Auswirkungen. Außerdem erscheint es im vorliegenden Fall nicht so, als ob Staaten gegen ihre moralischen Pflichten verstoßen, wenn sie Sondereinreisebeschränkungen (mit den vorgenannten Ausnahmen) verhängen. Plausibler ist die Ansicht, dass Staaten oft sogar moralisch dazu verpflichtet sind, Sondereinreisebeschränkungen zu implementieren.

Es gibt noch einen dritten Einwand gegen das Argument, der den Kern der Sache viel mehr trifft. Die Formulierung „das Recht auf Ausschluss“ lässt sich eingeschränkt oder uneingeschränkt interpretieren. Uneingeschränkt interpretiert bedeutet „das Recht auf Ausschluss“, dass Staaten nach ihrem eigenen Ermessen Migrantinnen ausschließen dürfen, auch wenn es keinen legitimen Grund dafür gibt. Folgt man dieser Ansicht,

42. Vgl. Walen und Haydar, „The Ethics of a Pandemic“.

43. Oliviero Angeli, „Das Recht auf Einwanderung und das Recht auf Ausschluss“, *Zeitschrift für Politische Theorie* 2 (2011): 171-84. <https://www.budrich-journals.de/index.php/zpth/article/view/6841>.

44. Angeli, „Das Recht auf Einwanderung“, 172.

45. Andreas Cassee, *Globale Bewegungsfreiheit. Ein philosophisches Plädoyer für offene Grenzen* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2016): 24-5.

haben Staaten *pro tanto* das Recht, ihre Einwanderungspolitik beliebig und uneingeschränkt zu gestalten.⁴⁶ So interpretiert scheint das Recht auf Ausschluss inkompatibel mit dem Offene-Grenzen-Gedanken zu sein. Es gibt jedoch auch die Möglichkeit, das Recht auf Ausschluss nicht uneingeschränkt, sondern eingeschränkt zu interpretieren. In Anlehnung an Anna Stilz könnte man das Recht auf Ausschluss als ein „bedingtes Recht“ auffassen.⁴⁷ Ein bedingtes Recht auf Ausschluss ist laut Stilz das Recht, Migrantinnen erst auszuschließen, wenn eine ausreichende Wahrscheinlichkeit besteht, dass die Aufnahme einen größeren Schaden verursachen würde als der Ausschluss. Ein sehr bedingtes Recht auf Ausschluss muss aber dem Recht auf Einwanderung nicht widersprechen. Verfechterinnen von offenen Grenzen müssen nicht verneinen, dass Staaten ein, wenn auch sehr bedingtes, Recht auf Ausschluss haben. Sie müssen nur verneinen, wie noch dargelegt werden wird, dass es unter normalen Umständen ein größerer Schaden wäre, Migrantinnen aufzunehmen, als sie nicht aufzunehmen. Das genügt, um zu beweisen, wie Joseph Carens den Offene-Grenzen-Gedanken ursprünglich formuliert hat, dass „Grenzen *prinzipiell* offen sein sollten und es den Menschen *normalerweise* freistehen sollte, ihren Heimatstaat zu verlassen und sich in einem anderen niederzulassen.“⁴⁸ Diese Position beschreibt den Fall der Sondereinreisebeschränkungen besser, da das Argument auf dem Schaden, den Covid-19 anrichten kann, beruht.

Gibt es einen anderen Weg, um diese Inkonsistenz zwischen offenen Grenzen und Sondereinreisebeschränkungen zu formulieren? Man könnte folgendermaßen argumentieren:

1. Staaten dürfen nur dann Sondereinreisebeschränkungen durchsetzen, wenn sie bereits die Jurisdiktion über ihre Grenzen ausüben.
2. Verfechterinnen von offenen Grenzen müssen es ablehnen, dass Staaten die Jurisdiktion über ihre Grenzen ausüben.
3. Deswegen müssen die Verfechterinnen von offenen Grenzen Sondereinreisebeschränkungen zurückweisen.

46. Wellman, *Debating Immigration*.

47. Anna Stilz, *Territorial Sovereignty: A Philosophical Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019): 187.

48. Joseph Carens, „Ein Plädoyer für offene Grenzen“, in *Ethik der Einwanderung*, hg. v. Frank Dietrich (Berlin: Suhrkamp): 166.

Dieses Argument weist jedoch die gleichen Probleme wie das vorherige auf. Obwohl es vielleicht eine anarchistische Variante der libertären Position gibt, welche die Jurisdiktion des Staates über seine Grenzen ganz ablehnt, können die meisten, die für offene Grenzen sind, ohne Schwierigkeiten akzeptieren, dass Staaten die Jurisdiktion über ihre Grenzen ausüben. Jene, die für ein Recht auf Einwanderung plädieren, müssen diese Jurisdiktion nicht ganz ablehnen. Die Frage ist eher, wie extensiv die Jurisdiktion des Staates über seine Grenzen sein soll.⁴⁹ Die Jurisdiktion kann man ebenfalls als eingeschränkt oder uneingeschränkt interpretieren. Es besteht keine Notwendigkeit für die Verfechterinnen offener Grenzen, eine beschränkte Jurisdiktion der Staaten in Bezug auf ihre Grenzen abzulehnen.

2. Übergeneralisiert das Plädoyer für Sondereinreisebeschränkungen?

Es gibt noch eine andere mögliche Ursache für die Inkompatibilität zwischen dem Offene-Grenzen-Gedanken und dem Argument für Sondereinreisebeschränkungen. Können die Verfechterinnen der offenen Grenzen behaupten, dass einige während der Corona-Pandemie erlassene Sondereinreisebeschränkungen zu rechtfertigen sind, ohne implizit akzeptieren zu müssen, dass Staaten auch in anderen Fällen und aus anderen Gründen Migrantinnen ausschließen dürfen? Diese Fragestellung kann als Dilemma wie folgt beschrieben werden: Verfechterinnen von offenen Grenzen sind der Meinung, dass es ein (nicht absolutes) *Recht* auf globale Bewegungsfreiheit gibt. Sie können entweder akzeptieren, dass Sondereinreisebeschränkungen aufgrund der Covid-19-Pandemie dieses Recht nicht überwinden können und deswegen solche Maßnahmen nicht zu rechtfertigen sind. Diese Position scheint mir allerdings unplausibel. Oder sie können akzeptieren, dass die Schäden, die eine potenziell größere Verbreitung von Covid-19 mit sich bringen könnte, genügen, um das Recht auf Bewegungsfreiheit zu überwinden. In diesem Fall müssten sie dafür aber eine Erklärung, die nicht *ad hoc* ist, liefern. Diese muss auch im Prinzip für andere Fälle, in denen Covid-19 keine Rolle spielt, gelten. Darum müssen die Verfechterinnen von offenen Grenzen also erklären, inwiefern und warum sich die Schäden von Covid-19 von anderen Schäden unterscheiden, wie zum Beispiel den Auswirkungen von

49. Alex Sager, *Against Borders: Why the World Needs Free Movement of People* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020): 30.

Einwanderung auf Arbeitsplätze und Kulturpraktiken, die in der Einwanderungsdebatte diskutiert werden.⁵⁰ Es ist jedoch nicht gesichert, dass eine gut begründete Differenzierung getroffen werden kann, insbesondere wenn man die weiter reichenden Folgen von Covid-19 – Arbeitslosigkeit, Unsicherheit und Beeinträchtigung der normalen Sozialverhältnisse – als *Teil* der Begründung für Sondereinreisebeschränkungen betrachtet. Genau diese Art von negativen Konsequenzen ist Teil der bekanntesten Argumente, die für das Recht auf Ausschluss plädieren, nämlich das „kulturelle Argument“⁵¹, das auf den potenziellen Auswirkungen auf die Kultur des Landes basiert, und das Argument der „distributiven Gerechtigkeit“, das sich auf die mutmaßlichen wirtschaftlichen Konsequenzen der Migration, besonders für die benachteiligten sozialen Gruppen der Gesellschaft, bezieht.⁵²

Wie könnten Verteidigerinnen der offenen Grenzen dieser Herausforderung begegnen? Manche von ihnen, beispielsweise einige Libertäre, würden zugeben, dass Sondereinreisebeschränkungen nicht gerechtfertigt sein können. *Strikte* Libertäre, die der Meinung sind, dass Freiheit *nur* beschränkt sein darf, um die negative Freiheit von anderen zu schützen, müssen Sondereinreisebeschränkungen zu jeder Zeit als ungerechtfertigt ansehen. Viele Libertäre haben jedoch eine weniger strenge Sicht auf die Dinge. Einige räumen ein, dass die negative Freiheit nicht der einzige Wert ist, und manche von ihnen akzeptieren, dass die Reisefreiheit gelegentlich zugunsten der öffentlichen Gesundheit eingeschränkt werden darf.⁵³ Überdies sind die meisten, die für ein Recht auf Einwanderung plädieren, nicht Libertäre (z. B. Carens und Oberman). Sie gestehen ebenfalls zu, dass einige Sondereinreisebeschränkungen als gerechtfertigt anzusehen

50. Manche Verfechterinnen von offenen Grenzen erlauben, dass Auswirkungen von Einwanderung auf Arbeitsplätze und Kulturpraktiken unter gewissen Umständen Exklusion rechtfertigen können. Sie argumentieren aber, dass diese Gründe Exklusion nur in extremen Fällen rechtfertigen können.

51. David Miller, „Immigration: The Case for Limits“, in *Contemporary Debates in Applied Ethics*, hg. v. Andrew I. Cohen und Christopher H. Wellman (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005): 193-206.

52. Stephen Macedo, „The Moral Dilemma of U.S. Immigration Policy: Open Borders Versus Social Justice?“, in *Debating Immigration*, hg. v. Carol M. Swain (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 63-82.

53. Ilya Somin, „Do Pandemics Strengthen the Case for Restricting Immigration?“, *Reason*, 13. März 2020. <https://reason.com/2020/03/13/do-pandemics-strengthen-the-case-for-restricting-immigration/>.

sind. Die Frage, die bleibt, ist, wie sie mit der anderen Seite des Dilemmas umgehen.

Wie könnte man dann das Argument für Sondereinreisebeschränkungen aufgrund von Covid-19 und das Argument für Einwanderungsbeschränkungen unter normalen Umständen konsistent unterscheiden, wenn in beiden Fällen die negativen Konsequenzen ähnlich ausfallen? Wenn wir diese Frage genauer untersuchen, wird deutlich, dass es mehrere Möglichkeiten gibt, um die zwei Argumente voneinander zu unterscheiden. Als Beispiel nehmen wir das Argument der distributiven Gerechtigkeit, dass Einwanderung negative Auswirkungen auf bereits benachteiligte Arbeiterinnen haben könnte. Es gibt hier fünf relevante Unterschiede zwischen Sondereinreisebeschränkungen und normalen Einwanderungsbeschränkungen, die insgesamt auf eine klare Differenzierung hinauslaufen. Diese Unterschiede betreffen die vier Bedingungen, auf denen mein Argument in Abschnitt III basiert.

Die erste Bedingung ist, dass der Ausschluss von Einwanderinnen nur gerechtfertigt sein kann, wenn Einwanderung die vitalen Interessen der Bürgerinnen bedroht. Es ist jedoch klar, dass, auch wenn es in beiden Fällen zu ähnlich gelagerten negativen Konsequenzen kommen kann, die Corona-Pandemie Auswirkungen auf die *Grundinteressen* der Menschen hat. Die Auswirkungen von Covid-19 auf die öffentliche Gesundheit und auf das öffentliche Gesundheitssystem sind extrem. Solche Schäden sind mit der potenziellen wirtschaftlichen Belastung durch Migration nicht zu vergleichen. Der erste Unterschied ist demnach, dass im Fall von Covid-19 *gewichtigere Interessen* betroffen sind.

Ein zweiter Unterschied, der auch auf meiner ersten Bedingung basiert, hat mit der Evidenz dafür, inwiefern Migration die vitalen Interessen betrifft, zu tun. Im Fall von Covid-19 zeigen die Daten relativ klar, dass die globale Mobilität bzw. der globale Flugverkehr das Virus stark verbreiten können und dass Sondereinreisebeschränkungen sowie andere Mobilitätsbeschränkungen ein wichtiger Teil einer größeren Eindämmungsstrategie sind. Es gibt auch klare Evidenz dafür, dass die sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Konsequenzen von Covid-19 für benachteiligte Arbeitnehmerinnen besonders stark sind.⁵⁴ Im Gegensatz dazu ist die Evidenz, dass Einwanderung unter normalen Umständen negative Auswirkungen auf den Arbeitsmarkt hat, viel weniger deutlich. Vielmehr

54. Piero Esposito, Stefan Collignon und Sergio Scicchitano, „The effect of immigration on unemployment in Europe: Does the core-periphery dualism matter?“, *Economic Modelling* 84 (2020): 249-258. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econmod.2019.04.014>.

zeigen Studien das Gegenteil, nämlich dass Einwanderung den Volkswirtschaften insgesamt einen Gewinn bringt.⁵⁵ Natürlich kann es manchmal Verliererinnen geben, die von der Einwanderung eher negativ betroffen sind, weil die positiven Effekte der Migration nicht gleich verteilt sind. Tatsache ist, dass die meisten Arbeitnehmerinnen von Migration nicht negativ betroffen sind.

Das bringt uns zum dritten Unterschied, der auch auf der Bedingung der „vitalen Interessen“ basiert. Auch wenn es eine kleinere Gruppe von Arbeitnehmerinnen gibt, die von Migration negativ betroffen ist, muss man darauf achten, *wie* Migration die vitalen Interessen der Arbeitnehmerinnen beeinflusst. Die beste Evidenz dafür, dass Einwanderung negative Auswirkungen für benachteiligte Arbeitnehmerinnen hat, sind Studien, die zeigen, dass größere Einwanderungswellen den Lohn der weniger qualifizierten Arbeiterinnen, wie z. B. Bauarbeiterinnen, herunterdrücken können.⁵⁶ Der Effekt hier ist aber gering und es gibt keinen Beweis dafür, dass Einwanderung einen Effekt auf die Arbeitslosenrate hat.⁵⁷ Im Vergleich dazu sind die wirtschaftlichen Auswirkungen von Covid-19 auf Arbeitnehmerinnen viel stärker: Seit dem Ausbruch ist die Arbeitslosigkeit massiv gestiegen. Der relevante Punkt ist, dass nicht alle negativen Auswirkungen, die vitale Interessen berühren, gleich stark sind. Minimale Auswirkungen auf das Einkommen der Arbeitnehmerinnen reichen nicht, um zu rechtfertigen, Menschen auszuschließen.⁵⁸ Wenn es ein Recht auf Einwanderung gibt, das genauso wichtig wie andere Grundfreiheiten ist, dann kann nicht jeder soziale Schaden Einwanderungsbeschränkungen rechtfertigen.⁵⁹

Das bringt uns gleich zur dritten Bedingung meiner oben verteidigten Rechtfertigung: Strengere Einwanderungskontrollmaßnahmen sind nicht

55. Clemens, „Trillion Dollar Bills.“

56. Gianmarco I. P. Ottaviano und Giovanni Peri, „Rethinking the Effect of Immigration on Wages“, *Journal of the European Economic Association* 10, no. 1 (February 2012): 152-197. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1542-4774.2011.01052.x>

57. Hier will ich auf keinen Fall potenzielle negative Effekte der Einwanderung auf Arbeitnehmerinnen herunterspielen. Wenn es diese gibt, sollen sie ernst genommen werden. Mein Punkt ist, dass diese Diskussion auf Evidenz basiert sein muss.

58. Oberman, „Immigration“, 47-8.

59. Es gibt aber kaum Beweise dafür, dass so etwas passieren würde, auch wenn Staaten viel mehr Einwanderinnen aufnehmen würden. Natürlich gibt es hier irgendwo ein Limit, wie Autorinnen wie Oberman zugeben. Sie argumentieren aber, dass Staaten „Hintergrundpflichten“ haben, Maßnahmen, die die Kosten von Migration reduzieren, durchzusetzen. Ein Beispiel dafür ist, dass reiche Staaten gegen die globale Armut kämpfen müssen, weil das längerfristig die Migration reduzieren kann. Oberman, „Immigration“: 51-2.

gerechtfertigt, wenn es *mildere Alternativen*, welche die negativen Konsequenzen ebenfalls abwenden können, gibt. Diese Bedingung ist wichtig, weil, auch wenn Einwanderung negative Auswirkungen auf den Arbeitsmarkt hätte, es Möglichkeiten gibt, diese zu verhindern, ohne einen Einwanderungsstopp herbeizuführen. Der Trade-off ist vermeidbar.⁶⁰ Der Staat könnte beispielsweise den Arbeitsmarkt besser regulieren und betroffene Branchen oder Arbeitnehmerinnen mehr Unterstützung anbieten. Er könnte weiters den Gewinn, den die Einwanderung mit sich bringt, nutzen, um in Arbeitsmarktinitiativen für betroffene Arbeitnehmerinnen zu investieren. Auch wenn Staaten nicht *alle* negativen Auswirkungen der Einwanderung auf Arbeitnehmerinnen kompensieren können, können sie die *stärksten davon* verhindern oder etwas abschwächen. Ich habe aber argumentiert, dass im Fall der Covid-19-Pandemie solche Alternativen nicht immer zur Verfügung stehen. Es ist tatsächlich schwer vorstellbar, dass Länder den Ausbruch von Covid-19 ohne Einschränkungen der internationalen Mobilität unter Kontrolle bringen können, besonders in der Anfangsphase der Pandemie.

Das bringt uns zur vierten Bedingung, wie Einwanderungsbeschränkungen die Interessen der Migrantinnen betreffen. Auch wenn es einen unvermeidbaren Trade-off zwischen Einwanderinnen und Arbeitnehmerinnen gäbe, ist nicht klar, wie man diesen Interessenkonflikt lösen sollte. Wenn es stimmte, dass durch Einwanderung einheimische Arbeiterinnen ihre Arbeitsplätze verlieren oder der Lohn sinkt, müsste darauf geachtet werden, dass aufseiten der Einwanderinnen auch tatsächlich ein relevantes Interesse daran besteht, ihr Land zu verlassen und in ein anderes einzuwandern. Der Verlust des Arbeitsplatzes oder Lohnkürzungen sind relevante negative Auswirkungen, da Arbeitnehmerinnen natürlicherweise ein Interesse daran haben, einen gut bezahlten Job und eine sichere Existenzgrundlage zu haben. Das Interesse der Einwanderinnen ist jedoch das gleiche. Jene Tatsache, die das Interesse der Arbeiterinnen an ihren Arbeitsplätzen begründet, nämlich die Tatsache, dass diese Jobs wertvoll sind und ein sicheres Leben ermöglichen, begründet auch das Interesse der Einwanderinnen an solchen Arbeitsplätzen und Lebensumständen. Die Interessen sind hier *symmetrisch*. Den nationalen Arbeitsmarkt zu „schützen“, indem man gewissen Gruppen den Zugang verwehrt, bedeutet nichts anderes, als ein Problem der Verteilungsgerechtigkeit mit Zwang zu lösen und die Entscheidung zu treffen, dass Staatsbürgerinnen dieses

60. Vgl. Oberman, „Immigration“: 46.

Privileg, nämlich der Zugang zu sicheren Jobs und geregelten Einkünften, allein aufgrund der Tatsache zusteht, dass sie „zuerst“ da waren und bereits im Besitz dieser Privilegien sind.

Im Fall der Sondereinreisebeschränkungen aufgrund von Covid-19 liegen die Dinge anders. Sowohl Bürgerinnen als auch Einreisende haben ein Interesse daran, die Verbreitung von Covid-19 zu verhindern.⁶¹ Wenn Sondereinreisebeschränkungen nötig sind, um diesen Zweck zu erfüllen, dann haben auch Einwanderinnen ein Interesse daran. Zu guter Letzt soll auf den wichtigen Unterschied aufmerksam gemacht werden, der sich daraus ergibt, *wie* Einwanderungsbeschränkungen und Sondereinreisebeschränkungen konkret die Interessen von Einreisenden betreffen. Ein wichtiger Teil der Rechtfertigung der Sondereinreiseverbote im Fall der Pandemie ist, dass es sich dabei um *temporäre* Maßnahmen handelt. Sie schränken daher nur vorübergehend die Interessen der Einreisenden ein. Je länger solche Maßnahmen dauern, desto schwieriger sind sie zu rechtfertigen. Die gängigen Einwanderungsbeschränkungen, die unter normalen Umständen in Kraft sind, sind hingegen *permanent*. Sie haben den Effekt, dass die meisten Ausländerinnen nie in ein Land einwandern können, weil sie nie die relevanten Bedingungen erfüllen können. Dauerhaft ausgeschlossen zu sein, unterminiert die Interessen der Einreisenden viel stärker als ein zwischenzeitliches Verbot.

Solche Unterscheidungen helfen dabei, Sondereinreisebeschränkungen und Einwanderungsbeschränkungen voneinander abzugrenzen. Verteidigerinnen der offenen Grenzen können deswegen Sondereinreisebeschränkungen akzeptieren, ohne damit implizit Einwanderungsbeschränkungen ebenfalls anzuerkennen. Wichtig ist, dass die Gewichtung der Interessen nicht immer der entscheidende Faktor bei dieser Auseinandersetzung ist. Es geht auch um andere Unterschiede: inwiefern und wie stark diese Interessen faktisch betroffen sein werden, dass es Alternativen zur Migrationskontrolle gibt, um die Interessen der Arbeitnehmerinnen zu schützen, dass permanente Maßnahmen die Interessen der Migrantinnen viel stärker als temporäre Maßnahmen betreffen.

Zum Schluss des Abschnitts möchte ich klarstellen, dass ich nicht argumentiert habe, dass Einwanderung *nie* aus anderen Gründen außer Covid-19 eingeschränkt werden kann. Das glauben die meisten Verteidige-

61. Man könnte auch meinen, dass alle nicht nur ein *Interesse* daran haben, sondern auch, dass es eine globale kollektive Pflicht gibt, die Verbreitung von Covid-19 zu verhindern. Es gibt hierfür keine Analogien im Fall der Standardargumente für Einwanderungsbeschränkungen.

rinnen der offenen Grenzen nicht. Es könnte auch im Prinzip andere Fälle geben, in denen Einwanderungsbeschränkungen gerechtfertigt wären. Ich habe argumentiert, dass ein Standardargument, nämlich das Argument der „distributiven Gerechtigkeit“, nicht ausreicht, um Einwanderungsbeschränkungen auf die in Abschnitt III dargestellte Weise zu rechtfertigen, weil es die relevanten Bedingungen nicht erfüllen kann.⁶² Dieses Argument ist auch von der Annahme ausgegangen, dass es ein (nicht absolutes) Recht auf Migration gibt. Diese Annahme habe ich nicht von Grund auf gerechtfertigt, weil es nur mein Anliegen war, zu zeigen, dass die Offene-Grenzen-Position *konsistent* zwischen Sondereinreisebeschränkungen und anderen Einwanderungsbeschränkungen unterscheiden kann.

V. Fazit

In diesem Aufsatz habe ich vier Thesen verteidigt. Erstens habe ich vorgeschlagen, dass Sondereinreisebeschränkungen gerechtfertigt sein können, wenn sie vier Bedingungen erfüllen: Sie sind gerechtfertigt, wenn sie *tatsächlich* effektiv die *vitalen Interessen* der Bewohnerinnen eines Staates schützen, wenn keine milderen Alternativen zur Verfügung stehen und wenn die negativen Auswirkungen, die sie nach sich ziehen, ein gewisses Maß nicht überschreiten. Ich habe danach die These verteidigt, dass einige Sondereinreisebeschränkungen bzw. Einreiseverbote und Flugstopps diese Bedingungen erfüllen, wenn sie mit den richtigen Ausnahmen implementiert werden. Dazu habe ich dargelegt, dass viele Sondereinreisebeschränkungen diese Bedingungen nicht erfüllen und deswegen auch nicht zu rechtfertigen sind. Covid-19 ist weder ein Grund, das Asyl abzuschaffen oder die Aufnahme von Flüchtlingen zu stoppen, noch ist es ein Grund, Einwanderinnen permanent auszuschließen. Staaten dürfen weder ihre Bürgerinnen noch ansässige Ausländerinnen von der Einreise abhalten. Sie sollten darüber hinaus das Recht auf Familienleben, so gut es geht, schützen. Zum Schluss habe ich erklärt, weswegen Verfechterinnen der offenen Grenzen meine vorgebrachten Argumente akzeptieren können. Die angebotene Begründung hängt nicht von einem allgemeinen Recht

62. Diese Unterscheidung ist meiner Meinung nach noch deutlicher beim „kulturellen Argument“ zu sehen: Die kulturellen Veränderungen durch die Migration werden überschätzt und die meisten Veränderungen, die es gibt, berühren nicht die vitalen Interessen der Staatsbürgerinnen. Vgl. Samuel Scheffler, „Immigration and the Significance of Culture“, *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 35, no. 2 (2007): 93-125. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4623784>.

auf Ausschluss ab und man kann auf mehrere Arten konsistent zwischen dem Argument für Sondereinreisebeschränkungen und einem Standardargument für Einwanderungsbeschränkungen unterscheiden.

Obwohl Staaten derzeit ihre Grenzen teilweise schließen dürfen, bleibt das Argument für offene Grenzen trotzdem genauso wichtig wie vor der Pandemie. Es bietet ein Ausgangspunkt, von der aus man Staaten kritisieren kann, wenn sie zu starke Einreisebeschränkungen treffen oder die Pandemie dafür nutzen, ihre ausländerinnenfeindliche Politik durchzusetzen. Es ermöglicht auch einen Blick darauf, wie die Welt *nach* Covid-19 aussehen sollte. Irgendwann wird die Pandemie vorbei sein, es gilt jedoch schon jetzt, der Gefahr entgegenzutreten, dass durch die während der Pandemie erfolgten Grenzschließungen und Krisenmaßnahmen Grenzen wieder mehr Bedeutung bekommen und sich Staaten wieder mehr abschotten. Wir müssen deswegen, auch während einer Zeit der präzedenzlosen Geschlossenheit, für eine offene Zukunft kämpfen.

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Questões Éticas da Pandemia
Ethical Issues of the Pandemic



The Covid-19 Pandemic and Climate Change: Some Lessons Learned on Individual Ethics and Social Justice

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic has confronted humanity with a complex and unexpected challenge. One part of this challenge concerned individual ethics, i.e., the behaviour of individuals with respect to the rules and restrictions that have been imposed by health authorities in the collective interest. Another part concerned, instead, the social organisation of immunisation campaigns. In this article I wonder whether the lessons we have learned in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic can be applied to climate change mitigation. My first argument is that at least some of the ethical successes obtained at the individual level can be repeated with respect to climate change, but only if we stop focusing solely on the risks of climate change and offer a convincing picture of the benefits and opportunities of a more sustainable world. The second argument is that the Covid-19 pandemic offered us a new perspective on the relationship between global systemic threats and social justice: no one can adapt in isolation, neither medically nor economically. An out-of-control climate will lead to the same situation, so the asymmetry of vulnerability between developed and developing countries (and also between wealthy and poor people within the same country) is only a short-term illusion.


Keywords: climate change, Covid-19, energy transition, globalisation, pandemic, restrictions, social justice, sustainability.

I. Introduction

One of the most common arguments in theoretical speculation since the Covid-19 virus made its sudden and devastating appearance is that the pandemic has changed something in the way we live, think, produce, sell, use technology, and do science¹. Many people stress, rightly or wrongly, that Covid-19 has shown us how fragile are the foundations of economic and political globalisation. From one moment to the next, global economic interactions began to slow abruptly; local production and

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1. Yuval Noah Harari. "Lessons from a year of Covid". *Financial Times*, February 26, 2021. <https://www.ft.com/content/f1b30f2c-84aa-4595-84f2-7816796d6841>

supply of services have gradually been crippled as national governments implemented restrictive measures. This in turn slowed down the international flow of goods and people to a level not seen since the post-war period².

An interesting key to interpreting the philosophical implications of the Covid-19 pandemic consists in comparing it with the other great threat of this century, i.e., climate change (CC). The climate threat preceded the Covid-19 pandemic and will (hopefully) outlast it³, hence it is useful to ask whether anything that we as human beings have learnt in the (unfortunately long and dramatic) interlude of the fight against Covid-19 can help us in the challenge of climate mitigation. If this comparative analysis is to be pursued, it is essential to start from a first empirical observation.

For decades we have been wondering how to reduce global emissions gradually and in a way that is at the same time acceptable to all parties concerned (i.e., without causing economic disasters through regressive measures and/or without hampering economic growth) and effective in preventing climate disasters for us and for future generations; however, no international negotiation or regional initiative has so far succeeded in convincing the national government of any country to implement climate mitigation measures proportionate to the climate risks foreseen by scientists⁴. All of a sudden, though, an uncontrolled and unpredicted (by the most) virus forced humankind to changing habits and lifestyle, thus causing an unprecedented reduction in emissions⁵. The feeling is the same as a passenger in a car with no brakes, seemingly destined to crash, who reaches out and discovers that she can apply the handbrake⁶. In more

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2. *The Economist*, "Has covid-19 killed globalisation? The flow of people, trade and capital will be slowed". May 16, 2020. <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2020/05/14/has-covid-19-killed-globalisation>
 3. Given that we cannot halt climate change in a few years, if the climate threat will outlast the virus, it would mean that we have managed to overcome the pandemic.
 4. IEA, *Net Zero by 2050* (IEA, Paris 2021). <https://www.iea.org/reports/net-zero-by-2050> .
 5. Robert McSweeney and Ayesha Tandon, "Global Carbon Project: Coronavirus causes 'record fall' in fossil-fuel emissions in 2020", *Carbon Brief*, December 11, 2020. <https://www.carbonbrief.org/global-carbon-project-coronavirus-causes-record-fall-in-fossil-fuel-emissions-in-2020> ; See also Jeff Tollefson, "COVID curbed carbon emissions in 2020 – but not by much", *Nature* 589, no. 7842 (2021): 343.
 6. David Klenert, Franziska Funke, Linus Mattauch & Brian O'Callaghan, "Five Lessons from Covid-19 for Advancing Climate Change Mitigation", *Environmental and Resource Economics* 76, no. 4 (2020): 751–778; Bruno Latour, "Imaginer les gestes-barrières contre le retour à la production d'avant-crise", *AOC*, March 30, 2020. <https://aoc.media/opinion/2020/03/29/imaginer-les-gestes-barrieres-contre-le-retour-a-la-production-davant-crise/> (an English translation by Stephen Muecke is available at

political terms, in the mid of the Covid-19 pandemic, the handbrake was applied through good moral incentives and targeted public policies.

The question therefore arises as to whether and why responsiveness (both individual and collective) to the level of risk of the Covid-19 threat differs, in proportional terms, from the responsiveness (both individual and collective) to the level of risk associated to global warming projections; and whether and which ethical mechanisms that have worked so far with respect to the Covid-19 pandemic can be replicated in climate mitigation⁷. On the one hand, the individual contributions that have been demanded of people in the fight against Covid-19 (in terms of movement restrictions, distancing from loved ones, loss of income, and so on) are far more onerous than those that would be needed for effective climate mitigation, i.e., climate mitigation that would contain global warming below 2°C above pre-industrial levels⁸. On the other hand, however, these are only temporary sacrifices (or at least, at the beginning were thought to be so), and this partly explains why the individual response to the Covid-19 pandemic was faster and more effective. Nonetheless, I believe that an analysis of individual behaviour during the pandemic can help us understanding how to address the more complex – because long-range – challenge of CC mitigation⁹. What needs to be done is to create the same spirit of common struggle for a better future that animated all the people who faced countless economic, social and emotional sacrifices during the Covid-19 pandemic. A future in which everyone can live a better life than they do now. I will discuss this in the first part of the article.

A second observation, which instead will entertain us in the second part of the article (and which, being less discussed and less evident than the first one, I will present a bit longer in this introduction) is that social justice plays a different role with respect to CC and Covid-19. And this is true both at the domestic and the global level. CC predominantly threatens

<http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/P-202-AOC-ENGLISH.pdf>)

7. See Wouter Peeters, Andries De Smet, Lisa Diependaele, and Sigrid Sterckx. *Climate Change and Individual Responsibility: Agency, Moral Disengagement and the Motivational Gap* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
8. See Daniel Edward Callies and Darrel Moellendorf, "Assessing climate policies: Catastrophe avoidance and the right to sustainable development", *Politics, Philosophy & Economics* 20, no. 2 (2021): 127–150.
9. See also Lukas H. Meyer and Marcelo de Araujo, "The Covid-19 Pandemic and Climate Change: Why Have Responses Been So Different?", *E-International Relations*, April 20, 2020. <https://www.e-ir.info/2020/04/20/covid-19-pandemic-and-climate-change-why-have-responses-been-so-different/>

developing countries, despite the fact that they have contributed less, both historically and relative to current emission rates, to causing the problem¹⁰. This is for a number of reasons: due to purely geographical contingencies, developing countries already start with higher temperatures; they are more dependent on agricultural production, which is the most exposed to the risks of unexpected weather events; poorer people tend to spend more of their income on basic necessities such as food, which are the most affected by price changes due to CC. At the same time, developing countries are also the ones who have less resources and less technological know-how to use for adaptation: they encounter more difficulties in defending themselves from sudden weather catastrophes, they cannot easily diversify production, in order to respond to climatic stresses; if developing countries decided to buy food or natural resources from abroad, they would spend much more than it would cost to produce it domestically¹¹; when faced with climate-induced water shortage, developing countries usually cannot afford the technologies needed to storage and distribute scarce water at need¹².

This double asymmetry of vulnerability and resilience to CC has induced the more developed countries to lock themselves into a sort of, more or less explicit, passive acceptance of the climate problem. The reasoning is roughly as follows. CC is certainly a threat to the entire world, but only in the long term. In the short term, instead, those who have resources to invest are generally less exposed to the dangers of CC and can also reduce the damage caused by CC by making small investments, both public and private, if necessary. This has misled many into believing that in the short and medium term it is cheaper to adapt to CC risks than to spend on mitigation. The corollary is that most developed countries have no political reason to make economic sacrifices to stop a collective global problem that primarily threatens the most vulnerable, but only moral obligations, which

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10. See also Darrel Moellendorf, "Climate Change Justice", *Philosophy Compass* 10, no. 3 (2015): 173–186.
 11. See Robert Mendelsohn and Ariel Dinar. "Climate Change, Agriculture, and Developing Countries: Does Adaptation Matter?", *The World Bank Research Observer* 14, no. 2 (August 1999): 277–293; Robert Mendelsohn, "The Economics Of Adaptation To Climate Change In Developing Countries", *Climate Change Economics* 3, no. 02 (2012).
 12. See for example how Australia is managing the water crisis. See Neal Hughes, "Water markets are not perfect, but vital to the future of the Murray-Darling Basin", *The Conversation*, March 1st, 2021. <https://theconversation.com/water-markets-are-not-perfect-but-vital-to-the-future-of-the-murray-darling-basin-155880>

in turn clash with other domestic obligations of socio-economic justice¹³.

The same theory and the same corollary find application within countries, be they more or less developed. Wealthy people feel less exposed to the risks of CC, both because they have access to adaptation technologies, as for example thermally insulated or weather-resistant buildings, because they carry out economic activities in the service sector, or even in the financial or digital economy, which is not directly exposed to climate risks, and also because in the event of climate damage they have economic means available to absorb it and continue as before¹⁴. Accordingly, the wealthy tend to believe that, at least for the short term, any ecologically sustainable behaviour on their part is an act of generosity towards the most disadvantaged, or of responsibility towards future generations, rather than an economic rational choice¹⁵.

On the contrary, the case of the Covid-19 pandemic, while presenting the same collective and global structure as the climate crisis, offered us a different perspective on the relationship between systemic threats and social justice. Even if the wealthiest could easily vaccinate themselves (imagine, for example, that the vaccine were sold on the individual private market rather than managed at the state level), this would not be sufficient to ensure their adaptation to the threat. The Covid-19 pandemic can only be exited if as many people as possible are vaccinated. Moreover, since the poorest people are the most exposed to contagion, because they usually live in smaller spaces where it is difficult to maintain social distancing, they use public transport more frequently and perform jobs that cannot be done remotely, it is in the interest of the wealthy to immunize the most vulnerable as soon as possible, even before themselves – i.e., giving priority to the vaccination of the poorer is the most efficient way to halt

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13. With respect to this, I think it is useful to notice the political arguments that the American conservative think tank *The Heritage Foundation* used to justify the decision, by President Donald Trump, to leave The Paris Agreement (which his successor, Joe Biden, however, cancelled in February 2021, officially bringing the United States back into the climate accord): Nicolas Loris and Katie Tubb, “4 Reasons Trump Was Right to Pull Out of the Paris Agreement”, *The Heritage Foundation*, June 1st, 2017. <https://www.heritage.org/environment/commentary/4-reasons-trump-was-right-pull-out-of-the-paris-agreement>
 14. See Anda David, Étienne Espagne, Nicolas Longuet Marx, “Inequality and climate change: the rich must step up”, *The Conversation*, June 23, 2019. <https://theconversation.com/inequality-and-climate-change-the-rich-must-step-up-119074>
 15. On the intergenerational aspects of energy justice see Giuseppe Pellegrini-Masini, Fausto Corvino, and Lars Löfquist, “Energy Justice and Intergenerational Ethics: Theoretical Perspectives and Institutional Designs”, In *Energy Justice Across Borders*, ed. Gunter Bombaerts, Kirsten Jenkins and Yekeen Sanusi (New York: Springer), 253-272.

contagions. Obviously, many people are too myopic to see this, and even if they are less exposed, for social reasons, to the risk of contagion, they act egoistically and would prefer to get vaccinated before all the others, if they are given the chance. However, this irrational behaviour, which unfortunately has brought to power abuses in many parts of the world¹⁶ and also to the creation of fast lanes for the super-rich in some countries with plenty of vaccine doses¹⁷, does not diminish the fact that acting selfishly in the face of Covid-19 does not lead to the maximisation of individual wellbeing, even if one starts from a position of advantage. The pandemic can only be escaped all together – no one, however wealthy, has any way of isolating themselves from the health-related, economic and social risks of the virus. This has created a somehow unedited sociological scenario: a global risk, which affects everyone indiscriminately and which the richest can only overcome if the most vulnerable are also given the same opportunity. What remains to be seen is whether, once we overcome the Covid-19 pandemic, this spirit of interclass cooperation will help, or at least serve as a cautionary tale for the other challenges that humanity will face in this century.

My argument, in this article, is thus divided into two parts. The first part has to do with what I call the individual ethics of the Covid-19 pandemic: namely, how people cope with restrictions on individual freedom and whether and how they accept to sacrifice their own individual utility (e.g., going out, meeting, having lunch with friends) in order to achieve a major collective goal, i.e., lowering the virus transmission rate. With respect to this, I maintain that the Covid-19 pandemic and CC are structurally similar, and I wonder whether there are some lessons to be learned from the collective effort against Covid-19 that may help us also in CC mitigation. The second part addresses, instead, the problem of immunization. I maintain that there exists a substantial difference between immunization from Covid-19 and adaptation to CC. The former can only be achieved by acting collectively,

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16. In Italy it has been recently coined the expression “furbetti del vaccino”, namely “the vaccine scoundrels”, to refer to all those people who abuse their public authority, or simply use connections and favouritism, to skip the long waits for vaccine treatment. See *Ansa*, “Vaccini: furbetti di Oristano, l’inchiesta si allarga”, April 15, 2021. https://www.ansa.it/sardegna/notizie/2021/04/15/vaccini-furbetti-di-oristano-linchiasta-si-allarga_41747779-1a61-4330-af72-6952069971ed.html
 17. See for example the phenomenon of “vaccine tourism”: Katy Dartford, “What is vaccine tourism and which European travelling companies are offering trips”, *Euronews*, April 16, 2021. <https://www.euronews.com/travel/2021/04/16/what-is-vaccine-tourism-and-which-european-travel-companies-are-offering-trips> .

while the latter can also be achieved individually, at least in the short term, if certain social and geographical circumstances are given. Accordingly, the Covid-19 pandemic has opened up a new way of looking at the relationship between individual well-being and social justice. It clearly remains to be seen whether this renewed spirit of cooperation that has, at least in part, permeated societies around the world, can replicate itself and endure even after the virus will be eradicated.

II. The individual ethics of the Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 restrictions have presented us with a huge and unexpected collective action problem, i.e., a situation where individuals simply have to refrain from blindly maximising their own personal utility if they are to achieve the best outcome for all. Personal utility calculations are those that take into account the increased chances of contracting the virus (and thus also of becoming a virus vector) in relation to marginal increases in exposure to it. The ethical challenge is the same as for a single agent in a multi-player prisoner's dilemma. Everyone has an interest in achieving the collective goal, but everyone would rather achieve the collective goal without doing their part. Obviously, if all tried to follow the individually best strategy (letting others do their part), the collective goal would be lost, and the results could also be dramatic. Freeriding is therefore both irrational (where it risks breaking down collective co-operation) and unfair (because it means benefiting from a collective result to which one has not contributed, despite having had the opportunity).

Assume for example that I am a commuter in the middle of a national lockdown and I have already spent ten hours at work, including travelling by public transport. What impact will a ten-minute walk around the house or sitting for half an hour reading the newspaper in public garden have on my chances of falling ill? Or, if I am too sick at home because I feel dizzy, and I really need to see the sun, would the comfort I can get from a walk (with a mask, of course) in the deserted city centre offset the potential loss of comfort I would cause myself and others if I contracted the virus, once this potential loss is weighted against a hypothetical risk factor?

The answers to both questions may in many cases be at odds with the suggestions made by technicians, doctors and public administrators during the harshest phases of the Covid-19 pandemic, which we could in turn summarise in a single maxim: stay at home, without discussions, and only go out if there is no other way to get food, medicine or help rela-

tives in need. But this is obviously only an apparent fracture, as the above maxim aims at achieving the optimal outcome for all (the defeat of the virus). Therefore, the real contrast, what precisely creates the problem of collective coordination, is the one between the individually most rational choice and the collectively best strategy. The former is only compatible with the latter as long as an extremely limited number of individuals try to pursue it. As the number increases, the contrast becomes deeper and deeper. That is to say, even though in a hypothetical scenario in which I was certain that I was the only one leaving the house, my walk might make me feel better without posing any substantial risk to myself or others, we should also acknowledge that as the number of walkers increases, also the risks of contagion would progressively increase, thus the sum of individually rational actions would drive us we in the worst scenario, the non-cooperative equilibrium, i.e. the uncontrolled spread of the virus.

The empirical evidence collected around the world during the Covid-19 pandemic can give us important general indications about individual behaviours in relation to other complex collective action problems that existed before the Covid-19 pandemic and will continue to exist after it. The most important of these is, of course, CC. I would therefore like to draw attention to two specific issues on which the sadly tragic story Covid-19 might make us reflect, as it is already doing. The first is that we have come to realise in a practical and obvious way that it is possible to reorient individual choices of production, consumption and leisure towards strategies that aim at maximising collective well-being by restraining the pursuing of individual well-being. Although this may seem irrelevant to CC mitigation, because combating Covid-19 requires temporary lifestyle changes while mitigating CC requires permanent changes, we cannot fail to emphasise that the sacrifices that almost half of the world's population has agreed to make during the pandemic are far less than the sacrifices that would be needed to transit to a net-zero emissions economy in thirty years' time, as these would be spread over a much longer timeframe and there would be time for political planning.

The second issue is that, to paraphrase a recent contribution by the sociologist and philosopher Bruno Latour, we have suddenly realised that there is a big red button that heads of state can push to stop "the train of progress"¹⁸. Of course, we have also realised that by "switching off the engines" of the economy, we have destroyed millions of jobs, squeezed

18. See Latour, "Latour, "Imaginer les gestes-barrières".

the financial sector and caused the first real contraction of world output since the post-war period. Put simply, sooner or later, indeed more sooner than later, a reactivation button will have to be pressed¹⁹. However, direct experimentation with the fact that it is possible to make a pit-stop means that there is room for manoeuvre, to change some of the things that make the way we produce and consume inefficient and/or unsustainable in the medium and long term. All in all, we realised that under global emergencies it is possible to collect and redistribute enormous economic resources, in complex interactions between national governments, banks, businesses, workers and international financial institutions. The same resources that we need to protect “the net-losers” in the transition towards a more sustainable future.

The problem of combating Covid-19, and CC mitigation have three characteristics in common. The first is that in both cases a single “wrongful” action is causally inefficient to determine the structural problem²⁰. The consumption of a steak, seen as a single event, is causally attributable to an infinitesimal fraction of the greenhouse gases produced by livestock. And at the same time, abstaining from the consumption of a single steak will have no effect on the market choices of large meat producers (not even small ones, in fact). In the same way, a single violation of the rules on the containment of the virus (e.g., a dinner at a friend’s house, trespassing outside one’s own municipality) has a very small effect on the vast problem of the Covid-19 pandemic, and is not sufficient on its own to determine it.

The second feature that the two phenomena have in common is the spatial, and to some extent temporal, dispersion between causes and effects. In the case of CC, the emissions produced at time t at point A accumulate in the atmosphere and will unfold their negative effects (together with other emissions) at points B, C, D, E, etc. of the world at time tn (we experience today the effects of emissions produced in the past). In the case of the Covid-19 pandemic, a virus transmission from an infected individual (who may be asymptomatic) towards a healthy one, can have negative consequences on people the first individual does not know and may never know (friends and relatives of the newly infected and friends and relatives of the latter) days, weeks or months later. Obviously, the

19. At the time of writing, many European countries are already loosening many of the restrictions that were introduced in response to the second wave of Covid-19.

20. See Augustin Fragnière, “Climate change and individual duties”, *WIREs Climate Change* 7, no. 6 (2016): 800-803.

spatial and temporal dispersion of cause and effect in the Covid-19 case is more contained than with CC, but it is there nonetheless.

The third feature that the two problems have in common is the dislocation of individual responsibility. In the case of CC, an individual wishing to absolve herself from her relatively small emissions would have an easy time both shifting responsibility horizontally, towards the big polluters such as industries, farmers, and transporters (“if they don’t start making serious changes, I don’t see why I should have to start”) and vertically, i.e., at the political and structural level (“it is the state that has to put me in a position to pollute less, it is not my problem”)²¹. In the case of the Covid-19 virus, a similar mechanism comes into action when the individual who violates the containment rules for an apparently morally neutral purpose (such as seeing a family member or meeting a colleague) morally absolves herself by shifting responsibility either to other individuals, who for example violate the rules for reasons considered more futile, or to the institutions that commit errors and carelessness in the public management of the crisis.

Notwithstanding these similarities, CC mitigation measures, and the perception of the problem itself, have fallen far short of what the scientific community requires in proportion to the impending danger. On the contrary, the measures taken to contain Covid-19 have been proportional to (and, according to some, have even exceeded) the (enormous) scale of the risk. In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, most people have managed to give up on free-riding on others (e.g., I wander around while others do their part in containing infections and stay home), and public institutions have obtained the political legitimacy necessary to put in place sanctions and controls that go in this direction. The food for thought and research that can be drawn from the comparative analysis of the two phenomena is that, perhaps, the reasons for the so-called “motivational gap” with respect to CC are not, or at least not exclusively, to be found in the epistemic and moral difficulties that individuals encounter in linking their actions to the structural and intergenerational problem of a changing climate²², but rather in a downward representation of the collectively best scenario (a successful climate change mitigation).

The images of the hospitals and the victims of the virus immediately

21. Peeters, De Smet, Diependaele, Sterckx, *Climate Change and Individual Responsibility*, 94-106.

22. See Alberto Pirni, “Overcoming the Motivational Gap: A Preliminary Path to Rethinking Intergenerational Justice”, *Human Affairs* 29, no. 3 (2019): 286-296.

created a sense of urgency, which in turn resulted in forms of empowerment, solidarity, pride in belonging to one's community, and so on. Climate change, fortunately, does not manifest itself in a similar way, but it poses other threats (abnormal and destructive weather events, droughts, floods, increased salinity of soils with associated damage to agriculture, and not least the increased spread of viral diseases). Investing time, resources and energy in a better communication of these risks and of their effects on everyday life may indeed be the key to finding a new and complex cooperative balance.

There is another substantial advantage in dealing with CC, compared to Covid-19, which a more effective communication could exploit. Many people, from scholars to business experts, share the reasonable expectation that somewhere in between the short and the medium term, investing in renewable energy would bring net benefits to the majority of individuals, either because it would reduce costs (think for examples of investments in domestic renewable energy generators or of thermal insulation of dwellings) or because there will appear new markets and job opportunities that did not exist before²³. If such circumstances hold, at least in part, we should have reasons to conclude that halting global warming is more appealing than fighting Covid-19. Whilst in countering Covid-19 we simply aim to restore a status quo situation that we suddenly saw degenerating, in CC mitigation we are asked to undergo some sacrifices now to be wealthier and happier tomorrow.

Accordingly, two objectives must become more central in the collective effort of climate mitigation. First, if a decarbonized world will be good for everybody in the medium term, every attempt to reduce carbon emissions should be accompanied by a clear public commitment at safeguarding the interests of potential net-losers in the short term²⁴. It does not suffice to envisage an impersonal aggregate advancement of wellbeing in an undefined future²⁵. When the entire society is asked to undergo a radical transformation, it is not simply unfair to let some people get poorer and

23. See Rebecca M. Henderson, *Reimagining Capitalism in a World on Fire* (London: Penguin, 2020).

24. See ILO, "A just transition to climate-resilient economies and societies: Issues and perspectives for the world of work", December 2016. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---gjp/documents/publication/wcms_536552.pdf ; *European Commission*, "The Just Transition Mechanism: making sure no one is left behind". https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/actions-being-taken-eu/just-transition-mechanism_en

25. See also Corvino, F, "The Intersectional Approach To Intergenerational Justice: A First Sketch", *Academia Letters*, Article 594 (2021): 1-7.

other get wealthier in the collective shift, but it is also an inefficient way of proceeding. An unfair ecological transition will be resisted by those who stand in the position to lose more from abandoning fossil fuels²⁶. Also in this regard, that tragic experience of the pandemic has much to teach us. We all remained home because we knew that we had no alternative but to sop the virus from spreading. Yet, those who had the chance to keep on working from home, or in the shops and in the commercial activities that were allowed to remain open, did not suffer a substantial loss of income (actually, in some cases some people also increased their income, just think for example of those who reduced commuting costs or of small local shops that increased their sells), but those others who had to close down their business (sport centres, bars, restaurants, hotels, tourist activities, and so on) found themselves suddenly without salaries or revenues, with even taxes to pay. Yet both the latter and the former have in the vast majority of cases complied with the common rules.

It would be wrong to think that it was only fear of punishment that kept people together. A decisive role was played by the legitimate expectation of the net losers to receive compensation through public resources: everyone would cooperate and no one would be left behind. In most countries this was clear from the start. Of course, in some cases the expectations were not met, due to a slow and inefficient public administration. But without this promise, there would have been a slide into dangerous social chaos and any attempt to defeat the virus would have been unsuccessful²⁷. The same thing should be done with the energy transition: to make clear, precise and public forecasts of which economic activities will lose profits in the short term, compared to the mitigation target we adopt; to quantify these losses; to decide which public authorities will intervene with refunds and with which financial coverage; to redistribute wealth not only from the top towards the bottom, but also horizontally, between different productive sectors, so that in a world that is finally sustainable and economically prosperous, no one is left behind.

The second objective is to not only communicate the risks of an

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26. See Stefano Carattini, Maria Carvalho and Sam Fankhauser, "How to make carbon taxes more acceptable", *The Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment (LSE) – Policy publication*, December 5, 2017. <https://www.lse.ac.uk/GranthamInstitute/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/How-to-make-carbon-taxes-more-acceptable.pdf>
 27. See also Joseph E. Stiglitz, "Recovering from the Pandemic: An Appraisal of Lessons Learned", *The Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS)*, October 2020. <https://www.feeps-europe.eu/attachments/publications/feeps%20covid%20paper%2010%20stiglitz.pdf>

out-of-control climate, but also to prospect all the positive aspects of a future sustainable world. Indeed, the second key element in the fight against Covid-19 has been hope: the possibility of imagining the longed-for moment when we will all go back to living as we used to, with even more desire and happiness than before. Every marginal individual sacrifice was possible, at least in part, because it was framed against the distance that still separates us from the exit from the tunnel. A bit like a cyclist who gives her all in the last kilometres of the climb. This is not to say that it is wrong to communicate the urgency of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by referring to doomsday scenarios, but it is also necessary to tell what the world will be like once the climate challenge is met. By this I mean what and how many jobs will be created, what will change in the way we produce and consume, what effect new technologies will have on individual energy expenditure, what we cannot do now but could do later, what the relationship between humans and nature will be like in a fully decarbonised world²⁸.

III. The Covid-19 pandemic, climate change and social justice

Another leitmotif of the Covid-19 pandemic was that it showed how important social justice is for healthy, well-functioning societies. Fairness in the distribution of social resources is usually thought of as a normative criterion opposed to another normative criterion, the efficiency of the economic system. The opposition exists, but the perception of its extensiveness is in many cases excessive²⁹. More equal societies responded better to the Covid-19 crisis and suffered fewer losses, both human and economic. And the fact that contemporary societies are exposed to a series of shocks of global origin should make us realise that social justice and economic efficiency inevitably converge, more than we are used to imagining.

This argument has undergone several interpretations. The first, and most widespread, is that the virus has finally made us realise how important it is to invest in the public sector, in order to guarantee high-

28. Some of the reflections in section II of this article were previously presented, in a much more restricted and informal form, in Italian, in this blog post: Corvino, F. "Coronavirus, cambiamento climatico ed equilibrio cooperativo", *Labont – Center for Ontology*, April 15, 2020. <https://labontblog.com/2020/04/15/coronavirus-cambiamento-climatico-ed-equilibrio-cooperativo/>

29. See also Joseph E. Stiglitz, *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013).

quality social services to people, even where we cannot see the immediate economic return³⁰. This is because where everything was left to the private sector, and the poorest people did not have immediate access to health care, the Covid-19 virus had an easier time spreading around. The second reading of the relation between the Covid-19 pandemic and social justice concerned the greater vulnerability that people belonging to the poorest social groups in the different countries displayed with respect to Covid-19³¹. In other words, if you are poorer, you have less access to health care, you are likely to live in more cramped and overcrowded spaces, you are more likely to take public transport, and you are therefore more at risk of contracting the virus. Covid-19 has given us an indication once again, should it be needed, that the less money you have, the more vulnerable you are to systemic risks and the less capacity you have to adapt to them.

This is also true with respect to CC. Within every country, be it more or less developed, the poor are at the ones who lose the most from unexpected weather events, from water scarcity, from heatwaves and so on. Basically, the poor have less resources to invest in adaptation and are less resilient to economic shocks. Yet, as we have partially seen above, the difference between CC and Covid-19 is that wealthy people can remain partially indifferent to the environmental plight of the poor, and above all the spread and the dangerousness of the climate threats is not a function of how many people are hit from them. Conversely, in the case of Covid-19, the spread of the health threat directly affects the wealthy. On the one hand, the more people are infected, the higher is the risk for everyone, also for those who try to isolate from others. On the other hand, the more people are living in cramped quarters, the more crowded public transport is, the more likely it is that the rich will have to close their factories, shops or restaurants. In short, Covid-19 showed us how economic and social inequalities are collective problems that affect the entire community, and none can save herself alone, because, in the middle of a pandemic, individual destinies are inextricably intertwined³². And the great peculiarity

30. See Jeevun Sandher and Hanna Kleider, "Covid-19 could change the welfare state forever", *World Economic Forum*, June 30, 2020. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/06/coronavirus-welfare-state-covid19/>

31. See W. Holmes Finch and Maria E. Hernández Finch, "Poverty and Covid-19: Rates of Incidence and Deaths in the United States During the First 10 Weeks of the Pandemic", *Frontiers in Sociology* 5, article 47 (2020): 1-10.

32. See also Abby Vesoulis, "Coronavirus May Disproportionately Hurt the Poor—And That's Bad for Everyone", *Time*, March 11, 2020. <https://time.com/5800930/how-coronavirus-will-hurt-the-poor/>

of Covid-19, compared to other systemic threats that feed and grow on inequalities, like CC, is that inequality turns into a boomerang that comes back, strong and violent, to those who launched it.

A third, possible, reading of the triple relationship between CC, the Covid-19 pandemic and social justice has, instead, a global dimension. As we hinted at before, those countries that are more vulnerable to the negative effects of CC are generally poorer, and this is mainly for geographical and economic reasons that do not necessarily have to do with climate: countries in the tropical and sub-tropical belt start, trivially, from a temperature that is already higher, base their production mainly on agricultural monocultures that are more exposed to the risks of a changing climate and abnormal weather events (e.g., floods with consequent salinization of the land), and have far fewer resources to invest in adaptation. While Rotterdam, for example, can afford an efficient and very expensive system of barriers to prevent seawater from flooding the city, many developing countries which are exposed to the same risk of flooding (in some cases, also higher risks), are much more vulnerable to water because they cannot afford protective infrastructures³³.

This implies that whether global warming leads to the creation of a devastating hurricane in Central America, or of a flood in Bangladesh, it makes little difference to the inhabitant of Innsbruck. Just as in Innsbruck itself, an abnormal heat wave is easily counteracted by the resident who has a comfortable home and is well served by air conditioning. Of course, in the long run an uncontrolled climate can also lead to the extinction of humankind, but those who live day-to-day, thinking only of their personal convenience, will not be particularly moved by this risk.

With Covid-19, however, the scenario has been initially reversed. During the first wave of the pandemic (from spring to summer 2020), developing countries generally coped better than developed ones. Many reasons can explain this. African countries, for example, had already had a dramatic experience with Ebola, and therefore their health systems showed greater responsiveness in both treating and preventing the spread of the virus. Higher temperatures helped as well, and moreover the African population is on average younger than in developed countries, thus less susceptible to infection and to the most negative consequences of the disease³⁴.

33. Jeff Goodell, "Rotterdam has learned to cope with rising seas. Here's how", *Vox*, November 15, 2017. <https://www.vox.com/energy-and-environment/2017/11/15/16651460/rotterdam-climate-change-sea-level-rise>

34. Anne Soy, "Coronavirus in Africa: Five reasons why Covid-19 has been less deadly than elsewhere", *BBC*, October 8, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-54418613> ;

The same is true of Southeast Asia, where the response to the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic has been prompt and successful, thanks both to a process of strengthening public governance, which began a few years ago, and to effective regional cooperation³⁵. Conversely, developed countries have been literally overwhelmed, with negative effects on the poorer and weaker sections of the population³⁶.

Given these global circumstances, developed countries understood that they cannot simply pass the buck on developing countries – how it has happened so far with climate change – , rather they realized from the first moment that they had to make heavy investments in finding a cure for the Covid-19 virus and in protecting their citizens from the global health threat. This partially explains why, within a few months, a substantial part of the public and private resources of the world's most developed countries were channelled into the great collective effort to halt the pandemic. The media also immediately changed their agenda to focus on the virus,

Munyaradzi Makoni, "Covid-19 in Africa: half a year later", *The Lancet* 20, no. 10 (October 2020): 1127.

35. Mely Caballero-Anthony, "Covid-19 in Southeast Asia: Regional pandemic preparedness matters", *Brookings Institution*, January 14, 2021. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2021/01/14/covid-19-in-southeast-asia-regional-pandemic-preparedness-matters/>; Kishore Mahbubani, "How East Asia has controlled coronavirus, and what it means for its recovery", *World Economic Forum*, July 29, 2020. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/07/asia-china-singapore-vietnam-covid19-coronavirus-government/>; Maru Mormina and Ifeanyi M Nsofor, "What developing countries can teach rich countries about how to respond to a pandemic", *The Conversation*, October 15, 2020. <https://theconversation.com/what-developing-countries-can-teach-rich-countries-about-how-to-respond-to-a-pandemic-146784>.
36. The second wave (from autumn 2020 to spring 2021) of the Covid-19 pandemic has hit, instead, developing countries hardest, with India and Brazil among the most dramatic cases. See Talha Burki, "No end in sight for the Brazilian Covid-19 crisis", *The Lancet* 2, no. 5 (May 2021): E180; Sujita Kumar Kar, Ramdas Ransing, S.M. Yasir Arafat, Vikas Menon, "Second wave of Covid-19 pandemic in India: Barriers to effective governmental response", *EClinicalMedicine* 36, 100915. Southeast Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe also had much more difficulty in coping with the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic than with the first one. There are various reasons for this, depending on the context, and it is impossible to give a single explanation. Certainly, in the second wave, the Covid-19 virus mutated, which made it easier to spread. It is also possible that the end of the first wave prompted all countries, both developed and developing, to lower their guard. In some cases, also electoral politics played a role in delaying lockdowns. See *The Economist*, "A worrying new wave of covid-19 is hitting South-East Asia", May 15, 2021. <https://www.economist.com/asia/2021/05/15/a-worrying-new-wave-of-covid-19-is-hitting-south-east-asia>; Tamara Popic and Alexandru D Moise, "Coronavirus: why is eastern Europe's second wave so much worse than its first?", *The Conversation*, December 1th, 2020. <https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-why-is-eastern-europes-second-wave-so-much-worse-than-its-first-150430>; Ivana Kottasová, "Africa's second coronavirus wave was much worse than the first, analysis shows", *CNN*, March 25, 2021. <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/03/24/health/coronavirus-africa-second-wave-intl/index.html>

just as they do during a war or after a terrorist attack.

If we wanted to simplify, we could say that the Covid-19 pandemic has confronted us with a situation similar to the one we will face in the second half of this century if we do not act now to halt climate change: a global threat from which those with the most to lose are the richest. Compared to Covid-19, however, the climate problem provides wealthy countries with an opportunity to intervene before the global threat hits them in a devastating way. Covid-19 gave us a tangible representation of what would happen if we do not act responsibly. The mental effort to be made, for those who now control much of the global wealth, is to adopt a medium-term time horizon. In the end, it is not even necessary to act for future generations, but to act as soon as possible for the people who are alive now, thinking about what their lives will be like in thirty years from now. Obviously, the more time that passes without effective collective action, the higher the costs of climate mitigation.

IV. “Never again”

The argument that Covid-19 has inevitably changed something in our way of interpreting the relationship between society and the risks it faces (risks arising from economic globalisation, from an out-of-control climate and from economic and social inequalities both within and among countries) has been joined by a second, somewhat subsequent argument: Covid-19 is, with respect to various social problems, a watershed, a point of no return at which we all collectively say “never again”.

If I look at the Italian case, which I experienced at first hand, the “watershed effect” mainly concerned public health. For years, it has been said, the various Italian governments reduced the number of doctors and nurses in the public health service. They kept the number of people enrolled in medical degrees closed, they tolerated a bottleneck between medical graduates and access to specialist degrees (i.e., fewer places in specialist degrees than doctors wishing to have access to them)³⁷, and then, all of a sudden, the government in office during the pandemic had no alternative but to recall retired doctors. And yet they run into major difficulties both in curing patients and in implementing the vaccination plan³⁸. People in Italy, as I imagine in many other parts of the world, let

37. Giammaria Liuzzi, “I medici in Italia ci sono, mancano gli specialisti” (a letter to the editor), *Quotidiano Sanità*, January 8, 2019. https://www.quotidianosanita.it/lettere-al-direttore/articolo.php?articolo_id=69678

38. Tim Hume, “Italian Doctors Are Coming Out of Retirement to Treat Coronavirus –

themselves go to an exercise in collective emotion in looking at the posts on Facebook in which nurses and doctors showed the marks carved on the skin of the face from masks after exhausting shifts of work, and in reading of old doctors who died while trying to cure the victims of Covid-19³⁹. Yet, every time someone has tried to ask why the Ministry of Health does not hire young doctors immediately, they were told by politicians and technicians that you do not train someone to be a doctor in a few months.

Many people are now ready to say “never again”. We should never again be so unprepared in the face of these devastating threats. The corollary of this argument is that it has been wrong to subject health care to strict budgetary rules, thus leading over the years to a substantial reduction in the health care workforce. I have mentioned the case of Italy here, but this is a debate that has crossed the world. We are now aware of the extent to which everyone’s ability to maintain their well-being above a minimum threshold, throughout their lives, is conditional on the existence of a range of basic welfare services, and obviously the higher the level and quality of services, the greater the likelihood of not ending up below the threshold of minimum welfare. Once this was understood, it was also easy to appreciate that there are some public spending needs, such as those in health care for example, which must be given a certain priority, and also some vigilance, over the others.

The second, slightly more timid, “never again” concerned the way science is done. First of all, it should be noted that never before in the history of humankind have so many brains set to studying and working on a single object. And all this was accompanied by the most advanced technologies and means of communication and sharing. The scientific evidence on Covid-19 was treated as a global common. Everyone had access to the data that was being collected from time to time by the various studies. And everyone who thought they could contribute to the medical challenge did so, from engineers to physicists, from mathematicians to social scientists. We suddenly found ourselves rooting for Russian, Chinese or American researchers to come up with a vaccine soon and give us back the full freedom we used to enjoy. Perhaps for the first time we started to feel like citizens of the world; the desire to get out of this collective nightmare

and Dying”, *Vice*, March 20, 2020. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/v74jwm/italian-doctors-are-coming-out-of-retirement-to-treat-coronavirus-and-dying>

39. Viola Giannoli, “Coronavirus, 300 medici morti in Italia. “Basta chiamarci eroi, ora vaccinateci tutti”, *La Repubblica*, January 23, 2021. https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2021/01/23/news/coronavirus_300_medici_morti_in_italia_basta_chiamarci_eroi_ora_vaccinateci_tutti_-283868822/

made us think globally. However, this cosmopolitan fire was dampened by abundant buckets of nationalism as soon as the war began over the supply of vaccines and the production of masks, and as soon as people started blaming each other for delays and mistakes in the vaccination plan and questioned (probably rightly) the ability of international organisations to coordinate the fight against the pandemic⁴⁰. However, something has remained, as with the health issue, and it is the awareness, at least for some, that those who do science must begin to do it in a truly interdisciplinary way. There has also been an understanding of how important it is for the various scientific professions to set themselves common objectives, objectives that have a real impact on the well-being of the people (who are then also the ones who, in most cases, finance this research through their taxes). For many, this seems to be a point from which there should be no turning back.

I believe that this determination not to repeat the mistakes of the past, which the Covid-19 pandemic has slowly brought about, should (and also can) be applied to the climate problem. First, the idea that there are limits to the application of cost-benefit analysis may well extend to the intertemporal case of climate. If we come to the conclusion, as the pandemic seems to have helped us to do, that there are costs we do not want to face because they would push humans below a threshold of minimum welfare, it makes no sense to question whether there exist correlative benefits to be reaped right now that can outweigh the costs that we do not want to bear, neither now nor in the near future. The only reasonable thing to say is that, also with respect to climate, there are thresholds that we do not want to cross, not now and not ever⁴¹.

Second, the way in which public and private resources, both economic and intellectual, have been mobilised in a short space of time and put at the service of a common global objective, and which has enabled us to achieve scientific results at an unprecedented speed, should give us a measure of human possibilities in the energy transition. Many of the technical obstacles that are usually raised when talking about decarbonisation, ranging from the cost of producing renewable energy to the possibilities of “storing” cleanly produced energy, can be resolved over time⁴². More

40. See also Thomas J. Bollyky and Chad P. Bown, “The Tragedy of Vaccine Nationalism: Only Cooperation Can End the Pandemic”, *Foreign Affairs* 99. no. 5 (September/October 2020): 96-108.

41. Simon Caney, “Climate change, intergenerational equity and the social discount rate”, *Politics, Philosophy and Economics* 13, no. 4 (2014): 320-342.

42. Michel Bourban, “Ethics, Energy Transition, and Ecological Citizenship”, in *Volume*

precisely, the more we use these new technologies, the faster we learn how to make them cheaper and more efficient. This is the concept behind the so-called “learning curves” which, when applied to energy, postulate a relationship of direct proportionality between the rate of diffusion of clean energies and the decrease in their price. There are also other cases in which there is an even more direct relationship between the rate of utilisation and the rate of increase in the use of certain technical solutions. Take electric cars, for example. One of the main reasons why people continue to be sceptical, at least in Europe, about electric cars is that there are few charging points. Some companies are trying to give the market a boost by investing in a first European network of charging points⁴³, but it is obvious that the more people decide to buy electric cars, the higher the demand for charging points will be, the more charging points will be installed, the more people will act without hesitation and go electric.

However, the problems of cost and of practicality are two of the main obstacles to a rapid and effective transition, and, as we have seen, they both have a purely technical component. The question we must ask ourselves is whether the acceleration that the scientific community, in all its disciplines, has given itself with regard to Covid-19 can be replicated, at least in part, with climate mitigation. If this were to happen, it would be possible to overcome the most difficult part of the energy transition, the initial start-up part, and this would set in motion a self-fulfilling process: more transition, lower costs and better access to renewable energies, increasing incentives to decarbonise. For this to happen, however, at least part of the collaborative and cosmopolitan spirit that has nurtured the global scientific community must be preserved, at least in the early stages, when we were groping in the dark and desperately looking for a first vaccine. With regard to the climate, we are exactly at this stage, and we now know how far science and business can push the accelerator.

Conclusions

If we want to summarise what has been said so far, Covid-19 has, on the one hand, showed us that when we have a clear and tangible global

9: *Renewable Energy and the Environment*, ed. Trevor Letcher, in *Encyclopedia of Comprehensive Renewable Energy*, 2nd edition, ed. Ali Sayigh (Amsterdam and San Diego: Elsevier, 2020).

43. Carolynn Look, “VW, BP to Invest in Europe Car-Charging Network: Manager Magazin”, *Bloomberg*, March 14, 2021. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-03-14/vw-bp-to-invest-in-europe-car-charging-network-manager-magazin>

objective, whose goodness we can experience at first hand, it is possible to ask of individual ethics much more than has been obtained so far with respect to climate mitigation. On the other hand, Covid-19 has shown many of the fragilities of contemporary societies, deriving mainly from the lack of a collective ethics with a global scope. Within this perspective, I read the downsizing, more or less everywhere, of national welfare services, the great differences in income that continue to grow within single countries despite the fact that we are living in a phase of convergent globalisation in which the poorer countries are narrowing the economic gap with the richer ones, the still, and unfortunately, unequal division of domestic work between men and women, and the inability to react seriously and decisively in the face of the climate emergency. But amid pain and death, the Covid-19 virus has also indicated several paths to follow to get us back on track, to become fairer and more efficient, and to successfully address the other challenges that will await us once the pandemic is (hopefully) eradicated.

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When the Face Becomes a Carrier: Biopower, Levinas's Ethics, and Contagion

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Abstract

In the midst of a pandemic, what does it mean to see the Other as Other and not as a carrier of the virus? I argue that in seeking a Levinasian response to the pandemic, we must be mindful of the implications of the mechanisms of surveillance and control that, presented as ways to protect the Other, operate by controlling the Other and rendering our relation to the Other increasingly impersonal. Subjected to these mechanisms, the Other becomes a dangerous entity that must be controlled, and the state that deploys them comes increasingly to mediate the relation between self and Other. The more we rely on such mechanisms for protection, the easier it becomes to regard the Other not as one who summons me to an infinite responsibility but as a vector of disease. Despite all the differences between Levinas's and Foucault's approaches, reading them in conversation shows that the control and surveillance of the population functions within a discourse that medicalizes and objectifies the Other in favor of the centralizing power that uses those technologies. In defiance of Levinas's warning against imposing a narrative on the Other's suffering, this discourse coopts that suffering as a justification for biopower.

Keywords: biopower, Covid-19, disease, ethics, Foucault, Levinas, SARS-CoV-2, surveillance.

1. Introduction

I argue that when evaluating responses to the Covid-19 pandemic in light of Emmanuel Levinas's ethics, we must be aware that the technologies and procedures that are presented as ways to protect us all – including contact tracing, smartphone tracking apps, mask mandates, quarantines, lockdowns, enforced social distancing, and vaccine passports – in fact operate by absorbing the Other into a population that must be controlled and by rendering the relation to the Other increasingly impersonal. The state that deploys these methods in the name of fighting the pandemic comes increasingly to mediate the relation between self and Other, and such technologies and procedures teach us to regard the Other not as one

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who summons me to an infinite responsibility but as a vector of disease. Subjected to these mechanisms that are ostensibly meant to provide security, the Other disappears and is replaced by a faceless, dangerous entity. Despite the differences between Levinas's and Michel Foucault's approaches, reading Foucault's *Security, Territory, Population* in conversation with certain Levinasian texts, particularly "Useless Suffering," shows that these mechanisms function within a discourse that erases the Other in favor of the centralizing state that deploys those mechanisms.

The stated goal of the mechanisms of control and surveillance that many countries have instituted is to protect people against an invisible enemy, Covid-19, that endangers everyone. Certainly transmissible diseases make clear our interconnectedness: I am not in fact a solitary ego but am fundamentally part of a community, whether I like it or not. Thus it might seem that Levinasian ethics requires us to adopt these mechanisms in order to protect the Other from disease. If I am, as Levinas writes, a hostage for the Other, am I not obliged to give up my freedom for the Other's sake? One can, however, invert the question: lockdowns and the mechanisms used to enforce them come with costs of their own (consider the impact of business closures on people's livelihoods, the impact of isolation on mental health, and the privacy risks of contact tracing, tracking apps, and vaccine passports), so dare I compel the Other to accept those costs if his or her values differ from mine? With the debate over the acceptability of surveillance and control seemingly undecided on the ethical plane, that debate then becomes a matter of politics: one tries to interpret empirical data about the dangers posed by the virus, by lockdowns, and by surveillance technologies, and then one weighs the costs and benefits of various courses of action to determine the extent to which it is permissible or advisable to surveil and control a population in an attempt to end or slow the pandemic. In short, we are faced with the classic debate over security versus freedom. What these political cost-benefit calculations overlook, however, is that no matter how well-intentioned the individuals who institute and enforce it may be, the control of populations obscures the face of the Other. When one understands how these mechanisms of control operate, I argue, it becomes clear that they are themselves anti-ethical. I propose, therefore, to transcend the debate over the proper trade-offs between security and freedom by showing how the control and surveillance of the population breaks down the ethical relation to the Other. Although my argument will have broader implications for our understanding of the state, as will become particularly clear

in the concluding section, my primary focus will be the mechanisms of control and surveillance employed in response to Covid-19.

2. Understanding State Responses to Covid-19 as Exercises of Biopower

To understand how the surveillance and control with which many governments have responded to Covid-19 is an exercise of biopower, let us begin by considering Foucault's presentation of biopower, at the beginning of *Security, Territory, Population*, as

the set of mechanisms through which what constitutes the fundamental biological features of the human species entered into the world of politics, into a political strategy, or, in other words, how society, modern Western societies, starting from the eighteenth century, took into account the fundamental biological fact that the human being constitutes a human species.¹

Biopower, then, refers to the socio-political systems that take the human species understood as a biological category, rather than the individual, as the object on which they act. The mechanisms of biopower could emerge as such only when statistical analysis and the science of biology came to appear as the proper lenses through which to understand humans. Under the biopolitical regime, the human being is defined strictly as a member of a biological species that is to be subject to surveillance² and control for

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1. Michel Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire, population: Cours au Collège de France, 1977-1978* (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 2004), 3, hereafter *STP* (Fr); *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 1, hereafter *STP* (En), translation modified.
 2. It is necessary to briefly clarify the concept of surveillance and its place within the biopolitical regime, since Foucault distinguishes between the apparatus [*dispositif*] of security that operates on the population and the disciplinary mechanisms that deal with the correction of individuals, and he associates surveillance with the latter. Discipline, for Foucault, involves "detective, medical, and psychological techniques [...] which fall within the domain of surveillance, diagnosis, and the possible transformation of individuals" (*STP* [Fr], 7; *STP* [En], 5). Surveillance, then, is concerned with humans who may be disciplined and shaped as individuals. In contrast, the apparatus of security serves fundamentally not to normalize individuals but to see to the health and security of the overall population. It does not follow, however, that surveillance and other techniques of normalization cease once humans come to be understood as members of a biological species. On the contrary, Foucault explicitly states that disciplinary mechanisms support the mechanisms of security, which themselves predate the contemporary concept of the species: he writes that "in order actually to

the sake of the population. After all, it is the population and not the individual that modern, statistically based science takes as its object – and so if this science does indeed offer the most proper and fundamental understanding of human beings, then humans are best governed by attending not to the training of individuals but to the regulation of the population as a whole. Crucially, the population is not even the sum of individuals considered in their individuality; on the contrary, “[the multiplicity of individuals] is pertinent simply as the instrument, relay, or condition for obtaining something at the level of the population.”³ There is no room here for the Other to and for whom I am infinitely responsible, with a responsibility that I cannot transfer to anyone else; it is not even a matter of the political justice in which I compare the interests of the Other and the third party.⁴ While justice does, for Levinas, oblige me to weigh the interests of different people, the ethical obligation remains fundamental: it is because the third is also an Other to and for whom I am infinitely responsible that I find myself responsible to and for multiple Others who may be in conflict. Biopolitics, in contrast, takes its calculations as fundamental, and so it cannot reckon with my infinite, incalculable responsibility. From the perspective of biopower, the Other, the third, and the self disappear into the population – a point the following section and the conclusion will

guarantee this security one has to appeal, to take just one example, to a whole series of techniques for the surveillance of individuals, the diagnosis of what they are, the classification of their mental structure, of their specific pathology, and so on; in short one has to appeal to a whole disciplinary series that proliferates under mechanisms of security and is necessary to make them work” (*STP* [Fr], 9-10; *STP*, [En], 7-8). Surveillance thus has its place within the biopolitical regime: individuals are surveilled so that the security of the population may be better assured. Moreover, surveillance has no regard for the face of the Other even within a primarily disciplinary regime, as the goal of disciplinary mechanisms is not to care for the Other but to bring each person into line with the norm. Certainly, one may attempt to justify surveillance by saying that it is best for each person to be thus brought in line, but as this article will show, surveillance functions by obscuring the face of the Other even when those who practice it claim or believe that surveillance is in people’s best interest.

3. Foucault, *STP* (Fr), 44; *STP* (En), 42, translation modified.
4. See Levinas’s observation, in “Philosophy, Justice, and Love,” that “it is always starting out from the Face, from the responsibility for the other that justice appears, which calls for judgment and comparison, a comparison of what is in principle incomparable, for every being is unique; every other is unique” (Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre nous: Essais sur le penser-à-l’autre* [Paris: Grasset, 2016], 114, hereafter *ENE*; *Entre Nous: On Thinking of the Other*, trans. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav [New York: Columbia University Press, 1998], 104, hereafter *ENT*).

further develop. Biopower operates on the individual only accidentally: its real object is the population.

When considering biopower in general and state responses to Covid-19 specifically, it is essential to realize that biopower is not an aberration or a deviation from what we take to be the state's ordinary, everyday way of functioning. Thus it is not the case that only recognizable abuses of state power, such as clear violations of a state's constitution, are biopolitical. The apparatus [*dispositif*] of security, which takes the population as its object, is an operation of biopower whether it is understood as legitimate or illegitimate, as constitutional or unconstitutional. Even state decisions that may initially seem to be refusals to exercise power are operations of biopower: insofar as the contemporary state is a biopolitical one, both its actions and its inactions take place as biopower. For instance, the Swedish strategy is as much an exercise of biopower as full lockdowns and obligatory smartphone tracking, not only because Sweden has imposed certain restrictions (including the closing of high schools and universities, social distancing guidelines, limits on the number of people who may gather together, and the closing of restaurants and bars that violate these rules) but also, and more fundamentally, because the Swedish approach, like that of other nation-states, takes for granted that it falls to the governing power to devise a strategy for responding to Covid-19 that will produce the most satisfactory results for the population considered as an object of statistical analysis. The United Kingdom cited expert recommendations to justify its shift from a herd immunity approach to a lockdown;⁵ likewise, the Swedish government cited expert recommendations to support its decision to not lock down. Indeed, the Swedish strategy was developed by the official state epidemiologist, Anders Tegnell – who, what is more, has acknowledged that Sweden's approach is not fundamentally different from that of other countries, stating, "To say Sweden acted very different [*sic*] than other countries, that's not true. We did basically the same as many other countries. We did it in a slightly different way."⁶ Indeed. What

5. See Mark Landler and Stephen Castle, "Behind the Virus Report that Jarred the U.S. and the U.K. to Action," *The New York Times*, March 17, 2020, updated April 2, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/17/world/europe/coronavirus-imperial-college-johnson.html>.

6. Quoted in Teri Schulz, "Do Sweden's COVID liberties cost lives?" *Deutsche Welle*, April 21, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/do-swedens-covid-liberties-cost-lives/a-57268022>. The article goes on to say that "[Tegnell] suggests that what Sweden has tried to do, in contrast with other countries, is to pinpoint 'what we need to close down where we have the effects so we don't have to close down the whole society.' The Swedish

is at stake, in these different responses to Covid-19, are differing interpretations of the data, while the implicit claim that the data call for a response by the governing state power is undisputed and scarcely acknowledged. In Sweden as in the U.K., Norway, Denmark, and other countries that locked down, the state has assumed the authority to determine how best to manage the population in an attempt to ensure its health – physical, mental, and economic.

Indeed, ensuring the health of the population is the great aim of the biopolitical regime. In “The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century,” Foucault observes that in the 18th century we see “the emergence of the health and physical well-being of the population in general as one of the essential objectives of political power. [...] The imperative of health – at once the duty of each and the objective of all.”⁷ Unsurprisingly, then, the biopolitical state takes a considerable interest in epidemics – and as we will see over the course of this article, epidemics are not an exception to that state’s standard operations, for biopower treats the population itself as an epidemic. It was also in the 18th century, as Foucault explains in *Security, Territory, Population*, that epidemics came to be understood for the first time in terms of statistical analysis and of calculations of risk for different sectors of the population;⁸ for the first time as well the increase, through contagion, in the number of cases of a disease came to be understood as a crisis that “can only be checked either by a higher, natural mechanism, or by an artificial mechanism.”⁹ These analyses and interventions are understood to be the business of a centralized power, and so the management of epidemics, as well as the managing of famines, contributes to “the integration of the town within central mechanisms of power, or better, the inversion that made the town the primary problem,

government only has a temporary legal right to impose a lockdown if it deems it necessary – something it has not done” (ibid.). The basic principle that the governing power should consult experts to determine what sectors of society ought to shut down, and that it should then shut those sectors down, is, however, as well established in Sweden as it is elsewhere. It is true that the Swedish state faces, in this regard, greater constitutional restrictions than other states do, but the principle that the state must respond to Covid-19 remains.

7. Michel Foucault, “La politique de la santé au XVIII^e siècle,” in *Dits et écrits, 1954-1988*, vol. 3, 1976-1979, ed. Daniel Defert and François Ewald with Jacques Lagrange (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 16; “The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century,” trans. Robert Hurley, in *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1988*, vol. 3, *Power*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 2001), 94.
8. Foucault, *STP* (Fr); 62-63; *STP* (En), 60-61.
9. Foucault, *STP* (Fr), 63; *STP*, (En), 61.

even before the problem of the territory.”¹⁰ The enemy is not only external, nor is the enemy only some definite internal group; rather, the population as a whole is understood as a danger to itself. The population must be controlled so that it can be protected from itself. Certainly, this emphasis on the population itself as dangerous may and often does coexist alongside the exclusion of foreigners or of particular subgroups of the population. Consider, for instance, the attempt to force international students to leave the United States if their universities opted for online-only classes (a policy that was ultimately rescinded, without being implemented, when Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology filed a lawsuit to overturn it).¹¹ The population, then, is understood to be threatened both by those who are perceived as outsiders and by itself as a whole.

In the biopolitical state, the exclusion of foreigners, the oppression of particular groups of citizens, and the control of the entire population are all presented as ways to secure the population from supposed threats rather than as ways to preserve the ruler's sovereignty. The “problem” at hand is

no longer that of fixing and demarcating the territory, but of allowing circulations to take place, of controlling them, sifting the good and the bad, ensuring that things are always in movement, constantly moving around, continually going from one point to another, but in such a way that the inherent dangers of this circulation are annulled. No longer the safety (*sûreté*) of the Prince and his territory, but the security (*sécurité*) of the population and, consequently, of those who govern it.¹²

Here Foucault could have been describing 21st-century governmental responses to the Covid-19 pandemic. The aim of these responses is precisely to control the circulation of people to eliminate “the inherent dangers of this circulation.” Lockdowns and quarantines restrict circulation with the promise that only in this way can circulation be made safe again at some indeterminate future moment. Contact tracing and tracking apps monitor circulation on the grounds that such monitoring is necessary to reduce the dangers of circulation to an acceptable level; again, the length of time during which such techniques will be necessary is unspecified,

10. Foucault, *STP* (Fr), 66; *STP*, (En), 64.

11. See Elizabeth Redden, “Government Rescinds International Student Policy,” *Inside Higher Ed*, July 15, 2020, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/07/15/trump-administration-drops-directive-international-students-and-online-courses>.

12. Foucault, *STP* (Fr), 67; *STP* (En), 65, translation modified.

and it is often unclear what level of risk is deemed acceptable. It is true that some lockdowns have been announced for a specific period of time and have indeed been lifted at the end of that period of time: to take one example, the recent lockdown of Perth and Peel in Western Australia was set for three days – from 12:01 am, April 24, 2021 to 12:01 am, April 27, 2021 – and was in fact lifted at 12:01 am, April 27, 2021.¹³ What remains unknown, however, is how often Australian state governments will impose lockdowns and when the last one will occur. On one level, it is obvious that no governing power in any country can possibly predict with certainty when risk levels will decrease to a point it would consider wholly acceptable, whether that point is zero Covid cases or some unspecified minimum level of viral circulation. More profoundly, though, there can be no true end to the present state of emergency – nor did it genuinely begin with Covid-19 – because the danger that is to be minimized is posed by the population itself. There is no such thing as a risk level that the governing power would consider wholly acceptable, for the risk is precisely the circulation of the population – and that risk is always potentially unacceptable, since its potential unacceptability is the justification for the state's exercise of biopower. Biopower justifies itself, that is, by the implicit claim that the population must be subject to certain controls so that the danger it poses to itself will not become too great.

In other words, the reason it is unspecified how long the mechanisms of surveillance and control will remain in place is not only, and not fundamentally, because we are unable to calculate when the pandemic will end. It is because this surveillance is not, as we are often urged to believe, an exceptional response to an exceptional problem. It is crucial to understand the implications of the fact that the above quotation from Foucault does not refer to the Covid-19 pandemic, even though, as I observed, it seems to have been written for the present moment: these mechanisms that states have deployed did not emerge from nowhere but are inscribed within the existing operations of biopower, and so state responses to Covid-19 cannot be understood independently of broader considerations of state power. Recall here that the governing power works to preserve itself: the “security” that is at stake is, as the above quotation indicates, that “of the population and, consequently, of those who govern it.” The population

13. See “Perth metro and Peel to enter a 3-day lockdown,” *WA.gov.au*, April 23, 2021, <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/announcements/perth-metro-and-peel-enter-3-day-lockdown>, and “End of lockdown in Perth and Peel,” *WA.gov.au*, April 26, 2021, <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/announcements/end-of-lockdown-perth-and-peel>.

must be constantly threatened so that power can operate to preserve itself. The constant operation of biopower works to protect the population from the threat that the population poses to itself; therefore the population is constantly threatened. To put it another way, biopower operates by first constituting the population as a threat in order to then protect it from that threat. Indeed, the population exists only as a threat: the population simply is that which for its own safety is subject to measurements, calculations, and controls that operate on the level of the group rather than of the individual.¹⁴ Without those measurements, calculations, and controls, a population would not be a population but would only be a group of individuals. And this analysis holds regardless of the motives or ultimate fate of any individual in the government. Once a system has been set in motion, one cannot escape that system simply by electing different people to sit at the top of it. Individual politicians may fall from grace when constituents object to the extent or manner of their exercise of their powers, but the biopolitical regime remains as long as there is a state that acts on the

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14. Considering that the population itself is the threat, it is interesting to note that, while justifications for the mechanisms of control enforced during the Covid-19 pandemic tend to present their use as a matter of scientific necessity, the pandemic has often been described as a war. Announcing a countrywide lockdown, French president Emmanuel Macron repeatedly stated, “*Nous sommes en guerre* [We are at war],” and he called for a “*mobilisation générale* [general mobilization]” (Alexandre Lemarié and Cédric Pietralunga, “« Nous sommes en guerre » : face au coronavirus, Emmanuel Macron sonne la « mobilisation générale »,” *Le Monde*, March 17, 2020, https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2020/03/17/nous-sommes-en-guerre-face-au-coronavirus-emmanuel-macron-sonne-la-mobilisation-generale_6033338_823448.html). British prime minister Boris Johnson said that his government had taken “steps that are unprecedented since World War II” and said, “[W]e must act like any wartime government and do whatever it takes to support our economy” (Boris Johnson, “Prime Minister’s statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 17 March 2020,” *Gov.uk*, March 17, 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-statement-on-coronavirus-17-march-2020>). American president Donald Trump said, “I view it as, in a sense, a wartime president” (Caitlyn Oprysko and Susannah Luthi, “Trump labels himself ‘a wartime president’ combating coronavirus,” *Politico*, March 18, 2020, <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/03/18/trump-administration-self-swab-coronavirus-tests-135590>). New York governor Andrew Cuomo said, “Ventilators are to this war what missiles were to World War II” (“We Are All in Quarantine’: 100% of NY Work Force Must Stay Home, Cuomo Puts State on Pause,” *NBC New York*, March 20, 2020, updated March 22, 2020, <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/coronavirus/nyc-hospitals-weeks-from-running-out-of-supplies-as-death-toll-soars/2335762/>). And these are only a few examples. The language of war functions to conceal the biopolitical control of the population by casting us not as members of a population that is itself the threat but rather as soldiers fighting an external enemy.

population. Even if all restrictions justified by the pandemic are eventually rolled back, the system within which they were instituted will still stand.

Indeed, techniques of control and surveillance have long been absorbing the Other into the abstraction of “the population” and teaching us to understand the population as a source of danger – while presenting themselves as obviously necessary measures. In the United States, one may think of the increased surveillance in airports following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, which is not only an attempt to secure territory against a foreign enemy but which also functions to control the population and its circulation – though, again, surveillance long predates the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). As noted above, biopower aims to guarantee the health of the population: Foucault points out that in Europe public health has been an object of the police since the establishment of the modern state, and not only during epidemics; indeed, the entire organization of the city “will be ordered by, subordinated to principles, to concerns of health: the width of roads, the dispersion of elements that may produce miasmas and poison the atmosphere, butchers, abattoirs, cemeteries.”¹⁵ The TSA certainly has vocal critics – though critiques often state that it is ineffective rather than questioning biopower itself – but it may seem obvious that cities should be designed in accord with “concerns of health.” As also noted above, even critics of lockdowns may take for granted that the state should concern itself with the health of the population, while simply arguing that lockdowns fail to preserve the population’s health or are actively detrimental to it. The apparent obviousness of the notion that the state should seek to ensure the health of the population is part and parcel of the functioning of biopower, which justifies itself by presenting its operations as natural. As Foucault explains later in his analysis, “the mechanism of security [...] connects to what the physiocrats called physical processes, which could be called natural processes, and which we could also call elements of reality.”¹⁶ Biopower operates because it ostensibly must: thus “the population as a collection of subjects is replaced by the population as a set of natural phenomena.”¹⁷ The idea that science prescribes the correct policy for governments to follow in responding to Covid-19 is, therefore, itself part of the system of biopower. Edward McGushin accurately summarizes

15. Foucault, *STP* (Fr), 332; *STP* (En), 325, translation modified.

16. Foucault, *STP* (Fr), 67; *STP* (En), 65-66, translation modified.

17. Foucault, *STP* (Fr), 360; *STP* (En), 352.

the biopolitical pursuit of health when he writes that in the biopolitical state, “the social body is conceived very concretely as a medical body, and doctors are the ones who can heal. They have the task of outlining a politics of health.”¹⁸ These sentences also could have been written about the Covid-19 pandemic – but they were not, and the fact that they were not reminds us that state responses to Covid-19 are not unusual responses to an unprecedented emergency but have arisen within and from the established systems of biopower. If it seems obvious that we should let experts determine public health policy, during the Covid-19 pandemic and in general, that is because we have already implicitly accepted the principle that the state should seek to promote the health of the population.

3. How the Operations of Biopower Obscure the Face of the Other

Having examined the operations of biopower in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, I now return to Levinas to argue that, in defiance of Levinas's warning against imposing a narrative on the Other's suffering, the mechanisms of control that states have imposed coopt that suffering as a justification for the operations of biopower. I have already noted that biopower absorbs the Other into the population and that this is no accident but is essential to the functioning of biopower. Let us now consider more directly the biopolitical narrative about risk and suffering: whose suffering, exactly, does biopower operate to prevent? No one's, for biopower operates on the population, an abstract entity that is the object of statistical analysis and calculation. The claim that we must weigh the harm caused by Covid-19 against the harm caused by lockdowns and the risks posed by surveillance technologies and increased government control may at first appear easy to dismiss on the grounds that human life is infinitely valuable and not subject to calculation – which is a Levinasian point. Yet the endorsement of the control and surveillance of the population on the grounds that we must minimize Covid-19 deaths at all costs is equally a calculation from which the face of the Other is absent.

As I stated in the introduction to this article, my aim here is not to discuss the question of security versus freedom or to embark on a practical analysis of the likelihood that any particular state government will use the mechanisms of control and surveillance that it has put in place,

18. Edward McGushin, *Foucault's Askēsis: An Introduction to the Philosophical Life* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 227.

such as contact tracing and cell phone tracking, for purposes other than responding directly to the Covid-19 pandemic. By challenging the discourse of security, by which these mechanisms are justified, on the grounds of ethics as understood by Levinas, I avoid the trap of criticizing that discourse in the name of a freedom that derives its sense only from the discourse of security itself. Foucault observes that “an apparatus of security, in any case the one I have spoken about, cannot operate well except on condition that it is given freedom, in the modern sense [the word] acquires in the eighteenth century: no longer the exemptions and privileges attached to a person, but the possibility of movement, change of place, and processes of circulation of both people and things.”¹⁹ The point is not that circulation is irrelevant to freedom; rather, the point is that freedom comes to be defined strictly in relation to the apparatus of security. Freedom becomes that which the apparatus of security ostensibly secures: the governing power controls the circulation of the population so that the population may be free to circulate without harming itself. The question whether there should be fewer restrictions on circulation, or none at all, therefore readily transforms into the question of how many restrictions are needed to properly secure the circulation of the population. We then find ourselves debating, not the discourse of security itself, but rather a tradeoff that takes place entirely within the terms set by the discourse of security. For the discourse of security does not deny that circulation is a good. Even positing circulation as an absolute good still accepts the terms of the discourse of security in that it is a calculation about what is most beneficial for the population.

Levinasian ethics transcends the discourse of security, and the attendant debate over security versus freedom, because it responds to the Other rather than entering into calculations about the population. The operations of biopower and the discourse of security that justifies them inherently fail to recognize that, as Levinas puts it in “Useless Suffering,” “*the suffering in the other* [...] is unforgivable to *me*.”²⁰ What the control and surveillance that operate on the population obscure is precisely what Levinas calls “the recourse that people have to one another for help, before the astonishing alterity of the other has been banalized or dimmed down to a simple exchange of good manners [*bons procédés*] that has become

19. Foucault, *STP* (Fr), 50; *STP* (En), 48-49, brackets and bracketed words in original.

20. Levinas, *ENE*, 104; *ENT*, 94.

established as an 'interpersonal commerce' of customs."²¹ For the mechanisms of security never operate on the Other at all – nor even on the self. My responsibility to recognize the Other's suffering as unforgivable does not matter in biopolitics; neither does the Other's suffering or the Other's call to me. One cannot even say that the relation to the Other has become an "exchange of good manners" or "good processes," since in surveillance there is no relation to the Other. Through the operations of biopower, a faceless state controls a faceless population, ostensibly for the sake of the population and so for the sake of no person at all.²²

The Other's suffering is thus co-opted for a narrative that justifies the mechanisms of security – that reinforces, that is, the power of the faceless state. Hence the Other's suffering is no longer recognized as senseless but is taken to mean that the centralizing power of the state must act to protect the population with which we identify ourselves – even though it is, in truth, a statistical abstraction to which we are wholly incidental. If the stories of the suffering Other did not reinforce the operations of biopower, they would be left untold or would be explained away. The Other's appeal to me is silenced, and my very responsibility is negated: both are irrelevant to the control and surveillance of the population, and so the surveillance does not see them and the control disregards them. But that which cannot be surveilled and controlled has no reality, as far as biopower is concerned. Reality is summed up in the population and the danger it poses to itself – and if it were not the Covid-19 virus it would be something else since, as explained in the previous section, the population is inherently a threat. Whether or not there is a literal epidemic occurring, there is always some contagion by which surveillance can justify itself, for the population itself is the contagion. We are not soldiers in a war against Covid-19, far from it: as far as the operations of biopower are concerned, we ourselves are Covid-19. The face of the Other is transformed into an abstract carrier of

21. Levinas, *ENE*, 111; *ENT*, 101, translation modified.

22. Mask requirements are particularly interesting in light of this obscuring of the face of the Other. It is true that ethical recognition of the Other does not depend on seeing his or her literal face. To take an example that is unrelated to the current discussions of Covid-19, one skier may recognize another as the Other even if both are concealing their faces against the cold. Yet the discourse of security within which the mask requirement finds its sense does obscure the Other's face in the Levinasian sense of the word. The mask, as one of the mechanisms by which the governing power controls the population, does stand for a discourse that places itself between self and Other in order to conceal them both.

the virus, much as, in the case of post-9/11 airport security in the United States, the face is transformed into an abstract potential terrorist.²³

To fully grasp the relevance of “Useless Suffering” to this discussion of biopower, it is crucial to understand that theodicy ultimately serves less to justify God than to justify ourselves. The notion that others’ suffering is ultimately meaningful, states Levinas, “is the grand idea necessary to the inner peace of souls in our distressed world.”²⁴ When we claim to have proven that God is not responsible for evil because evil is part of some grand plan and therefore, in the final analysis, serves the good, we are really saying that we ourselves are innocent: we did not need to intervene because the grand plan ensures that the evil and our own inaction will work out for good. Levinas’s rejection of theodicy does not blame God for evil and suffering; it blames us and commands us to fight them. The discourse of security functions, however, as a theodicy without God: it tells us that human suffering is subject to calculation and that we ourselves are not responsible for it as long as we do what we are told the calculations command. Whatever suffering still occurs is the fault of those who refused to obey the calculations, or else it is acceptable, according to those same calculations. And, as noted, that suffering serves to justify the orders we are given on the basis of the calculations. Suffering, then, takes on various meanings: it is the price we must pay to ensure that certain other interests are met (thus harm from Covid-19 and harm from lockdowns are traded against each other), it is a sign that some are disobeying orders and must therefore be punished, and, above all, it is a sign that we must submit to the governing power that knows better than we do how to calculate what degrees of suffering and what sources of suffering are acceptable.

It is true that an individual person may well submit to contact tracing, download a tracking app, and obey lockdown restrictions out of a sincere desire to care for the Other. As we have already seen, however, the functioning of biopower, in its various manifestations, does not depend on individual motivations. One might ask whether this independence from individual motives is not a good thing: may it not be the case that, at least

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23. Certainly not everyone is perceived as a threat, or as worthy of protection, to the same degree, but ending discrimination in the operations of biopower would not lead to every person being recognized as the Other to whom I am responsible, since those operations do not and cannot acknowledge the Other at all. Note that it is not that the individuals within a system view every person whom they encounter as a threat; a TSA agent may, for instance, encounter nobody whom she consciously or unconsciously fears is a terrorist. The point is that the system itself constitutes each person as a threat.
24. Levinas, *ENE*, 106; *ENT*, 96.

in some instances, biopower forces people to act for the good of the Other whether they want to or not, and then may biopower not serve the Other? This question utterly misunderstands biopower, however. If on some occasion biopower operates in a way that is, on balance, genuinely good for people, that is a coincidence. Indeed, the person who accepts control and surveillance because she wishes to serve the Other does so in spite of the principles by which the mechanisms of control and surveillance operates. This is so because biopower interposes the governing power between the self and the Other. Moreover, in justifying itself by presenting itself as natural, biopower further excludes the ethical, which is more fundamental than the really or apparently natural. As Levinas states in "Humanism and An-Archy," my responsibility to the Other is an-archic because it is "prior to Being and beings, not saying itself in ontological categories."²⁵ The legitimacy of the biopolitical depends on a denial of this an-archy. For biopower takes itself as the *arché*, the origin or first principle. It cannot be conditioned by ethics because it acts only on the population and cannot hear the call of the Other.

4. Conclusion: Risking a Just Politics

We cannot in practice exist purely within the ethical realm; we must, though it is strictly speaking impossible, calculate and compare the interests of the Other and the third.²⁶ It remains, however, that the biopolitical state is not the just state of which Levinas does speak favorably. In

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25. Emmanuel Levinas, *Humanisme de l'autre homme* (Paris: Fata Morgana, 1987), 91; *Humanism of the Other*, trans. Nidra Poller (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 57.
 26. Recall Levinas's statement that "it is always starting out from the Face, from the responsibility for the other that justice appears, which calls for judgment and comparison, a comparison of what is in principle incomparable, for every being is unique; every other is unique" (*ENE*, 114; *ENT*, 104). And as he writes elsewhere, "The third party is other than the neighbor, but also another neighbor, and also a neighbor of the other, and not simply his fellow. [...] Justice is necessary, that is, comparison, coexistence, contemporaneousness, assembling, order, thematization, the visibility of faces, and thus intentionality and the intellect, and in intentionality and the intellect, the intelligibility of a system, and thence also a copresence on an equal footing as before a court of justice" (Emmanuel Levinas, *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* [Paris: Kluwer Academic, 2011], 245; *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis [Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2006], 157). The third party is also an Other, and so I am responsible to and for both the Other and the third – yet their interests may conflict, or one may act with violence against the other, and so their respective claims must be weighted and compared. Doing so is the task of justice.

“Philosophy, Justice, and Love,” for instance, he writes that “there is a possible harmony between ethics and the state. The just state will come from just men and women and saints rather than from propaganda and preaching.”²⁷ Nor will it come from the operations of biopower – since biopower has no place for “just men and women and saints” but only for the abstract population. Rather, working out how humans may live in a just community is the project of a lifetime for all of us: justice will come only through each one of us striving to be just. And it is much easier to say what justice is not than to say what it is; how could it be otherwise if justice is not to forget the an-archic call of the Other that precedes every supposedly first principle? Because justice must always be referred to the call that exceeds my comprehension, it cannot be set forth in a program.

A key problem resulting from the operations of biopower is, unsurprisingly, a crisis of trust: the more natural it seems to submit to control and surveillance by a centralized state that exists to secure the population against threats, the easier it becomes to see each other person as an incarnation of the threat that is the population, and the harder dialogue becomes. Ernst Wolff warns that because Levinasian ethics is an-archic and therefore cannot tell us exactly how justice is to be lived out, a Levinasian politics “carries in it the danger of being a politics of the war of every citizen’s notion of justice against that of the others.”²⁸ The only way to avoid intractable conflict between different conceptions of justice is precisely dialogue among those who are committed to seeking justice – but the more we see each other as a threat, the less we are willing to trust that others are indeed committed to seeking justice. The path toward this necessary dialogue must involve a radical questioning of the operations of biopower that separate us from each other by absorbing us into the abstraction of the population.

Crucially, this radical questioning demands that we risk error. For although justice must calculate, no calculations tell us what justice is. Madeleine Fagan rightly points out that there is never, for Levinas, a purely ethical relation of only self and Other into which the third then enters; we are always already within the political. She concludes that “the consequences of approaching Levinas’s thought as refusing to provide a pure vision of ethics or responsibility, of foregrounding his argument that

27. Levinas, *ENE*, 131; *ENT*, 120.

28. Ernst Wolff, “The Quest for Justice versus the Rights of the Other?” *Sofia Philosophical Review* 3, no. 2 (2009): 78.

the Third is present even in the face of the Other in the face-to-face mean that Levinas cannot be used to provide an ethical ground, so returning us once again to the risk and uncertainty which may allow for responsibility.²⁹ Indeed. To be responsible is to bear the risk of uncertainty and error. From the perspective of ethics, a great lie of biopower is its promise to secure the population against error through calculations that tell us what risks to run and how much risk is acceptable, thereby freeing us not only from responsibility for the Other's suffering but also from responsibility for judging the interests of the Other and the third. Controlled, we are responsible for nothing: we do not ourselves bear the weight of the difficult and uncertain quest for justice, for judging different interests is not our task but that of the biopolitical state. Questioning the operations of biopower means, therefore, questioning the very notions of securing the population and reducing risk. Where this questioning may lead us is necessarily uncertain. If we wish to live in a just community, however, we must embark on this questioning of biopower and of its promise of security – and we must do so even and especially in a time of pandemic when it is all too easy to accept the operations of biopower as natural.

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29. Madeleine Fagan, "The inseparability of ethics and politics: Rethinking the third in Emmanuel Levinas," *Contemporary Political Theory* 8, no. 1 (2009), 21.

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Le masque en temps de la Covid-19 : ce qu'il donne à penser

The Mask in Times of Covid-19: Gives Rise to Thought

ROBBY MANDIANGU NGOFO *

Abstract

In this time of the Covid-19 pandemic, one experiences the other and self as mask wearers. Mask, which until now was mainly a reality of the medical world, has become an object of daily life. For some, it is indispensable and beneficial, and it has also become, for others, the symbol of freedom restriction by those in power. This article raises the debate above these different positions to apprehend what the mask makes one think. This study understands the mask from its roots in medical usage as a prophylactic measure. From semantical ethics of the term "mask," the author shows that one's responsibility is put at the first value on each mask covering halfway one's face. This commitment serves as a basis for responsibility and tends towards hope. It is a responsibility extended to the environment since the mask, which is supposed to protect one from disease, turns into the trash, endangering the environment.

Keywords: Covid-19, ecology, ethics, hope, mask, phenomenology, responsibility, solidarity.

1. Introduction

Les lignes qui suivent s'inscrivent dans le contexte sanitaire mondial, commencé les derniers mois de l'an 2019. Cette crise sanitaire nous a contraints à une expérience inouïe de l'autre et de soi : l'autre et soi-même en tant que masqués. Le psychiatre hospitalier honoraire Michel Verpeaux constate que « nous sommes également entrés dans l'ère de l'individu sinon virtuel, du moins "camouflé" ». ¹ Masqués ne sont pas seulement nos visages, mais surtout des expressions essentielles du commerce social, comme l'éclat du sourire dans sa totalité par exemple. Cette omniprésence du masque nous plonge-t-elle seulement dans la mascarade ou devient-elle une interrogation sur le sens de sa présence devenue à certains égards oppressante et parfois même étouffante?

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1. Michel Verpeaux, « Le masque ET l'écran », *L'information psychiatrique* 96, n° 8-9 (2020): 605, <https://doi.org/10.1684/ipe.2020.2158>.

Il semble qu'une manière de ne pas rester insensible à cette situation serait de ne pas laisser prisonnier le questionnement sur ce que donne à penser le masque, en ce temps de pandémie. Il est judicieux de regarder le masque d'un point de vue phénoménologique, en retournant à la chose même qu'est le masque, et donc « élucider (*aufklären*), ce qui effectivement se passe, ou mieux [...] de déplacer l'intérêt théorique du fait ou de l'événement [en l'occurrence le masque], sur l'essence de la relation de signification, de la relation d'objet ». ²

Il convient pour une telle entreprise d'oser suspendre le jugement sur l'opportunité ou pas du port du masque, suspendre le jugement sur le masque tout court. Le philosophe est appelé donc à conserver l'attitude neutre et désintéressée du spectateur, préoccupé uniquement de voir et de décrire de manière adéquate. ³ Ces lignes veulent se focaliser sur le masque, non comme simple artefact, mais comme symbole et ce qu'il donne à penser, ce que donne à penser le visage masqué. Il faut ainsi présupposer le masque pour le comprendre bien plus qu'un simple artefact. Il faut ouvrir les yeux sur les possibilités de sens qui se donnent à penser dans le masque pour s'élever à la hauteur du symbole. Ainsi on peut l'entrevoir comme faisant participer à un sens latent sous-jacent à une intentionnalité primaire et donc comme un symbole. Celui-ci est pour Paul Ricœur « le mouvement même du sens primaire qui nous fait participer au sens latent ». ⁴ Les lignes qui suivent veulent aller au gré de ce mouvement du sens primaire du masque (protéger) vers un sens latent (la responsabilité).

En d'autres termes, ce que veut soutenir notre argumentaire, c'est que sur chaque masque cachant à moitié nos visages, se donne à penser notre responsabilité, une responsabilité tendue vers l'espérance. Une telle entreprise ne devra pas ignorer le contexte normal du masque, le contexte sanitaire et hospitalier en général, ne fût-ce que pour ne pas perdre de vue les conditions d'émergence de cet objet nécessaire dans le domaine de la santé publique.

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2. René Schérer, « Husserl », in *Histoire de la Philosophie 3. Du XIX^e siècle à nos jours*, éd. par Yvon Belaval, vol. 3, Encyclopédie de la Pléiade (Paris: NRF/Gallimard, 1974), 530.
 3. Edmund Husserl, *Méditations cartésiennes. Introduction à la phénoménologie*, trad. par Gabrielle Peiffer et Emmanuel Levinas, Bibliothèque des textes philosophiques (Paris: Vrin, 1966), 30.
 4. Paul Ricœur, « "Le symbole donne à penser" », *Esprit*, n° 275 (août 1959): 65.

2. Du masque médical comme prophylaxie

L'évocation du masque reste encore généralement liée à la dissimulation, au travestissement, à l'apparence, et donc au faux. Ainsi, il reste cantonné dans l'ensemble au domaine du théâtre, du divertissement, de la fourberie, du mensonge et de la cosmétique.

Même quand il se comprend dans un sens plus positif, dans le domaine esthétique et de l'art, le masque conserve toujours une part de dissimulation. Ainsi, dans l'art africain, par exemple, le masque ne se comprend pas seulement à partir de la beauté en lui, mais surtout de son usage religieux. Beauté et utilité religieuse doivent forcément aller ensemble pour mieux saisir le sens du masque en Afrique. Les règles esthétiques complètent et même renforcent ce que le masque représente dans l'univers symbolique : révéler une réalité invisible. Pourtant, son pouvoir révélant se fait toujours au détriment du porteur du masque qui doit s'effacer, s'aliéner peut-on dire, au profit d'un autre, pour faire advenir l'invisible. Alexandre Sénou Adandé nous éclaire à ce sujet :

L'officiant travesti, c'est l'irréel dans un visible symbolique. À partir du moment où il porte le masque de la divinité et le costume qui le complète, il perd sa personnalité humaine, s'abstrait de la société du commun des mortels; il s'est retranché de ce monde et n'est plus que l'incarnation de l'esprit qui habite désormais en lui.⁵

Cette idée d'aliénation de soi – consciente ou non – subsiste encore aujourd'hui dans l'obligation de port du masque, chez plus d'un. Elle révèle de manière générale que cette crise, bien plus qu'une crise sanitaire, est aussi une remise en question d'une subjectivité, obligée d'aliéner une part de sa liberté. Du jour au lendemain, l'ego s'est retrouvé pris dans une sorte de minorité, où une partie de sa capacité décisionnelle semble lui échapper. Le masque paraît alors comme la face visible, le symbole de ces restrictions des libertés tendant à effiloche le tissu social.

Il est donc nécessaire de questionner cet artefact qu'est le masque à partir du fond sanitaire d'où il émerge et de le comprendre d'abord à partir de là. Cet aspect médical du masque, lui-même confiné aux hôpitaux, trouve déjà une place dans l'espace et le débat publics, brutalement certes,

5. Alexandre Sénou Adandé, « Fonctions et signification sociales des masques en Afrique Noire », *Présence Africaine* 1, n° I-II (1955): 30, <https://doi.org/10.3917/presa.9551.0024>.

mais aussi comme une invitation à un retour à la chose même dudit masque.

On peut s'étonner que dans le Littré, par exemple, la seule acception médicale pour le masque garde encore la connotation de ce qui se substitue au vrai, au réel. En effet, le masque, en médecine, renvoie à l'aspect que revêt un visage à cause d'une maladie ou d'un état physiologique, comme la grossesse. Non seulement, comme apparence, mais surtout comme impermanence, comme le temporaire.⁶ Ce qui est encore loin de l'usage consacré du masque en médecine.

En effet, l'usage du masque en médecine est commandé justement par la prise de conscience de la fragilité humaine, face aux maladies, de la fragilité humaine tout court. Les tentatives de compréhension de la transmission des maladies ont donné naissance à plusieurs hypothèses. De la théorie des miasmes par Hippocrate, en passant par les théories d'Ibn Al-Khatib (1313-1374) sur les contagions et les *seminaria contagionis* de Girolamo Fracastore, jusqu'à l'élaboration plus exacte de Louis Pasteur, il y a cette volonté tenace de connaître l'origine d'un mal. Cette connaissance porte en elle le désir légitime de trouver des moyens de se protéger des maladies. Le masque médical fait donc son apparition dans un contexte de peur, celle de contracter un mal dont on ne se remettrait jamais.

C'est dans cette optique qu'il faut situer le masque contre la peste, inventé par Charles Delorme en 1619. À l'usage des médecins, ce masque visait non seulement sa protection, mais devait aussi agir comme un bouclier pour l'empêcher de devenir lui-même un foyer de contamination. Quand on mesure l'incidence démographique de certaines pandémies aux siècles passés sur l'Europe, et même en Amérique, la nécessité de stopper la contagion était fondamentale et plus qu'impérieuse. Car en plus d'une mesure sanitaire, elle était radicalement question de vie ou de mort.

Avec le développement des mesures d'hygiène et d'asepsie, il est évident que le masque médical ne sert pas seulement à protéger le médecin, mais aussi à protéger le malade. En effet, l'adjectif « nosocomial », attesté depuis au moins le XVIII^{ème} siècle, rappelle que « l'hôpital, s'il est un lieu de soins, est aussi un lieu à risque, des risques peu connus qui ont la particularité de ne pouvoir être identifiés par les malades eux-mêmes »⁷. C'est

6. Le Petit Robert et le Larousse ajoutent à l'usage médical la définition du masque associé au gaz, comme masque à gaz, dispositif dispensant du gaz anesthésiant ou de l'oxygène.

7. François Bourdillon et Agnès Petit-Miolet, « Les risques cachés à l'hôpital », *Les Tribunes de la santé*, n° 41 (2013): 70, <https://doi.org/10.3917/seve.041.0069>.

la découverte que fait le médecin austro-hongrois Ignace Semmelweis en 1847, bien avant Louis Pasteur : ses étudiants en médecine, passant de la salle de dissection à la salle d'accouchement contribuèrent à l'augmentation de la mortalité des parturientes, en devenant des agents vecteurs des microbes d'un lieu à un autre (18% en 1847).

C'est un fait que dans un hôpital, le médecin, qui est censé apporter des soins et soulager le mal, peut se retrouver lui-même au rang des dangers potentiels pour le malade qu'il est censé soigner au départ.⁸ Ce double danger (être contaminé et contaminer) fait du masque médical bien plus qu'un masque de protection : il est un masque prophylactique, au sens grec du terme.

3. Tu ne tueras pas, tu te masqueras

Gaston Fessard affirmait au sujet de l'étymologie d'un mot, qu'elle « doit révéler, à travers l'origine commune de ses divers sens, quelque chose de la compréhension du concept ».⁹ Ce qui nous suggère un recours à l'origine étymologique du mot « prophylaxie » pour mieux en saisir la substance. Car le sens courant, renvoyant aux méthodes médicales de prévention contre les maladies, atténue tant soit peu la dimension hautement éthique que donne l'étymologie du terme. Le grec *προφυλάσσω* (veiller sur...) atteste dans son sens premier de la responsabilité de ce sur quoi ou de celui sur qui l'on veille, probablement dans un sens militaire de monter la garde devant quelqu'un ou quelque chose (*προφύλαξ, ακος* = garde d'avant-poste).

Le port du masque, notamment par les chirurgiens, part de cette volonté de veiller sur un organisme fragile que l'on peut davantage fragiliser, sans protection adéquate. Le chirurgien se découvre responsable de l'autre en se découvrant lui-même vulnérable et en prenant conscience de la vulnérabilité de l'autre. C'est donc la vulnérabilité qui est au centre, comme appel à la responsabilité, bien plus comme la responsabilité elle-même ; non pas seulement la vulnérabilité liée à la maladie actuelle, mais aussi cette vulnérabilité qui précède toute maladie, qui ouvre à la possibilité de la maladie ou à celle de son aggravation.

8. Eytan Ellenberg, « L'infection nosocomiale : relire l'histoire et penser au présent », *Santé publique* 17, n° 3 (2005): 472, <https://doi.org/10.3917/spub.053.0471>.

9. Gaston Fessard, *Autorité et Bien commun*, 1^{re} éd. (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1944), 12.

Dans un entretien avec le journaliste Nicolas Dutent, repris en annexe d'*Un trop humain virus*, Jean-Luc Nancy remarque que « la pandémie fait surgir une mort oubliée : ni celle des maladies connues, ni celle des accidents, ni celles des attentats. Une mort qui rôde partout, qui peut défier toutes les protections ». ¹⁰ Cette mort qui pourtant n'a cessé de nous hanter mais que la croissance techno-économique, pour emprunter un terme à Jean-Luc Nancy ¹¹, ne cesse de nous en donner l'illusion de l'absence, nous rassurant de notre propre invulnérabilité illusoire elle-même. Le sentiment de toute-puissance que confère la croissance techno-économique a creusé l'écart de la relation à la vulnérabilité, à la finitude, à partir de notre création d'un nouveau monde, une fois notre monde (les territoires, les ressources, les forces) conquis. ¹² Ce nouveau monde doit se comprendre « non seulement au sens où cette expression a jadis désigné l'Amérique mais au sens où le monde devient littéralement la création de notre technoscience qui en serait donc le dieu. Cela s'appelle la toute-puissance ». ¹³

Serait-ce ici l'invocation du mythe de Prométhée, l'apprenti-sorcier dont l'outrecuidance en vint à attirer le courroux de l'Olympe ? S'agit-il ici de mettre en exergue une quelconque création délibérée d'un virus, au point de s'allier à une probable théorie du complot ou du moins de l'alimenter ? Il s'agit d'abord et surtout de nous regarder nous-mêmes comme subjectivités transcendantes, avec nos pouvoirs constituants, nos désirs de toute puissance. De redire ce qu'affirme déjà presque implicitement le « tu ne tueras pas » du visage dans l'éthique lévinassienne.

La pensée de Lévinas peut être définie comme une philosophie de la relation, la relation à autrui, de son approche ; « approche qui ne se réduit ni à la représentation d'autrui ni à la conscience de la proximité ». ¹⁴ Elle est essentiellement prophylactique, au sens évoqué ci-haut, en ce qu'elle définit jusqu'où je suis gardien de mon frère, jusqu'où je veille sur lui. Je suis le gardien de mon frère non pas parce que je me découvre plus fort que lui, mais parce que sa vulnérabilité me parle de la mienne propre. Bien plus, du fond de cette faiblesse qui est mienne, dans la mortalité du

10. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Un trop humain virus*, Essais Document Divers (Paris: Bayard, 2020), 93.

11. Nancy, 38.

12. Nancy, 39.

13. Nancy, 39.

14. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Humanisme de l'autre homme*, Biblio-essais 4058 (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1990), 105.

moi, dira Lévinas, j'entends une interpellation, je vois surgir la possibilité du meurtre : le visage d'autrui.¹⁵

Ce visage, qui est « seigneurie et le sans-défense même », dit non seulement la vulnérabilité d'autrui en tant que telle, mais aussi et bien plus la possibilité qu'il soit tué. Le « tu ne tueras point » s'adresse à moi en affirmant presque implicitement la part de violence possible qui est en moi. On est presque surpris de découvrir qu'on n'est jamais vraiment *innocens*, qu'il y a en soi la capacité de nuisance, du mal. Non parce que l'on est foncièrement mauvais, mais parce que le mal est présent en moi comme virtualité. Il y a là l'exigence d'un rappel purement ricœurien : « il me faut comprendre ensemble et comme en surimpression la destination originelle de la "bonté" et sa manifestation historique dans la méchanceté ». ¹⁶ Cette conjonction de la bonté et de la méchanceté permet de prendre le sujet dans sa pleine mesure, dans sa vraie réalité.

Il va de soi que l'éthique lévinassienne, dans les extrêmes et paradoxes vers lesquels elle conduit, met en avant la bonté du moi : « Autrui nous engage dans une situation où vous êtes obligé sans culpabilité mais votre obligation n'en est pas moindre. C'est en même temps une charge. C'est lourd et si vous voulez, la bonté c'est cela ». ¹⁷ Cette éthique s'accorde ainsi avec Ricœur pour qui, « aussi originaire que soit la méchanceté, la bonté est plus originaire encore ». ¹⁸

Si le « tu ne tueras point » me ramène à cette vérité fondamentale qui est mienne, il me donne aussi la possibilité d'une réponse, car plus qu'un commandement, « tu ne tueras point » est un appel. Et c'est la réponse à cet appel du visage qui rend possible la bonté, rendant conscient de son originarité par rapport à la méchanceté. À l'opposé de Caïn, déniait sa responsabilité (« Suis-je le gardien de mon frère ? » ¹⁹) et qui ne peut prendre conscience du mal en lui (« Si tu n'agis pas bien, le péché, tapi à ta porte, te désire. Mais toi, domine-le ». ²⁰), le sujet se retrouve convoqué par « un appel puissant et contraignant pour qu'il doive s'y rendre, au

15. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Altérité et transcendance*, 1^è éd. (Paris: Fata Morgana, 1995), 113 et 114.

16. Paul Ricœur, *Philosophie de la volonté*, 3^è éd., vol. 2: Finitude et culpabilité (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1993), 161.

17. Lévinas, *Altérité et transcendance*, 116.

18. Ricœur, *Philosophie de la volonté*, 1993, 2: Finitude et culpabilité: 161.

19. Genèse IV, 9 (Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible)

20. Genèse IV, 7 (Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible)

double sens de s'y déplacer et s'y soumettre ». ²¹ La reddition du sujet (en tant que déplacement et soumission donc, faisant de lui le contre-exemple du « premier meurtrier ») se traduit par le « me voici », ouvrant à une « responsabilité jamais acquittée et toujours à nouveau future, qui n'est pas à venir mais qui advient. Responsabilité antérieure à la délibération à laquelle j'ai été exposé, voué avant d'être voué à moi-même ». ²²

Le masque comme geste barrière ne phénoménalise l'injonction éthique qu'en tant qu'il est porté. La mention « port du masque obligatoire » que l'on retrouve dans certains endroits en ce temps de pandémie est le rappel que le masque en tant qu'il est porté nous oblige. Il nous oblige par exemple à mieux le porter pour limiter les risques de contamination (d'où l'insistance : « un masque couvrant le nez et la bouche »). Par-delà cette obligation, il y a non pas une restriction de la liberté de porter ou pas le masque, mais plutôt un appel à la responsabilité pour autrui.

Le masque est prophylactique fondamentalement en tant qu'il est porté, en tant qu'il oblige à être porté. Il est vrai qu'il cache ainsi la face, la figure. Il doit pourtant le faire pour mieux révéler. Il doit mettre entre parenthèse la face pour que se phénoménalise le visage, au sens lévinassien. Dans ce paradoxe, l'altérité se donne à moi non dans la particularité d'une face mais dans l'anonymat du visage. Il me rappelle ma responsabilité non pas pour une personne concrète médiatisée par sa face, mais plutôt la responsabilité pour tous. Au fond, le masque en tant que porté et obligeant devient un rappel : « nous sommes tous le Messie ». ²³

Il y a donc un lien évident entre la responsabilité et la prophylaxie, en son sens étymologique relevé *supra*, qui permet de comprendre le masque lui-même à partir de l'éthique. Comprendre le masque dans une perspective éthique permet de le saisir en deçà de son sens fonctionnel, de son caractère pratique. Bien plus, le masque n'a son sens fonctionnel que parce qu'il a d'abord cette valeur prophylactique, éthique. La médecine a trouvé une expression qui exprime maladroitement certes cette valeur prophylactique : un geste barrière. Pourtant, le geste n'est une barrière que parce qu'il est d'abord un geste éthique. Il est un geste barrière non seulement parce qu'il fait obstacle à la propagation du virus, mais d'abord

21. Jean-Luc Marion, « Le sujet en dernier appel », *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 96, n° 1 (mars 1991): 87, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40903142>.

22. Lévinas, *Altérité et transcendance*, 115.

23. Emmanuel Falque, *Le combat amoureux. Disputes phénoménologiques et théologiques*, De Visu (Paris: Hermann, 2014), 127.

parce qu'il se fait la caisse de résonance de cette injonction : « Tu ne tueras pas ».

4. Visage masqué et solidarité

Cette injonction ne peut s'imposer avec une telle force qui est la sienne que parce que son appel est destiné à une instance qui peut l'entendre et parce qu'il provient du phénomène particulier qu'est le visage.²⁴ Il va donc de soi qu'il y a dans le « tu ne tueras point » une relation entre celui qui parle et celui qui reçoit l'appel. C'est une relation que le masque comme geste barrière révèle.

L'émergence de la Covid-19 a inséré dans les rituels sociaux ces gestes censés faire obstacle à la propagation du virus. Ces gestes barrières, comme on les appelle, peuvent être vus dans un sens positif comme devant servir d'écran face au virus morbide.

La mentalité médiévale n'a pas manqué de faire le lien entre la mort et les maladies terrifiantes auxquelles fait face la population en ces temps-là. La lèpre, par exemple, rend manifeste la menace qu'elle constitue à travers ses symptômes qui poussent l'équivalence entre la maladie et la mort jusqu'à une évidence visuelle : « chairs dégradées, déformation des traits, suintements. La décomposition n'est plus seulement ici le mécanisme secret du mal, sa lente progression dans l'obscurité des organes ; elle en est encore le versant ostensible, sa mise en scène monstrueuse ».²⁵

L'analogie entre la maladie et le cadavre, comme dans le cas de la lèpre, permet tant soit peu l'identification des contacts physiques et de la proximité du malade comme cause de l'expansion de la maladie. La mise en quarantaine et l'isolement sont encore aujourd'hui des mesures ayant fait leur preuve dans la lutte contre la propagation des maladies. Mais que faire quand, comme dans le cas de la Covid-19, l'évidence visuelle de l'identification entre la maladie et la mort se fait absente, sous le couvert parfois d'*asymptomaticité* ?

Des études établissent que les cas asymptomatiques, en raison de leur fréquence et leur infectiosité, ont été la raison principale qui a converti la

24. Jean-Luc Marion, *De surcroît. Études sur les phénomènes saturés*, 2^e éd., Quadrige (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2010), 149.

25. Georges Vigarello, *Histoire des pratiques de santé. Le sain et le malsain depuis le Moyen Age*, 2^e éd., Points Histoire (Paris: Seuil, 1999), 17-18.

Covid-19 en une pandémie.²⁶ Ils ont assuré le déplacement silencieux du virus, de son épicentre au reste du monde. On garde encore à l'esprit les mots du Président Emmanuel Macron, dans son adresse aux Français, le 16 mars 2020 : « Nous sommes en guerre, en guerre sanitaire, certes : nous ne luttons ni contre une armée, ni contre une autre Nation. Mais l'ennemi est là, invisible, insaisissable, qui progresse ».²⁷ Cette rhétorique martiale nous place devant une évidence : sur nos faces masquées, n'est-ce pas le virus lui-même qui nous rappelle sa présence discrète et invisible, nous disant, avec Descartes, presque en nous narguant, *prodeo larvatus* ? Du coup, d'aucuns n'ont-ils pas vu dans le masque une présence rendue visible du virus ? Franck Cochoy note à ce sujet : « plus fondamentalement, le port du masque est vecteur d'anxiété, dans la mesure où il rend visible la menace de l'invisible, et amène chacun à se méfier d'autrui. Le masque sort de l'ordinaire, rend palpable la pandémie, œuvre comme un rappel omniprésent de la menace qui nous guette ».²⁸

Cette méfiance d'autrui, justifiée dans un contexte d'anxiété, ne met à jour qu'un aspect de la situation. La présence des cas asymptomatiques indique que la maladie ne peut pas seulement venir d'autrui, mais je peux aussi être source de contamination. L'enfer n'est plus seulement l'autre : je le suis aussi, potentiellement. Prendre conscience de cette situation de fait, qu'il n'y pas que l'autre qui est potentiellement dangereux, devrait convertir la méfiance pour autrui en une prudence pour autrui et donc convertir la relation à lui. Le masque, comme mesure barrière, n'est plus seulement pour se protéger d'autrui, mais aussi pour protéger autrui de soi.

C'est déjà le sens de la mesure de lavage des mains qu'imposa Ignace Semmelweis à ses étudiants. Malheureusement, l'expression « geste barrière » s'est immiscée dans notre quotidien à partir d'un contexte difficile. Ce qui occulte la conversion du regard qu'implique le masque. Il s'agit de retourner la question sur soi, d'entendre au plus fort le visage d'autrui : « tu ne tueras point ». Les mesures de protection en milieu

26. Lea A. Nikolai et al., « Asymptomatic SARS Coronavirus2 Infection: Invisible yet Invincible », *International Journal of Infectious Diseases* Volume 100 (novembre 2020): 113, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijid.2020.08.076>.

27. Emmanuel Macron, « Adresse aux Français du Président de la République Emmanuel Macron », 16 mars 2020, <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2020/03/16/adresse-aux-francais-covid19>.

28. Franck Cochoy, « L'envers du masque », *Esprit*, n° 10 (octobre 2020): 27, <https://doi.org/10.3917/espri.2010.0024>. Cet article est important car il donne un aperçu général et synthétique des différentes perceptions du masque et les réactions qu'il suscite pendant la pandémie.

hospitalier, comme le masque, loin de consacrer la hauteur du soignant sur le soigné, les place au contraire sur un même pied d'égalité en découvrant leur dénominateur commun qu'est la vulnérabilité. L'omniprésence du masque dans les rues ne nous renvoie-t-elle pas à la communauté que nous formons ? Bien plus, n'est-il pas la visibilité de notre humanité commune ?

Face à la vulnérabilité, les différences contingentes de cette humanité sont abolies et nous sommes tous ramenés à ce qui unit : notre humanité même. C'est à bon escient que Jean-Luc Nancy parle de « communovirus ».²⁹ En effet, constate-t-il, « le virus nous communise. Il nous met sur un pied d'égalité (pour le dire vite) et nous rassemble dans la nécessité de faire front ensemble. Que cela passe par l'isolement de chacun n'est qu'une façon paradoxale de nous donner à éprouver notre communauté ».³⁰

On peut s'inspirer de la phénoménologie de Michel Henry pour cerner cette communauté que le virus nous donne à éprouver. C'est dans sa critique de l'intersubjectivité husserlienne que Henry introduit la notion de communauté, une communauté qui est nostrité, c'est-à-dire antérieure à l'égoïté.³¹ En d'autres termes, il s'agit dans cette communauté d'aller à l'en-commun des membres, « qui écarte toute idée d'un centre qui donnerait sens à une quelconque périphérie ».³²

Le terme « périphérie », cher au pape François, est loin d'être un simple concept pieux et religieux. Il décrit ces fractures dans la communauté humaine, où certains se retrouvent non plus comme être-avec mais comme être-deçà-de-soi.³³ Il s'agit donc dans cette communauté de relation à autrui, un autrui toujours si proche, même quand la distance géographique lui donne l'illusion d'être un lointain.

La pandémie de la Covid-19 a remis au premier plan des mots comme solidarité, dont on a vite mesuré la vacuité dans son usage habituel. En Afrique, le concept d'*Ubuntu* permet de mieux saisir cette

29. Nancy, *Un trop humain virus*, 21-25.

30. Nancy, 23.

31. Emmanuel Housset, *L'intelligence de la pitié. Phénoménologie de la communauté*, La nuit surveillée (Paris: Cerf, 2003), 106.

32. Mandiangu Ngofo Mambu, « "Va et, toi aussi, fais de même". Lueurs sur les périphéries existentielles à partir d'un regard phénoménologique sur la parabole du bon Samaritain (Luc 10, 29-37) », *Akwaba 1*, n° 17 (2018): 13.

33. Le terme est emprunté à Georges Charbonneau, chez qui le sens est autre. Cf. Georges Charbonneau, « L'être en deçà de soi ou la hantise de l'outrepassement », in *Les directions de sens. Phénoménologie et psychopathologie de l'espace vécu*, éd. par Jeanine Chamond (Paris: Cercle herméneutique, 2005), 117-30.

solidarité. L'appliquant au contexte sud-africain, Dirk Louw mobilise trois termes pour traduire ce concept. *Ubuntu* renvoie ainsi à « *humanity* », « *humanness* » et « *humaneness* ». ³⁴ Ces trois termes soulignent que le fondement de la solidarité ne se trouve guère d'abord dans l'appartenance à une nation, mais dans ce qui fait de nous ce que nous sommes, notre humanité ³⁵, et dans la communauté que nous formons, celle de *l'humanum*, pour reprendre un terme jonassien. ³⁶ *L'Ubuntu* n'est possible que si l'individualisme s'éclipse au profit de la redécouverte de la dimension communautaire de notre être-avec.

L'on n'affirme aucunement que l'individu est absorbé dans la collectivité, mais plutôt qu'il n'est lui-même que parce qu'il y a autrui. L'aphorisme par lequel se fonde cette notion de solidarité est explicite : « *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* » (en langue zoulou) ou « *motho ke motho ka batho* » (en langue sotho). Sa traduction littérale donne plus ou moins : « un humain est un humain par l'intermédiaire d'autres humains ». ³⁷ Ce proverbe énonce la description factuelle d'une règle d'éthique sociale basée sur le respect et la compassion et qui permet de mieux comprendre les relations interpersonnelles. Louw commente : « *It [l'aphorisme] not only describes human being as "being-with-others", but also prescribes how we should relate to i.e. what "being-with-others" should be all about* ». ³⁸

Dans la pensée de Jean-Luc Marion, l'énoncé de cet aphorisme peut trouver un écho dans la notion d'icône, qui élargit la pensée lévinassienne du visage. Comme phénomène saturé, l'icône ne se phénoménalise qu'autant qu'il se donne. Cette donation convoque l'accueil passif de l'ego, dépossédé de sa pourpre transcendantalite, qui se découvre comme adonné, c'est-à-dire « celui qui se reçoit soi-même de ce qu'il reçoit, celui

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34. Dirk J. Louw, « Ubuntu and the Challenges of Multiculturalism in Post-Apartheid South Africa », *Quest* XV, n° 1-2 (2001): 15.
 35. En traduisant *l'abantu* (autre forme d'*ubuntu*, pense-t-il) par compagnonnage fraternel ou concitoyenneté, Jacques Derrida passe à côté de la racine *ntu*, présente dans plusieurs langues africaines dite justement bantoues dans laquelle ladite racine réfère à l'humain. Sa traduction présente plutôt une application de *l'ubuntu* à un niveau étatique, national (Cf. Jacques Derrida, « Versöhnung, ubuntu, pardon: quel genre? », *Le genre humain*, n° 43 (2004): 115).
 36. Hans Jonas, *Le principe responsabilité : une éthique pour la civilisation technologique*, trad. par Jean Greisch, 2^e (Paris: Cerf, 1992), 140.
 37. Louw, « Ubuntu and the Challenges of Multiculturalism in Post-Apartheid South Africa », 15.
 38. Louw, 15.

à qui ce qui se donne d'un *soi* premier – tout phénomène – donne un *moi* second, celui de la réception et du répons »³⁹.

Face à l'icône, l'ego, en tant qu'adonné, se retrouve non plus comme celui qui constitue, mais plutôt comme celui qui se reçoit d'un appel, à qui l'icône impose son appel et ainsi l'envisage. Envisager peut être compris ici en son sens premier comme « regarder une personne au visage », affirmant tacitement la possibilité d'un visage pour l'envisagé, l'adonné pour ainsi dire. En celui-ci, comme envisagé, apparaît un visage d'où il peut être regardé. N'est-ce pas dans cette rencontre entre visages que peut surgir le respect, qui vaut comme le contre-concept du regard ?⁴⁰ Mais n'est-ce pas là aussi qu'opère la confiance, « le seul accès phénoménologiquement correct au visage d'autrui » ?⁴¹

Au finale, la solidarité dont il est ici question permet de comprendre toute relation humaine comme prophylactique et donc comme éthique. Elle offre à l'individu la garantie que « la réciprocité est toujours là pour autant que moi, qui suis responsable pour quelqu'un, vivant parmi les hommes, je suis à chaque fois l'objet de la responsabilité de quelqu'un. Cela découle de la non-autarcie de l'homme ».⁴²

5. Le masque et l'écologie

Si, pour le reste du monde, c'est la crise de la Covid-19 qui a permis de populariser le masque naso-buccal de chirurgie, en Asie il l'est surtout devenu à la suite de la crise climatique. Bien avant la pandémie, il était déjà courant de voir, par exemple, les habitants de Hong Kong portant des masques pour se protéger de la pollution de l'air. Le masque y est la solidarité de destin entre l'homme et la nature rendue visible.

Il ne faut donc pas que l'urgence sanitaire éclipse l'urgence climatique dans le débat public. Ce qui équivaudrait à oublier que dans la question de la pollution de l'air, il s'agit non seulement d'une urgence climatique mais aussi d'une urgence sanitaire. L'Organisation mondiale de la Santé estimait qu'en 2016 la pollution de l'air extérieur en zones urbaines et rurales avait causé 4,2 millions de décès prématurés.⁴³

39. Marion, *De surcroît*, 56.

40. Marion, 150.

41. Marion, 152.

42. Jonas, *Le principe responsabilité*, 140.

43. OMS, « Qualité de l'air ambiant et santé », 2 mai 2018, <https://www.who.int/fr/>

Il ne fait l'ombre d'aucun doute que la pandémie actuelle s'accompagne des retombées écologiques. Déjà, la maladie en elle-même, en tant que zoonose, touche à notre relation au monde animal et par ricochet à la nature toute entière. D'aucuns se sont réjouis que le confinement de 2020, en occasionnant la limitation de la circulation et des activités industrielles, ait réduit fortement la pollution. Il aurait permis une baisse de 5% des émissions de gaz à effet de serre. Malheureusement, l'envers de la médaille est que la forte demande de masque de protection accroît le risque de pollution des océans par ces objets de production devenus ordures après leur usage.⁴⁴

Ce qui est censé nous protéger devient du même coup ce qui alimente le feu de la mort pour l'environnement. Exactement comme notre liberté elle-même, censée n'être qu'une liberté humaine, et donc limitée, mais que l'on a parfois idolâtrée et portée au rang de transcendance.

En concluant le premier tome de *Philosophie de la volonté*, Paul Ricœur décrit le mouvement nécessaire auquel son œuvre invitait *in fine* : « s'éloigner de cette liberté qui inaugure de l'être, qui va du possible à l'être, pour rejoindre enfin une liberté qui repasse sur la nécessité, se subordonne à l'initiative des choses. Cette liberté semble-t-il, n'ose plus, elle consent, elle se rend ».⁴⁵ Le masque peut aussi se donner comme le cri de détresse face à notre liberté menaçante pour l'environnement.

L'écologie a toujours été l'invitation à une relation prophylactique avec la nature, mais qui se veut aussi questionnant la liberté. Car dans l'écologie, il s'agit d'abord de notre liberté, en sa capacité à consentir à l'altérité de la nature, mais aussi à l'altérité de l'autre homme. La transition écologique implique une transition beaucoup plus profonde : la transition écolologique. Les profondes métamorphoses économiques et sociales qu'implique la transition écologique ne peuvent avoir comme trame de fond qu'un *sursum* de la responsabilité, elle-même fondée sur une remise en question de notre liberté dans sa capacité à prendre en compte l'altérité de manière générale. Un personnage comme Greta Thunberg indique grâce à son action que la question de la transition écologique n'est pas seulement une affaire des états : elle n'advient qu'au terme d'une mobilisation de tous les acteurs ; non seulement les instances publiques et entreprises,

news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ambient-(outdoor)-air-quality-and-health.

44. ONU, « Cinq choses à savoir sur les masques jetables et la pollution plastique », ONU Info, 29 juillet 2020, <https://news.un.org/fr/story/2020/07/1074111>.

45. Paul Ricœur, *Philosophie de la volonté*, 2^e éd., vol. 1: Le volontaire et l'involontaire (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1988), 453.

mais plus généralement la population toute entière, comme agrégat d'êtres de liberté.

Hugues de Jouvenel se questionne à ce sujet : « Quels enseignements peut-on en tirer [des changements climatiques] quant aux comportements humains confrontés au choix : soit du “toujours plus” et du chacun pour soi, soit de sauver la planète que nous léguerons à nos enfants et petits-enfants, sachant que la “fée technologie” ne nous dispensera pas d'un tel choix ? »⁴⁶ Dans l'écologie, la responsabilité se fait responsabilité de la vie, dans laquelle se fait jour une inclusion du lendemain dans les soucis d'aujourd'hui, au point que cette responsabilité s'échappe de l'immédiateté pour se projeter vers l'avenir, dans l'à-venir⁴⁷. Hans Jonas le souligne assez bien à travers son impératif éthique qui se focalise sur la permanence de la vie et donc de sa possibilité future. Il s'agit de passer « à une morale qui condamne la dimension nuisible de notre action, celle-ci fût-elle accomplie avec de bonnes intentions ».⁴⁸ C'est ainsi que plus haut nous parlions d'une conversion égologique, qui est aussi un questionnement sur notre rapport au futur. Cette conversion égologique implique de tout réinventer du sujet et de la liberté :

Nous ne sommes peut-être enfin prêts à comprendre que nous ne sommes pas libres de la liberté mesquine du sujet sûr de soi et de ses droits – qui se réduisent au droit d'obéir au marché des uns et aux caprices des autres. Nous avons tout à inventer à neuf. Y compris le sens même de nos droits, de notre humanité et d'une « liberté ».⁴⁹

Un lien prend forme entre cette éthique de la vie qu'est l'écologie avec l'avenir. C'est un lien qui ouvre à l'espérance. Il s'agit de questionner comment notre agir aujourd'hui crée l'espérance, pas d'abord à un niveau économique ou politique, mais fondamentalement au niveau de la condition de possibilité de l'économique et du politique : la vie. C'est

46. Hugues de Jouvenel, « “Notre maison brûle” », *Futuribles*, n° 435 (27 février 2020): 3, <https://doi.org/10.3917/futur.435.0003>.

47. Jonas, *Le principe responsabilité*, 151.

48. Éric Pommier, « La responsabilité en discussion : Apel/Jonas », *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, n° 4 (2012): 497, <https://doi.org/10.3917/rphi.124.0495>. L'auteur l'illustre par un bel exemple : « Et s'il faut se méfier de ce Caïn qu'est la bombe atomique pouvant provoquer une catastrophe brutale, il faut sans doute se méfier davantage de cet Abel qu'est le réacteur nucléaire dispensant aux populations une énergie pourtant de prime abord bienfaisante » (Pommier, 497).

49. Nancy, *Un trop humain virus*, 44.

une éthique qui rend responsable de la vie, d'autrui comme vie, qu'il soit l'autre homme ou la nature même.

6. Conclusion : le masque comme espérance

L'espérance, par lequel se conclut le point précédent, résume plus ou moins ce dont le masque est finalement le symbole. Il est symbole de l'espérance de vie, non pas comme indicateur statistique d'évaluation du développement humain, mais comme ouverture à la vie et dépassement vers le futur. Comme le souligne Ricœur, « l'espérance n'est pas illusion (...). Elle est l'âme mystérieuse du pacte vital que je puis nouer avec mon corps et mon univers ». ⁵⁰ Il y a un pacte vital à conclure avec la vie, la mienne et celle d'autrui, et avec la nature. L'espérance permet de ressaisir le présent, le prendre à bras le corps, et de réinventer l'avenir pour ne pas tomber dans la fatalité.

Cette pandémie qui réactive avec violence la mort comme idée, au cœur de nos représentations et même dans nos gestes les plus banals ⁵¹, a planté l'angoisse et la désolation. Les médias et réseaux sociaux nous ont placés aux premières loges de la propagation rapide du virus. Le spectre de la mort a été bien palpable à partir des chiffres donnant le nombre de décès en temps réel. Parler d'espérance dans une situation de si grande peur signifie aussi retrouver le sens de la maladie, non comme une catastrophe, mais comme manifestation de la vie, qui est elle-même processus de création et de destruction. ⁵²

L'espérance qui se lit sur nos visages masqués est finalement une mission : s'aider mutuellement et parvenir ensemble à rester debout face à la peur et projeter des lendemains plus agréables. Les retombées économiques et psychologiques en ce temps de crise resteront sans doute dramatiques pour un grand nombre. Sans les minimiser, cette espérance nous rappelle que construire des lendemains meilleurs n'est pas la tâche des gouvernements et des personnels de santé seuls ; si notre vulnérabilité nous a montré le chemin de la solidarité, celle-ci est une exigence à prendre conscience que chacun de nos gestes en faveur de l'éradication de la maladie compte, aussi minime soit-il. Qu'il soit aussi banal que faire

50. Ricœur, *Philosophie de la volonté*, 1988, 1: Le volontaire et l'involontaire:451-52.

51. Claire Marin, « Réapprendre la maladie », *Esprit*, n° 5 (mai 2020): 57, <https://doi.org/10.3917/espri.2005.0055>.

52. Marin, 58-59.

ses courses seul pour ne pas encombrer les magasins ou simplement le respect, dans la mesure du possible, des gestes barrières. Et quand tout redeviendra normal, saurons-nous reprendre cette normalité sous des nouvelles bases ? La balle est dans notre camp.

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Radically Hopeful Thinking for a Wicked Covid-19 Pandemic Problem*

BENJAMIN HOLE**

Abstract

This paper explores the prospects of radical hope for addressing the devastation of the Covid-19 pandemic. Hope is useful for conceptualizing the proper balance between too much fear and too little about our uncertain future. First, I describe the ethical challenge of the pandemic as a wicked problem. Because accepted ethical theories fail to motivate solutions, wicked problems pressure us to develop our value systems, exercise moral imaginations, and discover creative solutions. Second, I develop an Aristotelian account of radical hope, drawing from ancient philosophy, virtue ethics, and recent climate ethics. Radical hope is a novel form of courage, which balances the goal of external success, that something good will emerge from the tragedy, against the goal of living well for its own sake through practical wisdom. I conclude by applying some lessons to our present situation.

Keywords: Aristotle, Covid-19, pandemic, radical hope, SARS-CoV-2, virtue ethics, wicked problem.

how hard it must be to live only with what one knows and what one remembers, cut off from what one hopes for!¹


Introduction: Devastation

It is devastating when one's culture collapses. Customs, arts and media, economies, social institutions, and local ways of life inform how we interact with one another, our dreams and aspirations, the sorts of relationships we choose, and the meanings we assign to our everyday lives. Like the sacking of Troy for Priam, a loss of culture is a devastating challenge to living meaningfully. Imagine being a member of Crow Nation, a

* I would like to thank Ramona Ilea for conversation about how my thinking about climate change could be applied to the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as Majestik De Luz for her work as a student research assistant.

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1. Albert Camus, *The Plague* (trans. Stuart Gilbert. New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1991), 292.

Plains tribe of Native American indigenous peoples, during the second half of the 19th century, experiencing gradual displacement from tribal land with the arrival of white settlers. Cultural underpinnings that gave life meaning would steadily recede. The Crow practice of courage, coup-counting, ceased to exist. There was no room for the coup stick in a world of European colonization, technology, and firearms. Ordinary behaviors lost their meaning.

When the buffalo went away the hearts of my people fell to the ground ... and they could not lift them up again. After this nothing happened.²

The Crow way of life perished. The world was upside down. It was like being flung into a fictional universe, uncertain of the new rules. Nothing made sense, as it once did. In the face of such enormous loss, there is much to fear, and little reason to be hopeful for the future.

The last chief of the Crow Nation, Plenty-Coups, led his people well through cultural devastation. He demonstrated imaginative excellence, discovering new ways for his people to live well amidst tragedy, and carving out room to exercise some presently unknown conception of Crow flourishing. In response to tragedy, Plenty-Coups embodies what some describe as “radical hope.” He advocated for the Crow in Washington D.C., defeating US government plans to take away their land and effectively eradicate Crow Nation. He continued his fight by helping his people acculturate to the new world, for example, through education programs. He confronted his fears in unexpected ways, and exercised newfound courage, aimed at a target of flourishing that he could not yet understand.

Like the arrival of colonizers on indigenous lands, the Covid-19 pandemic is culturally devastating. And this devastation is merely a catchall for all kinds of loss, including lost savings, jobs, loved ones, social institutions, and so on. In early April 2020, novelist R.O. Kwon wrote:

Consider how much has already been lost, and how much more we’re likely to lose: the lives already taken by the coronavirus, along with the lives currently in jeopardy, and exponentially more people falling ill every day. The lost livelihoods, the blasted plans. Entire families destitute today who were getting by three weeks ago. Upended routines. Postponed weddings and funerals. Depleted savings. Isolation. ... Jobs vanishing, the jeopardized local businesses – restaurants, bookstores – that make a place home. Whole cities are

2. Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 2.

changing, fast. Well, the whole world is, it seems, and there's that to grieve, too. I could go on; the list is long.³

The Covid-19 pandemic is devastating because recovering these losses seems unfathomable. There is little reason to be hopeful about the “new normal” future, whatever awaits us on “the other side” of tragedy. Kwon evokes Emily Dickinson:

There's Grief of Want – and grief of Cold –
A sort they call 'Despair'⁴

Often, grief is accompanied by a visceral desire that what has been lost will somehow return, such as the grief someone might feel after a romantic partner ends a relationship. Sometimes the only company is despair. Kwon compares this to the feeling she had as a 17-year-old, when she turned away from religion and lost “a faith, a vocation, a community and salvation all at once.” She had no desire for her new normal to be anything like her old. The grief obscured her vision of restoring meaningfulness. Without religion, she lacked any idea of a desirable life. Where does one go from here? In this grief of Cold, the radical hope exhibited by Plenty-Coups is helpful. It asks the victim of loss to draw from her inner resources to overcome her despair, by searching for new opportunities for a meaningful life in an uncertain world.

In this paper, I explore the prospects of radical hope for addressing the grief of Cold of the Covid-19 pandemic. Hope is useful for conceptualizing the proper balance between too much fear and too little about our uncertain future. First, I describe the ethical challenge of the Covid-19 pandemic as a wicked problem. Because accepted ethical theories fail to motivate solutions, wicked problems pressure us to develop our value systems, exercise moral imaginations, and discover creative solutions. Second, I develop an Aristotelian account of radical hope, drawing from ancient philosophy, virtue ethics, and recent climate ethics. Radical hope is a novel form of courage, which balances the goal of external success, that something good will emerge from the tragedy, against the goal of

3. R.O. Kwon, “Trouble Focusing? Not Sleeping? You May Be Grieving,” *The New York Times* (April 9, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/09/opinion/sunday/coronavirus-grief-mental-health.html>.

4. Emily Dickinson, “I Measure Every Grief I Meet” in *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, eds. Thomas Herbert Johnson (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1955).

living well for its own sake through practical wisdom. I conclude by applying some lessons to our present situation.

A Wicked Covid-19 Problem

Consider Mark's pandemic story, an imaginary of hope. In March 2020, he was laid-off from his first job as an elementary-school math teacher. Once the initial devastation wore off, he quickly flipped the script towards optimism. He decided to invest his unexpected "time off" into personal development. He wanted to go to Costa Rica, practice his Spanish, enroll in a volunteer program, and help people, while enriching himself at the same time. Talking to Mark on the phone, he says, "Thanks for telling me about social distancing! I can see why some people think that's important. But I haven't seen any data about the likelihood of someone getting infected, not showing any symptoms, and then infecting others... If I get sick, I'll be probably be fine, and I can self-quarantine in Costa Rica." In the end, Mark stayed home and followed social distancing guidelines long before his state mandated a stay-at-home order. What finally convinced him was an analogy between his travelling and polluters who feel like the effects of their behaviors are insignificant. Mark eventually decided to accept a precautionary principle for making an important decision from a position of uncertainty.

In this section, I want to draw an analogy between the public health crisis and climate change. We can describe the Covid-19 pandemic as a wicked problem, a problem that resists solutions: it is difficult to formulate because its dimensions are unstable, unclear, and multi-scaled.⁵ Since it is difficult to formulate, it is also difficult to solve; attempts to address one aspect will likely incur costs in another dimension of the problem. In environmental studies, wickedness has become a dominant framework for describing climate change.

There are parallels to each part of the definition. First, the dimensions of the problem are unstable. They develop as we continue to gather more information. As early as March 17, John Ioannidis raised worries about the difficulties of evidence-based decision making, describing the

5. See Horst W. J. Rittel and Melvin M. Webber, "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning," *Policy Sciences* 4 (1973): 155-169. To be clear, the structural wickedness associated with the problem is the large-scaled intersection of systemic problems, and not the virus itself. A vaccine is a clear solution to the infectious disease.

situation as a “fiasco in the making.”⁶ He claimed that without “reliable evidence on how many people have been infected with SARS-CoV-2 or who continue to become infected” government and public health officials lack the resources to make good decisions. Then, whatever public health officials say, the unpredictable reactions of individuals change the shape of the problem. For example, the US Surgeon General’s February 29 tweet discouraging the purchase of masks is not unrelated from the slow uptake of mask-wearing in the US.⁷ In addition, the instability includes widespread social distancing recommendations with incredible social and economic backlash, and further reverberations of those uncertainties.

Second, the dimensions of the problem are unclear. Tame problems, such as games of chess, have clear sets of rules to help guide possible solutions. Like Mark, policymakers struggle to apply a reasonable precautionary principle to a novel context, because the guidelines for application are uncertain. It is a novel virus with unclear epidemiology, as information about the virus develops. Instability and lack of clarity feed into one another. Then, depending on government decisions and the public reactions, the economic and social aspects are vulnerable to further change. For example, many have become unable to pay rent or get enough food: in the US, approximately 19 million children, or 1 in 4 children, now live in a household with insufficient food, and these levels of hardship are substantially higher among vulnerable populations.⁸ The breadth of relevant costs and benefits in analysis of the problem is also unclear.

Third, the problem is multi-scaled. Stakeholders must weigh competing scales, for example, policymakers weighing shorter-term considerations of public health against the longer-term social and economic costs. Even in March, Ioannidis worried that the longer-term impacts of a lockdown may cost more lives than the virus. Given the wicked nature of the problem, attempts at a solution to address one area come with significant costs in others.

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6. John P.A. Ioannidis, “A Fiasco in the Making?” *Stat News* (March 17, 2020), <https://www.statnews.com/2020/03/17/a-fiasco-in-the-making-as-the-coronavirus-pandemic-takes-hold-we-are-making-decisions-without-reliable-data/>.
 7. Maria Cramer and Knvul Sheikh, “Surgeon General Urges the Public to Stop Buying Face Masks,” *The New York Times* (February 29, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/29/health/coronavirus-n95-face-masks.html>.
 8. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *Tracking the Covid-19 Recession’s Effects on Food, Housing, and Employment Hardships*, (September 2020), <https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/tracking-the-covid-19-recessions-effects-on-food-housing-and-employment-hardships>.

As such, wicked problems challenge the individual's sense of moral agency. One feels powerless to address the enormity of the problem, since best efforts will incur moral losses elsewhere. If a conscientious social distancer makes a curbside pickup at Walmart, she may worry her behavior contributes to the structures of economic inequality exacerbated by the pandemic. She may worry about both immediate public health, as well as the long-term economic and social dimensions. Walmart continues to strengthen its monopoly as small business perish, more so now than ever. Perhaps our social distancer has read employee complaints on a local message board, that "essential employees" are forced to work in a hotspot without personal protective equipment. If Walmart is the only place nearby for her to do curbside pickup, she may feel like anything she does comes with immense moral costs.

A wicked problem demonstrates the failure of our accepted ways of thinking and this pressures us to exercise our moral imaginations. In climate ethics, Dale Jamieson influentially employs the framing of wickedness to highlight the inadequacy of ethical theories for motivating climate action. This is a steady theme in his body of work.⁹ Dominant approaches, such as consequentialism, deontology, and social contract theory, which developed "in low-population-density and low-technology societies," are designed to address simple ethical issues.¹⁰ The paradigm case for ethical theory is Jack intentionally stealing Jill's bicycle; in a wicked one, "Acting independently, Jack and a large number of unacquainted people set in motion a chain of events that causes a large number of future people who will live in another part of the world from ever having bicycles."¹¹ In the first case, we see Jack as morally responsible, but, in the second, we might see his behavior as somewhat excusable. Jamieson's point is that our old ways of thinking about values have failed in the novel circumstances of the Anthropocene. While we used to be able to depend on old conceptions of responsibility,

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9. See Dale Jamieson, "Ethics, Public Policy, and Global Warming," *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 17 (1992): 139-153, <https://doi.org/10.1080/11287462.1992.10800592>; Dale Jamieson, "When Utilitarians Should Be Virtue Theorists," *Utilitas* 19 (2007): 160-183, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0953820807002452>; Dale Jamieson, "Climate Change, Responsibility, and Justice," *Science and Engineering Ethics* 16 (2010): 431-445, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11948-009-9174-x>; Dale Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time: Why the Struggle Against Climate Change Failed – And What It Means for Our Future* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199337668.003.0003>.
 10. Dale Jamieson, "Ethics, Public Policy, and Global Warming," *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 17 (1992): 139-153, <https://doi.org/10.1080/11287462.1992.10800592>.
 11. Dale Jamieson, "Climate Change, Responsibility, and Justice," *Science and Engineering Ethics* 16 (2010): 431-445. 436, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11948-009-9174-x>.

the diffuse and far-reaching nature of anthropogenic climate change makes us think that we have little responsibility for a problem in which we are all complicit. We need radically new ethical concepts to motivate us to feel responsibility for our contributions to the wicked problem. For instance, most people do not feel guilty when they drive frivolously, and so we need extension and revision of our value systems.

Similarly, the Covid-19 wicked problem applies to everyone trying to navigate the strange new world, uncertain of the effects of their behavior, including Mark, public health officials, policymakers, and social-distancers. Our accepted values systems give us no easy answers. Like climate change, the pandemic is a fundamental challenge to our moral values and feelings of moral agency. If someone chooses to do her best to reduce her emissions, or socially distance, she is undermined by people free-riding on her efforts. If a local government decides to implement strict social distancing guidelines, their efforts may be thwarted by the looser guidelines elsewhere, undermining their efforts. Or, their efforts are undermined by the longer-term social and economic costs of implementing those guidelines.

To be clear, there are important differences between the Plenty-Coups example, climate change, and the Covid-19 pandemic. The level of devastation is different, and it applies differently to individuals in different positionalities. The Crow suffered cultural genocide and erasure, which was truly devastating. Some members of the current generation suffer devastating blows to their culture as a result of anthropogenic climate change, such as when communities burn to the ground or sink into the ocean, or when communities take drastic measures to adapt to the harms of climate change. Although many, especially the economically privileged, are insulated from the harms of climate change, there is still a devastating threat of collapse for members in the more vulnerable pockets. Similarly, many were able to survive the pandemic with very small changes to their daily lives and culture. For example, many affluent people were able to satisfy social distancing protocols by working remotely, Zooming into an online workplace. But even the lucky may feel on the cusp of disaster.

While things may feel secure for many, the diffuse impacts of the pandemic reverberate widely. Consider how this structural wickedness challenges faculty working in professional philosophy. The powerlessness one feels to address public health is similar to what she might feel addressing professional health of the discipline of philosophy. Most in higher education have received scary emails from upper administration about Covid-19 budget concerns. Any job-seeker knows that the job market will be historically brutal, as an unprecedented number of insti-

tutions announce hiring freezes.¹² Meanwhile, university administrators are cutting funding to philosophy departments, or cutting programs altogether, and the space for philosophy in higher education continues to recede. What can one do to support her academic discipline? Recently, a petition for academic solidarity, in which established philosophers pledge to decline invitations for “speaking engagements, workshops, and conferences,” during 2020-2021 academic year, from institutions that fail to support non-tenure-track faculty and graduate students, has received much attention in the philosophy blogosphere.¹³

In the blog post comments, philosophers are quick to offer a plethora of concerns: that supporting other philosophers might come at the cost of supporting more vulnerable employees, that grad students and non-tenure-track faculty may be better off leaving academia for safer job prospects, that the institutions impacted by this petition would likely be the poorest, that established faculty are “virtue signaling” with an empty gesture (of non-participation in events that are unlikely to occur), and that many departments and institutions are making understandably tough decisions just to stay open. Even the most powerful in the field likely feel disempowered at the prospects of addressing the pandemic’s fallout on academic philosophy. Attempts to address one dimension of the problem come with moral costs elsewhere, for example, despite noble intentions, declining a speaking engagement from a struggling philosophy department may hurt that department and real philosophers working in that department. Like climate change, the pervasiveness of the wicked problem is inescapable, even if the devastation does not feel immediate. Even if there are important dis-analogies between climate change and the pandemic, the analogy is useful for thinking about how to address pandemic. Our dominant ways of thinking about our values fall short of guidance and therefore we need to develop our moral imaginations to feel empowered.

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12. Colleen Flaherty, “Scores of Colleges Announce Faculty Hiring Freezes in Response to Coronavirus,” *Inside Higher Education* (April 1, 2020), <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/04/01/scores-colleges-announce-faculty-hiring-freezes-response-coronavirus>.
 13. See Brian Leiter, “Statement of Academic Solidarity” *Leiter Reports: A Philosophy Blog* (April 29, 2020), <https://leiterreports.typepad.com/blog/2020/04/statement-of-academic-solidarity.html>. Also see Justin Weinberg, “Scholars Threaten Boycott in Solidarity with Graduate Students & Non-Tenure-Track Faculty,” *Daily Nous: News for and about the Philosophy Profession* (April 29, 2020), <https://dailynous.com/2020/04/29/scholars-threaten-boycott-solidarity-graduate-students-non-tenure-track-faculty/>.

Radically Hopeful Thinking¹⁴

According to Aristotle, tragedy inspires in us feelings of pity and fear.¹⁵ He claims that we pity others, and fear for ourselves.¹⁶ We pity Priam and Plenty-Coups, and fear losses to our own lives. Academic philosophers may pity those who have fallen ill and lost their jobs due to Covid-19, and fear that those tragedies for themselves. Aristotle describes fear (*phobos*) as an expectation of something bad, which can include bad reputation, poverty, illness, friendlessness, and death.¹⁷ For many, the pandemic has already taken many of the things Aristotle has in mind, and everyone is in danger of such losses. Although fear is a rationally justified response to our risk of loss, an Aristotelian approach to virtue ethics is useful for negotiating the proper balance between too much and too little fear about our uncertain future in the pandemic.

On Aristotle's doctrine of the mean, the proper disposition is the mean state between extremes of excess and deficiency.¹⁸ It requires being rightly disposed toward many different features of a given situation: being rightly disposed to think, act and feel in the right way, at the right times, toward the right people, and so on.¹⁹ One can feel an excess or defect of fear with respect to any of these parameters, fearing too much (or little), too often (or seldom), fearing the wrong people (or not fearing the right people), and so on. The virtuous person develops a skill of "moral perception" to the salient features of her environment, to help her discern the mean state.²⁰ Courage is the moral virtue for addressing the proper balance of fear and

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14. The tripartite distinction between Stoic, Aristotelian, and Consequentialist theories of virtue draws from Benjamin Hole, "Radical Virtue and Climate Action," *Environmental Ethics* (2021, Online First), <https://doi.org/10.5840/enviroethics202142718>.
 15. Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Anthony Kenny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1449b21–29.
 16. Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, trans. Robin Waterfield, eds. Harvey Yunis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1382b26, 1386a2.
 17. Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. William David Ross, eds. John Lloyd Ackrill and James Opie Urmsion (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 1115a9–11.
 18. *Ibid.*, II.6.1106b25–26.
 19. *Ibid.*, II.6.1106b20–24.
 20. See Martha Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 37. Also see Benjamin Hole, "Aristotle's Account of Moral Perception (EN.VI.8) & Nussbaum's Priority of the Particular Thesis," *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*, The Good in Ancient Philosophy: Contemporary Retrievals, 2021, Vol. 77 (1): 357–380, DOI.10.17990/RPF/2021_77_1_0357.

confidence in ordinary cases of risk and danger.²¹ The virtuous person aims for the mean state, since both extremes of fear are undesirable. On one hand, Stoic indifference to fear encourages fatalistic resignation. It is tempting to reorient one's focus to whatever can be controlled within quarantine, ignoring the enormity of what is outside of one's control. On the other, an excess of fear encourages another kind of complacency. Sitting in quarantine, thinking of all of the things that could go wrong with any strategy one comes up with for addressing different aspects of the wicked problem is more likely to paralyze than galvanize action.

In ordinary cases of courage, there is a clear notion of success from which we can assess our fears of failure. For example, when a hero risks her life to save someone's life, that saving is a valuable aim against which she can weigh the risk to her own life. She assesses the risk in terms of the likelihood of success, and decides to overcome her fear to achieve an admirable goal. By contrast, an excess or deficit of fear would fall short of moral virtue, say, if she were unable to overcome her fear of a negligible risk, or if she ignored fear of great risk and acted recklessly.

Radical hope is a novel form of courage that arises in cases of tragedy, such as cultural devastation, where the aim of virtue is uncertain. Courage for addressing the wickedness of the pandemic must be radically hopeful in overcoming the uncertainty of its aim. For one, the aim is uncertain in that one's conception of living well (*eudaimonia*) is uncertain. The shape of human flourishing is liable to change in the new normal. For another, the aim is uncertain in that one's sense of moral agency feels diminished. Unlike ordinary hope, where it is easy to see the aim, radical hope requires imagination and creativity.

Recall uncertainty in the Plenty-Coups example. Cultural devastation undermined the meaning of Crow lives and, from that position, Plenty-Coups had little reason to believe that he could change the course of history for his people. He revised and extended his conception of courage, and found new opportunities for the Crow to live meaningful lives. Lear reconstructs his deliberative process:

We certainly know that we cannot face the future in the same way that we have been doing ... We must do what we can to open our imaginations up to a radically different set of future possibilities... If I am going to go on living, I need to be able to see a genuine, positive, and honorable way of

21. Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. William David Ross, eds. John Lloyd Ackrill and James Opie Urmson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), III.1.

going forward. So on the one hand, I need to recognize the discontinuity that is upon me – like it or not there will be a radical shift in form of life. On the other, I need to preserve some integrity across that discontinuity ... My commitment to goodness is manifested in my commitment to an idea that something good will emerge even if it outstrips my present limited capacity for understanding what that good is.²²

Searching for new opportunities for virtuous activity in unfamiliar circumstances allows for revision of virtue theoretical concepts, which, in turn, allows for revision of one's conception of living well. In the context of cultural genocide, there was no room for the old expression of Crow courage, coup counting, the Plains indigenous peoples' tradition of earning stature in battle. When the Crow conception courage was lost, Plenty-Coups used his "inner resources" to "thin-out" the old conception of courage, and find new parts to replace the old.²³ He employed radical hope in overcoming his fear of the unbidden, conquering despair, and striving toward a vision of living well in the new normal of the US reservation system. Like Dickinson's grief of Cold, we can describe the fear of uncertainty we feel in response to the pandemic as a deficit in hope, where we lack a vision of how things might look on the other side of the tragedy.

In response to tragic loss and uncertain future, there are two extremes for responding, and an Aristotelian mean approach helps one find the proper balance. Consider another stage to Mark's story. He struggles to be optimistic, but still hopes that he will get his old job back, so he can spend the year saving money and studying languages, and then go backpacking around the world during the summer of 2021. His old conception of his life well lived has always involved being a teacher and traveling the world. For this to come to fruition, a number of things would have to happen, such as schools reopening, some economic and political stability returning, developments in international travel, and so on. In historical and contemporary virtue ethics, the notion of external success is of great importance for the structure of the theory. Does Mark's hope depend on his success? Three answers to this question underlie three models for a theory of virtue: a Stoic extreme, a consequentialist extreme, and an Aristotelian mean.

According to the Stoic model, whether Mark succeeds in reaching his hopes has no bearing on his virtue. Virtue consists entirely in an excellent

22. Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 93.

23. *Ibid.*, 65.

application of his practical wisdom. Despite his best efforts, whether Mark succeeds or fails is ultimately outside of his power of control. By way of analogy, imagine the virtuous person, whose courage disposes her to save a child; for a Stoic, she would remain courageous even if she fails to save the child. The appeal of this theory of virtue is conciliatory in that living a meaningful life does not depend on success. There is much to say in favor of this model of virtue, especially for individuals feeling disempowered by the pandemic. So many things that people felt important for happiness have been taken away, such as going out to dinner, enjoying concerts and professional sports, feeling secure in one's ability to pay rent and support oneself, and so on. A Stoic approach is helpful because it helps is reorient what we value away from what the pandemic has stolen, and towards whatever is in our power of control. For example, social distancers in quarantine might find meaning in gardening and home-improvement projects, and a sense of relief surrendering investment in external success.

Although helpful, Stoicism limits advice for living well. It advises people to do their bests in unfavorable circumstances, but has little to say about improving them. To be clear, a Stoic can value matters of external success, but those cares are not part of his moral virtue. It is rational to prefer health over illness, and life over death, but those preferences for "natural advantage" are indifferent with respect to moral virtue. External success is neither good nor bad, but indifferent: virtue is rationally "chosen" and preferred indifferents are naturally "selected" or "preferred" based on their natural advantage.²⁴ Although a Stoic would prefer health over Covid-19, for example, that preference is indifferent with respect to her ability to be virtuous and live well. The pursuit of health is not part of the Stoic's virtuous aims. During the pandemic, a Stoic might advise to hunker down and weather the storm by suffering its consequences, as this too shall pass. A Stoic would find a meaningful life in quarantine, exercising her power of choice, while unemployed and impoverished, instead of identifying her happiness in factors outside of her control.

On the consequentialist model, virtue consists in producing good consequences systematically. This theory supplements ordinary consequentialism, not eudaimonism. Whether Mark flourishes does not matter. All that matters for his virtue is that the hopeful disposition would tend to produce good consequences. By way of example, a proponent of consequentialist virtue would claim that certain forms of impulsive courage

24. Marcus Tully Cicero, *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, trans. H. Rackham (London: W. Heinemann, 1931), III.51-2.

can be virtues, say, dispositions soldiers might have to jump on a grenade to save others. In climate ethics, Jamieson appropriates Julia Driver's consequentialist theory of virtue.²⁵ He argues that consequentialists should reject consequentialism in favor of a consequentialist theory of virtue, since consequentialist reasoning involves cost-benefit analysis to maximize utility, but, in a wicked problem, this kind of analysis fails to be efficacious.²⁶

There is a body of literature about the shortcomings of consequentialist reasoning in climate ethics, which, Stephen M. Gardiner aptly dubs "cost benefit paralysis."²⁷ His point is that economic analyses available to consequentialist reasoning depend deeply on competing ethical claims, and thus we should not rely on economic analyses solely. Taking it a step further, Benjamin Hale argues that purely consequentialist reasoning is wildly indeterminate with respect to climate action, since the wicked problem is intractable.²⁸ Although Jamieson captures the consequentialist value of a virtue-oriented approach for addressing wicked problems, a purely consequentialist theory of virtue is problematic. When it comes to novel, systemic problems, such as climate change or the pandemic, there is no basis for gauging success in a systemic way. We lack the sample size to ground assessments of reliability. Given our epistemic limitations, it is unclear which character traits are reliably successful. It is possible that a great amount of fear would lead to the best consequences, say, if this fear caused people to avoid one another and reduce the spread of infection. Yet, it is also possible that fearlessness would lead to the best consequences, say, by spreading the infection, and suffering the public health costs, outweighing long-term costs elsewhere. The task of determining which character traits would lead to reliably good consequences succumbs to the wicked problem.

According to the Aristotelian model, practical wisdom and some degree of external success are both necessary for virtue. Virtuous people

25. See Julia Driver, *Uneasy Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511498770>.

26. Dale Jamieson, "When Utilitarians Should Be Virtue Theorists," *Utilitas* 19 (2007): 160-183, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0953820807002452>.

27. See Stephen M. Gardiner, *A Perfect Moral Storm: The Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), Chapter 8, doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195379440.001.0001.

28. See Benjamin Hale, "Right-Leveling Indeterminacy: Environmental Problems, Non-State Actors, and The Global Market" (in *Climate Justice and Non-State Actors: Corporations, Regions, Cities, and Individuals*, eds. Jeremy Moss, Lachlan Umbers. London: Routledge, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429351877-8>.

align their goals of worldly success with their practices of wisdom. This is not to say that for Mark to be virtuous, he must always succeed in achieving his intended goals. The world is outside of his power of control, and so it is possible to be virtuous and fail. According to Aristotle, Priam's virtue was able to "shine through" the tragic sacking of Troy.²⁹ For example, it is possible for someone to be courageous and fail in battle, but this is only possible if his disposition to be courage tends to succeed; otherwise, his disposition might be foolhardy, deficient in fear. Virtue makes Mark and Priam more likely to succeed when facing risk, but in failure, they live better with virtue than they would without.

The point of addressing Stoic and consequentialist alternative frameworks is illustrative, not argumentative. To be clear, I have only addressed two extremes poles to elucidate the Aristotelian mean. While there is much to say about the strengths of the alternatives, the mean between extremes fares the best because it combines the conciliatory goals of the Stoic, to live well through tragedy, with the prescriptive goals of the consequentialist, to address the tragic situation. In the pandemic, radical hope asks us to find happiness with what is in our power of control, even if those areas are receding, and to exercise our moral imaginations to find new ways of being virtuous in those areas.

Conclusion: Lessons

As Rosalind Hursthouse is well-known for arguing, when dominant ethical theories fail to offer useful advice for how to live, virtue ethics helps fill those gaps.³⁰ For example, when someone considers whether to have an abortion, considerations of moral standing and rights will likely fall short, and so she turns to virtue for advice.³¹ Similarly, navigating the ethical messiness of the pandemic requires more than just principles and values. It requires imaginative excellence to live well amidst tragic circumstances. Depending on the old leaves one in the grief of Cold. In a recent online column, Adam Pelsler claims that grace, generosity, and

29. Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. William David Ross, eds. John Lloyd Ackrill and James Opie Urmson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), I.10.

30. See Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), <https://doi.org/10.1093/0199247994.001.0001>.

31. In support of this view, see Rosalind Hursthouse, "Virtue Theory and Abortion," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 20 no. 3 (1991): 223-246.

gratitude are more important than rules, rights, and responsibilities.³² He argues that living virtuously will help social distancers keep their “moral health” and “humanity intact” through the pandemic. For example, when his grocery store is out of an item, due to hoarding, he tells the cashier that he is thankful for the opportunity to try something new. While Pelser’s recommendations are for a non-academic audience, the philosophical takeaways are worthwhile. In two important ways, virtue ethics helps fills in gaps caused by the pandemic.

First, it offers guidance for living life well in diminished circumstances. This reflects the Stoic appeal of the Aristotelian approach, consolation through tragedy. According to Jamieson, “The virtues do not provide an algorithm for solving the problems of the Anthropocene, but they can provide guidance for living gracefully while helping to restore in us a sense of agency.”³³ When Pelser cannot decide what he has for dinner, he finds value in the dinner that is available. When student athletes are unable to participate in intercollegiate sports, they can find value in other activities. When social distancers are quarantined, there is little in their power of choice. Even so, living virtuously is an important part of living well. Take the example of gardening. In environmental ethics, Marcello di Paola describes the practice of gardening as a virtue, a possible strategy for addressing challenges to one’s moral psychology, including hopelessness, feeling overburdened, and feeling disengaged.³⁴ He suggests the practice for its mindfulness, as well as its prospects of making us feel hopeful, and engaging in activities that are not overly demanding. Many took up gardening over the pandemic to satisfy their psychological needs, in addition to their hunger.³⁵ Gardening helps people feel connected to nature, stay attentive to detail, and feel a sense of accomplishment and self-sufficiency, seeing the fruits of their labors. While insignificant in the

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32. Adam Pelser, “Ethics in a Pandemic Age.” *Psychology Today* (March 2020), <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/ethics-everyone/202003/ethics-in-pandemic-age>.
 33. Dale Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time: Why the Struggle Against Climate Change Failed and What It Means for Our Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 8, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199337668.003.0003>.
 34. See Marcello Di Paola, “Environmental Stewardship, Moral Psychology and Gardens,” *Environmental Values* 22, no. 4 (2013), 503-21. doi:10.3197/096327113x13690717320784.
 35. Petra Mayer, “Pandemic Gardens Satisfy a Hunger for More Than Just Good Tomatoes.” *National Public Radio Special Series: The Coronavirus Crisis* (May 9, 2020). <https://www.npr.org/2020/05/09/852441460/pandemic-gardens-satisfy-a-hunger-for-more-than-just-good-tomatoes>.

larger fight against Covid-19, these “victory gardens” were an important “win” for many lives whose conditions were quickly receding. When coup-counting becomes impossible, it is helpful for the Crow to find opportunities to exercise virtue elsewhere, within one’s power of control. When favorable circumstances recede, radical hope asks us to imagine that it is possible to live well with what remains.

Second, it offers guidance for individuals addressing the wicked problem. This reflects the consequentialist appeal of the Aristotelian strategy, prescription to improve circumstances. In the context of climate change, Jamieson claims, “[Virtues] are mechanisms that provide motivation to act in our various roles from consumers to citizens in order to ...” achieve good environmental outcomes “regardless of the behavior of others.”³⁶ Wickedness undermines individual motivation by making efforts seem irrelevant to the big picture. Even if an individual reduces her emissions, others will freeride on her efforts with their consumption. Even if one social distances, people who believe that the pandemic is a hoax will ignore social distancing and spread the infection. Virtue helps motivate people towards good outcomes, even when others free-ride on their efforts. To return to the first chapter of Mark’s pandemic story, while unsure whether his staying home will make a difference, he knows that if he flies to Costa Rica in March, he might spread the infection, and he does not want to be the sort of person who would risk that for personal gain. He thinks that people travelling to celebrate spring break were callous and inconsiderate.

Beyond the avoidance of freeriding, radically hopeful thinking is creative and so offers the guidance fitting of a novel pandemic. Wicked problems ask virtuous people to exercise their imaginations to discover creative solutions that seem impossible at the time. Rather than just avoiding freeriding, Plenty-Coups worked to proactively carve out space for the Crow to live well on the other side of the tragedy.

Consider one last chapter of Mark’s story. With fewer activities to occupy his time, he reorients his focus away from traveling the world, towards doing whatever he can to help people in his community suffering the effects of the pandemic. Current events caused him to let go of what now seems impossible. He now thinks that his earlier hope for things to return to pre-pandemic normal, so he can work and travel, was based

36. Dale Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time: Why the Struggle Against Climate Change Failed and What It Means for Our Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 186, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199337668.003.0003>.

on an old idea of happiness that is unlikely to return, so he searches for new ways. With recent Covid-19 surges in his area, it is looking unlikely that his school will reopen and hire him back at the end of the summer. He realizes that he might have to find a new line of work, but also wants to help people. Most pressing in his mind is the lack of support for the vulnerable students he used to teach. It broke his heart to discover that many depended on free or reduced school lunches for their nutrition, and he knew that moving to fully remote schooling had left them hungry. Since he was already a volunteer at the local food pantry, he spoke to them about spearheading a program to deliver food to hungry students, and has been developing that project.

Mark's pandemic story is an imaginary of radical hope. In many ways, things are worse than they were the previous year: He is still unemployed, barely scraping by on meager savings and odd jobs, and the students are struggling to learn from home, surviving on scarce resources themselves. However, he feels the happiest he has felt since losing his job in March. In some ways, he feels more fulfilled than he used to in his pre-pandemic life, now that he is pushing himself to do things that he would have thought impossible back then. Struggling to navigate his life in the wicked Covid-19 problem has presented new opportunities for living meaningfully. While it was unable to solve everything, the warmth of radically hopeful thinking helped thaw his grief of Cold.

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Covid-19 and our Duty to Die

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Abstract

When considering our own death, we normally weigh its impact on the people we love and care about, as well as worrying about the way in which our life might end, hoping that not too much suffering precedes it. However, such view, despite necessary, is a passive understanding of death, interpreted as something that merely happens to us, where we would have some control over timing if physician-assisted dying were legal in our countries. But what if our relation to death would not end there? What if special medical needs, such as the emergency situation resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, could have a direct impact on us creating a moral duty to end our lives? That is the thesis that will be advocated for in this paper: a moral duty to die will arise in some people to save resources that will help others get through Covid-19. It is important to indicate that the duty to die is personally acknowledged and self-imposed, thus nobody can be *coerced* to carry it out; for autonomy would be lost and such action should be considered an instance of incitement to die, therefore being morally blameworthy.

Keywords: bioethics, Covid-19, death, duty to die, meaning in life, pandemic, SARS-CoV-2.

1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly altered, and in many cases shattered, our reality and our understanding of it. Similarly, the diverse ways on which we went on living have been modified, sometimes unreflectingly. The experienced upheaval has obliged plenty of people to think about their life projects, expectations, and lifestyles; probably as the result of spending more time alone and free from many jobs' responsibilities than they normally had as part of their routines. Leaving aside further examinations on the socio-political labour alienation that could be inferred from the pandemic, it seems obvious that people have had the opportunity to spare some time reflecting. Inevitably, with the high numbers of deaths sweeping away any other news' headings, a sizeable portion of that thinking time was closely related to death issues, e.g., considerations about the way

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in which people were dying, reflections on our own mortality... Despite how easily we forget about it, we are finite beings, our lifetime is not limitless, and we must carefully acknowledge that fact.

When considering our own death, we normally weigh its impact on the people we love and care about, as well as worrying about the way in which our life might end, hoping that not too much suffering precedes it. However, such view, despite necessary, is a passive understanding of death, interpreted as something that merely happens to us, where we would have some control over timing if physician-assisted dying were legal in our countries. But what if our relation to death would not end there? What if special medical needs, such as the emergency situation resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, could have a direct impact on us creating a moral duty to end our lives? That is the thesis that will be advocated for in this paper: a moral duty to die will arise in some people to save resources that will help others get through Covid-19. It is important to indicate that the duty to die is personally acknowledged and self-imposed, thus nobody can be *coerced* to carry it out; for autonomy would be lost and such action should be considered an instance of incitement to die, therefore being morally blameworthy.

The paper starts with an analysis of the duty to die, presenting the societal and medical context that makes it possible to arise, offering a definition of it, and finally gathering three different arguments to defend its moral acceptability. Secondly, the relations between the Covid-19 pandemic and the duty to die are thoroughly examined, arguing in defence of the moral importance of recognising the later to save resources that could be more aptly reallocated to help other patients, resulting in an increase of their survival opportunities, together with a more positive prognosis and recovery. Finally, different perspectives on how the acknowledgment of the duty to die could shape the meaning we ascribe to our lives, and deaths, will be presented.

2. Our duty to die

2.1. Medicalization of death

Our mortal condition has always been the eternal, unescapable companion, and fate of human beings since the beginning of their existence¹.

1. Reflections on the philosophical problem of death can be traced back to Epicurus, on his attempt to explain why it should not be feared. [‘Letter to Menoeceus’, in *The*

As a result, diverse ways of facing, fighting and, finally, accepting death have existed in different societies along the passage of time. Contemporary western societies are currently facing the challenge of providing successful answers to a new shift in the way of dying. The irruption of advanced technologies employed in medicine and the improvement of the efficiency of treatments, which together convey the ability to postpone the moment of death and transform the waiting time before it into a more comfortable one, have shaped a characteristic new way of dying². Nowadays, death is more likely to happen after a prolonged period of physical and mental debilitation, where our life is gradually fading away until its final disappearance. This shift from a more traditional conception of death, typically defined and socially understood as unexpected, quick, and coming too soon, in most cases, imply the appearance of a corresponding new fear of death: the fear of dying too late and after the endurance of an unnecessary extended period of suffering (regardless of it being psychological or physical)³. This change has taken place in such a brief period of time that cultural adjustment has not been feasible; in other words, society is still incapable of a profound understanding of this new way of dying, its consequences, and its direct impact on the different spheres of life.

Essential Epicurus: Letters, Principal Doctrines, Vatican Sayings, and Fragments, ed. Eugene Michael O'Connor (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1993)]. For a current discussion on death and whether it shall be deemed as an evil, cf. Stephen E. Rosenbaum, 'Epicurus and Annihilation', in *The Metaphysics of Death*, ed. John Martin Fischer (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Stephen E. Rosenbaum, 'How to Be Dead and Not Care: A Defense of Epicurus', in *The Metaphysics of Death*, ed. John Martin Fischer (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); J. David Velleman, 'Well-Being and Time', in *The Metaphysics of Death*, ed. John Martin Fischer (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Thomas Nagel, *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); George Pitcher, 'The Misfortunes of the Dead', in *The Metaphysics of Death*, ed. John Martin Fischer (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Joel Feinberg, 'Harm to Others', in *The Metaphysics of Death*, ed. John Martin Fischer (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

2. John Hardwig, 'Going to Meet Death: The Art of Dying in the Early Part of the Twenty-First Century', *Hastings Center Report* 39, no. 4 (2009): 37–45.
3. There are different approaches to what a good death means and implies in the new context of dying. However, there seems to be consensus on the relevance that autonomy and the inclusion of dying in a life narrative, to help find meaning in death, have for persons to consider their process of dying good. Cf. Geoffrey Scarre, 'Can There Be a Good Death?', *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice*, 2012; Jeff McMahan, 'Death and the Value of Life', in *The Metaphysics of Death*, ed. John Martin Fischer (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Marian A. Verkerk, 'Towards Responsive Knowing in Matters of Life and Death', in *The Patient's Wish to Die*, ed. Christoph Rehmann-Sutter, Heike Gudat, and Kathrin Ohnsorge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 139–48; Ezekiel J. Emanuel and Linda L. Emanuel, 'The Promise of a Good Death', *Lancet* 351, no. SUPPL.2 (1998).

Western societies' response to this alteration in the traditional conception of death can be synthesized in the idea of the 'medicalization of death'⁴. Death, both as a process and as a well-delimited moment, has progressively abandoned the premises of our homes to move into the more aseptic atmosphere of hospital rooms. Its new location, a place where death can be almost *treated*, as if it were a disease, implicates direct consequences both to the dying person and to those around them. In first place, the person facing death within a medicalized context often tries to postpone it, in a gambling attempt and effort to get as close as possible to the dividing line beyond which treatment is futile before its cessation; this is the idea of technological brinkmanship proposed by Callahan⁵. The difficulty to clearly draw a defining line between life and death, in terms of where and when we must establish it, includes numerous tough decisions and moral perils when considering the different options at hand to escape from an unnecessarily delayed death. Similarly, a medicalized death lacks its personal traits, it is a type of death snatched from the subject and turned into an object of medical analysis and scrutiny. This new layout makes us forget the human tasks of dying⁶: the wisdom to recognise and accept that our life is over; the skill of wrapping up and get ready for the end; and the ability to make peace with our past. Secondly, the medicalization of death profoundly affects those around the dying person, their loved ones. On one side, families are burdened by the costs of treatments and the emotional impact this belated death has on them⁷. On the other side, considering the big picture, society is also affected to the extent that it must decide on the difficult moral task of what lives are worth preserving⁸, which will inevitably affect the medical profession, for physicians will have to decide when to save a life or let a person die.

As the result of the previously mentioned changes, both the medicalization of death and the excessive costs of new treatments and technol-

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4. John Hardwig, 'Medicalization and Death', *APA Newsletters on Philosophy and Medicine* 6, no. 1 (2006): 2–9.
 5. *The Troubled Dream of Life: Living with Mortality* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1993), chap. 1.
 6. Hardwig, 'Medicalization and Death'.
 7. Cf. Lara Pivodic et al., 'Burden on Family Carers and Care-Related Financial Strain at the End of Life: A Cross-National Population-Based Study', *European Journal of Public Health* 24, no. 5 (2013): 819–26, <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/cku026>.
 8. Needless to say, that will not happen on a case-by-case basis, but as the result of discussing and deciding about the allocation of resources and the investment in healthcare.

ogies employed for them, societies are not prepared to confront the new economic challenges presented upon them. Assuming the right to a decent minimum of health care as an unquestionable and defining characteristic of Western societies⁹, the problem of a just allocation of scarce resources remains as one of the biggest ordeals to solve. Bearing in mind the principle of justice within the field of bioethics, and considering the factual budget limitations, priorities must be clearly established about determining what ought to be done when resources are inadequate to provide all the health care benefits that is technically possible to provide¹⁰. Different responses have been offered regarding the fairer method to allocate resources justly; some argue for a rationing by age¹¹, whereas others regard as more appropriate to also consider the high costs of some treatments as a determining factor¹². Both approaches will be properly discussed and examined below.

Due to this described new way of dying, learning how to die becomes one of the most important tasks of our times. The shift from a death that would usually come too soon and unexpectedly, before most of our life goals and expectations could be fulfilled and/or successfully achieved, into a death that comes too late and after an unnecessarily prolonged period of suffering in most cases, has generated a widespread fear of the later. Within this context, the idea that death may often be worth pursuing, or at least peacefully embraced, gains strength and becomes a powerful tool to face and overcome the widespread fear of a late dying.

I advocate for Hardwig's¹³ decision to use the language of art to talk about '*the art of dying*', understood as the ability to pursue and accept death prior to entering the feared process of dying too late. The main elements in this '*art of dying*' are wisdom, skill, and prudential virtues, which together function to determine the key factors to unfold our desired way of exiting our existence. The first element to consider is the acknowl-

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9. Further discussion could be offered regarding the appropriateness of including the US among those countries, and whether Medicare and Medicaid initiatives aim to and effectively provide a decent minimum of healthcare for the American citizenship. However, that will not affect how our argument unfolds, and it should be addressed on a different paper.
 10. Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, 7th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), chap. 7.
 11. See Norman Daniels, *Just Health: Meeting Health Needs Fairly*, *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, vol. 86 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)..
 12. See Margaret Pabst Battin, *The Least Worst Death* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), chap. 3..
 13. 'Going to Meet Death: The Art of Dying in the Early Part of the Twenty-First Century'.

edgement of one's life trajectory, the various stages a person has lived, endured, enjoyed... throughout their lives, identifying difficulties, success, and failure, reflecting on every and each of them, and their individual contribution to the whole. When doing so, the remembrance of our past will unveil many events that we may regret, thus bringing life to an end will require from us self-forgiveness regarding those past incidents where our actions could have been different. Secondly, but closely related to the earlier one, there is the acceptance of death, the recognition that our life is finite, and it will necessarily end. Finally, interwoven with the other two, there is the relevance of timing. The subject will need to wisely and skilfully identify the right moment for their death, were the recognition of their life's trajectory and the meaning of events within it will play a crucial role to ascertain the adequate time to die. It is also worth mentioning the interpersonal dimension of the art of dying. Our decision will affect our family and loved ones, thus it must be made considering them as key elements within our lives, so we must prepare them for our deaths as well.

Although the relations between the duty to die and the Covid-19 pandemic will be discussed below, it is important to highlight the existing junctions concerning the described new way of dying, the existence of a moral duty to die, and the likeliness of the later within the Covid-19 pandemic. The high infectiousness of Covid-19 turned it into a quickly spreadable disease that suddenly took healthcare resources of countries to reach their limits. Accommodation to the unexpected situation was impossible, and healthcare professionals needed to decide how to employ the limited available resources, in other words, they had to choose whom to save and why. Likewise, many among the affected elderly felt that a moral obligation to die so others, youths or other people with higher needs and impact for society, could survive. They acknowledged that their lives had come to an end and sought to find meaning in their deaths by helping others who needed it more¹⁴.

2.2. Definition

The notion of a duty to die first appeared, although not explicitly coined as a duty, in *Death: right or duty?* by Lamm¹⁵. His argument started with the consideration that there was (and there still is) a concentration

14. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for indicating the relevance of these connections and the importance to mention them earlier in the paper.

15. 'Death: Right or Duty?', *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics*, no. 6 (1997): 111–12.

of health care resources on the sickest 1%, whereas other people are going without primary basic health care and kids without vaccinations. Lamm considers that framing the discussion around death in terms of ‘rights’ entails a misunderstanding in our perception and beliefs about the impact that our decision has in society. Believing that death is a right, or merely an option that we can postpone if we wish, creates in us the irrational fiction that we can spend as much government or insurance money as we want to delay it. This misinterpretation of our present healthcare context results in the high expenditure of resources and money on the elder generation at the expense of the next one. In Lamm’s words, “*our aging bodies can bankrupt our children and grandchildren*”¹⁶.

The philosophical problem that appears behind Lamm’s reflection is clear: in a context where resources are scarce, a reduced percentage of very sick people are concentrating most of them, whereas a more just distribution of those same resources could be implemented to improve and lengthen other people’s lives. Among the many plausible causes for this situation, people’s belief that they can prolong their lives as much as they wish – regardless of the bigger societal picture – is one of the most relevant. Hence the proposal of a duty to die. A duty to accept that our lives necessarily and irremediably end, the responsibility to assimilate that irrationally clinging to it will only cause unjust procedures in the (re)allocation of resources, affecting others negatively. The duty to die is, therefore, a personal duty where an autonomous patient accepts her death, or even hastens it, and morally recognises that her dying is necessary to help others live better and longer. Timing is one of the duty to die key characteristics. For, the recognition of our personal duty to die does not imply that our death should necessarily come earlier than we would have otherwise wanted; but it creates in us the need to reflect carefully and consider when the right time for our own dying would be. Thorough consideration of our lives, past and present, is required to elucidate the reasons underlying and supporting the right timing for one’s own death.

2.3. *Arguments on societal responsibilities.*

Once an initial understanding of the duty to die and the context where it emerges has been obtained, arguments to defend the existence and appearance of such duty in specific situations must be offered. Three

16. Ibid., 112.

alternatives will be examined, each of them sufficient to defend and morally support the existence of a duty to die. First, the most conservative approach to such duty will be explained, understood as the passive obligation to die inexpensively. Second, an examination of two bioethical imperatives in the healthcare context – the right of a decent minimum of healthcare and the necessity to allocate resources justly – will be addressed to morally advocate for the duty to die. Finally, the duty to die can also be defended from a contractarian perspective, where people would accept their responsibility to die in a hypothetical Rawlsian's veil of ignorance situation. All three perspectives share a core moral intuition: there are times when embracing our death, either passively or by a hastening procedure, becomes our responsibility, our duty. Justification can be found in saving other people's lives or helping them significantly improve their medical condition and prognosis.

i) A passive duty to die

The idea of a '*passive duty*' to die was first introduced by Callahan¹⁷ and finds its underlying justification in a societal context, where resources are scarce and limited. For Callahan, then, the passive duty to die consists in finding the way to a low cost, non-technological death. His assumption is that no culture can allow healthcare to pre-empt all other societal needs totally; doing so would be morally wrong and blameworthy. However, the most common way of dying in Western societies nowadays is that of an extended period of time where unlimited money and resources are thrown to delay the process of dying, which sometimes conducts unnecessary suffering and wait for the unavoidable outcome.

Despite what could be initially thought, Callahan is quite conservative when considering the appropriateness of death and, thus, of the duty to die. For, death would be only considered acceptable when further efforts would be likely to deform the process of dying, and when there is a good fit between the inevitability of death and the timing and circumstances of that death in the life of the individual. That is, only when further treatment is futile based on the patient's prognosis, and death comes at the right time for that person, can one have a duty to die by withholding or withdrawing treatment. It is worth mentioning that Callahan does not consider active steps towards the end of a patient's life.

17. *The Troubled Dream of Life: Living with Mortality.*

A similar argument is defended by Ehman¹⁸ and Menzel¹⁹. For the first, the duty to die in medical contexts is a duty not to accept, claim or purchase medical care necessary to prolong our lives. For the second, the duty to die is a duty to let death come relatively cheaply, by no active means. Evidently, the emphasis in these notions of a duty to die does not lie on the duty to die itself, but on the idea of a passive dying; for, there are no reasons presented to defend the motives that could create such a duty in someone, e.g., by allowing others to better use the saved treatment resources. The focus seems to be on the idea of dying by passive means, so their contribution to our insight is relevant in those scenarios where the duty to die arises in a context of economic scarcity of resources and one has a duty to die in order not to pre-empt all other societal goods – that is, to the extent they align with Callahan’s argument²⁰.

ii) *Decent minimum of health care and just distribution of scarce resources*

A second approach to the duty to die, much sounder in the bioethical field, can be defended from the principle of justice and two interrelated perspectives within it: 1) the right to a decent minimum of health care²¹; and 2) the just allocation of scarce resources²². However, our moral responsibility to die arises due to the socioeconomic situation and context of our health care system. Here, the duty to die is a duty towards others, a duty that appears when acknowledging how unfair it would be to expect our health care system to provide limitless resources and money to treat us, whereas others in higher need would be deprived of a fairer allocation of resources for them. But one could ask, what is the moral relevance of health? To justify its importance, we need to extend the principle of justice outside the context of medicine. The main idea is that meeting health needs protects opportunity²³. Our health needs are required to maintain,

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18. ‘The Duty to Die: A Contractarian Approach’, in *Is There a Duty to Die?*, ed. James M. Humber and Robert F. Almeder (New Jersey: Humana Press, 2000), 221.
 19. ‘The Nature, Scope, and Implications of a Personal Duty to Die’, in *Is There a Duty to Die?*, ed. James M. Humber and Robert F. Almeder (New Jersey: Humana Press, 2000), 221.
 20. However, Ehman also proposes a contractarian approach that will be examined later.
 21. Allen Buchanan, ‘The Right to a Decent Minimum of Health Care’, *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 13, no. 1 (1984): 55–78.
 22. Margaret Pabst Battin, *Ending Life: Ethics and the Way We Die* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), chap. 14.
 23. Daniels, *Just Health: Meeting Health Needs Fairly*, vol. 86, chap. 2.

provide, and restore functional equivalents to normal species functioning. Thus, giving us a ‘normal opportunity range’ within which an array of life plans – that reasonable people are likely to choose for themselves – could be developed²⁴.

The argument to defend the duty to die from this view is two-folded.

It needs, on the one side, to explain what the implications of recognising a right to a decent minimum of health care are. Buchanan²⁵ points to four key features of this right. First, the right of a decent minimum of health care is a right in the strong sense, not a mere ought judgement. When saying that, we mean that if a person A is entitled to X, i.e., A has the right to X, X is due to A. The X in our context is a decent minimum of health care. A second characteristic of this right is its enforceability. By that, Buchanan means that we are all equally compelled to comply with the right, and societies must guarantee that everybody receives such a decent minimum of healthcare. Thirdly, and probably the most problematic, valid right-claims for health care trump appeals to maximization of utility. Thus, we could not speak of improvement of treatment for a few on utilitarian grounds when the number of resources used to achieve that would cause a failure to provide decent minimum care and/or treatment for others. Only when this right is guaranteed, utilitarian moral weighing could be considered. Finally, and based on what has been just explained, this right is universal.

On the other hand, once that right has been safeguarded, we need to provide a just way of allocating resources when those are limited and scarce. That ought to be done, following Battin²⁶, by allocating more resources in the initial stages of life to guarantee a higher life expectancy and quality of life for most. Thus, when reaching our last stages of life, the duty to die might well be justified by others’ needs to enjoy the same goods in life we have already experienced. It is important to note an underlying assumption for the duty to die and the allocation of resources to be effective, that is, there ought to exist redistributive mechanisms that effectively move the saved resources to a place where its use would be efficient. Similarly, the institutions need to be capable of accomplishing such an enterprise.

24. Ibid.

25. ‘The Right to a Decent Minimum of Health Care’.

26. *Ending Life: Ethics and the Way We Die*, chap. 14.

Yet, the way of distributing and allocating those scarce resources, and the justification to do so, raises reasonable questions about the manner in which it would be conducted. Battin²⁷ and Daniels²⁸ have both advocated for age-rationing to defend the just allocation of resources. Battin's argument sustains that the treatment elder people require is commonly the most expensive and it would only serve to prolong a life of poor quality, which is also likely to be short when compared to the time left for younger generations –who would more efficiently enjoy the benefits of allocating resources at those stages of life. Besides that, the elderly has already lived full lifespans and claimed a fair share of societal resources. Daniel's justification is based on what he calls the 'prudential lifespan account'. The main feature of this account is the protection of the normal functioning (health needs) at every stage of life and within an age-relative normal opportunity range. Our needs vary from one life stage to the next one and so do our opportunities; thus, we need institutions which can protect us and respond to these changes. That is the justification to defend the unequal treatment at various stages of life. Finally, it is necessary to state the main objective of both defences of age-rationing, for they seek the maximization of the chances to reach a normal life expectancy and enjoying an appropriate good health throughout the process.

The recognition of a duty to die in this context would play a significant role to improve the overall situation of a just resource allocation. One must accept, when the time comes, that it is immoral to use resources limitlessly to postpone an already known death. In other words, one has a duty to die in situations when, while awaiting death due to a terminal illness, their use of resources would deprive someone else of their fair share and thus it would impede that person enjoy an average lifespan.

iii) Contractarian approach to the duty to die

On a still new perspective, Ehman²⁹ approaches the idea of a duty to die focusing on the hypothetical consent that moral agents would give to the duty to die, proven its rational acceptability on a societal level. He starts by rejecting the idea of a duty to die as presented before. For him, the duty to die cannot be defended on grounds of self-sacrifice that might

27. *The Least Worst Death*, chap. 3.

28. *Just Health: Meeting Health Needs Fairly*, vol. 86, chap. 6.

29. 'The Duty to Die: A Contractarian Approach'.

benefit others significantly. On the contrary, when talking about duties in the moral sense, Ehman assumes that it is always in the rational interest of each agent to accept them. However, ending their own lives to protect others could never be in the rational interest of moral agents. Thus, he denies the moral legitimacy of such duties that require that much from agents. Why would someone do that? It would be completely irrational to accept a duty that imposes a moral weight that does not promise a benefit worth that cost.

Having said that, there is however a situation where the duty to die could be defended, but on different grounds. If we, as individuals, were required to think about the totality of our lifespan and make decisions bearing always in mind this big picture perspective, could we find a moral justifiable situation where the duty to die became acceptable because the benefit provided by it would be worth the cost (i.e., to end our lives) it imposes on us? Under this new light, the duty to die appears as a more rational idea to comply with and consent to. For, when considering the consequences of compliance with the duty to die over the course of one's whole life, an individual could righteously accept the decision-making³⁰ procedures that led to such duty; because it would be on their benefit and interest to accept the restrictions on life-saving medical care as a general practice. Our compliance with the duty to die would increase our survival and the enjoyment of a higher-quality life when considering a life-span perspective; even though it could not be in our particular interest in some cases. Using Rawlsian terminology, it is in the individual's best interest to accept and comply with a duty to die from the veil of ignorance position; because it would guarantee a better overall care and resource destination across different life-stages, increasing our chances to live better and longer, even when that would eventually mean that we, as individuals, could also have to recognise our own duty to die. The costs saved in a moral context where the duty to die is recognised and thoroughly accepted should be used to improve medical care and increase resources in earlier stages of life³¹.

Now, for the duty to die to be morally defensible and accepted on a societal scale, the above-mentioned reallocation of resources must effectively occur. It would be the only guarantee which supports that it is in the

30. Those decisions are made in the context of the invariably scarcity of medical resources, which constrains our capability to decide what the optimal morally right course of action could be.

31. Note the similarities with the argument previously offered in section 3.5.2. regarding the reallocation of resources.

prospective interest of individuals to comply with the principle. It is worth noticing that this second approach presented by Ehman perfectly aligns with the previous arguments defended by Battin and Buchanan, for the moral grounds on which is defended are identical.

3. The Covid-19 pandemic situation and our duty to die

The Covid-19 pandemic stroke us as a medical emergency situation never experienced before in recent times. Its rapid spread together with its novel character significantly worsen the global situation. For, it was a new type of coronavirus for which no effective treatment or a vaccine had yet been developed, and neither scientific knowledge of the virus had been obtained. Healthcare systems were strained due to the limited character of the available resources to provide appropriate care to the unexpected growth of people needing treatment³². Intensive care units were rationed and could not be offered to everyone, even when a high number of patients were suffering the Covid-19 acutest symptoms and the risk of death increased³³. As an unavoidable consequence, many people were barred from receiving treatment that could have improved their condition because it had been previously offered to someone who caught the virus earlier on, maybe when resources were enough to be fairly distributed and thus the situation was not ethically problematic. In a like manner, healthcare professionals were physical and mentally exhausted due to the

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32. Although the focus will be put exclusively on the reallocation of resources from Covid patient who acknowledge their duty to die to other patients who would benefit better from the same treatment, we are aware of the Covid-19 impact on other relevant healthcare procedures, as the treatment of chronic diseases, transplantation, or the earlier diagnosis of cardiopathies. Cf. Guilherme Pessoa-Amorim et al., 'Admission of Patients with STEMI since the Outbreak of the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Survey by the European Society of Cardiology', *European Heart Journal – Quality of Care and Clinical Outcomes* 6, no. 3 (1 July 2020): 210–16, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ehjqcco/qcaa046>; Yogini V Chudasama et al., 'Impact of COVID-19 on Routine Care for Chronic Diseases: A Global Survey of Views from Healthcare Professionals', *Diabetes & Metabolic Syndrome: Clinical Research & Reviews* 14, no. 5 (2020): 965-67, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dsx.2020.06.042>; Daniele Doná et al., "Pediatric Transplantation in Europe during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Early Impact on Activity and Healthcare", *Clinical Transplantation* 34, no. 10 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1111/ctr.14063>. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for bringing my attention to this issue.
 33. Timothy W. Farrell et al., 'Rationing Limited Healthcare Resources in the COVID-19 Era and Beyond: Ethical Considerations Regarding Older Adults', *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* 68, no. 6 (2020): 1143–49, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jgs.16539>.

intense conditions on which their job was being performed. Adding to that, they had to deal with the unavoidable decision to let some people die, which had a significant psychological impact on them³⁴. Finally, there is still another feature of Healthcare Systems worth mentioning for the sake of our argument, that is, the pandemic emergency emphasised the closed character of medical institutions where the allocation of resources occurs³⁵. As a result, all saved, or unemployed, resources could be destined to another person who would benefit from them. For example, if a patient refuses an intensive care bed unit and thus the treatment she would receive, that same unit would be assigned to another Covid-19 patient who also needs it. Contrary to what it could be intuitively thought, resource redistribution and reallocation of resources do not necessarily occur in the described closed ways in “normal” circumstances, i.e., in non-pandemic medical scenarios; sometimes the saved resources could be reallocated to a different medical unit or be saved for future projects.

Once the new medical situation has been adequately depicted, what is the new context's incidence in our moral responsibilities? How ought we to act were we in a position where our treatment decisions might have a direct impact on the lives of others? If we were at the end of our lives and had made peace with the unavoidability of death and its proximity, would we have a responsibility to refuse treatment so others could benefit from it? In other words, would we have a duty to die? An initial objection could be offered to impede our argumentation from the beginning. It can be argued that medical triage is already in place to decide how to (re)allocate and distribute the scarce resources that any specific healthcare setting has. Triage is a medical procedure to decide who would benefit more from a limited set of resources, offering treatment based on the severity of their illness, their likelihood to benefit from it, and the available resources. The procedure becomes especially difficult during medical emergency situations³⁶, where the ethical challenges increase due to a higher number of people in need of help and the impossibility to aid them all, some of which may irremediably die as a result.

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34. Peter E. Wu, Rima Styra, and Wayne L. Gold, 'Mitigating the Psychological Effects of COVID-19 on Health Care Workers', *Cmaj* 192, no. 17 (2020): E459–60, <https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.200519>.
 35. Matthew A. Warner, 'Stop Doing Needless Things! Saving Healthcare Resources During COVID-19 and Beyond', *Journal of General Internal Medicine* 35, no. 7 (2020): 2186–88, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-020-05863-6>.
 36. Cf. Ware G. Kuschner, John B. Pollard, and Stephen C. Ezeji-Okoye, 'Ethical Triage and Scarce Resource Allocation during Public Health Emergencies: Tenets and Procedures.', *Hospital Topics* 85, no. 3 (2007): 16–25, <https://doi.org/10.3200/HTPS.85.3.16-25>.

So, if appropriate and ethically just triage is on place – therefore deciding who receives treatment based on how likely the person is to benefit from it – why would a person have a duty to die in a health emergency context? Our thesis defends that acknowledgment of the existence of a personal duty to die is necessary despite the effective implementation of medical triage, since it would be complementary, facilitating healthcare personnel to make decisions and releasing more medical resources. The underlying moral justification for our thesis rests on the principle of autonomy, central in contemporary bioethics³⁷. The patient's recognition of her duty to die, in other words, her autonomous decision to let herself die, either by rejecting treatment or access to intensive care, or hastening death, where legally permissible, would ease the triage procedures, facilitating the reallocation and redistribution of saved resources, which would thereby be more effectively employed. Triage decision-making is amidst the most challenging procedures in medical settings because the bioethical principle of justice outweighs those normally paramount of respect for autonomy and non-maleficence. Decisions of this kind, especially during emergency situations like the Covid-19 pandemic, irremediably result in patients to whom the necessary treatment that improves their condition will not be provided. That means, failure to respect the autonomy of those patients, and thus the harm caused on them, which could even mean their death, is morally justified based on a more just allocation of those saved resources on others who are more likely to benefit from them.

The above-depicted triage procedure is overly simplified. For there are numerous features and defining characteristics of the patients' condition, available treatment, and patient's prognosis, which must be considered when making decisions regarding who will have access to the available resources and why³⁸. However, the underlying moral justification to apply the bioethical principle of justice³⁹ in those cases remains the same. Then, the incidence of the duty to die here is of a complementary and facilitating character. Autonomously recognising our duty to die, therefore the acceptance that our own life has come to an end, so no further treatment

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37. Cf. R Gillon, 'Ethics Needs Principles--Four Can Encompass the Rest--and Respect for Autonomy Should Be "First among Equals"', *Journal of Medical Ethics* 29, no. 5 (2003): 307–12, <https://doi.org/10.1136/jme.29.5.307>; Beauchamp and Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, chap. 4. Respect for Autonomy.
 38. It became especially difficult due to the novel characteristics of the Covid-19. Cf. R. Jaziri and S. Alnahdi, 'Choosing Which COVID-19 Patient to Save? The Ethical Triage and Rationing Dilemma', *Ethics, Medicine and Public Health* 15 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jemep.2020.100570>.
 39. Cf. Beauchamp and Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, 279–92.

will be required and could be employed to save and/or improve another's lives, would have a major impact on easing the triage procedure, removing alternatives to evaluate and consider. Objectors could argue that we are not merely "removing alternatives", for that is a euphemistic way of referring to our own lives, so the matter should not be so lightly examined. However, extraordinary healthcare emergencies make uncommon moral responsibilities arise, or even become mandatory due to the exceptional character of those same circumstances. Discussion here does not revolve around saving everybody's life. The crucial matter in this kind of moral quandary is to dilucidated who will receive treatment and why, accepting the unavoidability of a worsening condition or the consequence of death for those who will not. Moreover, acknowledgment of those deaths, bearing them as the inevitable outcome of our medical decisions, does not impede our moral justification from being right. In other words, there are good moral reasons to justify the triage decision-making procedure, based on the just allocation of resources and the possibility to save lives by doing so, and the fact that some people will die as a result is not a counterargument. The relevant issue is who will die and why. So, if someone who is among the people who will die has autonomously accepted it, as a result of the recognition of her own duty to die, our moral justification for leaving her out of the resources allocation is more solid.

4. Duty to die and meaning of life (and death)

What is the impact of acknowledging the existence of a personal duty to die in our search for meaning? Would it, or could it, have a positive effect on us? Despite the initial negative response that comes to the mind of many when confronted with such questions, it is worth dwelling thoroughly on the issue and carefully examining some of the arguments presented to justify it. At the end of the section, some remarks will be offered to link general aspects of finding meaning in the acknowledgement of a duty to die to the specificities of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The first argument presents us with the close relation, and direct influence, of recognising the possibility of having a duty to die and how it could help us recovering meaning in death. The argument was first presented by Hardwig⁴⁰ and rests upon three main considerations. On the one side, it affirms our moral agency, for it makes explicit and evident that, even though the end of our lives is near, we still have the opportunity and

40. 'Is There a Duty to Die?', *The Hastings Center Report* 27, no. 2 (1997): 34–42.

can do things for others. The closeness of death does not make our moral responsibilities disappear; quite the opposite, it might become the perfect opportunity to reaffirm ourselves in them, as we had done previously during our lives. This takes us to the second foundation of the argument: the affirmation of connections. The assumption of a duty to die therefore becomes an instance to acknowledge that we are not alone and isolated but live together embedded in a myriad of connections and relationships with others towards whom we have moral responsibilities. Death cannot become an excuse to avoid fulfilling our duties towards them. Quite the contrary, the inevitable approach of death makes it imperative that we accept the new duties emerging from the novel situation, those duties could help us find new meanings in death. Finally, in a moment of history when people tend to isolate themselves and live alone, only establishing few and weak social, familial, and communal interactions and bonds, which weakens our sense of community, death becomes more difficult without the support of a big community which could help the individual find meaning in it. Accepting our duty to die, where and when it appears, then, provides us with the opportunity to die for those we love, to improve their lives as our last life decision.

The second argument is grounded on the idea of coherence. For Churchill⁴¹, the way we die is an opportunity to honour and preserve the self, maintaining coherence with one's life values. At a minimum, for a person whose main life values have been caring for those she loved the acceptance of a duty to die would be to avoid a demeaning or humiliating death; for, it should be the final opportunity to embody the values that one had during her life. Moreover, this coherence would significantly contribute to increase our sense of ownership over our own death. Lastly, in a more positive approach, Churchill argues that this coherence when ending one's life could be understood as a fulfilment of a duty to oneself, i.e., the duty to be coherent with the rest of one's life. As a possible objection to this last idea, it seems dubious to assign the term 'duty' to that necessity of coherence with one's previous life actions. It could be interpreted as too demanding, for the duty to die rests upon our responsibilities towards others, a ground where it can be more solidly defended.

A final argument for establishing a correlation between the duty to die and finding meaning in death (and life) starts from Hardwig characterization of the former. For him, the duty to die is self-recognised, self-im-

41. 'Seeking a Responsible Death', in *Is There a Duty to Die?*, ed. John Hardwig (London: Routledge, 2000).

posed, and self-enforced⁴². Those three features help us understand, following Scarre⁴³, that death is an action and a decision we make, not something that merely happens to us. So, even though we might not fully control the circumstances of our dying, we can substantially influence its meaning. The individual is thus confronted with the possibility of a good death where caring for others would be an appropriate character of the closure of one's own life. In other words, the acceptance of a duty to die provides one's life with a new insight and the opportunity to create or discover new sources of meaning in death.

Whether or not we fully agree with the arguments presented above, not all of them are necessary to accept the existence of a relation between the duty to die and finding meaning in death. To accept the validity and plausibility of just one of them is sufficient for the purpose of our argument to confirm our initial, albeit for many counterintuitive, claim.

The Covid-19 pandemic has become a clear example where the circumstances in which a person might die are not controlled by them, neither by healthcare professionals providing help. However, the way those people accept their death, acknowledging its unavailability and immediacy, will have a direct influence on the meaning it acquires in relation to the rest of their lives. Recognising the existence of their duty to die, justifying it on moral grounds, for their deaths will help others save their lives and/or improve their condition, could underline one's ownership over the process and provide meaning to it. Similarly, there would be people at the end of their lives for which helping others in need of aid, even when dying is the only available alternative to do so, is paramount to maintain coherence with the rest of their previous ethical actions and moral life. Finally, and related to the first of the arguments presented above, the pandemic situation set a situation where an unforeseen strengthening of social relations and caring bonds occurred. People bolstered solidarity as a salient human moral trait, engaging in different actions to help others in need. In this context, the recognition of a duty to die becomes the fundamental action to confirm our solidarity and love towards others, thus affirming the mesh of caring relationships in which we are embedded, and which supports us throughout our lives.

42. *Is There a Duty to Die?* (London: Routledge, 2000), chap. Dying responsibly.

43. 'Can There Be a Good Death?'

5. Conclusion

When first confronted with the existence of a duty to die, people noncritically regard it as an unavoidable obligation to end their life when others, or for that matter society, believe their existence is *worthless*. This approach has been debunked by offering a detailed understanding and an adequate moral definition of the duty to die. The recognition of our duty to die is personal, arising from the autonomous consideration that the time for our death has arrived before we unjustly make a wrong use of societal healthcare resources which could be employed to save others' lives. Needless to say, patients' competence and correct information are also prominent features for the duty to die to be acknowledged. Choosing the right time to die is not to be decided lightly, for it necessarily requires thorough consideration and thought. However, the complexity and seriousness of the matter cannot become an excuse that precludes our moral reasoning from recognising the existence of our duty to die.

Different arguments have been presented to advocate for the duty to die on moral grounds, first offering a general justification of such duty and, later, tailoring the appearance of the duty to die to the specificities of the Covid-19 healthcare emergency. All three arguments share an underlying moral justification based on justice, which is the recognition of situations where it is our responsibility to end our own lives so others can live and enjoy the goods life can still bring upon them. That is not to say that socioeconomic policies to improve the overall welfare of the population shall be disregarded. Public investment in healthcare systems is necessary and morally justifiable to improve the overall quality of life for people; but that defence would require moving to different moral grounds and that is not the topic of the present paper. Besides that, the realistic impossibility to limitlessly fulfil every single person healthcare needs does not have as a direct consequence the total stagnation of invested tax-payers capital in healthcare systems. Moral duties or, for our argument's sake, responsibilities, obligations, arise in specific contexts, i.e., the Covid-19 pandemic, and they need to be carefully considered and weighed to know which the correct decision to make is. However, our duties do not disappear by criticising or hypothesising about different moral scenarios, thus it would be morally blameworthy to escape from our duties by doing so. Finally, a specific argument to defend the impact of the duty to die in the Covid-19 emergency situation has been offered. The acknowledgment of our duty to die would facilitate the resource allocation procedures on more solid

grounds, because people would autonomously decide that their lives have ended, and the saved resources could be employed to save others' lives.

To finish, some reflections on how the duty to die could help finding, or adding, meaning in life and death have been presented. Gaining final autonomy with regards to our own death timing and knowing that our death will surely save others and allow them to enjoy life, as we have previously done, could help us give meaning also to the end of our existence. For, in such circumstances, our death will inevitably imply to bestow life to others.

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Reflexões Existenciais sobre a Pandemia:
Vulnerabilidade, Morte e o Sentido da Vida

*Existential Meditations on the Pandemic:
Vulnerability, Death and the Meaning of Life*

Actitudes culturales ante la enfermedad y la muerte. Perspectivas desde la pandemia global

Cultural Attitudes Towards Illness and Death. Perspectives from the Global Pandemic

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Abstract

In the context of Covid-19 pandemic, this paper reflects on the effects of great epidemics on our cultural attitudes towards illness and death. First, through a parallel between the coronavirus pandemic and the medieval Black Death, I examine the impact of epidemics on our ways of thinking about reality and of responding collectively to the fear of dying. Based on the historical periodization of the different mentalities towards death, formulated by Philippe Ariès, I argue that epidemic phenomena modify the way in which the different cultures conceive and deal with finitude, and how this fact manifests itself in the contemporary society, characterized by the denial of death. I conclude that current pandemic can lead us to a thoughtful reappropriation of our mortality. Second, based on the reflections of American writer Susan Sontag, I analyze the negative impact of military metaphors associated with contagious diseases, and how these metaphors promote our fears and irrational attitudes in the face of crisis. Finally, I show that the emergence of new pathologies, such as coronavirus disease, is generating a conceptual change in medicine that leads to rethinking many of the traditional ideas regarding microorganisms and the infections they cause. I claim that this scientific revolution may contribute to a positive modification in our ways of understanding death and disease, and to the search for a more balanced relationship with the natural environment that also helps prevent future pandemics.

Keywords: attitudes towards death, black death, Covid-19, death denial, ecological microbiology, military metaphors, SARS-CoV-2.

1. Vida y muerte en tiempos de la peste

El estudio de las enfermedades epidémicas de la antigüedad ha suscitado un interés creciente. En principio, develar el origen y los modos de transmisión de infecciones del pasado ayuda a la ciencia a comprender mejor los fenómenos actuales. Pero además, en tiempos de crisis sanitaria global, encontramos que un examen de las creencias, miedos y actitudes culturales de hombres y mujeres de otros tiempos, que también sufrieron el azote de la peste, nos permite reflexionar sobre nuestra propia experiencia de la enfermedad.

En la larga historia de las enfermedades infecciosas, la peor fue sin duda la Peste Negra. Llamamos “Peste Negra” o “Muerte Negra”¹ a la

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epidemia que, entre los años 1347 y 1353, asoló Europa, Oriente Medio, Asia Menor y el norte de África, exterminando más de la mitad de la población mundial.² Lo anterior la convierte en la pandemia más grave de la historia humana. El agente causal de la Muerte Negra fue la bacteria *Yersinia pestis*, transmitida por la pulga de la rata negra, *Xenopsylla cheopis* (y en ocasiones por la *Pulex irritans*, propia de nuestra especie).³ Huyendo de la plaga, miles de personas se desplazaron a través de la geografía llevando las pulgas infectantes en sus ropas y encerres, contribuyendo a la rápida diseminación de la enfermedad. La tragedia se vio favorecida, además, por la hambruna que aquejaba Europa desde comienzos del siglo XIV y que hizo de su población una más susceptible de enfermar y morir.⁴

Aunque sea imposible predecir los efectos a largo plazo de la pandemia que hoy nos afecta, la historia de la peste nos permite constatar que toda gran epidemia genera, como ningún otro fenómeno global, efectos profundos en la sociedad que la padece.⁵

1.1. *El miedo a morir*

Además de sus enormes efectos sobre la vida personal, social y económica, las grandes pestilencias sacuden nuestras creencias más íntimas, especialmente nuestro modo de entender y afrontar la muerte. De acuerdo con el historiador francés Philippe Ariès, el Medioevo se caracterizó por una actitud ante la muerte que él llama *la muerte domada*: la creencia en la vida eterna mitigó el temor a la desaparición física y

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1. A pesar de su popularidad, estas denominaciones parecen deberse a un error en la traducción de la expresión latina *atra mors*, usada en los textos de la época para referirse a la peste. La palabra “*atra*” traduce “negra” pero también “terrible”; esta última parece haber sido la acepción original.
 2. El historiador noruego Ole Benedictow calcula una mortalidad del 60%, y un saldo total aproximado de 50 millones de muertos. Véase: Ole J. Benedictow, *La Peste Negra (1346–1353). La historia completa*, trad. José Luis Gil Aristu (Madrid: Akal, 2011), 607.
 3. Véase: Ann G. Carmichael, “Bubonic Plague,” en *The Cambridge World History of Human Disease*, ed. Kenneth Kiple (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 628–631, <https://doi.org/10.1017/chol9780521332866.083>.
 4. Véase: Henry S. Lucas, “The Great European Famine of 1315, 1316, and 1317,” *Speculum* 5, no. 4 (Octubre 1930), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2848143>.
 5. En su libro *Plagas y pueblos*, William McNeil muestra que detrás de muchos de los grandes acontecimientos de la historia de la humanidad encontramos los efectos de enfermedades epidémicas, cuya repercusión fue muchas veces mayor que la de las decisiones políticas y las confrontaciones bélicas. Véase: William H. McNeill, *Plagas y Pueblos*, trad. Homero Alsina Thevenet (Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno, 1984).

persistió solo el miedo a morir de repente sin haber accedido al sacramento de la confesión⁶. La *mors repentina* era el castigo de los pecadores, mientras el clero y las clases altas, que gozaban de comodidades que les permitían morir de enfermedades crónicas, asumían esta muerte apacible como un premio por su piedad religiosa. Pero con la peste llega la *democratización de la muerte*: la plaga ataca súbitamente a ricos y pobres por igual, poniendo en tela de juicio las jerarquías tradicionales y mostrando la ineficacia de la fe como refugio ante los males del cuerpo⁷. Para Ariès, ello dio origen a una nueva manera de comprender la finitud: *la muerte propia*, característica del hombre renacentista que pierde la certidumbre en la salvación ultraterrena y cultiva la conciencia de su mortalidad.

Con la Peste Negra aparece el “arte macabro”, que muestra imágenes de cuerpos pestilentes o en descomposición y esqueletos que toman posesión de los vivos; iconografías precursoras de las *Ars moriendi* del siglo XV y de lienzos como *El triunfo de la muerte* de Peter Brueghel el Viejo. Surgen también las *danzas de la muerte*, retratos de esqueletos bailarines que cortejan a los vivos; obispos, reyes y mendigos por igual. Si pudieran hablar, estas imágenes dirían: “*memento mori*” (recuerda que morirás).

Más de seis siglos después, en diciembre de 2019, se reporta la aparición de una nueva infección en un mercado de mariscos de Wuhan en la China central. Pronto se descubre que esta enfermedad es producida por un virus, que se bautiza *coronavirus de tipo 2 causante del síndrome respiratorio agudo severo* (abreviado SARS-CoV-2 por sus siglas en inglés). El 11 de marzo de 2020 la Organización Mundial de la Salud declara que esta enfermedad se ha transformado en una pandemia mundial. El temor generalizado a la *enfermedad por coronavirus* (abreviada Covid-19) no se explica únicamente por su capacidad de llevar al paciente a la muerte. Enfermedades infecciosas como el cólera o la malaria, y padecimientos como la desnutrición, exhiben tasas de mortalidad iguales o mayores, pero no generan ni una fracción del miedo que despierta el coronavirus, pues

6. Véase: Philippe Ariès, *El Hombre ante la Muerte*, trad. Mauro Armiño (Madrid: Taurus, 2011).

7. Es necesario matizar la expresión “democratización de la muerte”, pues en toda epidemia aquellos con menos recursos económicos son más vulnerables a los efectos de la enfermedad. En el caso de la Peste Negra la reducción poblacional fue proporcionalmente mayor entre los pobres que entre las clases acomodadas; los primeros vivían en condiciones higiénicas deficientes que los hacían más propensos a convivir con las pulgas de la rata, carecían de asistencia médica y tenían un mayor riesgo de perecer víctimas del hambre y la pobreza que la peste trajo consigo. Un fenómeno análogo se presenta hoy en el caso de la enfermedad por coronavirus.

se consideran condiciones propias de los pobres y marginados, o están circunscritas a ciertas regiones geográficas. Como antaño, es la democratización de la muerte la que hace a la Covid-19 tan temible y motiva el enorme ruido mediático que la acompaña. Aún si no hemos sido afectados personalmente por la enfermedad, las noticias llegan tan rápido en nuestro mundo hiperconectado que, en palabras de Daniel Loewe, “lo que hemos alcanzado, al menos en el caso del coronavirus, es que el sufrimiento en cualquier lugar se transforme en miedo en todos los otros”.⁸

El terror que suele acompañar a la pestilencia se debe no solo a que democratiza la muerte sino a por lo menos otros dos factores. En primer lugar, se teme a la peste porque no se la entiende. Los médicos de la Baja Edad Media plantearon numerosas teorías que buscaban explicar el origen de la plaga: la atribuían al efecto de los *miasmas* o “aires pútridos” (esta explicación se remonta a la medicina hipocrática), a los temblores en las profundidades de la tierra o a los fenómenos astrales.⁹ Sobra decir que ninguna de estas especulaciones logró traducirse en formas efectivas de mitigar los efectos de la enfermedad.

En tiempos de la Covid-19 debemos admitir que a pesar de nuestros avances científicos no terminamos de comprender los virus: partículas pequeñísimas que habitan el interregno entre lo vivo y lo inerte; siempre cambiantes evaden las defensas naturales de sus huéspedes, los medicamentos y en algunos casos las vacunas; capaces de saltar desde otras especies de animales para infectar al hombre, desnudan nuestra fragilidad, nuestra condición de meros seres biológicos, poniendo en entredicho una vez más la que Jean-Marie Schaeffer llama “la tesis de la excepción humana”.¹⁰

El segundo factor que exacerba nuestro miedo a la enfermedad se deriva del anterior: no sabemos cómo erradicarla. Al igual que la Muerte Negra, la enfermedad por coronavirus parece un mal inevitable pese a las acciones que podamos realizar para disminuir la posibilidad de contagio. De hecho, muchas medidas sanitarias modernas hunden sus raíces en la Europa de la peste. Es entonces cuando se inventa la cuarentena como un medio para evitar el contagio. Los enseres y los pisos se rociaban con vinagre (predecesor de nuestros desinfectantes, cuyo uso es mandatorio) y por primera vez (en una sociedad que evitaba el baño por considerar que

8. Daniel Loewe, *Ética y coronavirus* (Santiago: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2020), 192.

9. Véase: Orlando Mejía Rivera, *La medicina antigua. De homero a la peste negra* (Manizales: Universidad de Caldas, 2017), 493–495.

10. Jean-Marie Schaeffer, *El fin de la excepción humana*, trad. Victor Goldstein (Ciudad de México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2009), 13.

abría los poros a los efectos letales de los miasmas) se ordena el lavado de las manos y el rostro y la limpieza de las calles, que hedían a orina y a heces fecales.¹¹ Hasta la aparición de las primeras vacunas, nuestros únicos mecanismos efectivos para disminuir los efectos de la Covid-19 eran aquellos inventados hace más de seiscientos años, cuando nada se sabía de los microbios o de las predicciones de la epidemiología.

La impotencia de la medicina medieval frente a la Peste Negra motivó diversas prácticas de origen mágico y religioso. En busca de remedio contra la devastación surgen los *flagelantes* (penitentes que van de pueblo en pueblo en busca del perdón divino que acabe con la catástrofe)¹², pero también los danzantes lascivos que beben y copulan libremente pues entienden que la vida es fugaz y que la muerte los aguarda. A lo largo de la historia encontramos estas dos respuestas antagónicas ante las enfermedades epidémicas: la oración y la lujuria. En relación con esta última, leemos en *La peste* de Albert Camus: “si la epidemia se extiende, la moral se ensanchará también. Volveremos a ver las saturnales de Milán al borde de las tumbas”.¹³ Refiriéndose a la peste de Atenas (ca. 430 a.C.), el filósofo Daniel Loewe afirma que esta “eliminó no solo a los atenienses, sino también su moral”.¹⁴ Las modernas sectas religiosas, que en medio de la crisis por el coronavirus rezan por la salvación del mundo, y aquellos que inundan los burdeles para celebrar una vida que se saben en riesgo de perder, son instancias actuales de las viejas prácticas de la Europa pestilente.

En el contexto de la Muerte Negra se ubican obras como el *Decamerón* de Giovanni Boccaccio, quien fue testigo ocular de la enfermedad. El libro trata de un grupo de hombres y mujeres florentinos que, huyendo de la epidemia, se refugian en el campo y se cuentan historias. En el inicio de la Jornada Primera, que abre la obra, el autor describe el azote de un

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11. Mejía Rivera, *La medicina antigua. De homero a la peste negra*, 493.
 12. La idea de que las plagas obedecen a un castigo divino es tan antigua como el hombre, por lo cual no es extraño que se recurriera a esta explicación en tiempos de la Peste Negra. Para citar un caso concreto: Los historiadores coinciden en afirmar que la epidemia inició en 1346 en la ciudad de Caffa, entonces ocupada por cristianos genoveses y asediada por los mongoles, que traían la plaga. A propósito de este episodio, el cronista italiano Gabriele de Mussis (1280 – 1356 d.C.) relata que “a los cristianos asediados les parecía que se disparaban flechas desde el cielo para herir y humillar el orgullo de los infieles, que morían rápidamente con señales en sus cuerpos y abscesos en sus articulaciones” (citado por Benedictow, *La Peste Negra (1346 – 1353). La historia completa*, 92–93).
 13. Albert Camus, *La peste*, trad. Rosa Chacel (Bogotá: El Tiempo, 2002), 103.
 14. Loewe, *Ética y coronavirus*, 15.

mal para el que no había cura conocida, detalla varios de sus síntomas cardinales y menciona tal abundancia de cadáveres que estos debían ser arrojados en fosas comunes,¹⁵ “no bastando la tierra santa para ser enterrados”.¹⁶ Boccaccio alude también a la democratización de la muerte; habla de una plaga que ataca sin distinción a niños y viejos, asombrado al describir que aquellos “jóvenes que Galeno, Hipócrates y Esculapio hubiesen juzgado rebosantes de su salud, desayunaron por la mañana con sus familiares y amigos, para a la noche siguiente cenar con sus antepasados”.¹⁷ Al mostrar que contar y escuchar historias puede ser una manera de hacer frente a la peste, este libro inaugura una tercera vía para escapar de la calamidad: antes que sucumbir a la lujuria o a la locura mística, la literatura se vuelve un refugio ante la inclemencia de la naturaleza inescrutable.

1.2. La negación de la muerte

Para Philippe Ariès, así como la conciencia de una *muerte domada* es típica de la Edad Media y la de una *muerte propia* caracteriza al Renacimiento, a partir de la segunda década del siglo XX Occidente adoptó una actitud ante la muerte que el autor denomina *muerte invertida* o *prohibida*: se la ha eliminado del imaginario de la modernidad.¹⁸ Los moribundos, que nadie quiere mirar, se confinan en unidades de cuidado intensivo, reducidos a cuerpos inanimados conectados a monitores y ventiladores mecánicos. Las iconografías sepulcrales del arte macabro han desaparecido de nuestro paisaje cotidiano; nos hemos quedado sin imágenes que evoquen la mortalidad. Morir es algo de lo que es mejor no hablar. La muerte prohibida es una *muerte negada*. Para el tanatólogo y escritor Orlando Mejía Rivera, nuestros intentos por ignorar la existencia del cadáver son otro signo del rechazo que la sociedad tecnológica siente ante la finitud: los muertos se ocultan bajo una mortaja, se maquillan para semejar un cuerpo vivo o son rápidamente incinerados.¹⁹

15. Esta imagen coincide con la crónica de Agnolo di Tura, sobreviviente de la Peste Negra, quien cuenta que “los miembros de un hogar llevaban a sus difuntos muertos a una zanja lo mejor que podían, sin sacerdotes ni oficios divinos” (citado por Benedictow, *La Peste Negra (1346 – 1353). La historia completa*, 155).

16. Giovanni Boccaccio, *El Decamerón*, trad. Caridad Oriol Serres (Barcelona: Bruguera, 1972), 52.

17. *Ibid.*, 53.

18. Véase: Ariès, *El Hombre ante la Muerte*.

19. Orlando Mejía Rivera, *La muerte y sus símbolos. Muerte, tecnocracia y posmodernidad*

Como consecuencia de los intentos por desterrarla, la muerte ha adoptado imágenes indirectas pero no por ello menos perturbadoras: Durante la segunda mitad del siglo veinte el “hongo atómico” característico de las explosiones nucleares fue la imagen paradigmática del terror apocalíptico. Hoy, una pequeña esfera (invisible al ojo desnudo) de la que surgen amenazantes las *proteínas espícula* que le dan su peculiar forma de corona, es la nueva iconografía del terror. Sin embargo, incluso frente a un fenómeno sanitario de proporciones globales, nuestros intentos por negar la muerte persisten y adoptan formas inusitadas. En *La Peste*, Camus muestra los esfuerzos de los ciudadanos de Orán por negar la epidemia que azota la ciudad: incluso el personal médico, a pesar de la evidencia, teme utilizar la palabra “peste”, mientras las autoridades evitan instaurar medidas sanitarias como la cuarentena, que funcionan como equivalente simbólico de la aceptación colectiva de la enfermedad. “Las plagas, en efecto, son una cosa común pero es difícil creer en las plagas cuando las ve uno caer sobre su cabeza”.²⁰

Fruto de la negación colectiva de la finitud, durante el siglo pasado se popularizaron las “comisiones para la inmortalidad”, agremiaciones que buscaban eliminar la muerte con ayuda de los adelantados científicos. En Rusia, la organización conocida como los “constructores de Dios” sostenía, en palabras de John Gray, que “una vez que se dominara por completo el poder de la ciencia, se podría vencer a la muerte mediante la fuerza”.²¹ Comunidades de estas características todavía funcionan en Europa y Estados Unidos²². Los proyectos para erradicar la muerte produjeron una serie de libros divulgativos ocupados de justificar esta posibilidad desde el punto de vista científico y ético. Tal vez el más célebre sea *The Immortalist* de Alan Harrington,²³ escrito en la década del sesenta. Textos de esta naturaleza tienen varios herederos en la literatura contemporánea, como *La Muerte de la Muerte* de Cordeiro y Wood²⁴, cuyos autores afirman que “estamos en una guerra contra la muerte, una guerra por la

4 ed. (Medellín: Universidad de Antioquia, 2018), 60–68.

20. Camus, *La peste*, 36.
21. John Gray, *La Comisión para la Inmortalización. La ciencia y la extraña cruzada para burlar la muerte*, trad. Carme Camps (Ciudad de México: Sexto Piso, 2014), 16.
22. Mejía Rivera, *La muerte y sus símbolos. Muerte, tecnocracia y posmodernidad*, 11.
23. Alan Harrington, *The Immortalist* (Nueva York: Random House, 1976).
24. No sobra mencionar que los argumentos presentados en estos textos con el objeto de justificar la posibilidad biológica de la inmortalidad suelen ser bastante cuestionables a la luz de la ciencia contemporánea.

vida, y nuestras armas son la ciencia y la tecnología”.²⁵ Como era de esperarse, es el temor a la muerte el que funciona como imperativo ético para la búsqueda de la inmortalidad: “en todo el mundo mueren alrededor de 100.000 personas inocentes debido a enfermedades relacionadas con el envejecimiento. Uno de los próximos puedes ser tú, o uno de tus seres queridos. Podemos evitarlo, debemos evitarlo, y cuanto antes mejor”.²⁶

Estas tentativas de abolir la muerte están íntimamente ligadas a los ideales tecnocráticos propios del capitalismo. Se busca desterrarla porque amenaza la idea de progreso, la cual implica una ingenua presunción de inmortalidad, la posibilidad de una existencia perenne entre los muros de un enorme centro comercial global. Es por ello que el rechazo a la muerte se acompaña siempre de un rechazo al proceso de envejecimiento. Se espera poder hacer del individuo una especie de “máquina de funcionamiento perpetuo”, mientras la vejez representa un detrimento en la productividad.

La psiquiatra suiza Elisabeth Kübler-Ross postuló la existencia de *cinco etapas del duelo* por las que transita aquel que ha sufrido una pérdida traumática o ha sido diagnosticado con una enfermedad terminal: *Negación, ira, negociación, depresión y aceptación*.²⁷ Durante la primera etapa, la negación, un paciente terminal, por ejemplo, suele rechazar la idea de que está enfermo y va a morir, atribuyendo su diagnóstico a un error médico, a una confusión e incluso a una conspiración malintencionada²⁸. Hoy, una sociedad en pandemia (una “enfermedad de todos”)²⁹ parece manifestar colectivamente este primer estadio del modelo de Kübler-Ross. A pesar de la pretendida racionalidad de nuestro siglo, basta mirar la prensa o las redes sociales para evidenciar el auge de teorías conspirativas que buscan negar la existencia de una epidemia global. Presa del miedo, muchos hombres y mujeres prefieren restar importancia a la calamidad o atribuirle a una conjura orquestada por fuerzas internacionales, antes que enfrentar la posibilidad de su muerte personal.

25. José Luis Cordeiro y David Wood, *La muerte de la muerte. La posibilidad científica de la inmortalidad física y su defensa moral* (Barcelona: Ariel, 2018), 237.

26. *Ibid.*, 239.

27. Véase: Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *Sobre la muerte y los moribundos*, trad. Neri Daurella (Barcelona: Debolsillo, 2010).

28. León Tolstoi, en los primeros capítulos de su novela *La muerte de Iván Ilich*, hace un retrato revelador de esta negación de la que participan no solo el paciente sino sus amigos y familiares. (Véase: León Tolstoi, *La muerte de Iván Ilich*, trad. Alaric Dukass (Barcelona: Plutón, 2017).

29. La palabra “pandemia” viene del griego *pan* (παν) “todo” y *demós* (δήμος) “pueblo”.

1.3. La muerte recobrada

La cultura de la muerte prohibida conduce a una especie de esquizofrenia colectiva, dado que en el fondo sabemos que vamos a morir pero vivimos dando la espalda a esa realidad. Más allá todavía, siguiendo a Max Scheler, podemos afirmar que la existencia de la muerte forma parte de “los elementos *constitutivos* no solo de nuestra conciencia, sino de toda conciencia vital”.³⁰ Esta idea aparecerá de nuevo en Martin Heidegger, quien subraya la importancia de nivel ontológico del estar-vuelto-hacia-la-muerte que define al *Dasein* (ser-en-el-mundo) humano: “el *Dasein* existe como un arrojado *estar vuelto* hacia su fin”.³¹ Para Heidegger la muerte no es solo la única certidumbre sino el fundamento de toda certeza; no es ajena a la vida sino que está inscrita en su mismo centro como un horizonte de sentido. En palabras del escritor mexicano Octavio Paz: “una civilización que niega la muerte acaba por negar la vida”.³² De lo anterior podemos concluir que la manera como un individuo o una sociedad entienden la muerte está íntimamente relacionada con el modo en que conducen su existencia. De acuerdo con Orlando Mejía Rivera “la concepción que una cultura tenga de la muerte es la que determina, de manera sutil, sus nexos con la vida y el mundo, no al contrario”.³³

Un ejemplo del impacto que tienen las actitudes culturales ante la muerte lo proporciona, de nuevo, La Peste Negra. Si bien esta enfermedad produjo notables efectos negativos, la crisis contribuyó a configurar las características fundamentales del final de la Baja Edad Media y fue un factor fundamental en la génesis del Renacimiento³⁴. La democratización de la muerte condujo a reevaluar las rígidas estructuras sociales del Medioevo, lo que a su vez motivó el cambio en el modelo económico imperante hasta entonces; el tránsito desde una conciencia de la muerte domada hacia una de la muerte propia se manifestó en un auge de la literatura y del arte, convertidos en refugio para quienes veían en la inminencia de la muerte una reivindicación del poder creativo de la vida. La Muerte Negra ayudó también a desmontar la imagen rígida del Cosmos

30. Max Scheler, *Muerte y supervivencia*, trad. Xavier Zubiri (Madrid: Encuentro, 2001), 18.

31. Martin Heidegger, *Ser y tiempo*, trad. Jorge Eduardo Rivera (Madrid, Trotta, 2003), 271.

32. Octavio Paz, *El laberinto de la soledad* (Ciudad de México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1970), 54.

33. Mejía Rivera, *La muerte y sus símbolos. Muerte, tecnocracia y posmodernidad*, xxvi.

34. Véase: Henry E. Sigerist, *Civilización y enfermedad*, trad. Ramón Aguirre Dávila (Ciudad de México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1987).

entendido hasta entonces “como un todo finito, cerrado y jerárquicamente ordenado”³⁵ de conformidad con la escatología medieval, sentando las bases para la revolución científica de los siglos siguientes.

Las pandemias pueden permitirnos recobrar la conciencia de nuestra mortalidad en tanto nos enfrentan con la muerte de los otros y, por lo tanto, con la amenaza de nuestra propia desaparición. Podemos decir, con Bernard Schumacher, que “el ser humano tiene una conciencia de su mortalidad, de la inscripción de la muerte en *su* vida, solo mediante un rodeo, experimentando la muerte de otro”.³⁶ El temor a morir o a que muera un ser querido acaso sea un sentimiento inevitable, propio la condición humana. Pero ese temor es distinto del pánico que provoca una muerte percibida como extraña, radicalmente distinta de la vida, negada hasta que su inminencia nos confronta.

Podemos decir que la enfermedad por coronavirus es la primera gran pandemia desde la llamada “gripe española” (producida por el virus de la influenza AH1N1), que entre 1918 y 1920 cobró entre 50 y 100 millones de vidas.³⁷ Es decir, esta es la primera epidemia global por una enfermedad aguda que le toca en suerte a la cultura de la muerte invertida o prohibida.³⁸ Si la peste del siglo XIV condujo a una apropiación de la muerte que a su vez sentó las bases para el florecimiento intelectual del Renacimiento, no es descabellado esperar que esta pandemia nos sirva para recobrar una conciencia de la muerte que sea una auténtica conciencia de la vida.

35. Alexandre Koyré, *Estudios de historia del pensamiento científico*, trad. Encarnación Pérez Sedeño y Eduardo Bustos (Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno, 1977), 6.

36. Bernard N. Schumacher, *Muerte y mortalidad en la filosofía contemporánea*, trad. Vicente Merlo Lillo (Barcelona: Herder, 2018), 113.

37. Alfred W. Crosby, “Influenza,” en *The Cambridge World History of Human Disease*, ed. Kenneth Kiple (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 807 – 811, <https://doi.org/10.1017/chol9780521332866.135>.

38. Durante el siglo XX se presentaron múltiples enfermedades epidémicas. Sin embargo estas, a diferencia de la “gripe española”, bien estuvieron circunscritas a ciertos países o regiones, bien son enfermedades insidiosas y de difícil transmisión (como el caso del Síndrome de Inmunodeficiencia Adquirida); a causa de lo anterior sus efectos a corto plazo fueron menos dramáticos.

2. Las metáforas bélicas y el miedo a los otros

2.1. La “guerra contra el coronavirus”

De acuerdo con la escritora norteamericana Susan Sontag, muchas enfermedades están provistas de una enorme carga metafórica, culturalmente determinada y que condiciona la experiencia individual y colectiva de estos padecimientos. Sontag sostiene que desmitificar la enfermedad es una parte fundamental del proceso de aceptación, comprensión y tratamiento de las patologías.³⁹ En nuestro caso, la Covid-19, como toda infección, está asociada a la idea de impureza, de contagio inminente que causa repulsión. También, como en los tiempos de la Peste Negra, la pandemia ha resucitado la antigua idea de que la enfermedad es consecuencia de la violación de una norma. Esto es cierto no solo en el ámbito religioso sino también en el secular: los infectados por coronavirus suelen ser acusados de no haber mantenido las medidas higiénicas necesarias para prevenir el contagio; algunos se esfuerzan por mantener su condición en secreto, buscando eludir la sanción social.

Muchas metáforas negativas asociadas con la enfermedad, y la consecuente predilección por ocultarla, son producto de la negación de la muerte, cuyo arraigo en nuestra cultura ya hemos examinado. Sin embargo, esta relación es bidireccional: la negación de la muerte se alimenta también de las metáforas asociadas con la enfermedad, que la proveen de una carga adicional que buscamos evitar.

Para Sontag, las metáforas más comúnmente asociadas con las enfermedades infecciosas son de naturaleza bélica. Sin ir más lejos, examinemos la frecuencia con la cual tanto el lenguaje científico como el popular hacen alusión a la “guerra contra el coronavirus”. El uso de metáforas militares para referirse a las enfermedades inicia en el siglo XIX de la mano de la *medicalización de la muerte*: la muerte deja de representar un destino ineludible y se convierte en una enemiga que puede combatirse gracias a los avances de la medicina. Con la aparición de la teoría microbiológica de la enfermedad, el uso de metáforas bélicas se afianza: “Se decía que las bacterias ‘invadían’ el cuerpo, o que se ‘infiltraban’ en él”.⁴⁰ A partir de entonces el cuerpo se entiende como una “fortaleza” asediada por los “ejércitos de la enfermedad”. De ahí que los distintos elementos

39. Véase: Susan Sontag, *La enfermedad y sus metáforas – El Sida y sus metáforas*, trad. Mario Muchnik (Bogotá: Debolsillo, 2017).

40. *Ibid.*, 79.

del sistema inmune sean conocidos popularmente como “defensas” y que desde la aparición de los primeros antibióticos estos se hayan promocionado como “armas” para ganar la “guerra contra los microbios”.

La popularidad de las metáforas bélicas para referirse a las enfermedades ha hecho que la historia de la medicina se entienda como una crónica de guerra. Para citar algunos ejemplos: dos de las publicaciones más populares sobre la historia de las enfermedades infecciosas se titulan, justamente, *La lucha contra las enfermedades*⁴¹ y *Hombres contra microbios*.⁴² En el libro de Ole Benedictow *La Peste Negra (1346 – 1353). La historia completa* (acaso la publicación más importante escrita en años recientes sobre esta enfermedad), la epidemia se narra detallando las maniobras de los “ejércitos de bacterias, ratas y pulgas”⁴³ que lograron la “conquista de Europa” gracias al “genio estratégico de la Peste Negra”.⁴⁴

De acuerdo con la cronología presentada por Philippe Ariès, la concepción de la muerte invertida o prohibida aparece a finales del siglo XIX y se consolida a comienzos del XX. Este proceso coincide con la medicalización de la muerte y con el auge de la microbiología que, como mencioné, condujeron al uso médico de las metáforas bélicas. Esta coincidencia histórica entre la negación de la muerte y la metáfora militar no es fortuita. No es posible entender la enfermedad y la muerte como fenómenos naturales, propios de la vida, si se los concibe bajo la forma de invasores externos en guerra con el organismo. El miedo a los microbios invisibles es, hasta cierto punto, análogo al terror arcaico a los espíritus malignos. Tanto en la posesión demoníaca como en la infección por un agente patógeno, el cuerpo es asaltado por entidades extrañas e indeseables que amenazan la integridad del que Pedro Laín Entralgo llama *criterio etiológico de la salud*, de acuerdo con el cual “sano equivale a ‘limpio’”.⁴⁵

41. Charles E. A. Winslow, *La lucha contra las enfermedades*, trad. Armando Bazán (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Antonio Zamora).

42. Wilhelm von Drigalski, *Hombres contra microbios. La victoria de la humanidad sobre las grandes epidemias*, trad. Ignacio Rodrigo (Barcelona: Labor, 1954).

43. Benedictow, *La Peste Negra (1346 – 1353). La historia completa*, 119.

44. *Ibid.*, 141.

45. Pedro Laín Entralgo, *Antropología médica, para clínicos* (Barcelona: Salvat, 1984), 188.

2.2. *Terror al contagio en la sociedad aséptica*

Para Susan Sontag, “la metáfora militar sirve para describir una enfermedad particularmente temida como se teme al extranjero, al ‘otro’, al igual que al enemigo de la guerra moderna”.⁴⁶ Así como la jerga de la guerra se utiliza para hablar de las enfermedades, en tiempos de pandemia es común que los términos médicos se usen para designar aquello que se considera incorrecto o moralmente inaceptable. Políticos de todas las latitudes, por ejemplo, han empezado a referirse a sus opositores como un “virus” destinado a destruir la nación, o como una “enfermedad” que necesita ser “curada”.

Una de las iconografías más representativas de la Peste Negra muestra a un médico rigurosamente cubierto de la cabeza a los pies, llevando un bastón en la mano para evitar tocar a los enfermos y el rostro oculto tras una máscara de pájaro. El pico de la máscara servía para guardar un puñado de hierbas aromáticas, que ayudaban a disimular la fetidez de los bubones supurantes y de las pilas de cadáveres. Los *médicos de la peste* tienen su equivalente contemporáneo no solo en el personal sanitario, sino en todos los rostros envueltos en mascarillas y lentes protectores; en la inquietud con que miramos a los otros, todos posibles transmisores de un mal que, como entonces, no discrimina etnia, clase social ni edad alguna (a pesar de una cierta predilección del virus por los pacientes más viejos). La pandemia nos lleva a ver al otro con mirada recelosa: tememos tanto al virus como al vecino que se acerca peligrosamente, que nos amenaza con su contacto físico inminente. Nos parece revivir los temores del cirujano medieval Guy de Chauliac, quien afirmaba que la peste se transmitía “por el simple hecho de mirarse”.⁴⁷

Las epidemias recrudecen nuestro recelo frente al extranjero y el diferente. En tiempos de la Peste Negra, cristianos y musulmanes culparon a los judíos de la debacle sanitaria; un castigo divino, de Yahvé o de Alá, contra los impíos. También se los acusó de causar la enfermedad al envenenar las aguas.⁴⁸ Muchos fueron quemados vivos, otros, más afortunados, fueron excluidos de la sociedad, todos víctimas de una persecución que antecede al antisemitismo moderno. Prejuicios análogos motivaron, a principios del siglo XVI, la creación del Gueto judío en Venecia, una de las ciudades más golpeadas por la pestilencia. En palabras de Richard

46. Sontag, *La enfermedad y sus metáforas – El Sida y sus metáforas*, 113.

47. Citado por Mejía Rivera, *La medicina antigua. De homero a la peste negra*, 497.

48. Véase: Benedictow, *La Peste Negra (1346 – 1353). La historia completa*, 112.

Sennett, con la creación del Gueto “los venecianos pretendían y creían que estaban aislando una enfermedad que había infectado a la comunidad cristiana (...) Los cristianos temían tocar a los judíos (...) El cuerpo judío era impuro”.⁴⁹ Segregar al que era diferente y alejarlo de la ciudad equivalía a extirpar un absceso para que la pus no infectara el resto del cuerpo sano; así “la pureza de la masa quedaría garantizada por el aislamiento de la minoría”.⁵⁰ Esta práctica está lejos de haber quedado en el pasado. Wilhelm Reich, por ejemplo, consideraba “el miedo irracional a la sífilis como una de las fuentes más importantes de las posturas políticas y de las opiniones antisemitas del nacionalsocialismo”.⁵¹ Por nuestra parte, desde el inicio de la pandemia por coronavirus hemos visto cómo la catástrofe se atribuye a los ciudadanos chinos (en cuyas tierras surgió el mal que nos fustiga), a los ateos, a los fanáticos, a los inmigrantes, a los ricos, a los pobres e, irónicamente, al personal de salud.

En su libro *Immunitas*, el filósofo italiano Roberto Esposito sostiene que eventos como el temor a la inmigración masiva, el afán por neutralizar los virus informáticos y el miedo ante la aparición de una enfermedad epidémica, tienen en común que despiertan en nosotros una obsesión por la *inmunidad*.⁵² La necesidad de protegernos de lo extraño nos lleva, entre otras cosas, a convertir nuestras ciudades en fortalezas frente a la amenaza de lo ajeno, o a restringir la entrada en ella de los forasteros. En palabras de María Teresa de la Garza “el punto central del problema migratorio, desde la perspectiva biopolítica, es el rechazo del extranjero como posible causa de contaminación de la vida de las poblaciones receptoras”.⁵³ Llama la atención que una de las medidas más populares (aunque se justifica en algunos casos) para frenar las pandemias sea justamente la prohibición de la entrada de inmigrantes.

Aún antes de la Covid-19 nuestras ciudades mostraban mucho de ese arcaico temor a tocar y ser contagiado que motivó la creación del Gueto de Venecia. Las urbes del siglo XXI privilegian la seguridad y el aislamiento pues “en la multitud moderna la presencia física de los otros

49. Richard Sennett, *Carne y piedra. El cuerpo y la ciudad en la civilización occidental*, trad. César Vidal (Madrid: Alianza, 1994), 232.

50. *Ibid.*, 246.

51. Citado por Sontag, *La enfermedad y sus metáforas – el Sida y sus metáforas*, 73.

52. Véase: Roberto Esposito, *Immunitas. Protección y negación de la vida*, trad. Luciano Padilla López (Buenos Aires: Amorrortu, 2005).

53. María Teresa de la Garza, “Bioética y Biopolítica,” en *Perspectivas de bioética*, ed. Juliana Gómez Valenzuela (Ciudad de México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2008), 118.

seres humanos es sentida como algo amenazante”.⁵⁴ Para el sociólogo Zygmunt Bauman, la ciudad, que originalmente nació para proteger tras sus murallas a sus habitantes de las amenazas de los bárbaros, se ha convertido en la principal fuente de peligros: “Los amigos, los enemigos y, sobre todo, los extraños (...) se mezclan actualmente en las calles de la ciudad y las comparten codo con codo”.⁵⁵ Esto ha llevado al auge de las zonas residenciales fortificadas y provistas de sofisticados sistemas de seguridad, y a una creciente aversión por los espacios públicos pues “los extraños entrañan *riesgo*”.⁵⁶ Esta tendencia sistemática al aislamiento se ha recrudecido con motivo de la pandemia y es de esperarse que continúe en aumento.

3. Nuevos horizontes conceptuales

En el siglo XX los avances de la microbiología y la terapia anti-biótica llevaron a un optimismo generalizado. Se creyó que las infecciones serían erradicadas por completo⁵⁷. Parte de la incredulidad de muchos ciudadanos en relación con la existencia de la pandemia por el coronavirus se debió a que, ingenuamente, consideraban la posibilidad de una epidemia global como cosa del pasado. Pero aún antes de la actual crisis sanitaria, dos fenómenos pusieron en tela de juicio esta visión optimista sobre el futuro de las enfermedades infecciosas: el primero fue la creciente capacidad de las bacterias para hacerse resistentes a los fármacos antimicrobianos, lo cual demostró que la velocidad de adaptación de los microorganismos al “arsenal terapéutico” es mucho mayor que nuestra capacidad de producir nuevos medicamentos. Esto explica la aparición de *enfermedades reemergentes* (aquellas que surgen con violencia después de haber sido, si no erradicadas, por lo menos controladas) y de las *infec-*

54. Sennett, *Carne y piedra. El cuerpo y la ciudad en la civilización occidental*, 24.

55. Zygmunt Bauman, *Vida líquida*, trad. Albino Santos Mosquera (Bogotá: Paidós, 2017), 111.

56. *Ibid.*, 117.

57. Para ilustrar esta actitud podemos citar al médico y bacteriólogo Wilhelm von Drigalski, quien en 1954 escribía: “Hemos visto que esa manifestación milenaria de la existencia simultánea de los grandes de la creación (los seres humanos) y de sus enemigos más diminutos y mortales (los microbios) no es una ley *inevitable*. En el transcurso de pocas generaciones se han debilitado y hasta aniquilado temibles potencias naturales” (von Drigalski, *Hombres contra microbios. La victoria de la humanidad sobre las grandes epidemias*, 357).

ciones multirresistentes (inmunes a la acción de antibióticos que deberían poder eliminarlas).

El segundo fenómeno que puso en cuestión el optimismo médico del siglo pasado es el de las *enfermedades emergentes*, aquellas que recientemente han aparecido en la especie humana por primera vez y que muestran una incidencia creciente. Las infecciones emergentes son *zoonosis*: los microorganismos que las producen provienen de otras especies animales y han logrado adaptarse para infectar a los seres humanos. La Peste Negra, la “gripe española” (de hecho todas las gripes), el ébola, el SIDA y en total casi el 60% de nuestras enfermedades infecciosas tienen un origen zoonótico⁵⁸. Este también es el caso de la Covid-19. Las enfermedades zoonóticas suelen ser más difíciles de contener y casi imposibles de erradicar, dado que el agente infeccioso cuenta con numerosos “escondites” en otros hospederos animales desde los cuales puede volver a surgir como una enfermedad humana en cualquier momento.⁵⁹

Si bien no todas las enfermedades zoonóticas son virales, los virus son una causa frecuente de zoonosis pues su simpleza estructural les confiere una gran capacidad de mutación y por ende una mayor probabilidad de saltar entre especies. Esto es especialmente cierto en el caso de aquellos virus cuyo material genético no es el Ácido Desoxirribonucleico (ADN) sino el Ácido Ribonucleico (ARN), pues la tasa de mutación de estos últimos es muy superior. Este es el caso, por ejemplo, del Virus de Inmunodeficiencia Humana (VIH), de los virus de la influenza y del SARS-CoV-2.⁶⁰

Aunque no hay un acuerdo entre la comunidad científica a la hora de considerar los virus como seres vivos o como partículas inertes, es cierto que estos pequeños fragmentos de material genético encapsulado poseen una de las características distintivas de los seres vivos: “la capacidad para la evolución”.⁶¹ Al mutar los virus se transforman y, en virtud de la selección natural, mejoran progresivamente su eficacia. Dado que los agentes causales de las enfermedades emergentes son, por definición, nuevos para los seres humanos, no existe una memoria inmunológica que

58. Véase: Nathan Wolfe, *The viral storm. The dawn of a new pandemic age* (Nueva York: Times Books, 2011).

59. Véase: David Quammen, *Contagio. La evolución de las pandemias*, trad. Francisco José Ramos, Marcos Pérez, Inga Pellisa, Pablo José Hermida, Luis Jesús Negro y Francesc Pedrosa (Barcelona: Debate, 2020).

60. *Ibid.*

61. Ernst Mayr, “¿Cuál es el significado de la “vida?” en: *La esencia de la vida*, ed. Mark A. Bedau, y Carol E. Cleland (Ciudad de México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2016), 211.

pueda mitigar sus efectos sobre nuestra especie por lo que la infección suele ser especialmente grave.

La aparición de infecciones resistentes y de enfermedades emergentes y reemergentes puso en evidencia la necesidad de un cambio conceptual en lo relativo a las patologías infecciosas. A continuación detallaré las contribuciones recientes de la ecología y la biología evolutiva a la comprensión de las infecciones. Argumentaré luego que estos cambios están llamados no solo a modificar el modo en que la ciencia entiende estos fenómenos sino que, en tiempos de pandemia global, pueden ser sustrato para un cambio positivo en la manera como culturalmente entendemos la enfermedad y la muerte.

3.1. Una mirada ecológica

En años recientes ha ganado fuerza una explicación de la Peste Negra medieval que se conoce como *perspectiva ambiental*, la cual sostiene que una serie de cambios climáticos ocurridos durante los siglos inmediatamente anteriores a la peste generaron modificaciones en los ciclos biológicos de ratas y pulgas que, a la postre, contribuyeron a la diseminación de la infección. Estos cambios climáticos llevaron también a que las tierras fueron menos aptas para el cultivo; ello condujo a una disminución en la producción de alimentos y a la hambruna que aumentó la susceptibilidad de la población a la enfermedad. En palabras de Robert Gottfried, la Peste Negra “solo puede comprenderse, en su contexto epidemiológico, como parte de un periodo de 300 años de crisis ecológica”.⁶²

Las perturbaciones ecológicas parecen ser aún más importantes que los factores sociodemográficos a la hora de explicar el surgimiento de una pandemia. Como en el caso de la Covid-19 los cambios abruptos en los ambientes naturales que habitan virus y hospederos animales son la principal causa de la emergencia de enfermedades zoonóticas. Estas perturbaciones son producto, sobre todo, de la tala, la minería y otras actividades extractivas que conducen a la migración masiva de distintos animales silvestres que llevan consigo virus que pueden infectar al hombre. La caza, manipulación y consumo de estos animales y su reclusión en granjas o mercados de alimentos insalubres favorecen el salto de los virus de una especie a otra.

62. Robert S. Gottfried, *La Muerte Negra. Desastres naturales y humanos en la Europa medieval*, trad. Juan José Utrilla (Ciudad de México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1989), 19.

Todo lo anterior, unido al aumento acelerado de la población humana y a la gran velocidad con la que se transmiten las infecciones en un mundo globalizado, permite explicar el aumento vertiginoso de las enfermedades zoonóticas desde la segunda mitad del siglo XX. Los especialistas predicen que esta cifra seguirá creciendo. Por causa de la destrucción de su ambiente natural, nuevos microbios están en riesgo de convertirse en agentes de pandemias futuras.⁶³ En palabras de David Quammen: “la gente y los gorilas, los chimpancés y los murciélagos, los roedores y los simios, y los virus: todos estamos juntos en esto”.⁶⁴ La crisis producida por la Covid-19 es una señal de alarma que advierte del advenimiento de nuevas y peores enfermedades si no dirigimos nuestros modos de producción hacia una relación más equilibrada con el medio ambiente.

Antes de la pandemia por Covid-19, en los años 2002 y 2003, un virus similar (el SARS-CoV) produjo un brote de enfermedad que inició probablemente en la provincia China de Cantón. A pesar de que logró detenerse a tiempo (aunque cobró más de setecientas vidas), reveló el potencial pandémico de las enfermedades emergentes producidas por virus de esta especie. Expertos de distintas latitudes que se dedicaron al estudio de ese brote advirtieron del riesgo que entrañaban los nuevos coronavirus de origen animal, presumiblemente provenientes de los murciélagos, y señalaron la importancia del estudio de estos microorganismos desde el punto de vista ecológico.⁶⁵

La *perspectiva ecológica* de las relaciones patógeno-hospedero ha hecho importantes descubrimientos de cara a prevenir las epidemias. Un ejemplo es el trabajo de los científicos Nathan Wolfe, Claire Panosian y Jared Diamond: *Origins of major human infectious diseases*.⁶⁶ Los autores

63. Véase: Wolfe, *The viral storm. The dawn of a new pandemic age*.

64. Quammen, *Contagio. La evolución de las pandemias*, 111.

65. Entre los textos más relevantes sobre el tema, escritos poco después del brote infeccioso de Cantón, se encuentran: Vincent C. C. Cheng et al., “Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus as an Agent of Emerging and Reemerging Infection,” *Clinical Microbiology Reviews* 20, no 4 (2007), <https://doi.org/10.1128/cmr.00023-07>; Jie Cui et. al., “Evolutionary Relationships between Bat Coronaviruses and Their Hosts,” *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 13, no 10 (Octubre 2007), <https://doi.org/10.3201/eid1310.070448>; Samson Wong et. al., “Bats as a continuing source of emerging infections in humans,” *Reviews in Medical Virology* 17, no1 (Octubre 2007), <https://doi.org/10.1002/rmv.520>; Dhanasekaran Vijaykrishna et. al., “Evolutionary Insights into the Ecology of Coronaviruses,” *Journal of Virology* 81, (Abril 2007), <https://doi.org/10.1128/jvi.01135-07>.

66. Wolfe et. al., “Origins of major human infectious diseases,” *Nature*, 447 (mayo 2007), <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature05775>.

plantean la existencia de cinco estadios por los que un virus transita hasta llegar a tener potencial pandémico: los virus que están en *fase uno* no han sido detectados en seres humanos; los que se encuentran en *fase dos* pueden transmitirse de animales a humanos, pero no de persona a persona (es el caso de la rabia y de algunas formas de tularemia). Los virus en *fase tres* pueden propagarse entre seres humanos por periodos de tiempo cortos, solo durante brotes esporádicos que tienden a ser autolimitados (es el caso del ébola); aquellos en *fase cuatro* se contagian de persona a persona por periodos largos (como la fiebre amarilla, la influenza A y el SARS-CoV-2); finalmente, los virus en *fase cinco* se han vuelto exclusivos de nuestra especie (la malaria por *plasmodium falciparum*, el sarampión, la rubeola o el VIH).

Con base en estos hallazgos, Wolfe, Panosian y Diamond propusieron la creación de un “sistema de alarma global temprana”⁶⁷ para identificar poblaciones humanas que conviven con distintos animales salvajes o los incorporan en su dieta, y prevenir la aparición de pandemias por nuevos virus. La insuficiente receptividad de los gobiernos del mundo a iniciativas de esta naturaleza es otra de las causas de la pandemia actual. La atención que se preste de ahora en adelante a los resultados de estas y otras investigaciones similares será fundamental a la hora de evitar nuevas catástrofes globales.

3.2. *Hacia una nueva teoría de los microorganismos. Coevolución*

A partir de la última década del siglo pasado, un nuevo modelo explicativo ha venido incorporándose a la medicina. Se trata de la *biología evolutiva*, que se fundamenta en las tesis del darwinismo: los individuos, en su lucha por sobrevivir y reproducirse, están sometidos a presiones ambientales que seleccionan aquellos más aptos, con mayor eficacia reproductiva, cuyas características pasan a la generación siguiente. La integración de los modelos evolutivos a la ciencia médica busca explicar el origen de las enfermedades no solo a partir de la *ontogenia* (la historia del sujeto concreto que sufre un padecimiento) sino de la *filogenia* (la historia del linaje humano). Se estudia la prevalencia de las enfermedades en virtud de las contingencias evolutivas y de las adaptaciones a lo largo de la historia de la especie.⁶⁸

67. Ibid., 283.

68. Véase: Randolph Nesse y George Williams, *Why we get sick. The new science of darwinian medicine* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996). Este libro se considera el fundador del modelo explicativo que hoy se conoce como *medicina evolucionista*.

Un programa de investigación que tenga en cuenta la historia evolutiva de los virus y de sus hospederos parece una alternativa plausible frente a la visión unicausal y determinista característica de los inicios de la infectología. A fines del siglo XIX, Robert Koch formuló una serie de “leyes” que buscaban determinar la relación causal entre un microorganismo y la enfermedad que generaba. Según este autor, un agente patógeno puede considerarse el causante de una patología si se cumplen las siguientes condiciones: está presente en los individuos enfermos y ausente en los sanos; puede aislarse del cuerpo enfermo e inocularse en un sujeto sano generando la enfermedad; cuando se aísla nuevamente en los sujetos inoculados resulta idéntico al microbio original. La ciencia médica contemporánea ha constatado que estas condiciones difícilmente se cumplen. En el caso del SARS-CoV-2, su presencia es una condición necesaria para la aparición de la Covid-19, pero claramente no es condición suficiente. Factores inmunológicos del hospedero, la edad del paciente y su estado de salud previo, hacen la diferencia entre los portadores asintomáticos y aquellos que enferman gravemente y mueren. Pero acaso el factor más importante para determinar la posible gravedad de una infección sea el grado de adaptación evolutiva entre el ser humano y el microorganismo infectante: a mayor adaptación mutua menor gravedad de la infección.

La idea, propia del siglo pasado, de que las infecciones son producto de gérmenes a los que solo cabe eliminar, está siendo reemplazada por una imagen dinámica en donde la evolución de nuestra especie y de los gérmenes infectantes condiciona una relación mutua, que puede ir desde una simbiosis benéfica hasta la presentación de una enfermedad severa. Para señalar la importancia de estas relaciones interespecie baste mencionar que el número de microorganismos que alberga el cuerpo de una persona promedio es mayor que el total de sus células propias. Los microbios que nos habitan cumplen funciones en la producción de nutrientes esenciales, en la defensa contra enfermedades, en la regulación de nuestro sistema inmune e incluso de nuestra conducta.⁶⁹

En lo que respecta a los virus, vistos hoy más que nunca por la comunidad general como un enemigo al que hay que eliminar, sorprende saber que muchos de ellos generan relaciones no lesivas con sus hospederos. Es más, cerca del 8% de nuestros genes fueron, otrora, virus que termi-

69. Véase: Peter Gluckman et. al, *Principles of Evolutionary Medicine* 2 ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 237–261.

naron incorporándose al genoma humano. Microbios y seres humanos participan de un proceso de *coevolución*.⁷⁰

Al inicio de esta sección mostré que fenómenos como la resistencia de los microorganismos a los antibióticos y la alta tasa de mutación de los virus, nos revelan que los microbios serán los ganadores de cualquier “carrera armamentista”. Justamente, varios de los manejos médicos más recientes contra distintas infecciones no buscan eliminar el agente causal sino incorporarlo a una relación con el huésped que no conduzca a la enfermedad. El abordaje “bélico” de las enfermedades infecciosas debe cambiar para garantizar el bienestar de nuestra especie, y este cambio debe incluir el fomento de una mejor relación con la naturaleza.

3.3. *La pandemia como oportunidad*

En su libro *La estructura de las revoluciones científicas*⁷¹ el filósofo Thomas Kuhn argumenta que la ciencia se caracteriza por periodos de *ciencia normal*, durante los cuales la investigación se desarrolla en el marco de un *paradigma* reinante y resuelve sus distintos problemas particulares apelando únicamente al modelo explicativo vigente. Sin embargo, ocasionalmente aparecen *anomalías* que ponen en tela de juicio la eficacia del paradigma y llevan a algunos científicos a explorar otras posibilidades interpretativas de la realidad; ello da inicio a un periodo de *ciencia revolucionaria*. En la sección anterior examinamos cómo la emergencia de nuevas enfermedades transmisibles parece sacudir las bases del paradigma reinante en lo que a la microbiología se refiere, y reclamar el surgimiento de otras maneras de interpretar los mismos fenómenos. Varios autores han sostenido que estos cambios conceptuales representan auténticas *revoluciones científicas* que deben entenderse a la luz de la propuesta de Kuhn.⁷²

Presentar argumentos a favor o en contra de una lectura en clave kuhniana de esos nuevos modelos de interpretación excede los objetivos de este texto. Si bien estos cambios conceptuales están lejos de ser una

70. Véase: Frank Ryan, *Violution: The Most Important Evolutionary Book Since Dawkins' Selfish Gene* (Nueva York: Harper Collins, 2009).

71. Thomas Kuhn, *La estructura de las revoluciones científicas*, trad. Carlos Solís Santos (Ciudad de México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2011).

72. Véase por ejemplo: Maureen O'Malley et. al., “Paradigm change in evolutionary microbiology,” *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 36, no 1 (Marzo 2005), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.shpsc.2004.12.002>; Ramy Karam Aziz, “The case for biocentric microbiology,” *Gut Pathogens* 16, no. 1 (Agosto 2009), <https://doi.org/10.1186/1757-4749-1-16>.

cuestión menor, es posible que puedan incorporarse satisfactoriamente al cuerpo teórico de la infectología antes que comportarse como teorías rivales o radicalmente distintas. Para usar las categorías del propio Kuhn, la explicación tradicional de las enfermedades infecciosas y los planteamientos recientes pueden no ser *paradigmas inconmensurables*.

Mi interés en señalar el carácter revolucionario de las nuevas maneras de comprender las infecciones radica más bien en explorar las consecuencias, en el marco de esta pandemia global, de un cambio más o menos radical en la manera de entender nuestra relación con los microorganismos. En primer lugar, este cambio tendrá enormes repercusiones en la forma como se conducen las ciencias biomédicas, contribuirá a comprender mejor la actual crisis sanitaria y acaso a resolverla. Pero además, los modelos explicativos basados en la ecología y la biología evolutiva pueden contribuir a replantear nuestras concepciones culturales frente a la enfermedad y la muerte. Si históricamente las grandes epidemias, a pesar de sus efectos nefastos, han sido un acicate para la revisión de las creencias y prácticas de los pueblos que las padecen, este puede ser el momento justo para reflexionar sobre las nuestras.

Al señalar el potencial heurístico de la pandemia por el coronavirus no estoy abogando por un optimismo excesivo. Si bien se puede pensar que la pandemia llevará al mundo a un nuevo estado de solidaridad y trabajo conjunto, lo contrario también es posible: la historia de las epidemias muestra que tienden a profundizar las diferencias sociales, a fomentar los nacionalismos y los sistemas políticos opresivos. En el mismo sentido, aunque podemos desear que la situación actual estimule un aumento en los recursos destinados a la prevención de enfermedades infecciosas emergentes, también es factible que, en su afán por recuperar su economía, las grandes potencias recrudescan la explotación indiscriminada de la naturaleza. Antes que fomentar un optimismo desmedido, lo que sostengo es que la pandemia puede abrir posibilidades de reflexión individual y colectiva.

A lo largo de este texto he argumentado que la negación de la muerte, característica de nuestro tiempo, se nutre y a la vez alimenta una idea de la enfermedad relacionada íntimamente con las metáforas bélicas y con el miedo al contagio. Este hecho, lejos de restringirse al ámbito biológico, permea nuestras relaciones con los otros. La medicalización de la muerte y las teorías microbiológicas del siglo pasado contribuyeron a fomentar esas actitudes culturales. Por el contrario, la perspectiva ecológica de las enfermedades infecciosas pone el acento en que, antes que una guerra sin cuartel, la interacción entre seres humanos y microbios se da en el

marco de un proceso de coevolución. A su vez, si las metáforas militares han contribuido a una obsesión por la *inmunidad* que conduce al aislamiento y a la desconfianza, una concepción de las infecciones que no defina nuestras relaciones con el entorno en términos de “nosotros contra ellos” tal vez ayude a modificar el ideal “aséptico” que está detrás de la discriminación, los odios raciales y el ostracismo demográfico. La construcción de puentes conceptuales entre los nuevos modelos científicos y los imaginarios colectivos de la modernidad acaso nos permita entender que, en palabras de Susan Sontag, “no se nos está invadiendo. El cuerpo no es un campo de batalla. Los enfermos no son las inevitables bajas ni el enemigo”.⁷³

La idea de la muerte invertida o prohibida se fundamenta en que se la comprende como algo ajeno, radicalmente distinto de la vida, un mal que preferimos ignorar mientras esperamos que sea extirpado. He mostrado que volver la espalda a la muerte, antes que protegernos del sufrimiento, nos conduce a volver la espalda a la vida. Aquí también los nuevos modelos de comprensión de las infecciones que apuntan a entenderlas como un fenómeno natural, propio de la vida y no extraño a ella, son un buen punto de partida de camino a una reapropiación reflexiva de la muerte. Este cambio conceptual aspira a transformar nuestra relación con el medio ambiente, lo que a su vez es fundamental para prevenir el surgimiento de nuevas pandemias.

Una visión de los microorganismos como entidades malignas que deben ser eliminadas, antes que formas de vida en constante relación con los seres humanos, es sintomática de una separación conceptual artificial entre la naturaleza y nosotros. Nuestra relación instrumental con la naturaleza nos lleva a creer que en ella solo hay dos tipos de seres vivos: aquellos que representan una fuente potencial de recursos y aquellos que son una amenaza. Para Luis Felipe Abreu Hernández, las dos actitudes predominantes ante la crisis climática global son: aquella que nos insta a seguir explotando sin clemencia los recursos naturales, y aquella que aboga por la “salvación del planeta” a través de la disminución radical e incluso la desaparición de la humanidad. Ambas opciones surgen de “considerar a la naturaleza como un ente mecánico independiente de la voluntad humana: en tal caso nos hacemos a un lado por considerarnos seres anómalos y destructores o bien nos confrontamos y la destruimos

73. Sontag, *La enfermedad y sus metáforas – El Sida y sus metáforas*, 205.

para salvar nuestra vida”.⁷⁴ Abreu Hernández concluye que “solo la superación del dualismo garantiza nuestro futuro”⁷⁵. Frente a esta dicotomía, y en medio de una pandemia global causada justamente por la explotación indiscriminada de la naturaleza, los nuevos modelos de comprensión de las enfermedades infecciosas parecen sugerir una visión intermedia.

4. Conclusión

Me he propuesto examinar las relaciones entre las grandes epidemias, como la que hoy padecemos, y nuestros modos de entender no solo la muerte sino la vida. Un examen de la pandemia de Covid-19 en paralelo con otros fenómenos epidémicos del pasado nos muestra que, en cierto sentido, nuestros miedos y actitudes colectivas no son muy distintos de los de aquellos que, antes que nosotros, experimentaron los efectos de una enfermedad global. Pero, al mismo tiempo, la historia nos señala aquello que nos distingue de nuestros antepasados: la manera particular en que hemos configurado la experiencia de enfermar y morir. Gracias a ello podemos ver más claramente los orígenes y las consecuencias de nuestra negación cultural de la muerte y la enfermedad, y diseccionar las metáforas que usamos para enfrentar o evadir estos fenómenos. Los modelos científicos recientes que buscan explicar mejor la crisis sanitaria y mitigar sus consecuencias pueden ser otro elemento que contribuya a reevaluar nuestras creencias y actitudes colectivas ante esa crisis.⁷⁶

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74. Luis Felipe Abreu Hernández, “Bioética y Biomedicina,” en *Perspectivas de bioética*, ed. Juliana Gómez Valenzuela (Ciudad de México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2008), 129.

75. *Ibid.*, 129

76. Agradecimientos: Agradezco al profesor Reinaldo Bernal Velásquez, de la Pontificia Universidad Javeriana (Bogotá – Colombia).

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Antropo-etica della vulnerabilità al tempo del Covid-19

Anthropo-ethics of Vulnerability at the Time of Covid-19

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Abstract

Concern for human vulnerability seems to be at the heart of the recent sanitary emergency. The aim of this article is to show why actual reflections on Covid-19 need an adequately theorized conception of vulnerability. We first review anthropological and ethical approaches to vulnerability in two of the main authors of the classical-medieval tradition: Aristoteles and Thomas Aquinas, proving that they include the vulnerability in their reflections. The thought of these authors is then combined with the ethical reflections of the contemporary philosophers Alasdair MacIntyre and Marta Nussbaum, identifying some of the challenges emerging from these authors. In particular, we wonder how to reconcile constitutive human vulnerability, which reappears manifestly after Covid-19, with the general tendency to be scared from or to avoid it. We then briefly propose theoretical concepts, such as humility, care and creativity, available within the philosophical literature, to address these challenges.

Keywords: Aquinas, Aristoteles, care, Covid-19, creativity, Nussbaum, virtue, vulnerability.

Introduzione

La vita si dipana tra i meandri della fragilità, che al contempo la delimita e la riveste del suo ornamento. Gli uomini sono caratterizzati dal fascino ambiguo della finitezza, finitezza nascosta ed esorcizzata fino all'evento-pandemia del Covid-19, e che oggi richiede una sua riconcettualizzazione e spiegazione di senso. Questo paper si propone di indagare in profondità una dimensione strutturalmente connaturata nell'esistenza umana: la vulnerabilità, in relazione al contesto storico attuale segnato dalla pandemia. L'itinerario che si intende affrontare muove dal presupposto che l'uomo, considerato nella sua animalità, è principio di limiti e di fragilità, per il solo fatto di essere e di avere un corpo. La carne viva che lo riveste e lo qualifica come essere vivente è esposta alle affezioni, alle piaghe aperte delle ferite e dei mali fisici e alla

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degenerazione fisiologica. In aggiunta, il suo essere di natura razionale e spirituale lo ammantava di ulteriori insicurezze: il desiderio, mai completamente soddisfatto, di onnipotenza, di infinito, di trascendenza e di perfezione lo pone in una condizione di congenita privazione, che concorre ad alimentare la sua vulnerabilità. Questa ferita costitutiva imperversa in tutti gli ambiti dell'uomo e non intacca solo il suo essere, ma contagia anche i rapporti con il mondo esterno; ne scaturiscono relazioni, comportamenti ed esperienze precarie. Questo punto di partenza ineludibile, con l'avvento della pandemia, è divenuto esplicito mostrando tutta la sua dirompenza e drammaticità. Un tempo, infatti, si assisteva a una serie di atteggiamenti che ottenebravano la dimensione precaria dell'esistenza, attraverso mascheramenti esteriori o interiori, che non hanno fatto altro che rafforzare la paura originaria. Oggi è quanto mai urgente dare una risposta alle domande di senso che scaturiscono da un nemico un tempo invisibile, divenuto visibile: la morte.

Tra gli obiettivi che la tesi si propone vi è quello di dimostrare che l'armonia dell'uomo non può prescindere, anzi esige, la sua vulnerabilità. Si intende descrivere questo concetto nei suoi aspetti peculiari legati all'emergenza sanitaria, al fine di indagare se la vulnerabilità può essere concepita non solo come una condizione ontologica dell'uomo, ma anche come una sua fondamentale virtù. Si ritiene, infatti, che fragilità del suo presente, dei suoi vissuti, della sua esistenza e delle sue relazioni, ne mettono in risalto e ne mette in risalto e ne fa apprezzare la sua peculiare bellezza. Questo connubio di perfezione e imperfezione, di anelito all'infinito custodito in condizioni limitate, si scorge fin dai presupposti metafisico-antropologici, che rispecchiano quelli biologici ed esistenziali.

Si intende articolare le riflessioni indagando due dimensioni tra loro concatenate: l'antropologia e l'etica. Le radici della fragilità, come si è detto, risiedono nella struttura dell'uomo, per cui si ritiene fondamentale cominciare il discorso a partire dalla descrizione della sua natura, nelle sue dimensioni ontologiche e psicofisiche. A tale proposito, l'intento principale è delineare le categorie filosofiche che fondano il concetto di vulnerabilità per dare una risposta – che, data l'ampiezza dell'orizzonte esistenziale del tema, non pretende di essere esaustiva – al vuoto di senso, al disorientamento e alla frammentarietà dell'uomo contemporaneo.

Si comincia con il verificare l'ipotesi in base alla quale due autori classici come Aristotele e Tommaso D'Aquino contemplino una certa qual forma di vulnerabilità nei loro costrutti teorici antropologici. Ci si sofferma, poi, sul pensiero del filosofo Alasdair MacIntyre circa un aspetto peculiare della vulnerabilità: la dipendenza. Infine, vengono approfondite

le riflessioni della filosofa contemporanea Martha Nussbaum che, nel libro *La fragilità del bene*, pone l'accento sulla condizione instabile e incerta dell'uomo e sulla possibilità di sviluppare degli strumenti per affrontarla. Questi autori forniscono delle linee interpretative della situazione attuale, contrassegnata da una precarietà che investe tutti gli ambiti umani.

1. Per un'antropologia della vulnerabilità

1.1 Aristotele: la vulnerabilità come precarietà

La vulnerabilità è un concetto complesso che evoca diversi significati e racchiude in sé numerose categorie concettuali. Attingendo all'etimologia, vulnerabile è chi è esposto alla ferita, chi è nudo di fronte alla possibilità di essere toccato profondamente, leso negli affetti, nelle condizioni psicologiche, spirituali, economiche, sociali. Vulnerabile è innanzitutto la condizione ontologica dell'uomo come essere fragile e mancante, ma si ritiene che sia anche la postura consapevole che un uomo assume quando fa il passaggio esistenziale dal costruire difese, al lasciare che la sua vita sia toccata e anche ferita dalle circostanze, dagli altri e anche da sé stessi.

In questo articolo, sebbene inevitabilmente si lambiranno i magmatici confini del concetto, si vuole tenere un punto di osservazione particolare sulla vulnerabilità, si intendono approfondire quei caratteri che ne determinano un suo coinvolgimento in ambito etico. Secondo il pensiero di Emmanuel Lévinas, infatti, la vulnerabilità interpella l'uomo immediatamente sul piano dell'azione, in quanto ne sollecita la cura¹.

Prendendo come orizzonte di riferimento la Virtue Ethics di matrice aristotelica si vuole studiare, dunque, il concetto di vulnerabilità, non solo come caratteristica propria dell'essere umano, ma anche come virtù. L'ipotesi di fondo è che la vulnerabilità nella sua manifestazione più completa sia una condizione ontologica, che una volta scoperta, riconosciuta e accolta, possa essere sviluppata, esercitata e acquisire la forma di una virtù. Se *vulnerare* dal latino significa "ferire", assumere la vulnerabilità, ossia esercitare la virtù della vulnerabilità, vuol dire saper fare della propria precarietà un'occasione. A questo proposito si intende chiarire il significato di quella che si è appena definita virtù della vulnerabilità, attraverso quegli aspetti antropologici che hanno una ricaduta su un piano

1. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totalità e infinito: saggio sull'esteriorità* (Milano: Jaca Book, 1996), 269.

etico e che contribuiscono a mettere a fuoco il significato del termine che si vuole prendere a riferimento.

La scelta dei caratteri della vulnerabilità che saranno approfonditi è motivata, inoltre, dall'intenzione di sottolineare quegli aspetti che sono emersi e hanno avuto una ripercussione maggiore durante la pandemia. In questo senso, si intende scorporare il concetto di vulnerabilità secondo le seguenti dimensioni: la precarietà, l'incompiutezza, la dipendenza e l'esposizione. Queste categorie derivano direttamente da un carattere proprio dell'essere umano: la sua costitutiva relazionalità. L'uomo, infatti, in quanto animale sociale ha bisogno dell'altro per giungere a compimento.

Questi caratteri hanno indirizzato la scelta degli autori che saranno presi a riferimento, in quanto è emerso come ciascuno approfondisca un aspetto in particolare tra questi. Nello specifico – come di vedrà di seguito – dall'antropologia aristotelica si evince una visione puntuale circa la precarietà e l'incertezza dell'esistenza. Dal pensiero di Tommaso si possono trarre i caratteri dell'incompiutezza e dell'incompletezza creaturale. In *Animali razionali dipendenti* MacIntyre descrive approfonditamente la dipendenza come virtù del dare e del ricevere. Infine, grazie a Nussbaum viene chiarito il significato dell'aspetto dell'esposizione della natura umana.

La scelta d'inquadrare le riflessioni all'interno del filone della Virtue Ethics di derivazione aristotelica² si considera in linea con una visione della felicità legata all'esercizio delle virtù, in quanto apre la possibilità di ritenere la pratica della virtù della vulnerabilità propedeutica a una vita piena. Non vengono, invece, considerati altri filoni di pensiero classici come lo stoicismo, in quanto la visione antropologica ed etica che qui si sostiene non postula il dominio delle passioni, la cosiddetta atarassia, ma integra le passioni, quali manifestazioni stesse della vulnerabilità. Per questo motivo non si fa riferimento neanche al pensiero di Epicuro, in quanto per quest'ultimo il piacere è assenza di dolore, mentre il dolore è parte della vulnerabilità e qui si intende sottolineare che la felicità non esclude il dolore, in quanto si può avere una vita piena e florida anche nella sofferenza.

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2. Per approfondimenti sull'etica delle virtù si veda: Rosalind Hursthouse. *On virtue ethics*. (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Angelo Campodonico, Michel Croce, e Maria Silvia Vaccarezza, *Etica delle virtù: un'introduzione* (Roma: Carocci, 2017).

Si delinea di seguito il pensiero di Aristotele per inquadrare i presupposti a cui attinge la *Virtue Ethics* e per tracciare i primi cardini della visione antropologica ed etica di questo studio sulla vulnerabilità.

Aristotele considera l'universale un'astrazione e ciò che realmente esiste la sostanza³. Quest'ultima, delle dieci categorie⁴ in cui si predica e si manifesta l'essere, è quella principale. L'essere, infatti, non si articola in modo univoco, ma analogico: si dice e si esplica in modi diversi, tutti però riferiti a uno che assurge a protagonista: l'ente individuale e sussistente, detto sostanza prima⁵. Questa è il soggetto di tutte le altre accezioni e categorie e si distingue dalle sostanze seconde, che sono «le specie in cui sussistono le sostanze prime; e anche i generi di tale specie»⁶.

La sostanza è sempre una composizione indissolubile o «sinolo» di materia e forma e le essenze, non sono platonicamente intese come isolate dalla materia, ma sono bensì immanenti e permettono a questa di esistere. La generazione di una sostanza sensibile è, infatti, frutto di un principio che fa sì che la cosa venga in essere (forma) e di un sostrato materiale informe e indeterminato (materia)⁷. La forma è perciò anche atto (*enérghēia*), forza che permette alla potenza (*dýnamis*) della materia di esistere realizzandosi in una forma specifica. La forma, in quanto *entelechia*, 'attualità', fa sì che la materia giunga a compimento, perfezionando la propria natura. Questo rapporto tra la potenza e l'atto, la materia e la forma, si riscontra in ogni ambito del divenire⁸; è interessante studiarne gli sviluppi nei campi della biologia e dell'antropologia. Per gli esseri viventi la forma è l'anima, principio di generazione e di cambiamento che opera internamente alla materia, che è il sostrato corporeo che accoglie la forma vivificante⁹. Gli esseri viventi si distinguono dagli inanimati proprio in virtù

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3. Ignacio Yarza, *Filosofia antica* (Roma: Edusc, 2016), 187-188.
 4. Nella prospettiva aristotelica di corrispondenza tra il pensiero e la realtà le categorie sono sia i predicati generali, dunque le condizioni di pensabilità delle cose, che le caratteristiche reali, e perciò, le condizioni di esistenza, degli enti.
 5. Eustachio Paolo Lamanna, *Lecture Filosofiche ad uso dei licei. Volume primo: Antichità e Medio Evo* (Firenze: Felice Le Monnier, 1959), 68-69.
 6. Aristotele, *Le categorie*, trad. Marcello Zanatta. 1. ed. I Classici della BUR L729 (Milano: Biblioteca universale Rizzoli, 1989), 5, 2 a 12 – 3 b 24.
 7. Aristotele, *Metafisica*, trad. Roberto Radice, e Giovanni Reale (Milano: Bompiani, 2003), VIII I, 1042a.
 8. Aristotele nel IX libro della *Metafisica* fa numerosi esempi per spiegare la relazione tra potenza e atto, ripresi in particolar modo dall'ambito artistico, geometrico e biologico. Un esempio noto tra questi è il legno che è in potenza rispetto alla statua di Ermete.
 9. Elena Pagni, *Corpo vivente mondo: Aristotele e Merleau-Ponty a confronto*. Premio

del fatto di possedere un'anima, «atto primo di un corpo naturale che ha la vita in potenza»¹⁰. Per vita Aristotele intende la capacità di auto movimento verso il bene naturale, che ogni corpo possiede in virtù della propria forma. La struttura metafisica dell'essere rispecchia quella biologica, materia e forma, corpo e anima rappresentano un'unità indistinta che è la sostanza, sul piano ontologico, e l'essere vivente, su quello fisico. L'anima è unica in ogni essere vivente, ma ha diverse funzioni: vegetative, come la nutrizione e la riproduzione; di tipo sensitivo, come le sensazioni, gli appetiti e il movimento; e di carattere razionale come la conoscenza e la deliberazione¹¹. Ogni funzione superiore contiene la precedente e appartiene propriamente a una tipologia di vivente: l'anima vegetativa alle piante, l'anima sensitiva agli animali e quella intellettuale agli uomini. L'anima è unica in ogni essere vivente, ma ha diverse funzioni: vegetative, come la nutrizione e la riproduzione; di tipo sensitivo, come le sensazioni, gli appetiti e il movimento; e di carattere razionale come la conoscenza e la deliberazione¹².

Legati alle sensazioni vi sono gli appetiti, che sono inclinazioni naturali, come le tendenze legate al desiderio o al rifiuto di un oggetto più o meno piacevole (appetiti concupiscibili) o quelle inclinate a oggetti difficili da conseguire (appetiti irascibili)¹³. Le sensazioni sono dunque congiunte a un ampio spettro di attività biologiche, cognitive e comportamentali.

Aristotele nel terzo libro del *De Anima* tratta dell'intelletto, facoltà che considera al vertice delle funzioni dell'anima. L'anima intellettuale contiene al suo interno le operazioni proprie delle altre due vite, sensitiva e vegetativa, ma le supera e ne differisce perché, in quanto indipendente dal corpo, può assimilare tutte le forme intelleggibili della realtà. L'incorporeità garantisce all'intelletto una conoscenza universale, che è possibile grazie all'astrazione delle forme presenti negli enti, non estrapolabili attraverso la sensazione. Mentre i sensi colgono una forma sensibile, esteriore, l'intelletto coglie l'essenza, il concetto.

Aristotele, sempre nel *De Anima*, delinea una breve descrizione della facoltà appetitiva razionale coincidente con la volontà, il cui contenuto è ulteriormente approfondito nell'*Etica Nicomachea*¹⁴. La volontà è la

Ricerca «Città' di Firenze» 6 (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2012), VIII-IX.

10. Aristotele, *L'anima*, trad. Marcello Zanatta, e Roberto Grasso. 1. ed. (Roma: Aracne, 2006), II, 1, 412a28.

11. Cf. Ignacio Yarza, *Filosofia antica*, 209.

12. Ibid.

13. Aristotele, *L'anima*, II 3, 411a.

14. Aristotele, *Etica Nicomachea*, trad. Claudio Mazzarelli (Milano: Bompiani, 2005), X 8,

capacità di orientarsi al bene, che rappresenta il fine ultimo dell'uomo, che coincide con la realizzazione della sua natura, e, dunque, con il raggiungimento della propria perfezione. Ogni uomo, infatti, agisce per uno scopo che intende come un bene in vista del suo fine ultimo, che coincide con la felicità (εὐδαιμονία)¹⁵. Secondo Aristotele il fine ultimo dell'uomo dev'essere confacente alla sua facoltà propria, la più nobile, la ragione. Nello specifico, lo Stagiritica concepisce la vita contemplativa, dedicata alla coltivazione dello studio, come la più alta e felice per l'uomo, ma chiarisce che è una via per pochi. La seconda possibilità, a portata di tutti, per raggiungere la felicità e, dunque, per agire secondo la propria natura razionale, è l'esercizio delle virtù¹⁶.

È importante, inoltre, evidenziare che Aristotele non trascura, nella sua trattazione della felicità, alcune condizioni che reputa necessarie perché si sviluppi e si mantenga una vita buona; tra queste elenca: la salute¹⁷, i beni esteriori¹⁸, le risorse e il tempo libero¹⁹. Sottolinea, anche, che avvenimenti sopraggiunti, come le disgrazie o i mali improvvisi, possano compromettere l'esistenza di una persona virtuosa, la quale però può, proprio in questi casi di sventura, far «risplendere il bello»²⁰, se riesce a dimostrarsi forte e paziente. Sebbene, dunque, Aristotele ritenga che l'*eudaimonia* si realizzi in una vita virtuosa che si sostanzia nell'esercizio stabile della bontà, tuttavia quest'eccellenza e questa fermezza di carattere non sono al riparo dalla precarietà dell'esistenza. Questa precarietà strutturale espone l'uomo virtuoso al rischio di una perdita della sua condizione; tuttavia, questa fragilità non è illimitata, perché la razionalità pratica può essere lo strumento con cui reagire alle situazioni e continuare a vivere bene. È in questo che consiste il valore stesso dell'uomo: il suo essere legato al filo dell'incertezza gli permette di dischiudere le sue potenzialità, proprio nello scenario della sua provvisorietà. Senza il rischio connesso alla condizione umana strutturale, non si manifesterebbe la fioritura delle virtù, l'espressione della creatività, della libertà e della responsabilità. L'uomo virtuoso descritto non è dunque isolato, chiuso in

1178a9.

15. Ignacio Yarza, *Filosofia antica*, 219-220.
16. Eustachio Paolo Lamanna, *Lecture Filosofiche ad uso dei licei. Volume primo: Antichità e Medio Evo*, 78.
17. Aristotele, *Etica Nicomachea*, X 9, 1178b34-35.
18. *Ibid.*, I, 9, 1099a32-33.
19. *Id.*, *Etica Eudemia*, trad. Pierluigi Donini (Roma: Laterza, 1999), I 4, 1215a25-27.
20. Aristotele, *Etica Nicomachea*, I 11, 1100b28.

sé stesso e rassegnato all'ineludibile incertezza dell'esistenza ma, consapevole dei suoi limiti e delle sue potenzialità, si apre all'altro, realizzando la propria autentica natura di «animale politico»²¹.

1.2 *L'incompiutezza dell'uomo secondo Tommaso d'Aquino*

Nell'opuscolo giovanile *De ente et essentia* Tommaso d'Aquino riprende ed integra la metafisica e l'antropologia aristotelica²². Le nozioni di potenza e atto e di materia e forma sono presenti, ma in un rapporto che deve la sua originalità all'introduzione di due concetti: l'essenza e l'esistenza²³. L'essenza è infatti in potenza rispetto all'atto d'essere (o esistenza) e questa attualizzazione è possibile grazie all'intervento creativo di Dio²⁴. Sia le sostanze composte che quelle angeliche sono creature e, dunque, ricevono l'essere. Solo in Dio essenza ed esistenza coincidono in quanto Dio è per essenza atto puro, esistere assoluto²⁵. In questo binomio di essenza ed esistenza e nella concezione creaturale degli enti consiste l'apporto e l'originalità tommasiani rispetto alla metafisica aristotelica. Dal momento che gli enti non possono darsi l'essere da sé, ma ne partecipano, dovranno aver ricevuto l'essere da un ente altro e creatore che non riceve l'esistenza da nessun altro, ma la possiede di per sé. Tommaso ritiene, perciò, che le cose non abbiano in sé la causa della propria esistenza, ma siano create dall'unico essere necessario ed eterno: Dio. Ne consegue che l'essere finito e l'essere divino non possano coincidere²⁶; l'essere per Tommaso non è uno, ma si dice in modo analogico, ossia simile, in riferimento alle creature e a Dio. Le caratteristiche possedute dagli enti sono derivate da quelle di Dio, sono una partecipazione e una porzione di quelle qualità che per Dio sono un assoluto.

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21. Aristotele, trad. Giuliana Besso, e Lucio Bertelli, *La politica. Vol. 1: Libro 1* (Roma: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2011), I 2, 1253a.
 22. Nicola Abbagnano, *Storia della filosofia. 2: Il pensiero medievale e rinascimentale: dal Misticismo a Bacone* (Roma: Gruppo editoriale L'Espresso, 2005), 187.
 23. Tommaso d'Aquino aveva ricavato da Avicenna la lettura di questi due concetti, che poi erano stati a loro volta elaborati in maniera differente da Maimonide. Per approfondimenti si veda: Nicola Abbagnano, *Storia della filosofia. 2: Il pensiero medievale e rinascimentale: dal Misticismo a Bacone* (Roma: Gruppo editoriale L'Espresso, 2005), 187 (incluse note).
 24. Nicola Abbagnano, *Storia della filosofia. 2: Il pensiero medievale e rinascimentale: dal Misticismo a Bacone*, 191.
 25. Tommaso d'Aquino, trad. Giuseppe Barzagli, *La Somma teologica* (Bologna: Edizioni Studio Domenicano, 2014), I, q. 50, a.2.
 26. *Ibid.*, I, q.13, a.5.

L'essenza dell'uomo è caratterizzata dalla compresenza di corpo e anima. Questa, in accordo con Aristotele, è l'atto o forma del corpo, il principio immateriale delle operazioni vitali. L'anima, in quanto sostanza intellettuale, capace al contempo delle funzioni vegetative e sensitive, condivide parte della sua natura con le sostanze pure e parte con quelle corporee²⁷. Diversamente dagli altri animali, l'anima umana è immateriale e sussistente, in quanto l'uomo compie operazioni intellettuali che prescindono dal corpo. Eppure, nonostante la sua sussistenza, l'anima è incompleta per sé stessa, in quanto esige per natura l'unione al corpo²⁸.

Da un punto di vista etico, come per Aristotele anche per l'Aquinate il fine dell'uomo consiste nella felicità, nel raggiungimento della pienezza del proprio essere. Per Tommaso esiste una beatitudine mondana, che si consegue con mezzi naturali, anelando ai beni terreni più vicini al Sommo bene, esercitando le virtù, lottando contro i vizi ed esercitando la ragione speculativa. Vi è poi una beatitudine soprannaturale che integra la prima, possibile attraverso la fede e l'interazione della grazia divina²⁹. Tuttavia, la perfetta beatitudine si avrà solo con la conoscenza della causa prima, la visione dell'essenza divina, perciò la vita umana si configura come una «feconda inquietudine d'un al di là³⁰».

In quanto immagine divina e desiderio di Dio, l'uomo ha una natura relazionale, dal momento che Dio è amore, relazione e provvidenza per essenza³¹. Anche l'uomo partecipa dell'amore donativo e della provvidenza divina, amando e provvedendo per sé e per gli altri. Perciò l'uomo descritto da Tommaso non basta a sé stesso, per realizzare concretamente il suo fine, vivere una vita piena, essere felice e dunque virtuoso, dipende dagli altri. Tommaso si preoccupa di delineare una natura umana non priva di apparenti contraddizioni, se da una parte descrive le sue perfezioni e unicità, dall'altra non nasconde le sue mancanze. L'Aquinate pone l'accento sulla natura vulnerabile – dal latino *vulnus* ossia ferita– dell'essere umano, in bilico tra il suo essere carne e spirito, ferita dal peccato, limitata nelle sue facoltà, esposta alla lotta con le tendenze viziose e legata alle cicatrici delle sue sofferenze. L'essere umano, così come risulta tratteggiato

27. Étienne Gilson, trad. Mariateresa Fumagalli e Beonio Brocchieri, *La filosofia nel Medioevo: dalle origini patristiche alla fine del 14. secolo* (Milano: BUR Rizzoli, 2017), 613.

28. Tommaso d'Aquino, *La Somma teologica*, I, q. 75, a.1-6.

29. Ibid., I, II, q. 3, a. 8.

30. Étienne Gilson, *La filosofia nel Medioevo: dalle origini patristiche alla fine del 14. secolo*, 616.

31. Tommaso d'Aquino, *La Somma teologica*, I, q.3, a.6.

da Tommaso, si dipana tra l'oggi e il non ancora, tra i desideri mondani e quelli trascendenti, tra la ricerca, l'appagamento e l'inquietudine di una natura che naviga i lembi della contingenza.

1.3 MacIntyre: la virtù della dipendenza riconosciuta

Alasdair MacIntyre in *Animali razionali dipendenti* sviluppa un'indagine di tipo antropologico ed etico sulla vita buona in cui cerca di rispondere al perché le virtù siano necessarie per gli esseri umani e di quali virtù abbiamo bisogno per raggiungere la felicità e, dunque, la vita buona³². Il presupposto di partenza di *Animali razionali dipendenti* è che l'uomo sia innanzitutto un animale, un corpo animato, le cui operazioni sono «informate di razionalità»³³. Il filosofo si rende conto che una concezione strettamente aristotelica della virtù non è più sufficiente se si intende partire dal presupposto della debolezza umana. Aristotele fa coincidere il virtuoso di massimo grado con il magnanimo (*megalopsychos*), ossia con colui che trae godimento dalla propria autosufficienza e che considera un limite la propria dipendenza dagli altri. MacIntyre, infatti, corregge ed integra quest'elaborazione morale traendo spunto da Tommaso, che include nel suo discorso etico non solo l'animalità, ma anche la dipendenza, e introduce virtù quali la misericordia, l'umiltà e la carità³⁴.

Il primo capitolo di *Animali razionali dipendenti* si apre con l'annuncio della debolezza e della sofferenza insite nella condizione umana, le quali, peraltro, il più delle volte superano la nostra volontarietà e il nostro margine di controllo e ci rendono bisognosi gli uni degli altri³⁵.

La vulnerabilità tocca l'esistenza umana manifestatamente nelle sue tappe più delicate, come la nascita e la vecchiaia, ma la attraversa, più o meno sporadicamente, nell'intero corso della vita.

MacIntyre dà un grande peso all'influsso del contesto e delle relazioni che contrassegnano il periodo dell'infanzia e dell'adolescenza³⁶. L'uomo attraversa un primo stadio di accudimento tipicamente animale, che riceve dal concepimento alla prima infanzia, e passa a una cura esclusi-

32. Cf. Alasdair MacIntyre, e Marco D'Avenia. *Animali razionali dipendenti: perché gli uomini hanno bisogno delle virtù* (Milano: Vita e pensiero, 2001), XIII.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Cf. Alasdair MacIntyre, e Marco D'Avenia, *Animali razionali dipendenti. Perché gli uomini hanno bisogno delle virtù. Filosofia morale*, 7.

36. Cf. Ibid., 79.

vamente umana, che favorisce l'emergere delle abilità proprie degli esseri razionali indipendenti. Questo secondo tipo di rapporto richiede in primis ai genitori di far maturare nei loro figli un distacco dalle loro dipendenze e lo sviluppo di un'autonomia di giudizio. In questo processo complesso e non privo di conflitti il primo punto di partenza è la consapevolezza realistica che questo percorso di crescita è difettoso e un'autosufficienza integrale non sarà mai raggiungibile e neppure auspicabile³⁷.

MacIntyre sostiene che «il riconoscimento della dipendenza è la chiave per l'indipendenza³⁸». Infatti, dipendiamo dagli altri nel corso di tutta la nostra vita, non solo ai suoi albori, ma anche una volta diventati esseri razionali indipendenti³⁹. Con l'età adulta il nostro ragionamento pratico è sempre esposto al rischio di errori e spesso la nostra responsabilità intellettuale è influenzata da difetti morali non imputabili direttamente a noi.

In ogni istante della nostra vita ci collochiamo in un punto specifico di una trama di relazioni di dare e avere; può accadere che ci troviamo in una situazione in cui prevale il bisogno o in momento in cui siamo nella condizione di soddisfare le necessità di qualcuno. È bene sottolineare che queste non possono essere intese come relazioni di stretta reciprocità, spesso nasciamo e viviamo la nostra infanzia con un grande debito nei confronti dei nostri genitori, che probabilmente non sarà mai colmato in pari entità e qualità durante tutta la nostra vita⁴⁰. Questa cura incondizionata, che l'uomo ha ricevuto fin dal concepimento, è quella che gli è richiesta di fronte ai drammi, alle urgenze della vita e alle esigenze degli altri. Per sopperire alle debolezze altrui è quindi fondamentale sviluppare, oltre a un ragionamento pratico indipendente, un ampio ventaglio di virtù. Innanzitutto, MacIntyre considera essenziale acquisire le virtù che enumera Aristotele, in quanto permettono all'uomo di ragionare efficacemente sui mezzi in vista dei fini e di capire cosa è meglio fare nella situazione contingente. Questo è possibile perseguendo contemporaneamente il bene proprio e quello altrui. L'uomo che ha sviluppato un ragionamento pratico indipendente è colui che, consapevole di quanto ha ricevuto aiuta chi è nel bisogno disinteressatamente e senza condizioni.

MacIntyre completa il quadro descrittivo delle virtù introducendone una seconda tipologia, non più legata al percorso di acquisizione dell'in-

37. Cf. *Ibid.*, 82.

38. *Ibid.*

39. Cf. *Ibid.*, 94.

40. Cf. *Ibid.*, 99-100.

dipendenza, ma strettamente connessa all'accettazione della condizione reciprocamente bisognosa degli uomini. Queste disposizioni non convenzionali e non presenti nella classica lista aristotelica, vengono chiamate da MacIntyre virtù della dipendenza riconosciuta o del dare e del ricevere⁴¹. A questo proposito il filosofo scozzese ricerca delle virtù che regolino un giusto rapporto con gli altri, informato dalla generosità, delle disposizioni che permettano al contempo azioni giuste e buone. MacIntyre trova ispirazione dalla dottrina morale di Tommaso d'Aquino, rifacendosi in particolare alla sua descrizione della carità, e la integra con la teoria aristotelica. Tommaso postula l'idea che un'azione possa essere al tempo stesso giusta, generosa, benefica e misericordiosa. Per giustizia si intende il dare quanto è dovuto ad un altro⁴². La generosità è una risposta attenta e al contempo affettuosa ad un uomo in condizione di precarietà. La definizione generica di beneficenza è fare del bene all'altro. Infine, la misericordia è la risposta al bisogno urgente ed estremo di una persona, motivato da un profondo sentimento di compassione⁴³. È interessante osservare come MacIntyre sottolinei che queste virtù non siano mere passioni, ma abbraccino entrambe le dimensioni dell'uomo, quella razionale e quella emotiva. La giusta generosità, che MacIntyre erge a cardine delle virtù della razionalità dipendente, si fonda sul concetto, già argomentato, del dare senza condizioni e senza calcoli, proprio in forza della rete di relazioni che richiede questa virtù. Tra le virtù del ricevere, che sono quelle che implicano una maggiore consapevolezza del proprio stato di bisogno e dipendenza, MacIntyre parla del saper ricevere e accettare con gratitudine, del saper mostrare cortesia e dell'esercitare la pazienza per chi dà in maniera sgarbata o impropria⁴⁴.

MacIntyre aggiunge un tassello in più rispetto alle conclusioni tratte a partire da Aristotele e da Tommaso sulla vulnerabilità umana, che ha una grande rilevanza considerando la situazione attuale segnata dalla pandemia. L'attuale emergenza sanitaria ha, infatti, messo in luce quanto sia connaturale la dipendenza nelle relazioni e come sia determinante la trama delle reti di dare e avere all'interno di una comunità.

41. Cf. *Ibid.*, 118.

42. Cf. Tommaso d'Aquino, *La Somma teologica*, II-II, q. 117, a. 5.

43. Cf. Alasdair MacIntyre, e Marco D'Avenia. *Animali razionali dipendenti: perché gli uomini hanno bisogno delle virtù*, 119.

44. Cf. *Ibid.*, 125.

2. Coltivare la vulnerabilità oggi

2.1 La vulnerabilità come esposizione secondo Martha Nussbaum

Ne *La fragilità del bene*, Martha Nussbaum si pone il problema del legame tra il bene umano, l'*eudaimonia*, e la fortuna, quest'ultima intesa come un insieme di aspetti che sono fuori dal controllo dell'uomo⁴⁵. La filosofa analizza il pensiero greco e le diverse considerazioni del ruolo della fortuna, fornendo una sua originale interpretazione del pensiero di Aristotele⁴⁶. Nussbaum si domanda se le relazioni e i beni, che sono di per sé esposti al rischio e alla vulnerabilità, possano essere componenti di una vita buona, senza pregiudicarne l'esistenza.

Il percorso che Nussbaum compie attraverso questo libro è sviscerare l'etica dalla tragedia e introdurre al contempo la tragedia nell'etica. L'etica prende vita e voce attraverso i personaggi e le loro vicende per inscenare una trama che si dipana in tutto il corso del libro: la lotta tra l'abitare e il trascendere i confini e i limiti umani.

Nel suo immergersi nelle trame della tragedia greca, Nussbaum mette in luce due concezioni antitetiche circa la precarietà umana e il modo di affrontarla. Da una parte, c'è la visione di Platone, che concepisce l'eccellenza come via che tende al superamento dei limiti e al raggiungimento della vita contemplativa, autosufficiente e ascetica, distaccata dai beni esteriori e svincolata dagli esiti della fortuna. Dall'altra, c'è l'approccio aristotelico che definisce l'esistenza a partire dalla finitezza dell'uomo, condiviso da Nussbaum.

Nel presentare l'*Antigone*, la filosofa ha analizzato le conseguenze della rigidità dell'atteggiamento di auto dominio e di controllo di Creonte contrapponendola alla condotta flessibile proposta da Ermone e Tiresia⁴⁷. Un'apertura e una sensibilità al mondo e alla complessità della realtà permettono di adattarsi e di non restare impassibili di fronte agli eventi.

Nussbaum erge la fragilità, intesa come esposizione dell'uomo alle situazioni avverse della vita, a tratto identitario e a condizione di senso e di valore dell'uomo, la sua tesi centrale è che l'uomo buono non è immune ai colpi dolorosi e inaspettati della fortuna, ma affrontandoli ne sa trarre delle opportunità. Un tratto che fa cogliere e apprezzare la

45. Martha Craven Nussbaum, *La fragilità del bene: fortuna ed etica nella tragedia e nella filosofia greca* (Bologna: Il mulino, 2004), 49.

46. Ibid., 56.

47. Ibid.

bellezza dell'uomo è la sua vulnerabilità; «La tenerezza di una pianta non è la durezza abbagliante di una gemma»⁴⁸. A titolo di esempio, Nussbaum spiega che l'unicità di un amore umano non è la stessa che caratterizza l'amore tra due esseri immortali. La dimensione valoriale del limite è un'esperienza propriamente umana, non ne partecipano né gli animali, perché non ne sono consapevoli, né gli dèi, perché non ne sono esposti.

L'uomo descritto da Nussbaum è come una vite⁴⁹, «da verdi rugiate nutrita tra gli uomini saggi e tra i giusti levandosi nell'etere liquido», che si dipana tra la vulnerabilità del mondo e la sua ambizione a fronteggiarlo⁵⁰. Ogni uomo si trova a vivere un corpo che è costantemente esposto a limiti, necessità, complessità inaspettate. La felicità umana non consiste, perciò, nel vivere come se la vulnerabilità non esistesse, ma nel costruire degli equipaggiamenti, quanto più resistenti, per affrontare i limiti che la vita pone. Per Nussbaum, sulla scia di Aristotele, la consapevolezza della propria vulnerabilità, in quanto presupposto perché si sviluppino le virtù, è anche una condizione perché si realizzi la felicità. La tradizione epicurea, stoica e platonica, invece, ha indicato la strada per la vita buona a partire dal trascendimento della stessa umanità con la sola forza della ragione, per mezzo del distacco dai beni esteriori e dalle minacce della sorte.

La scelta di focalizzare l'attenzione sul pensiero di Martha Nussbaum, e in particolare sul suo testo *La fragilità del bene*, deriva dal legame tra le sue riflessioni e l'etica eudaimonistica di orientamento aristotelico, incentrata sulla pienezza, sulla fioritura e sulla prosperità umana, una concezione dell'uomo che implica elementi che sono fuori dal controllo umano, una visione all'interno della quale la razionalità e le emozioni sono integrate e collaborano tra loro per realizzare la vita buona. Nussbaum condivide il pensiero aristotelico sottolineando il carattere centrale di elementi incontrollabili o ineliminabili, come le condizioni avverse o le emozioni. Al contrario, come si è sottolineato, gli stoici considerano le emozioni dannose ai fini del raggiungimento della meta dell'uomo: l'imperturbabilità. D'altra parte, si è visto in questo articolo come il raggiungimento della felicità non si realizzi attraverso l'atarassia, ma bensì all'interno di una vita autenticamente umana e, dunque, secondo virtù. In questo senso, le emozioni fanno parte di quegli aspetti della vita che vanno integrati ai fini di un'esistenza autentica. La vulnerabilità, infatti, è strettamente

48. Ibid., 47.

49. Ibid., 13.

50. Pindaro, *Odi e Frammenti*, trad. Leone Traverso (Firenze: Sansoni, 1989), *Nemea* VIII, 40-42, vv 39, 42-44.

collegata alle emozioni: è grazie a queste che si percepisce la propria condizione fragile, in quanto esposta.

2.2 *L'umiltà e la cura come virtù da coltivare oggi*

Si è tentato di descrivere i caratteri filosofici del concetto della vulnerabilità e ora si intende inquadrare le riflessioni alla luce delle conseguenze, in termini esistenziali, della pandemia da Covid-19.

Si è scelto di parlare di vulnerabilità, in quanto si ritiene che l'ingresso stesso dell'epidemia sulla scena mondiale rappresenti una ferita all'intera umanità. Una ferita, che è anche una cesura, e in quanto tale, permette di accedere in profondità e scendere nelle viscere esistenziali, in quei luoghi bui e nascosti, ai quali la vista deve progressivamente abituarsi.

È apparsa sulla scena della vita quotidiana l'inoppugnabile verità sull'uomo: la sua limitatezza, la sua nudità, la fragilità nei confronti di una vita che appare inesorabilmente fuori controllo. La morte non è più relegata a un immaginario ospedaliero, è rientrata nelle case, nelle strade, nell'ordinarietà.

La vulnerabilità, intesa secondo le categorie descritte, è strettamente legata alla corporeità. Essa, infatti, attinge alla natura stessa del corpo, al suo essere fragile ai colpi inflitti da parte degli altri uomini o delle cose o degli eventi sfavorevoli. La vulnerabilità del corpo si esprime bene con l'immagine, già evocata, della nudità che richiede la risposta della responsabilità dell'uomo, come afferma Lévinas⁵¹. Dunque, se la vulnerabilità è una condizione ontologica che rende l'uomo propriamente uomo, la cura è un atto umano originario. L'apparire del volto dell'altro invoca una risposta, che è una risposta di cura, di premura, di attenzione.

Questo trova riscontro anche nell'evidenza del vissuto della pandemia, basti pensare a come in questo periodo di emergenza sia emersa la vulnerabilità umana e, allo stesso tempo, si sia palesata l'esigenza e la necessità della cura, in tutti i sensi che questo termine evoca nella lingua italiana – cura come assistenza medica e cura come risposta dell'uomo alla vulnerabilità dell'altro. Per cura, dunque, qui si intende la doppia sfumatura che Heidegger fece in *Essere e tempo*⁵², distinguendo tra una cura materiale, che favorisce la conservazione della vita, e una cura spirituale, intesa come dedizione per l'altro affinché questo raggiunga il suo compimento

51. Emmanuel Le'vinas, *Totalità e infinito: saggio sull'esteriorità*, 70-73.

52. Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Essere e tempo* (Milano: Longanesi, 2009), 241-242, 377-382.

come uomo. Entrambe le due dimensioni sono emerse vigorosamente in questo tempo. Cosa ha da dire la vulnerabilità all'uomo oggi?

A partire dalla rivoluzione postindustriale e con l'innovazione tecnologica si sono verificate conseguenze di grande portata in tutti gli ambiti sociali⁵³. Le categorie dello spazio e del tempo sono state stravolte, la possibilità di connettersi facilmente a livello globale, la rapidità di accesso all'informazione e l'immediatezza nel costituire le relazioni, sono alcune tra queste⁵⁴. L'uomo contemporaneo, appiattito nel presente, abituato a soddisfare con rapidità i propri bisogni, si limita talvolta a godere della sua vita illudendosi di poterne eliminare i limiti. Il pericolo di una navigazione superficiale dell'esistenza, senza una discesa nel suo abisso per coglierne il senso, per dare alla propria identità una direzione consapevole, è dietro l'angolo.

L'emergenza come si è visto, oltre a mettere al centro dell'attenzione mediatica il mondo sanitario, ha fatto emergere iniziative di solidarietà e vicinanza. In controtendenza rispetto al mito contemporaneo dell'autonomia è emerso quanto l'altro e gli altri siano fondamentali perché una vita sia piena e completa.

La vulnerabilità, dunque, oggi è una sfida controcorrente, una via per andare in profondità, per attingere al senso nascosto delle cose cogliendone lo spessore. Accogliere la sfida, sollecitata dall'emergenza, di riconoscersi vulnerabili, significa tornare a penetrare i confini della propria umanità. Il processo comincia dall'accoglienza dei limiti emersi in questo periodo come la paura, lo scoraggiamento, il disorientamento, la precarietà fisica, psichica e spirituale. Dopo un primo momento di "abbassamento", di esplorazione del proprio "humus originale", l'uomo che ha conosciuto le proprie debolezze, può percorrere le tappe della guarigione, che gli permetteranno di rialzare lo sguardo e scorgere l'altezza della sua dignità e vocazione personale e comunitaria. Questo è possibile coltivando la virtù dell'umiltà, che altro non è che il rispetto e la consapevolezza della propria condizione precaria e limitata. Rivestirsi di umiltà equivale a tornare al primo abito naturale di cui l'uomo dispone, quello della nudità della sua condizione limitata e dipendente e, dunque, relazionale. Solo una volta abbracciata la propria condizione, questa può essere curata e questo può diventare un processo virtuoso e trasmissibile. Le due virtù dell'umiltà e della cura, si ritiene che insieme possano gettare una luce sulla presente situazione emergenziale.

53. Carla Xodo Cegolon, *Capitani di se stessi: l'educazione come costruzione di identità personale* (Brescia: La scuola, 2003), 63.

54. *Ibid.*, 74-80.

È importante, in questa fase della trattazione, esplicitare che si intende prendere a riferimento la definizione di umiltà e cura che attingono all'orizzonte di pensiero dell'etica delle virtù di matrice aristotelico-tomista. Per quanto riguarda l'umiltà, un'esponente di questo filone di pensiero, la filosofa Nancy E. Snow, ha sostenuto che questa è una virtù buona in sé stessa e valutabile anche per i suoi benefici, tra cui una forma di realismo, che contribuisce alla maturità personale⁵⁵. A questo proposito, e su questa scia, Iris Murdoch ritiene che l'umiltà sia la liberazione dall'arroganza e dalla superbia e, dunque, un accesso autentico e pieno alla realtà⁵⁶.

Quest'ultima descrizione dell'umiltà appare quanto mai attuale, come risposta alle sfide che la realtà pone in essere; un atteggiamento umile permette di non sovrastimare, né sottovalutare le proprie risorse e i propri limiti nell'affrontare le criticità.

Ciò che è emerso prepotentemente oggi, nel tempo della pandemia, è che la vulnerabilità non è solo nell'altro lontano da noi, ma dimora in noi, come hanno evidenziato anche Lévinas e Ricoeur⁵⁷. Come sottolinea anche la filosofa Elena Pulcini, il soggetto vulnerabile è colui che, innanzitutto, si riconosce fragile e bisognoso di cura e, in quanto tale, è capace di riconoscere la simile condizione dell'altro da lui e può prendersene cura⁵⁸. Chi esercita la virtù della vulnerabilità è, dunque, un soggetto che prima di tutto è umile, ha conosciuto la sua precarietà e può entrare in contatto con le ferite dell'altro per offrirgli il suo aiuto.

Per quanto riguarda la cura, la definizione qui presa in considerazione attinge a un filone dell'etica di matrice prevalentemente femminista, sviluppato negli ultimi quarant'anni, chiamato etica della cura⁵⁹. In base a questa è possibile individuare tre modi di intendere il concetto di cura: come l'attività del prendersi cura di qualcuno che versa in una condizione di bisogno, oppure come il rapporto che si instaura nelle relazioni più intime, come un'amicizia o un rapporto genitoriale, o infine come una

55. Cf. Nancy E. Snow, *Humility*, in Clifford Williams, a c. di, *Personal virtues: introductory essays* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 73-89.

56. Iris Murdoch, *The sovereignty of good*, *Studies in ethics and the philosophy of religion* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1970), 41, 59, 67-68, 76.

57. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence*, (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1990); Paul Ricoeur, *Persona, comunità e istituzioni: dialettica tra giustizia e amore* (Fiesole: Ed. cultura della pace San domenico, 1994).

58. Elena Pulcini, *La cura del mondo: paura e responsabilità nell'età globale*, 1. ed, Nuova cultura 219 (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2009), 228-229.

59. Cf. Rosemarie Tong e Nancy Williams, «Feminist Ethics», 12 maggio 1998, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/feminism-ethics/> (Winter 2018 Edition), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/feminism-ethics/>>.

disposizione generale ad essere attenti alle necessità altrui. Quest'ultimo senso è quello che si è adottato, dato che è quello che più si coniuga all'approccio speculativo di matrice aristotelico-tomista e alla sua applicazione nel contesto attuale.

Riconoscersi toccati, turbati e feriti dalla situazione emergenziale improvvisa dalla quale siamo stati travolti è il primo passo per accogliere la nostra strutturale precarietà e prendersi cura di sé e dell'altro. Una cura che è intesa come atteggiamento esistenziale di consapevolezza e di attenzione, di premura e non evasione dalla realtà, di accoglienza e non nascondimento del dolore. Solo riconoscendo la ferita la si può pian piano guarire e, se non guarire, almeno, appunto, curare.

2.3 *La creatività: una cura alla ferita*

Il mondo occidentale ha demonizzato la fragilità, dimenticando quella sfumatura ambigua che soggiace al temine, limite, e ne cela le potenzialità. L'uomo e la società, per sentirsi invulnerabili e onnipotenti, si sono resi immuni, ma la refrattarietà al tocco dell'altro, al contatto con le fragilità proprie e altrui rende freddi spettatori della vita, senza slancio e senza possibilità di rischio e iniziativa interpersonale. È dall'attuale 'epifania' della vulnerabilità sulla scena pubblica e privata che si può ripartire per trasfigurare in senso creativo le proprie ferite.

I diversi periodi di quarantena e semi quarantena nel mondo, hanno mostrato, come dallo stravolgimento delle abitudini quotidiane, spesso si è sviluppata un'effervescenza creativa e artistica⁶⁰. Diverse attività sono, infatti, sorte, proprio a partire dal vuoto e dal disorientamento generati dalla situazione di emergenza. Tanti hanno dovuto mettere in discussione il modo tradizionale di svolgere il loro lavoro e dare spazio a nuovi modi di affrontarlo. Alcuni professionisti, dopo un periodo di fermo, si sono reinventati, alcuni hanno messo il loro mestiere al servizio dei bisogni dettati dall'emergenza sanitaria. Si è assistito a veri e propri esempi di precarietà trasfigurata in creatività generativa, capace di generare novità, relazioni, solidarietà, collaborazione. Giusto per fare un esempio, nel mondo della moda diverse aziende come Prada e Louis Vuitton si sono riconvertite nella produzione di mascherine, rinunciando alla competizione tra loro per rispondere a un unico fine solidale. Fenomeni come l'esuberanza di iniziative artistiche sviluppate nelle case di pittori, illustratori, musicisti,

60. Per un approfondimento, in particolare per quanto concerne lo spazio domestico, si veda: AA.VV. *Home in the Time of Coronavirus*, (London: Home Renaissance Foundation, 2020).

poeti e chef, lo sviluppo di nuove proposte nelle pagine web di musei e di altre istituzioni culturali, disegnano un quadro effervescente nato a partire dai vincoli imposti dalla pandemia. Inoltre, in questo tempo per alcuni la dimensione interiore è stata un terreno di scoperta e maturazione. Molti si sono riscoperti resilienti e capaci di adattarsi creativamente alle sfide imposte dalla crisi, hanno saputo dare valore alle giuste priorità e cogliere l'importanza del tempo.

Oggi, di fronte ai drammi della malattia e della morte divenuti così prossimi, c'è l'esigenza per ciascuno di risignificare il proprio dolore, donare a questo un senso, ossia una direzione, una pienezza e una profondità nuove⁶¹. Cyrulnik ha scritto diversi testi sulla scrittura e riscrittura di sé attraverso l'ordine simbolico per trascendere il dolore. Non si tratta né di negarlo, né di sublimarlo, ma di trasformarlo in un lavoro creativo volto a riscrivere parti del proprio sé. Il processo di ri-scrittura prevede, infatti, il progressivo abbandono di parole interiori vecchie sulla propria storia e l'apprendimento di nuovi orizzonti esistenziali, dopo un evento traumatico⁶². Ogni ferita può perciò essere intesa come un'iniziazione e la sua cura – la riscrittura simbolica, appunto – può non portare necessariamente alla sua guarigione⁶³. Ciò che cambia è il senso che si ricava esplorando il lavoro che fa il dolore con il proprio sé, imparando che nei vincoli si nasconde la possibilità di essere generativi⁶⁴. L'esperienza della sofferenza e del limite sono perciò una via d'intelligenza per accogliere la realtà esterna e per conoscere il proprio mondo interno⁶⁵.

Durante il tempo del confinamento in casa in tanti hanno vissuto quella che Frankl ha definito come "autotrascendenza", vale a dire la capacità, durante un momento critico, di uscire da sé stessi, di non rimanere centrati sul proprio io, ma di aprirsi a un tu, a un'alterità che può essere talvolta una persona, un compito, un lavoro o un'opera che si arricchiscono di senso⁶⁶.

61. Cf. Antonia Chiara Scardicchio, *La ferita che cura: dolore e sua possibile collaterale bellezza* (Napoli: AnimaMundi Edizioni, 2018).

62. Boris Cyrulnik, *La vita dopo Auschwitz: come sono sopravvissuto alla scomparsa dei miei genitori durante la Shoah* (Milano: Mondadori, 2014), 179.

63. Massimo Recalcati, *Incontrare l'assenza: il trauma della perdita e la sua soggettivazione* (Bentivoglio: ASMEPA, 2019).

64. Ibid., 403, 404.

65. Cf. Salvatore Natoli, *L'esperienza del dolore: le forme del patire nella cultura occidentale* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2010), 28.

66. Viktor Emil Frankl, *Uno psicologo nei Lager* (Milano: Ares, 2013).

Il limite, la mancanza e la sofferenza vissuti in questo tempo possono diventare il presupposto per l'esplorazione di sé stessi, per una scoperta delle proprie capacità creative e per un rinnovamento della propria quotidianità, del proprio lavoro e delle proprie relazioni. Ogni atto, anche intriso della precarietà del momento, ha la potenzialità di diventare un veicolo di creatività generativa. Nelle situazioni limite si nasconde un potenziale: il dolore può essere trasformato in un'opera d'arte.

Conclusione

La prima parte dell'articolo si focalizza sui caratteri antropologici ed etici dell'uomo inteso come essere vulnerabile. Di fronte alla vulnerabilità, le molteplici reazioni si possono sostanzialmente riassumere in due: il rifiuto o l'accettazione. La prima e forse più immediata risposta è la negazione e il nascondimento dei propri limiti attraverso *escamotage* apparentemente appaganti, ma, talvolta, interiormente letali. Un altro atteggiamento può consistere nell'accogliere e nell'abitare le debolezze e le criticità, per trasformarle progressivamente in esperienze feconde. Su questa seconda possibilità, di una ferita aperta e curata, che diventa occasione di incontro con sé stessi e con gli altri, si articolano le riflessioni. A partire dai punti di vista di Aristotele, Tommaso, MacIntyre e Nussbaum l'uomo è tratteggiato come un essere incarnato, concreto, esposto al dinamismo e al divenire dell'esistenza, dunque fragile, bisognoso dell'altro. Né la corporeità, né i sensi sono appendici di un'anima autoreferenziale, ma sono bensì i costitutivi essenziali dell'uomo. Il corpo è emblema di bellezza, di gradevolezza e di armonia, ma è al contempo simbolo delle precarietà che porta *in nuce*. Il corpo precario è l'icona di questo periodo storico minacciato dalla pandemia. Eppure, la fragilità, che si è manifestata in questo tempo in tutta la sua evidenza e dirompenza, non ha solo spaventato e stravolto esistenzialmente la vita degli uomini, ma li ha anche messi in comunione, li ha resi simpatici⁶⁷ ed empatici tra loro. Riconoscere di essere vulnerabili oggi significa perciò entrare in relazione profonda e autentica con sé stessi e con gli altri. È possibile guardare con sincerità e accoglienza l'altro, se prima si è fatto penetrare lo sguardo negli abissi più sgradevoli del proprio io per abitarli. Questo significa che oggi, la paura della solitudine, del contagio, della malattia e della perdita

67. Intesa nel vero e proprio senso greco di συμπάθεια, termine composto di σύν "con" e πάθος "sentimento"; si nota una sfumatura che avvicina il concetto di simpatia alla compassione. Per approfondimenti sul termine si veda: Luigi Volpicelli, *Lessico delle scienze dell'educazione* (Milano: Antonio Vallardi Editore, 1978), 191.

dei propri cari, in sostanza la paura della morte, non può essere più evasa e necessita di essere esplorata e attraversata. Solo in questo modo si può crescere attraverso questa crisi e apprendere da questa qualcosa che ci permetterà di prenderci cura di noi e degli altri attorno a noi.

La vulnerabilità è il luogo in cui si annida la possibilità di sviluppare l'umanità dell'uomo. Affrontare la vulnerabilità, tuttavia, non significa cancellarla, ma renderla una strada percorribile. Si è visto nel corso della seconda parte della trattazione che si può affrontare la propria precarietà, in primo luogo, attraverso la virtù dell'umiltà, che ci permette di accogliere la nostra condizione limitata, dipendente e fragile. Questo passaggio è propedeutico al prendersi cura di sé e dell'altro, solo così si può iniziare il processo di guarigione. Infine, il dolore, la paura, la mancanza e il disorientamento che caratterizzano questo periodo possono essere trasformati in *incipit* per avviare una ricostruzione creativa e generativa di sé. Questo comporta saper accogliere la realtà vedendone le potenzialità, che implica, anche nelle situazioni estreme, saper profetizzare "ciò che non è ancora" oltre la sofferenza.

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La vulnerabilità come “ritorno del rimosso” e la nuova domanda di senso durante la pandemia da Covid-19

Vulnerability as a “Return of the Repressed” and a New Demand for Meaning during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The great leap forward of medicine in the twentieth century contributed to the myth of the repression of vulnerability accompanied by the illusion of individual control and self-determination. However, epidemics, like major natural disasters, have continued to act as elements capable of upsetting scientific optimism. The Covid-19 pandemic, with its uncertain causes and unpredictable effects, has led to authentic demythologisation and caused a “return of the repressed”: a feeling of vulnerability along with dramatic awareness of our mortality. This phenomenon has been accompanied by a re-emerging demand for meaning, which has led to a more direct confrontation with the drama of suffering and the need for a personal relationship with the sacred, finally rediscovering the public dimension of prayer. Firstly, the article outlines in its essential features the ambiguity of the pre-pandemic cultural horizon. Secondly, it analyses the characteristics of the rise of a new sensibility, by referring also to the notion of prayer as a “political issue” coined by Jean Daniélou.

Keywords: death, pandemic, prayer, religion, vulnerability.

1. Introduzione. L'epidemia e la medicina: nóúmeno o fenómeno?

Rispetto alla malattia individuale, che riceve la sua prima razionalizzazione già nella concezione ippocratica, il fenomeno epidemia fin ben oltre la modernità si è presentato come resistente a questa lettura, mettendo in crisi i metodi diagnostici. Al pari delle grandi catastrofi naturali, esso ha sempre presentato una dimensione sfuggente a qualsiasi categorizzazione. Lo storico Tucidide,¹ nel noto resoconto della cosiddetta “peste” che devastò Atene nel secondo anno della Guerra del Peloponneso

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1. Cfr. Tucidide, *La Guerra del Peloponneso* I, trad. Franco Ferrari, Moses I. Finley, Giovanna Daverio Rocchi (Milano: Rizzoli, 1985), II, 47-53.

(430-429 a.C.), descrive con precisione e distacco gli eventi. È il tentativo di presentarne una semeiotica per sottrarre all'arbitrio del caso il fenomeno, riconducendolo alla lucidità dell'osservatore e separandolo dall'elemento imponderabile e numinoso. Lucrezio aggiungerà alla *observatio* dei morbi la *ratio*, l'indagine causale, per liberare l'animo dell'uomo dalle tenebre della superstizione, evitando che l'ignoranza delle cause (*ignorantia causarum*) spinga ad attribuire gli eventi al potere degli dèi.²

Tuttavia, si tratta di tentativi insufficienti: l'epidemia si mostra, a dispetto di tutto, con dei caratteri eccezionali che rappresentano una sfida per la medicina antica, costituendo un autentico *noúmeno*, impossibile da pensare e da decifrare. Ne è un esempio l'imbarazzo di Galeno di fronte alla cosiddetta "peste antonina", che, giunta da Oriente in seguito alle campagne militari dell'imperatore Lucio Vero, sconvolse l'Impero Romano dal 165 al 180 circa. Galeno, ben lontano dal tentarne una diagnosi, non riesce a fornirne neppure una descrizione sistematica, tanto che permane tuttora l'incertezza sull'identificazione della natura della malattia.³ La medicina antica, che basava diagnosi e terapia sulle caratteristiche individuali, risulta priva di strumenti quando l'indagine si allarga alle popolazioni, dove manca quella conoscenza della specifica costituzione del paziente ritenuta indispensabile.

Questa sorta di smarrimento della scienza di fronte all'epidemia permane fino alla modernità, se si pensa alla narrazione manzoniana della peste di Milano (1629-1633) e alla diceria degli untori. È uno dei motivi per cui il trascendente, il numinoso, ha sempre accompagnato da protagonista la diffusione delle epidemie, con l'esigenza di placare o di supplicare l'elemento divino. Sarà il secolo XX a segnare la grande svolta nell'ambito della lotta alle epidemie, con l'isolamento e l'identificazione del virus, le vaccinazioni, i farmaci antivirali e gli antibiotici, nonché il progresso della cooperazione sanitaria globale.⁴

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2. "Ora spiegherò (*expediam*) quale sia la causa (*ratio*) delle malattie e donde / la forza maligna (*morbida vis*) possa sorgere d'un tratto e arrecare esiziale / strage alla stirpe degli uomini e alle torme degli animali". Tito Lucrezio Caro, *La natura*, trad. Francesco Giuncotti (Milano: Garzanti, 1994), VI, 1090-1093.
 3. Galeno, *Nuovi scritti autobiografici*, trad. Mario Vegetti (Roma: Carocci, 2013). Cfr. Rebecca Flemming, "Galen and the Plague," in *Galen's Treatise Περὶ Ἀλπιᾶς (De Indolentia) in Context: A Tale of Resilience*, ed. Caroline Petit (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2019), 219-244. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctvrk2wj.12>
 4. Le Fanu definisce "età aurea" della medicina il periodo tra gli anni '40 e '60, in cui la parabola del suo progresso, poi entrata in fase discendente, ha quasi raggiunto il suo apice. Per l'autore, questa "età aurea" si deve ad alcune tappe fondamentali,

Il grande balzo in avanti della scienza iniziato un secolo prima, dalla biologia alla fisica, contribuirà a quel “disincantamento” del mondo, la razionalizzazione intellettualistica della realtà, “per cui – con parole di Weber – basta solo *volere per potere*, ogni cosa, in linea di principio, può essere dominata con la *ragione*”.⁵

Tuttavia, le epidemie, al pari delle grandi catastrofi naturali, hanno continuato a rappresentare un elemento perturbante dell’ottimismo scientifico.⁶ Il virus della pandemia cosiddetta “spagnola”, definita “il più grande olocausto medico della storia”,⁷ che flagellò il mondo nel biennio 1918-1920, provocherà infatti 50 milioni di vittime e verrà isolato solo nel 2005. A più riprese, altre epidemie si sono diffuse in gran parte del mondo: basti pensare alla cosiddetta “asiatica”, all’Ebola o alla Sars. Mentre i progressi nella prevenzione, nel controllo e nel trattamento delle malattie infettive hanno migliorato la capacità di fronteggiare tali eventi, i processi di globalizzazione con la relativa mobilità ne hanno aumentato la minaccia e accelerato la trasmissione globale. In passato, le pandemie si diffondevano in modo piuttosto prevedibile lungo i passaggi militari o le principali rotte commerciali, ma la globalizzazione ha moltiplicato e reso meno decifrabili le possibili vie di comunicazione. Alle soglie del 2000, la frequenza e la velocità dei vettori di trasmissione umana e animale, hanno mostrato che non esiste più un unico percorso dominante per il movimento geografico e l’espansione delle malattie infettive. Le pandemie restano fondamentalmente incerte e richiedono la flessibilità di risposte di volta in volta appropriate, sebbene la stessa globalizzazione abbia anche facilitato la cooperazione internazionale, promuovendo una maggiore collaborazione tra gli Stati, nella ricerca e nella vigilanza sulle malattie.

tra cui la scoperta di alcuni antibiotici e antitumorali, la chirurgia a cuore aperto e quella dei trapianti, il perfezionamento di tecniche fino a quel momento pionieristiche e destinate a diventare routine, come le endoscopie e le tomografie, l’avvento degli psicofarmaci. Cfr. James Le Fanu, *Ascesa e declino della medicina moderna*, trad. Stefano Galli (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2005), 149 e ss.

5. Max Weber, *Il lavoro intellettuale come professione*, trad. Antonio Giolitti (Torino: Einaudi, 1988), 20.
6. Cfr. Mark Honigsbaum, *Pandemie. Dalla Spagnola al Covid-19, un secolo di terrore e ignoranza*, trad. Valentina Salvati, Rossella Monaco, Donatella Brindisi, Vincenzo Ostuni (Firenze: Ponte alle Grazie, 2020). Frank M. Snowden, *Storia delle epidemie. Dalla Morte Nera al Covid-19*, trad. Milvia Faccia (Gorizia: Leg Edizioni, 2020).
7. Patrick R. Saunders-Hastings, e Daniel Krewski. “Reviewing the History of Pandemic Influenza: Understanding Patterns of Emergence and Transmission,” *Pathogens* 5, no. 4 (2016): 66. <https://doi.org/10.3390/pathogens5040066>.

Il panorama si presenta, dunque, caratterizzato da una forte ambiguità. Da un lato, nonostante due pandemie globali in un decennio, l'opinione popolare negli anni '70 era che le società avessero ormai gli strumenti per prevenire, trattare e controllare le malattie infettive. La fiducia è stata ulteriormente alimentata dal successo dei vaccini nel ridurre la morbilità e la mortalità da vaiolo e poliomielite, in particolare nei paesi occidentali. Nel 1969, a William H. Stewart, *Surgeon General* degli Usa era stata attribuita, a torto o a ragione, una frase rivelatasi poi drammaticamente utopistica: ormai era giunto il momento di "...close the book on infectious diseases, declare the war on pestilence won".⁸ Dall'altro, nonostante un secolo di sforzi di prevenzione e controllo spesso riusciti, le malattie infettive sono rimaste un innegabile problema globale per la salute pubblica, anche per l'emergere di nuove malattie di origine alimentare e per la resistenza agli antimicrobici.

Inoltre, la nascita e lo sviluppo della sanità pubblica, con il consolidarsi dei sistemi di Welfare, hanno posto di fronte a scelte difficili, sia per l'allargamento della nozione del diritto alla salute, sia per la necessità del bilanciamento degli investimenti e dell'allocazione delle risorse disponibili.⁹ È evidente che la vulnerabilità dei sistemi si è mostrata direttamente proporzionale alla loro complessità.

2. La rimozione della vulnerabilità tra mito della salute e autodeterminazione dell'individuo

L'ambiguità sinora descritta ha contribuito a creare un clima culturale caratterizzato da altrettanta ambiguità, dove l'individuo da un lato si è sentito protetto e fiducioso, confidando ciecamente nel potere di controllo della razionalità scientifica, dall'altro, timoroso della possibile espropriazione della propria autonomia, ha rivendicato il diritto a porsi come arbitro insindacabile di sé, delle proprie scelte e decisioni nell'ambito della salute. Ne è derivato uno stato d'animo oscillante tra l'onnipotenza e l'angoscia, giacché, mentre l'assolutizzazione della domanda di salute e l'imperativo

8. Brad Spellberg, "Dr. William H. Stewart: mistaken or maligned?," *Clinical Infectious Diseases* 47, no. 2 (2008): 294. <https://doi.org/10.1086/589579>

9. Maxwell J. Smith, e Diego S. Silva, "Ethics for pandemics beyond influenza: Ebola, drug-resistant tuberculosis, and anticipating future ethical challenges in pandemic preparedness and response," *Monash Bioethics Review* 33, no. 2-3 (2015): 130-47. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40592-015-0038-7>

della qualità della vita pongono alla medicina richieste sempre più pressanti ampliandone lo spazio d'intervento, la privatizzazione delle proprie preferenze e la radicalizzazione del principio di autonomia ne criticano il potere, cercando di ridurre drasticamente la sfera di influenza.

In entrambi i casi, il rimosso è il sentimento di vulnerabilità, non più considerata come categoria fondamentale del nostro esistere, ma come elemento residuale, o perché suscettibile prima o poi di una soluzione tecnica o perché negato dall'autodeterminazione di un soggetto considerato sempre lucido e padrone delle proprie scelte.¹⁰ Sintesi di finitezza e di fragilità, la vulnerabilità è esposizione al dolore, alla malattia, all'invecchiamento e, come tale, strettamente legata alla nozione di dipendenza, di non autosufficienza e all'esigenza di protezione e di cura¹¹. La mortalità è la punta estrema della vulnerabilità e due evidenti manifestazioni di questa rimozione sono, sebbene differenti per motivazioni ed esiti, l'accanimento terapeutico e la richiesta eutanascica. In entrambi affiora il rifiuto di misurarsi in maniera umana con la morte: con l'accanimento terapeutico, la medicina ricorre a qualsiasi mezzo per posticiparla, mentre con la richiesta eutanascica l'individuo pretende di gestirla in prima persona, decidendone tempi e modi.

Per Foucault, il progresso della clinica si è accompagnato a questa resistenza opposta alla mortalità: “La salute sostituisce la salvezza [...] la medicina offre all'uomo moderno il volto ostinato e rassicurante della sua finitudine; in essa la morte è detta e ridetta, ma al contempo scongiurata; e se essa annuncia senza posa all'uomo il limite che questi porta con sé, gli parla anche del mondo tecnico, che è la forma armata, positiva e piena della sua finitudine”.¹²

Se il sogno dell'immortalità è stato una costante nella civiltà umana, una volta tramontata l'idea di trascendenza e quella dell'esistenza come viaggio, alla scienza medica è stata demandata la funzione di strumento per esorcizzare la morte. Lo aveva già preannunciato Eschilo, che nel *Prometeo incatenato* fa dire al suo personaggio, mentre sconta la pena di

10. Per Martha Nussbaum, alla base della moderna idea contrattuale di società vi è la “finzione di un adulto competente”, che non tiene conto di tutte quelle situazioni in cui si è dipendenti, vulnerabili e bisognosi di cura. Martha Nussbaum, *Giustizia sociale e dignità umana. Da individui a persone*, trad. Edoardo Greblo (Bologna: il Mulino, 2002), 35.

11. Estelle Ferrarese, “Vivre à la merci. Le care et les trois figures de la vulnérabilité dans les théories politiques contemporaines,” *Multitude* 37-38, no. 2 (2009) : 132-141.

12. Michel Foucault, *Nascita della clinica*, trad. Alessandro Fontana (Torino: Einaudi, 1969), 224.

aver violato il limite divino, che solo dopo aver donato all'uomo l'oblio della morte, poteva offrirgli il fuoco, la capacità tecnica,¹³ la quale risulta inseparabile da questa rimozione della morte, dall'illusione di poterla dimenticare o sconfiggere. La scomparsa della morte fa parte della rivoluzione antiescatologica prodotta dalla tecnologia e dalla secolarizzazione. Da questa prospettiva, la morte è diventata sempre uno scacco della scienza, che riesce a prendersi comunque la sua rivincita trovando per ogni morte – non più trapasso, ma *de-cesso*, semplice venir meno – una spiegazione logica e razionale. Da mistero, la morte si è trasformata in episodio, incidente di percorso che un futuro progresso potrà certamente prevenire in tempo. Sottoposta ad una *catena di smontaggio*, è stata frazionata in molteplici patologie, ciascuna controllabile e un domani forse anche evitabile, ma, come è stato osservato, questa decostruzione operata dalla tecnica biomedica non ha abolito la morte, ma la ha lasciata nuda e priva di significato, trasformandola in fenomeno osceno, da rimuovere alla vista.¹⁴

La narrazione fantascientifica ci ha presentato una versione ingenua dell'immortalità, à la Frankenstein, resa possibile dall'assemblaggio di organi, dal moltiplicarsi dei trapianti, dall'infusione di nuova energia vitale in un cadavere: un tentativo connotato sempre da una sorta di *ybris*, la violazione di un limite sacro che rende il risultato in qualche modo terribile. L'emancipazione operata dalla scienza biomedica usa invece il linguaggio del controllo, della prevenzione, della manipolazione.¹⁵

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13. “Prometeo: Liberai gli uomini dall'incubo della morte/Corifea: Quale rimedio scopristi a tale malanno?/ Prometeo: Infusi in loro cieche speranze./Corifea: Grande beneficio largisti all'uomo./Prometeo: Oltre a questo, poi, trasmisi loro il fuoco”. Eschilo, *Prometeo incatenato*, ed. Carlo Carena (Milano: Mondadori, 1960), 16.
 14. Osserva Alain Finkielkraut: “È impossibile dichiarare su un certificato di morte che qualcuno è morto di vecchiaia. Bisogna indicare per forza una causa: arresto cardiaco, embolia polmonare, incidente cerebrovascolare. Ed è il cattivo funzionamento di un organo l'incidente 'meccanico' a essere considerato il responsabile del naufragio finale. Tutte pratiche rivelatrici dell'inconscia speranza che un giorno si possa 'riparare' tutto”. Alain Finkielkraut, *Noi, i moderni*, trad. Marina Valensise (Torino: Lindau 2006), 286. Cfr. Zygmunt Bauman, *Il teatro dell'immortalità. Mortalità, immortalità e altre strategie di vita*, trad. Giovanni Arganese (Bologna: il Mulino, 1995), 229. Cfr. Philippe Ariès, *Storia della morte in Occidente: dal Medioevo ai giorni nostri*, trad. Simona Vigezzi (Milano: Rizzoli, 1978).
 15. Cfr. Edoardo Boncinelli, e Galeazzo Sciarretta, *Verso l'immortalità. La scienza e il sogno di vincere il tempo* (Milano: Raffaello Cortina, 2005); Guy Brown, *Una vita senza fine? Invecchiamento, morte, immortalità*, a cura di Edoardo Boncinelli (Milano: Raffaello Cortina, 2009). Robert Redeker, *L'eclissi della morte*, trad. Vincenzo Salvati (Brescia: Queriniana, 2019).

Tuttavia, l'accesso a una vita più lunga non è una promessa alla portata di tutti, ma limitata a precise aree geografiche e classi sociali, trasformandosi in una sorta di *status symbol* o addirittura in uno strumento di potere, qualora tale diritto fosse assicurato solo a quei tipi di vita giudicati idonei, in base a criteri politici o socioeconomici.

Ma si verifica anche il fenomeno opposto. Nell'ottica libertaria, propria della soggettivizzazione dei diritti, l'espropriazione della morte prodotta da una tecnica biomedica efficientista e disumanizzante appare soffocante e la reazione è sottrarsi, trasferendo anche il morire nella sfera della libertà. Morire bene passa a significare poter gestire in proprio questo processo, disponendo di sé con un atto di autodeterminazione radicale. “Naturale” indica allora quell'uscita dal corpo rivendicata come un diritto in caso di grave malattia, respingendo come “artificiale”, ossia contro natura, ogni intervento medico di sostegno vitale. Da *de-cesso*, la morte diviene *pro-cesso*, anzi procedura, la quale, paradossalmente, richiede sempre e comunque l'intervento della scienza medica.

Espressione di un individualismo che considera l'esistenza come questione privata e parla solo il linguaggio dei diritti, quest'atteggiamento è tuttavia una risposta inadeguata a un problema reale. La medicina moderna ha infatti contribuito prima alla de-sacralizzazione della malattia e del dolore, non più mistero né fatalità, poi alla naturalizzazione del corpo e della vita stessa. Se il sistema delle cure sostituisce la cultura della cura, il dolore, l'invecchiamento, la morte sono svuotati di senso: o spettacolarizzati o rimossi. Ne deriva un impoverimento antropologico, che d'altronde il rifiuto del corpo malato e delle cure non colma, anzi depriva radicalmente di significato, rendendo ancora più insensata la dimensione finita della nostra condizione.¹⁶ In realtà, dietro ogni domanda di morte si nasconde un mondo sommerso formato da domande di senso – senso della vita, del dolore, dell'invalidità – e da domande d'aiuto, per far fronte

16. “Che la vita sia mortale è certo la sua contraddizione di fondo, ma appartiene inscindibilmente alla sua essenza e non si può nemmeno non immaginarla in essa. La vita è mortale non anche se è vita, bensì perché è vita, in base alla sua costituzione più originaria, in quanto il rapporto [...] sul quale essa si fonda è di tipo revocabile e incerto. La sua realtà [...] è in fondo una crisi continuata, il cui superamento non è mai sicuro ed è tutte le volte solo la sua continuazione (come crisi). Affidata a sé stessa e rimessa totalmente alla propria prestazione, per fornire la quale dipende però da condizioni che non controlla e che possono quindi negarsi; dipendente quindi dal favore e dallo sfavore della realtà esterna”. Hans Jonas, “Peso e benedizione della mortalità,” in *Tecnica, medicina ed etica. Prassi del principio responsabilità*, ed. Paolo Becchi (Torino: Einaudi, 1997), 206.

all'incapacità e vincere la solitudine. Non si può fingere di ignorare che una richiesta così disperatamente antinaturale nasconda nel fondo una inconsapevole implorazione, un'estrema domanda rivolta ai *prossimi*, per ricevere conferma del proprio valore, pur nella malattia o nella menomazione, per essere accompagnati e consolati.¹⁷

Ne consegue un difetto di simboli interpretativi della sofferenza e della malattia, sia prossima che lontana. Il processo di *de-metaforizzazione* è stato considerato il trionfo della razionalità e dell'approccio terapeutico, giudicando retrogrado o comunque arbitrario ogni tentativo di interpretarne la dimensione biografica e simbolica¹⁸. Vi ha contribuito anche il declino del rito, inteso come gesto dal valore sacrale o religioso, patrimonio di una tradizione condivisa, sempre più trasformato in rituale consumistico o in scadenzario salutistico. I rituali delle gare sportive, i festival canori, gli *screening* da effettuare in base all'età, conservano del rito la gestualità codificata e la periodicità, ma non riempiono di senso il tempo che passa.¹⁹ Allo stesso modo, nel transito verso la morte, il commiato è spesso smarrito o anonimo e quel gesto rituale per eccellenza che è la preghiera risulta estraneo, perché appartiene a un codice di cui non si condivide più il senso.²⁰ La pandemia ha reso ancora più evidente

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17. Si vedano le considerazioni della psicologa Marie de Hennezel, che paragona la richiesta eutanasi a un iceberg, dove il sommerso, ossia le domande inesprese, è di gran lunga maggiore di ciò che emerge e andrebbe pertanto riconosciuto e interpretato. Marie de Hennezel, *La dolce morte*, trad. Antonella Viale (Milano: Sonzogno, 2002). Anche la "dignity therapy", di recente applicazione con malati terminali, ha come scopo favorire fino alla fine la stima di sé del malato, in modo da preservare il significato dell'ultimo periodo di vita. Cfr. Max H. Chochinov, *Terapia della dignità. Parole per il tempo che rimane*, ed. Giuseppe Moretto e Luigi Grassi (Napoli: Il Pensiero Scientifico editore, 2015).
 18. È la posizione del noto saggio di Susan Sontag, *Malattia come metafora*, trad. Ettore Capriolo (Torino: Einaudi, 1979).
 19. Cfr. Giuseppe Angelini, *La malattia, un tempo per volere* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2000), 59-60.
 20. "Abbiamo perduto i rituali e opponiamo resistenze culturali. Comportamenti come vegliare un parente, un amico che sta per lasciarci nella quiete di una stanza sono scomparsi. Non si osa più neppure pronunciare la parola 'morte', né accettare di vedere morire i propri cari. Le persone in buona salute non riescono a infrangere il muro di silenzio che le separa da coloro che stanno navigando verso l'ultimo porto. Nessuno sa più trovare le parole giuste, i gesti rasserenanti che permetterebbero al morente di andarsene più serenamente. E così, sempre più spesso, si muore all'ospedale, lontani da casa. [...] Inoltre, i medici di base delegano sempre più spesso all'ospedale la 'gestione della morte'. Ecco dove si muore, in un posto che assomiglia più a una fabbrica di terapie che a un luogo accogliente". M. de Hennezel, *La dolce morte*, 20-21.

tale perdita, con l'impossibilità di sostare accanto al morente e di celebrarne le esequie.²¹

Attraverso i media si è senz'altro più esposti alla conoscenza del dolore altrui, delle disgrazie lontane, ma, pur nella commozione o nell'indignazione, a prevalere è un sentimento di impotenza di fronte a uno scenario trasformato in spettacolo, che rischia di produrre assuefazione anziché solidarietà.²²

Questo è il motivo per cui noi occidentali abbiamo il più delle volte guardato alle epidemie presentateci dai media come a un fenomeno drammatico ma lontano, proprio di contesti estranei di fronte ai quali ci siamo illusoriamente cullati nel privilegio dell'immunità.

3. Il ritorno del rimosso: anamnesi della morte, domanda di senso e qualità della preghiera

La pandemia da coronavirus ha sbriciolato questa costruzione, che del resto presentava già le sue crepe. Il sogno della modernità di poter controllare la realtà si era già infranto per l'incapacità di dirigere o di prevedere tutte le conseguenze del progresso scientifico. Come osserva Finkielkraut, abbiamo dovuto prendere atto che “siamo esseri di ragione, ma non per questo viviamo sotto il sole della ragione”.²³ È interessante osservare che la prima reazione sia stata la ricerca del colpevole, a conferma della convinzione di muoversi in un sistema di cui è legittimo cercare il difetto di funzionamento in caso di blocco o di guasto. Il progresso scientifico ci ha infatti abituati a non considerare più le catastrofi né come una nemesi divina, né come uno scandalo metafisico, bensì come un problema politico, tecnico o scientifico, con il risultato di estendere in modo schiac-

21. Cfr. Marie de Hennezel, *L'adieu interdit* (Paris: Plon, 2020).

22. Il fenomeno veniva segnalato già nel 1923 da Max Scheler: *Essenza e forme della simpatia*, trad. Lucio Puzi (Roma: Città Nuova, 1980), 275. Cfr. Robert Spaemann, *Felicità e benevolenza*, trad. Matteo Amori (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1998), 145; Luc Boltanski, *Lo spettacolo del dolore. Morale umanitaria, media e politica*, trad. Barbara Bianconi (Milano: Raffaello Cortina, 2000), 235-270. Per Susan Sontag, di fronte a una scala troppo grande della sofferenza altrui, “la compassione non può che vacillare e diventare astratta”. Susan Sontag, *Davanti al dolore degli altri*, trad. Paolo Dilonardo (Milano: Mondadori, 2003), 77.

23. A. Finkielkraut, *Noi, i moderni*, 215.

ciante il campo della responsabilità, decretando la fine dell'innocenza assieme a quella della contingenza.²⁴

Per scongiurare questo dilatarsi smisurato della responsabilità, come osserva ancora Finkielkraut, bisognerebbe invocare il principio di realtà, che comporta variabilità, vulnerabilità e contingenza: “sottrarsi all’ alternativa tra queste due varianti del principio di ragione (secondo il quale nulla deve succedere senza che vi sia una ragione perché sia così e non altrimenti): la computazione, che afferma la calcolabilità di ogni cosa, e l’imputazione, che cerca il colpevole ogni volta che il calcolo è in difetto”.²⁵

Di fronte alla pandemia ci si è resi conto che la cosiddetta “euristica della paura” proposta da Jonas,²⁶ intesa come consapevolezza dei possibili esiti catastrofici delle nostre azioni, costituisce una risposta insufficiente e in fin dei conti sconsigliata, perché la percezione del pericolo futuro contribuisce senz’altro a una maggiore precauzione, ma il senso di minaccia finisce per paralizzare la capacità di reagire. Doversi arrendere all’imponderabile, a ciò che anche con un’attenta indagine razionale sul processo causale e sugli effetti ha offerto ben poche certezze, ha prodotto un evidente smarrimento delle coscienze, ma l’improvviso faccia a faccia con la morte non ha avuto un esito radicalmente negativo. Dover prestare un “assenso ontologico alla finitudine”²⁷ per qualcuno è stato uno scacco, ma per molti ha rappresentato una opportunità di riflessione. La temporalità dilatata, la deprivazione sensoriale e di stimoli esterni, i ritmi meno incalzanti, gli spazi più limitati, hanno originato in qualche caso atteggiamenti depressivi, ma in molti altri casi hanno favorito un contatto con il proprio mondo interiore, rivelandosi una opportunità per ridimensionare l’attivismo, la tendenza a una esteriorità e presenzialità esasperate o al bisogno compulsivo di movimento. Non di rado è stata la possibilità di relativizzare i propri interessi, di riordinare le priorità, di ampliare la dimensione della spiritualità.

24. “Agli uomini viene ingiunto di rispondere anche di ciò che non hanno voluto. Per dirla in altre parole: una volta il pericolo arrivava dall’esterno sotto forma di alea, di colpo del destino; poi, all’apogeo dell’ottimismo prometeico, arrivava come evento statistico da tenere sotto controllo attraverso la prevenzione. I due fenomeni non sono scomparsi ma oggi i rischi maggiori vengono dal *di dentro*: il più delle volte come prodotti derivati delle nostre azioni, delle nostre decisioni, dei nostri calcoli”. Ibid., 305.

25. Ibid., 306.

26. Cfr. Hans Jonas, *Il principio responsabilità. Un’etica per la civiltà tecnologica*, ed. Pier Paolo Portinaro (Einaudi: Torino, 1990), 35 e ss.

27. Finkielkraut, *Noi, i moderni*, 287.

Se è vero che le catastrofi non producono automaticamente una rigenerazione morale, è però altrettanto vero che possono rappresentare un detonatore di problemi, ma allo stesso tempo un’occasione per risvegliare la domanda di senso. Una ricerca di senso che non ha lo scopo di trasformare l’essere in dover essere, ma di indurci a una feconda pensosità, per risemantizzare quelle manifestazioni della vulnerabilità – il dolore, la malattia, l’invecchiamento, la morte – private di trascendenza e di spessore simbolico nell’orizzonte tecnologico e di drammatica consistenza nelle metafisiche giustificazioniste.

Non che la scienza sia rimasta muta di fronte alla pandemia, anzi: tuttavia il suo chiasso assordante ha lasciato nude le domande essenziali e i suoi bollettini di guerra, con un linguaggio oscillante tra la sconfitta e il trionfalismo, hanno avuto l’effetto di accrescere lo smarrimento. L’anamnesi della morte ha riportato alla ribalta ciò che era divenuto osceno, con la violenta irruzione di immagini non più lontane nel tempo e nello spazio, ma drammaticamente vicine.

Il pianto è stato forse la prima manifestazione di una ritrovata sensibilità contro il freddo razionalismo tecnoscientifico. L’affermazione di Victor Hugo: “Qui ne pleure pas ne voit pas”,²⁸ trova eco in Miguel de Unamuno, il quale considerava il saper piangere la suprema saggezza al pari della filosofia, perché “no basta curar la peste, hay que saber llorarla” e il piangere tutti assieme rende le proprie pene un’unica pena comune, così come la grande prerogativa del tempio è quella di essere un luogo dove si può piangere con gli altri.²⁹

Una *euristica del pianto* ci mostra quanto sia importante questa espressione di umanità di fronte a ciò che è razionalmente incomprensibile, forse via per la guarigione dell’aridità del cuore, che consente di

28. Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables, I* (Paris: Garnier 2018), 885.

29. “Un pedante que vio a Solón llorar la muerte de un hijo, le dijo: ‘¿Para qué lloras así, si eso de nada sirve?’ Y el sabio le respondió: ‘Por eso precisamente, porque no sirve’. Claro está que el llorar sirve de algo, aunque no sea más que de desahogo; pero bien se ve el profundo sentido de la respuesta de Solón al impertinente. Y estoy convencido de que resolveríamos muchas cosas si saliendo todos a la calle, y poniendo a luz nuestras penas, que acaso resultasen una sola pena común, nos pusiéramos en común a llorarlas y a dar gritos al cielo y a llamar a Dios. Aunque no nos oyese, que sí nos oiría. Lo más santo de un templo es que es el lugar a que se va a llorar en común. Un *Miserere*, cantado en común por una muchedumbre, azotada del destino, vale tanto como una filosofía. No basta curar la peste, hay que saber llorarla. ¡Sí, hay que saber llorar! Y acaso esta es la sabiduría suprema”. Miguel de Unamuno, *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida*, (Madrid: Verbum, 2019), 23.

scoprire l'irripetibilità e l'unicità di ogni singolo essere umano.³⁰ Ben lontano dalla radicale adesione all'ingenua promessa dell'Illuminismo espressa da Schiller nell'*Inno alla gioia*: un futuro dove la sofferenza sarebbe stata respinta o persino annullata,³¹ un mondo senza dolore. È il tentativo di giustificare in una gabbia logica anche l'ingiustificabile o l'imperdonabile come avviene nel *Regno della grazia* di Leibniz (*Reich der Gnade*) – “il più perfetto dei mondi”³² – o nel kantiano *Regno dei fini* (*Reich der Zwecke*).³³

Forse proprio in quanto evento irriducibile alla pura logica, la pandemia, considerata inizialmente come un problema del sistema sanitario, della finanza mondiale, di protezione civile o di coordinamento tra stati nazione, è diventata invece l'occasione per risvegliare il senso del sacro e il bisogno di affidamento al divino. Si è prodotta una inversione di tendenza. Nella modernità, da un lato è stato il progresso della scienza a decretare spesso il declino del sacro, dichiarando superflua l'“ipotesi Dio”, secondo la nota espressione di Laplace. Dall'altro, la questione del male, tragicamente sperimentata con i genocidi del XX secolo, ha costituito quello scandalo teologico che ha indotto molti credenti a negare qualsiasi teodicea e l'esistenza stessa di Dio.³⁴ L'effetto dell'affermarsi di un umanesimo laico, senza trascendenza è stata la privatizzazione o l'irrelevanza della preghiera. Per molti sociologi della religione, se nelle società secolarizzate molti ancora pregano, lo fanno per ottenere qualcosa, ma

30. Finkielkraut, *Noi, i moderni*, 39-40.

31. “L'uomo a cui la sorte benevola/concesse di essere amico di un amico,/chi ha ottenuto una donna leggiadra,/unica il suo giubilo al nostro!/Sì, chi anche una sola anima/ possa dir sua nel mondo!/ Chi invece non c'è riuscito,/lasci piangente e furtivo questa compagnia”. Friedrich Schiller, “Inno alla gioia,” in *Poesie filosofiche*, trad. Giovanna Pinna (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2005), 110.

32. “Tutte le menti, sia degli uomini sia dei genii [= angeli], entrando per mezzo della ragione o delle verità eterne in una specie di società con Dio, sono membri della città di Dio, cioè del più perfetto Stato, formato e governato dal più grande e dal migliore dei monarchi: in cui non c'è delitto senza castigo, né buona azione senza ricompensa proporzionata, e infine, tanta virtù e tanta felicità quante ne sono possibili [...]”. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, “Principi della natura e della grazia fondati nella ragione,” in *Scritti filosofici*, vol. 1, ed. Domenico Omero Bianca (Torino: Utet, 1988), 281.

33. Cfr. Immanuel Kant, *Fondazione della metafisica dei costumi*, ed. Vittorio Mathieu (Milano: Rusconi, 1994), 155. Si veda: Alberto Pirmi, *Il “regno dei fini” in Kant. Morale, religione, politica in collegamento sistematico* (Genova: il Melangolo, 2000), 60 e ss.

34. Si veda ad esempio la posizione di Richard Lowell Rubinstein, *L'immaginazione religiosa. Studio sulla psicoanalisi e la teologia ebraica*, trad. Giuseppe Sardelli (Roma: Astrolabio Ubaldini, 1974). Pur nello smarrimento, la negazione di Dio dopo Auschwitz non è stata comunque radicale, come si può constatare in Elie Wiesel. Cfr. *La notte*, trad. Daniel Vogelmann (Firenze: La Giuntina, 1992).

pochi credono che questa preghiera sia efficace.³⁵ In questo contesto, la preghiera sarebbe piuttosto espressione di una “pia speranza”, in fin dei conti una manifestazione dello scetticismo che aleggia anche tra i credenti.

La drammaticità della pandemia, con le circostanze straordinarie di isolamento forzato, ha invece riportato in primo piano, pur con un innegabile elemento emozionale,³⁶ gesti e riti che sembravano privi di senso, inutili o ridicolizzati. È emersa in particolare una dimensione pubblica della preghiera, grazie al pellegrinaggio alla chiesa di San Marcello, compiuto a piedi da papa Francesco in una Roma deserta. Un gesto ricco di elementi simbolici, perché il pellegrinaggio è da sempre il segno di un percorso interiore di conversione, che tuttavia l'autorità religiosa ha compiuto a nome della collettività, come se radunasse attorno a sé non solo i cittadini romani, ma l'umanità intera. Anche l'esposizione in piazza san Pietro dell'antico crocefisso della peste, il 27 marzo 2020, ha creato un legame ideale tra la nuova sensibilità religiosa e la devozione tradizionale, rappresentando un richiamo dirompente di spiritualità per chiunque, al di là delle appartenenze religiose e persino al di là della fede. La solitudine del Papa in atteggiamento orante era una supplica a nome dell'umanità impaurita, ma anche la manifestazione di una speranza più solida di quella prodotta dalle certezze scientifiche e di una fraternità più robusta della generica solidarietà planetaria, minacciata dal rischio del contagio.

La riproposta della dimensione pubblica della preghiera è stato un segnale di forte richiamo anche per i credenti. La modernità si è infatti caratterizzata per la progressiva esclusione delle religioni dallo spazio pubblico, per la privatizzazione della preghiera, per la netta cesura o persino contraddizione della scienza nei confronti della fede. Tra i credenti, la frattura dell'“ora et labora” ha introdotto la falsa dicotomia tra vita contemplativa e attiva, la prima considerata elitaria e spesso solo decorativa, la seconda accessibile a tutti, funzionale ed efficace.³⁷ La

35. Cfr. Bryan Ronald Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

36. Questo elemento è del resto presente in alcune manifestazioni attuali di risveglio del sacro che non coincidono esattamente con una rinascita del religioso. Cfr. Michel Maffesoli, *La nostalgie du sacré: le retour du religieux dans les sociétés postmodernes* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2020).

37. Scriveva nel 1960 l'allora cardinale Montini: “Religione e lavoro: vi è qualche cosa che non solo distingue, ma separa queste due espressioni della vita umana: talvolta esse si ignorano, talvolta si sospettano, talvolta si oppongono l'una all'altra. Spesso convivono senza aiutarsi; senza fondersi in una spiritualità omogenea; senza intrecciarsi in un'armonia equilibrata. Quando sono spinte ad avvicinarsi, si temono. A costringerle insieme, una inceppa la seconda, la seconda profana la prima. Si direbbe che non sono fatte per intendersi. Si direbbe anzi che l'opposizione sorta nella mentalità lavoratrice

dimostrazione che le misure precauzionali e i dispositivi medici potessero accompagnarsi alla recita di preghiere, che la fiducia nei vaccini non rendesse superflua l'invocazione a Dio si può leggere come una ricerca di equilibrio tra il trascendente e l'immanente, come l'apertura di un varco per legittimare le espressioni religiose e ammetterle nello spazio pubblico. La stessa chiusura precauzionale degli edifici di culto, decisa in tanti Paesi, è stata l'occasione per una riflessione più profonda sul valore e sul diritto dei riti religiosi, che non sono equiparabili ad altre attività ricreative e culturali al servizio del benessere delle persone, come vorrebbe una mentalità secolarizzata.

È emersa un'altra dimensione della preghiera, la sua qualità "politica", per usare una felice espressione di un saggio scritto nel 1965 da Jean Daniélou,³⁸ dove già si presagiva il rischio che il progresso tecnologico, l'accelerazione dei ritmi di vita, la socializzazione urbana avrebbero creato un mondo orientato ai valori materiali, separato dalla trascendenza, una minaccia per coltivare l'intimità e la vita spirituale. Partendo dall'idea che la religione è parte del bene comune temporale e non riguarda solo la vita futura, ma rappresenta un elemento costitutivo del presente, egli considera la preghiera, aspetto essenziale di tutte le religioni, come una dimensione fondamentale di ogni umanesimo.³⁹ Se la politica ha come scopo il bene comune, ossia dar vita a un ordine dove la fioritura della persona sia possibile in tutti i suoi aspetti, allora l'orazione è un problema politico, perché occorre creare le condizioni in cui questa si realizzi. Nella misura in cui una città non la rendesse possibile, tradirebbe il suo ruolo, giacché l'uomo, per la sua realtà corporea, è un essere sociale e non può essere concepito come svincolato da un contesto.⁴⁰

Ciò è ancora più urgente per la radicale estraneità tra mondo profano e mondo sacro realizzata dalla civiltà tecnica. Quando l'esistenza

contro la religione abbia qualche cosa di profondo, di irriducibile". Giovanni Battista Montini, "Un grande problema del giorno: Religione e lavoro," in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 1° aprile 1960, 3.

38. Jean Daniélou, *L'orazione problema politico*, trad. Luciana Marinese (Roma: Arkeios, 1993). Cfr. Gabriel Flynn, "A Renaissance in Twentieth-Century French 'Catholic Philosophy'," *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 76, no. 4 (2020): 1559-1592. https://doi.org/10.17990/RPF/2020_76_4_1559

39. Cfr. *Ibid.*, 19.

40. Cfr. *Ibid.*, 23, dove Daniélou cita la nota affermazione di Giorgio La Pira: "In una città un posto ci deve essere per tutti: un posto per pregare (la chiesa), un posto per amare (la casa), un posto per lavorare (l'officina), un posto per imparare (la scuola), un posto per guarire (l'ospedale)". Giorgio La Pira, "Discorso ai sindaci," 2 ottobre 1955, in *Il fondamento e il progetto di ogni speranza*, ed. Paolo Andreoli, e Carlotta Alpigiano Lamioni (Roma: Ave, 1992), 46.

collettiva era impregnata di valori religiosi, il contatto con il sacro era costantemente trasmesso attraverso le strutture stesse della vita, mentre nelle attuali condizioni di vita l'uomo rischia di spersonalizzarsi, perché, costantemente sottoposto a sollecitazioni esterne, ha difficoltà a ritrovare sé stesso coltivando l'interiorità. La preghiera rende possibile alla fede di interiorizzarsi, altrimenti questa rischierebbe di trasformarsi in una pratica esteriore o addirittura in credenza superstiziosa.

Per l'autore, che l'orazione sia un problema politico non equivale ad affermare una sacralizzazione della politica, né una politicizzazione della religione, in una confusione di compiti.⁴¹ Anzi, comporta una sfida che l'una può lanciare all'altra: la religione sfida la politica ricordando che è vitale per lo stesso sviluppo sociale adoperarsi per mantenere le condizioni favorevoli all'orazione, mentre la politica sfida la le istituzioni religiose perché incoraggino l'espressione collettiva dell'adorazione ed evitino che i luoghi di culto si convertano in residui sociologici di comunità sacrali. La questione fondamentale è riconoscere all'interno del mondo tecnico il diritto di cittadinanza dell'elemento religioso, l'unico capace di garantire un autentico umanesimo. Un mondo in cui la cultura si costituisse totalmente al di fuori di Dio, un presunto umanesimo dove la preghiera fosse privata di senso e resa impraticabile, non garantirebbe all'uomo la libera espressione di sé e forse neppure la sua sopravvivenza, come la storia ha tragicamente dimostrato.

L'emergenza della pandemia ha impietosamente rivelato che la razionalità tecnico-scientifica, nonostante le sue promesse e certezze, non possiede le risorse necessarie per affrontare la vulnerabilità quando le esigenze di cura dei più fragili diventano particolarmente acute. Senza una nozione concreta di fraternità, che postula una dimensione trascendente, il rischio è lo scarto del debole, come è stato vistosamente mostrato nel dilemma della priorità dell'accesso alle cure. Di fronte al trauma delle morti in solitudine di tante persone care, la modernità secolarizzata è rimasta muta ed è emerso il bisogno vitale di ascoltare e di pronunciare una chiara parola di fede e di speranza.

4. Conclusion

Il dramma della pandemia ha originato uno smarrimento collettivo per la consapevolezza della fragilità personale e della debolezza dei sistemi. Improvvisamente, la maggior parte della popolazione è stata posta di

41. Cfr. Jean Daniélou, *L'orazione problema politico*, 31.

fronte all'impossibilità di compiere azioni dirette e concrete contro il male dilagante e ha riscoperto il valore della preghiera, anche nella sua dimensione pubblica. Pur senza generalizzare questo fenomeno come una vera e propria rinascita religiosa, tuttavia vi si può leggere la ricerca di un orizzonte dove le categorie antropologiche della vulnerabilità e della mortalità trovino senso non soltanto in quanto potenzialmente sanabili, ma soprattutto in quanto costitutive della condizione umana e aperte alla dimensione trascendente. In questa prospettiva, esse rappresentano una provocazione per la mentalità tecnocratica, perché richiedono uno sguardo differente, capace di riconoscere il valore unico di ogni singola esistenza.

La prima pagina del "New York Times" del 24 maggio 2020, quando gli Stati Uniti hanno raggiunto il tragico traguardo di centomila morti per Covid, con una media di più di mille morti al giorno, recava il titolo "An Incalculable Loss". La riempivano nomi e cognomi di persone decedute, accompagnate da una scritta: "One hundred thousand. A number is an imperfect measure when applied to the human condition".

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What the Plague Tells Me and What it Can't: Moral Lessons from Two Novels

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Abstract


This article turns to Jack London's and Albert Camus' novels about contagion to try to tease out some of the moral meanings of the pandemic we are currently living through. In many ways, these works are prescient, and can thus serve as commentary on the situation we find ourselves in. In others, their narratives differ from each other and from our experience; the differences signal what is at stake in some of our circumstances. Camus' ideal of solidarity focuses my discussion. I show how certain conditions associated with an outbreak provide occasions for solidarity, but also examine several obstacles to it. Many of those obstacles, I contend, have to do with the limitations on what we can know – about ourselves, one another, and the world. In the end, I argue that complete solidarity may require us to reconceive our relationship to our communal past and the natural world.

Keywords: Camus, ethics, Jack London, pandemic, plague, solidarity.

Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee.

John Donne

In Albert Camus' *The Plague*, the priest Paneloux tells his congregants that after months of living with the plague, they are “now, perhaps, better able to comprehend what it was telling us unceasingly.”¹ Of course, *The Plague* is also trying to tell its readers something, and the first address is part and parcel of the second. In the aftermath of a world war, it may have been fruitful to read that novel as a figure for a fascist invasion. In the present day, we readers find ourselves in the unusual hermeneutic position of being addressed concurrently by a pandemic and by great literature about men besieged by contagion; the events literally narrated

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1. Albert Camus, *The Plague*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 222.

are of particular interest to us. In these pages, I will endeavor to mine this conjunction, triangulating to illuminate the philosophical import of our predicament through a reading of two highly relevant works, Jack London's *The Scarlet Plague* and Camus' aforementioned masterpiece. In many ways, these works are prescient, and can thus serve as commentary on the situation we find ourselves in. In others, their narratives differ from each other and from our experience; the differences signal what is at stake in some of our circumstances.

Like Paneloux and several of Camus' other main characters, I find contagion's chief significance to be a moral one. Specifically, I will focus on the ethics of solidarity Camus articulates mainly from the perspective of his novel's narrator and protagonist, Dr. Rieux. I find that ethic encapsulated in the quote from Donne that serves as an epigraph to this paper. From that perspective, the challenge contagion poses to each of us is to confront it, as a threat to all. (I leave the scope of "all" unspecified for now; I will argue below that it's broader than we might suspect.) A reader could quite reasonably doubt that Camus' message offers much grist for the mill of a philosophical project. After all, he describes the fight against the plague more than once in the simplest of terms, as "common decency," which in Rieux's case just amounts to "doing his job."² Camus never expounds a set of principles in the manner of eminent moralists, though he hardly lacked the wherewithal to do so. Further, the novel sounds a powerful warning against theory in the voice of Tarrou, who found that sophisticated arguments undergird the human willingness to murder that he sees as continuous with plague.³ However, I won't be enumerating a set of rules for solidarity, or even try to argue directly for its practice. Rather, I will try to illuminate it by identifying and scrutinizing the obstacles that work against it in the context of a pandemic, since I believe that can help us understand what it means for us and highlight the choices it confronts us with. I also believe this is consonant with the spirit of Camus' work, whose ideal of solidarity is no less powerful for its simplicity.

I begin by examining behavior, both in the works of literature that occupy us and in our recent experience, that undermines or flies in the face of solidarity, and focus on it through much of the essay. I want to understand what motivates it. There may be no unified, monolithic explanation for it, but my reading highlights several important and recurring

2. Camus, *The Plague*, 163.

3. *Ibid.*, 248.

factors. The great practical difficulty of detecting pathogenic threats can often lead us to fall back on indefensible heuristics based on motivated reasoning, itself rooted in division rather than broader unity. For example, we arbitrarily link groups or behavior we frown upon to the menace of contagion. I identify a certain tension between the sanitary effects of physical distance and its moral effects, which arguably include diminished concern. Lacking unity of purpose, the various actors threatened by contagion are often at cross-purposes. I argue that viewing events through the lens of prior narratives can foreclose solidary responses. A conspicuous feature in the narratives I discuss is the tendency to disown the peril as my own, linking it instead to a group of others. I also explore the converse tendency to confront it as my exclusive concern, dismissing what it means to others who face it along with me. I suggest that experience's ability to redefine our values can serve as a corrective to such narratives and the moral obstruction they create. However, beyond moral questions about how we conceptualize our plight, it remains the case that inequalities and divisions that precede the outbreak make a real difference to the danger it poses to different societies and different strata within societies. Realizing this highlights a pandemic's potential as a catalyst for egalitarian change, but I also explain how social divisions can harden under the changing conditions it brings about. Ultimately, genuine solidarity would demand not just bridging divisions within communities but reconceptualizing our relationship to the natural world and the past. Recognizing the ways in which existence may be absurd can both motivate the pursuit of solidarity and temper the hope for enduring, wholesale improvement of the conditions we face.

The urban flight the plague sets off presents a conspicuous foil to solidarity. In London's novel,

the people [...] fled from the city by millions – at first the rich, in their private motor-cars and dirigibles, and then the great mass of the population, on foot, carrying the plague with them, themselves starving and pillaging the farmers and all the towns and villages on the way.⁴

Early in 2020, when New York became the regional epicenter of the Coronavirus pandemic, its wealthy residents fled to their summer homes in rural areas.⁵ Late that year, thousands of passengers crammed

4. Jack London, *The Scarlet Plague* (Orinda, CA: SeaWolf Press, 2018), 67.

5. Tracey Tully and Stacey Stowe, "The Wealthy Flee Coronavirus. Vacation Towns

onto trains departing London hours before travel restrictions meant to curb the spread of a new, more contagious variant of the virus went into effect.⁶ In Camus' novel, Oran's authorities forestall that flight by closing and guarding the town's gates. Raymond Rambert's efforts to elude those barriers will occupy us in detail below. They represent one way of trying to dissociate from contagion: by disowning it as *my* problem. Its converse is to accept it threatens *me*, but disregard or deny that it threatens *everyone* alike. I will discuss both these foils to solidarity.

What underwrites behavior like I've just described? Although solidarity is an ethical challenge, I believe it is conditioned by what we can know: about ourselves, about one another and about the world. Several of the impediments to solidarity I examine will be of that nature.

The story of *The Scarlet Plague* is narrated retrospectively by Professor Smith, the last survivor of the world before the plague, to his feral grandsons. That device provides the occasion for making explicit a fact we might ordinarily find too obvious to notice: the plague is invisible. As such, as Smith's grandsons object, it does not compel belief. Even the tangible dead rat that serves as the plague's first harbinger in Camus' novel provokes a strong skeptical reaction: "the concierge... was genuinely outraged. On one point he was categorical: 'There weren't no rats here.' In vain the doctor assured him that there was a rat, presumably dead, on the second-floor landing; M. Michel's conviction wasn't to be shaken."⁷ Oran's public health officials tiptoe around saying – even among themselves – that there might be an outbreak of plague. As with other truths that are not self-evident, such as historical facts, anthropogenic climate change or the likely outcome of proposed policies, belief in the plague may be conditioned by motivated reasoning. One of the aims that guide such reasoning is preserving the status quo. Another is group loyalty, since the profession of beliefs that unite a group generally leads to acceptance by it. In our day, we've seen resistance to believing in the COVID-19 virus and the danger it presents ranging from statements by officials in the United States, Brazil and Mexico minimizing the risk it poses, to outright claims from conspiracy theorists that the "scamdemic" is a hoax designed to

Respond: Stay Away." *The New York Times*, March 25, 2020. <https://nyti.ms/3vQgsXV>.

6. April Roach, "Queues at London train stations as crowds flee the capital before tough Tier 4 restrictions come into force" *The Evening Standard*, December 20, 2020. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/queues-london-train-stations-tier-4-covid-restrictions-b394242.html>.
7. Camus, *The Plague*, 7&ff.

advance some nefarious political agenda; it is easy to believe motivated reasoning underlies such professions.

The characters in Camus' and London's novels are not in the same epistemological position as each other or as we are. In *The Plague*, the outbreak is confined to Oran, which is then closed off from the rest of the world; their environs are the stage for the plague as a whole. By contrast, in London's novel and in our world, the outbreak is global. Thus, the events unfold outside any one individual's purview; nobody is in a position to follow a non-trivial cross-section of the developments related to the contagion directly. Intercontinental communication breaks off just after Professor Smith learns the serum against the scarlet plague has been discovered in Berlin; he can only speculate that it came too late. Nevertheless, he and his dwindling group do traverse much of California, witnessing and suffering the descent into chaos firsthand. There is an interlude, however, during which Smith's window on events approximates one familiar to many of us in the 21st century: after a student dies of the scarlet plague in his lecture, he agrees with his brother to quarantine at home until he can determine whether he has been infected. "To all of this I agreed, staying in my house and for the first time in my life attempting to cook. And the plague did not come out on me. By means of the telephone I could talk with whomsoever I pleased and get the news. Also, there were the newspapers, and I ordered all of them to be thrown up to my door so that I could know what was happening with the rest of the world."⁸ Thus, he learns of the chaos engulfing other major American cities. I would argue that during that interlude he glimpses hyperreality, approaching what Baudrillard calls a "simulacrum," a self-enclosed system of signs and references that no longer connects with direct experience. The fact that many of us experience the pandemic thus, on screens, ensconced in the privacy of our homes, affords us the epistemic latitude to entertain, for instance, the aforementioned conspiracy theories.

This position so many of us occupy, of sympathetic spectators outside the fray, mirrors that of the outer, uninfected world on Oran. It is worth noting that Rieux contrasts that position with solidarity and finds it wanting:

Sometimes at midnight, in the great silence of the sleep-bound town, the doctor turned on his radio... And from the ends of the earth, across thousands of miles of land and sea, kindly, well-meaning speakers tried to voice

8. London, *The Scarlet Plague*, 66.

their fellow-feeling, and indeed did so, but at the same time proved the utter incapacity of every man truly to share in suffering that he cannot see. “Oran! Oran!” In vain the call rang over oceans, in vain Rieux listened hopefully; always the tide of eloquence began to flow, bringing home still more the unbridgeable gulf that lay between Grand[s humble decency] and the speaker. “Oran, we’re with you!” they called emotionally. But not, the doctor told himself, to love or to die together – “and that’s the only way. They’re too remote.”⁹

For Camus, the distance that keeps outsiders safe also precludes actual solidarity, even when the airwaves bridge it. Is that point (as) plausible in the context of a global pandemic, in which most of the distant, ethereal communicants endure the same ordeal, sheltering from the same danger? I believe it is. Byung-Chul Han observes that

[t]he virus isolates and individualizes us. It doesn’t generate any strong collective feeling. Somehow, each worries only about his own survival. The solidarity that consists in keeping our distance from each other isn’t a solidarity that enables us to dream of a different, more peaceful and just, society.¹⁰

If every man pursues his own self-interest, that symmetry of purpose won’t yield any unity worth the name among like-minded egoists. Hannah Arendt observes in another context that

reality is not guaranteed by the ‘common nature’ of all men who constitute it, but rather by the fact that, differences of position and the resulting variety of perspectives notwithstanding, everybody is always concerned with the same object... [S]ingular experience... does not cease to be singular if the same experience is multiplied innumerable times.¹¹

Exiled from a common sphere in which they can appear to each other, men fade into the unreality of pure privacy. Solidarity with a sign is not possible.

If pathogens are invisible, their effects and their human vessels are not. Under the shadow of contagion, the danger posed by proximity, which in other circumstances is shared willingly, for instance, between lovers, or

9. Camus, *The Plague*, 138&ff.

10. “La emergencia viral y el mundo de mañana.” *El País*, March 22, 2020. <https://elpais.com/ideas/2020-03-21/la-emergencia-viral-y-el-mundo-de-manana-byung-chul-han-el-filosofo-surcoreano-que-piensa-desde-berlin.html>. Translation mine.

11. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: UChicago Press, 1998), 57&ff.

physicians and patients, and unwillingly, say, by two men on a lifeboat, becomes endemic to human (and, as I explain below, interspecies) contact. However, this way of putting it can be misleading if it implies that the outbreak alters the risks of proximity but supervenes independently of it. London suggests that risk is never fully calculable:

Long and long and long ago, when there were only a few men in the world, there were few diseases. But as men increased and lived closely together in great cities and civilizations, new diseases arose, new kinds of germs entered their bodies. Thus were countless... human beings killed. And the more thickly men packed together, the more terrible were the new diseases that came to be.¹²

Above, I noted that social cohesion can be one of the driving factors behind motivated reasoning, since groups are united by shared belief. But a potentially stronger catalyst of social cohesion is an external enemy the group can close ranks against. Solidarity's antipode is the temptation to conceptualize the danger not as a threat to us all, but as a threat by *them* against *us*. Professor Smith's dean slams the door in his face after learning that a student died of the plague at his lecture. In Camus' novel, the magistrate Othon laments that his wife and children are "under suspicion" after she nurses her infected mother. When the plague broke out in Athens, the citizens surmised that the Peloponnesians had poisoned the cisterns.¹³ In 2020, Houthi militants in Yemen chased Ethiopian refugees into the desert at gunpoint, blaming them for bringing the virus.¹⁴ That year, in the context of the pandemic, attacks on health care workers rose worldwide, especially in India and Mexico, largely driven by assailants who saw them as potential agents of contagion.¹⁵ More generally,

[n]ationalism and polarization have been on the rise in many countries, especially exclusionary nationalism. Efforts to contain and manage the virus have reinforced nationalist trends globally as some states turned inward to protect their citizens and sometimes cast blame on marginalized groups. The

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12. London, *The Scarlet Plague*, 47&ff.
 13. Thucydides, "The Plague in Athens" in *The Portable Greek Historians*, ed. M. Finley (New York: Viking Press, 1959), 274.
 14. Vivian Yee and Tiksa Negeri, "African Migrants in Yemen Scapegoated for Coronavirus Outbreak." *The New York Times*, June 28, 2020. <https://nyti.ms/3fmjD3H>.
 15. Samaan Lateef, "India and Mexico emerge as hotspots for attacks on Covid health workers." *The Telegraph*. March the 2nd, 2021. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/terror-and-security/india-mexico-emerge-hotspots-attacks-covid-health-workers/>.

response to the pandemic has fueled partisanship and polarization in many countries as groups argue over the best way to respond and seek scape-goats to blame for spreading the virus and for slow responses.¹⁶

The character of Raymond Rambert in Camus' novel embodies a richer, less adversarial variant of this antipode to solidarity that is worth discussing at length. Rambert is a journalist visiting Oran when the plague breaks out. Eager to return to his waiting beloved, he meets various people in authority to make his case to be allowed to leave the city in defiance of the quarantine. "But confound it," he tells an official, and then Rieux, "I don't belong here!"¹⁷ Rambert presents himself as an innocent bystander to a struggle that only rightly belongs to the citizens of Oran. This view of things is in line with the aforementioned examples of those who dismiss the plague as someone else's problem, but its basis is different, or at least more explicit. Rambert apprehends his life as following a given script, which Oran's problems aren't part of: "The truth is I wasn't brought into the world to write newspaper articles. But it's quite likely I was brought into the world to live with a woman. That's reasonable enough, isn't it?"¹⁸

Rambert presents himself as living out a narrative with a given *telos*. Curiously, it is not a *telos* he takes responsibility for as the author of his story, not one he sees himself as choosing, but one he has guessed at ("it's quite likely") and tries to live out. A powerful limitation on any use of narrative as a guide to action lies in a point first discerned by Schelling, and transmitted from him to Kierkegaard to Richard Wollheim to Bernard Williams: life can only be understood backwards, but must be lived forwards. As my life unfolds, I never have a stable vantage point outside the process of living from which to view it. For example, Rambert guesses that he was brought into the world to live with a woman, and that his nascent relationship with the woman he strives to return to will fulfill that end. But there is no way of knowing that *in media res*: for all he knows, that relationship will actually turn out to be the watershed that reveals to him that he cannot abide living with any woman. Williams brings Schelling's point to bear against Alisdair Macintyre's "radically, and revealingly, mistaken" proposal that "I can answer the question 'What am I to do?' only if I know of what story or stories I am part." "But how," Williams rejoins, "am I

16. *Global Trends 2040*. (National Intelligence Council: March 2021), 12. https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/GlobalTrends_2040.pdf.

17. Camus, *The Plague*, 85.

18. *Ibid.*

supposed to know what stories I belong to, except by deciding what I am going to do? If it is my story, that is the way in which I decide how it is to continue.”¹⁹ So even if Rambert’s life does turn out to be about his partnership with that woman, that can’t be a prior fact that informs his pursuit of the relationship; it is, on the contrary, an outcome of that pursuit.

It would be a simplification, if not an outright mistake, to say Rambert’s life turns out to be about living with a woman. Toward the end of the novel, once the plague has receded and Oran, reopened, he goes to meet her at the train station. Before they are reunited, he thinks to himself

If only he could put the clock back and be once more the man who, at the outbreak of the pandemic, had had only one thought and one desire: to escape and return to the woman he loved! But that, he knew, was out of the question now; he had changed too greatly. The plague had forced on him a detachment which, try as he might, he couldn’t think away.²⁰

I identify this “detachment” with the perspective Rambert originally derides as “abstraction” when he accuses Rieux of living in a world of abstractions²¹, one that apprehends the plague as a threat to all, not only or primarily to my personal hopes. Yet “detachment” doesn’t exhaust the perspectival shift Rambert undergoes by the time the plague ends. To understand more fully, let’s consider how his quest to escape the quarantine illicitly ends. After repeated setbacks and hindrances, it appears Rambert has a clear path to leave Oran, but he desists and instead joins Rieux’s “sanitation brigades,” a personally risky enterprise aimed at curtailing the plague.

Rambert said he’d thought it over very carefully, and his views hadn’t changed, but if he went away, he would feel ashamed of himself, and that would embarrass his relations with the woman he loved. Showing more animation, Rieux told him that was sheer nonsense; there was nothing shameful in preferring happiness. “Certainly,” Rambert replied. “But it may be shameful to be happy by oneself.”²²

19. Bernard Williams, “Life as Narrative.” *European Journal of Philosophy* 17, no. 2 (2007), 309&ff.

20. Camus, *The Plague*, 294.

21. *Ibid.*, 87.

22. *Ibid.*, 209.

I find Charles Larmore's reflections helpful in appreciating the implications of this change in Rambert's perceptions. Larmore critiques a tradition that he traces from Socrates to Rawls that conceives of the good life as one orchestrated by a rational plan in pursuit of "what we have discovered on careful reflection to constitute our true good, our best possibilities."²³ What interests me here is his critique of the assumption that our good can be discerned and settled in advance of living, then set up as the grail we seek. He observes that "this frame of mind embodies too great a timidity with regard to the power of experience to change what it is that makes life worth living."²⁴ It is easy to see how that criticism might apply to Rambert's originally single-minded endeavor to resume his nascent relationship in disregard of the demands of the situation he finds himself in. And in fact, the eventual evolution of his perspective nicely illustrates the transformative and revelatory effects Larmore thinks experience can have on our view of the good:

There is an openness to life's surprises, which it behooves us to maintain. For instead of being the mishap that sadly defeats our plans, the unexpected can turn out to be the windfall that discloses new vistas of meaning and forms of happiness that we least suspected or never imagined and that may change our lives and who we are in the most far-reaching ways. Sometimes we learn that we have been mistaken in the things we have hitherto valued. Sometimes instead we learn to appreciate human goods of which we had little understanding before, and making them our own is likely to alter the complexion of our other commitments as well.²⁵

To bring this to bear on Rambert's case, we can try to flesh out the evolution of his perception a bit further. He aspired to structure his life around the good of romantic love, which he understood in terms consistent with those Hannah Arendt lays out: "Love, by reason of its passion, destroys the in-between which relates us to and separates us from others... [B]y its very nature [it] is unworldly, and it is for this reason... that it is not only apolitical but antipolitical, perhaps the most powerful of all antipolitical human forces."²⁶ This is not the place to debate the meaning of "political"; I realize there are definitions on which the fight against the plague would

23. Charles Larmore, "The Idea of a Life Plan" in *The Autonomy of Morality* (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2008), 248.

24. *Ibid.*

25. Larmore, "The Idea of a Life Plan," 250.

26. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 242.

not count as such. For my purposes, it is enough to read the above as describing love as anti-*communal*, eroding community and solidarity by estranging the lovers from the rest. Perhaps in the context of the quarantine, Rambert discovers that the kind of love most worth aspiring to isn't, after all, one that excludes the larger communal context in which it unfolds, but one that is nourished by and responsive to it.

Rambert isn't the only character in Camus' tale who resorts to narrative to confront and make sense of the plague. The Priest Paneloux sees in it a reenactment of Biblical scourges smiting the faithless and warns his congregants in an impassioned sermon that they are paying the price for their iniquity.²⁷ In London's novel, Smith realizes the plague can't be an instrument of justice when it kills off most of mankind but spares the thuggish Chauffeur. Paneloux undergoes a perspectival shift that parallels Rambert's and mirrors Smith's insight. When the magistrate's young son loses a slow, painful battle against the plague, Rieux forcefully points out to the priest that the boy can't credibly be taken for anything but an innocent victim; the plague isn't a force for justice.²⁸ Thus, in a follow-up sermon, Paneloux again extols the virtues of following God's will, but no longer bases it on any presumption to grasping His designs: the suffering of innocents is incomprehensible, but the believer can't pick and choose which of God's choices he accepts; faith demands wholesale acceptance.²⁹ Plausibly, he too, in the mold Larmore sketches, has redefined the good he lives for in response to his experience: no longer is obedience to God wedded to a distinct black and white moral code; it now calls for the resolve to persevere in circumstances (like the suffering of innocents) that aren't obviously amenable to any such account. Camus reflects that "[a] pestilence isn't a thing made to man's measure; therefore we tell ourselves that pestilence is a mere bogey of the mind, a bad dream that will pass away. But it doesn't always pass away and, from one bad dream to another, it is men who pass away."³⁰ If he is right, it will probably be difficult to fit contagion into *any* narrative one might care to organize one's life around; it is not a sense-making feature of life but a sense-sundering one.

In Camus' novel, as in life, every attempt to disown contagion as *my* problem by marking and singling out those who are susceptible to it,

27. Camus, *The Plague*, 94&ff.

28. *Ibid.*, 215.

29. *Ibid.*, 225.

30. *Ibid.*, 37.

as described above, inevitably fails; that's why Rieux answers the magistrate's complaint with the indisputable observation that "if it came to that, *everyone* was 'under suspicion.'"³¹ He makes the same point in greater detail when Rambert asks him to certify that he is free of contagion to expedite his egress from Oran: "I can't give you that certificate because I don't know whether you have the disease or not, and even if I did, how could I certify that between the moment of leaving my consulting-room and your arrival at the Prefect's office you wouldn't be infected?"³² I can never round up, mark and expel all the plague's carriers, any more than I could the sinners Paneloux originally conflates them with. They aren't the pauper, health care worker or foreigner either. London's novel tantalizes us with a plague whose transmission is apparent to the naked eye: those infected "had died very quickly, and... one of the first signs of the disease was the turning red of the face and all the body."³³ The pathogen itself might be invisible, but one couldn't hope for a clearer mark on its hosts. However, it turns out to be deceptive: "It slew so swiftly when once it manifested itself, that we were led to believe that the period of incubation was equally swift... [W]e did not know... that the period of the incubation of the plague germs in a human's body was a matter of a number of days."³⁴ The COVID-19 virus is even more cunning: not only does it have a long incubation period, but many of those it infects never develop symptoms – and are thus much better positioned to propagate it than those sequestered with symptoms.³⁵ Thus, the propensity to divide and turn on one's fellow men when contagion threatens us turns out to be an exercise in futility. If I want to put a human face on the plague, the best choice is probably my own. This explains why, as Camus notes, in Paneloux's second sermon, "instead of saying 'you [have deserved it!]' he now said 'we'."³⁶

31. Ibid., 115. Emphasis added.

32. Ibid., 86. Rieux's point is apparently lost on contemporary authorities who demand such a certificate as a condition for the exercise of certain freedoms: <https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/fr-proof-negative-test.html>.

33. London, *The Scarlet Plague*, 56.

34. Ibid., 91.

35. Chunyang Li, et al. "Asymptomatic and Human-to-Human Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in a 2-Family Cluster, Xuzhou, China," *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, Volume 26, No. 7 (July 2020), https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/26/7/20-0718_article. Camilla Rothe, et al., "Transmission of 2019-nCoV Infection from an Asymptomatic Contact in Germany" *New England Journal of Medicine*, 382: 970-971, March 5, 2020. DOI: 10.1056/NEJMc2001468.

36. Camus, *The Plague*, 222.

Once one sees the futility of projecting the menace of contagion onto a group of persons, the virus' potential as a force for unity and equality comes into relief. I mentioned above that nothing brings a group together like facing a common threat, and the group under threat in Camus' novel is the entire city, and in London's, as well as our time, mankind as a whole. Public officials tell us that none of us are safe until everyone is safe. That premise is clearly congenial to solidarity. Yet in fiction and in fact, egalitarian social change is hard to come by during a pandemic. The virus may be an equal opportunity killer, but we don't meet it on a level playing field.

Dr. Rieux himself seems to have egalitarian sensibilities – we are told he begins his round in the area where his poorer patients live,³⁷ and doesn't charge them his fee.³⁸ However, he is the exception in Oran. The townspeople disregard the plague's first casualties until "other members of [the] community, not all menials or poor people," fall prey to it. "[I]t was then that fear, and with fear serious reflection, began."³⁹ It isn't that the better off are immune to the plague (I have already mentioned to how it ravages the magistrate's son), but it seems they're not the ones who bear the brunt of its attack. "Hitherto the plague had found far more victims in the more thickly populated and less well-appointed outer districts than in the heart of the town. Quite suddenly, however, it launched a new attack and established itself in the business center."⁴⁰ Only when the citizens of Oran finally come together to celebrate the end of the plague do the divisions between them momentarily give way; Camus underlines that the plague's potential as an agent for unity only crystallizes fleetingly: "Tomorrow real life would begin again, with its restrictions. But for the moment people in very different walks of life were rubbing shoulders, fraternizing. The leveling-out that death's imminence had failed to accomplish was realized at last, for a few gay hours, in the rapture of escape."⁴¹

Plausibly, "the more thickly populated and less well-appointed outer districts" were hit first and harder *because* they were more thickly populated. At any rate, this is the case in real life. For example, in Los Angeles County, which boasts the highest percentage of overcrowded homes (defined as more than one person per room) in the U.S., the contagion

37. Ibid., 9.

38. Ibid., 18.

39. Ibid., 23.

40. Camus, *The Plague*, 168.

41. Ibid., 297.

that has largely spared more spacious areas nearby spreads rampantly. Unsurprisingly, those who reside in such congested housing are the have-nots. “Working-class neighborhoods... all have [death rates] four times higher than the countywide rate... [T]hose who live in lower-income communities in L.A. County are more likely to die of the disease than those in wealthier communities.”⁴² In addition to crowding, slum dwellers worldwide face multiple disadvantages in the wake of a pandemic: sanitation and health care services in their areas are likely to be inferior; their homes tend to be poorly ventilated; their access to tests, limited; and they are financially unable to shelter in place.⁴³ Clearly, contagion has compounded and cast into relief the inequality of existing social arrangements. Camus may well have apprehended the potential for this; indeed, Rambert initially tells Rieux he has come to Oran “to make a report on the living conditions prevailing among the Arab population, and especially on the sanitary conditions.”⁴⁴ A link between dispossession and epidemiological vulnerability would help explain why “the cream of Oran society” feels secure in the knowledge that “evening dress was a sure charm against plague” at the Municipal Opera House.⁴⁵ But the illusion of safety is shattered when the lead soloist drops dead during a performance of Gluck’s *Orpheus*, prompting the patrons to “stampede toward the exits” leaving behind “the toys of luxury, so futile now, forgotten fans and lace shawls derelict on the red plush seats.”⁴⁶

In London’s novel, contagion does function as an agent of social change – not because of humanity’s solidarity, but because of its divisiveness. The result isn’t a more egalitarian world, but an inversion of hierarchies. In his narrative, Prof. Smith describes a *status quo* prior to the outbreak in which society’s most productive members have the least: “Our food-getters were called freemen. This was a joke. We of the ruling classes owned all the land, all the machines, everything. These food-getters were our slaves. We took almost all the food they got, and left them

42. Tony Barboza, et al., “L.A. County releases first neighborhood breakdown of COVID-19 deaths; poor areas hit hard” *The Los Angeles Times*, April 28, 2020. <https://lat.ms/3fKZggR>.

43. Lee Riley, et al., “A Billion People Live in Slums. Can They Survive the Virus?” *The New York Times*, April 8, 2020. <https://nyti.ms/3dB6Pny>.

44. Camus, *The Plague*, 12.

45. *Ibid.*, 200.

46. *Ibid.*, 200&ff.

a little so that they might eat, and work, and get us more food – ”⁴⁷ The rich, in their motor-cars and airships, spearhead the flight from populous areas that disseminates the plague more widely. It is all for naught: the plague culls most of the human population, sparing one in millions. In that context, Prof. Smith experiences something like the solidarity of the rejoicing citizens of Oran when he comes upon another of the very scant survivors, the Chauffeur: “I was afraid to look again, for I knew it was an hallucination, and I knew that if I looked the man would be gone. And so precious was the hallucination, that I wanted it to persist... Yet did I cry and desire to embrace him, though the Chauffeur was a brute, a perfect brute – the most abhorrent man I have ever known.”⁴⁸ The social stratification that divided the professor and the brute before the plague loses its importance; he encounters him not as a menial or an unpleasant person, but as a partner in a shared human existence that had been lost to him as he roamed the countryside after the last of his companions has died. Both London’s novel and Camus’ suggest that the divisions that structure both social existence and even our response to the menace of contagion recede in the joy of recovery, when aspects of our existence from which we have been excluded – a life in common with others – open up to us again.

This moment of basic fellow feeling is – as it was in Camus’ tale – short-lived. It is also one-sided: the Chauffeur isn’t alone and he has seized the opportunity the plague presents for social leveling, beating and enslaving his former employer, the heiress Vesta Van Warden. “He said,” Smith recounts, “that in the old days he had been a servant, had been dirt under the feet of men like me and of women like Vesta, and that now he had the greatest lady in the land to be servant to him and cook his food and nurse his brats. ‘You had your day before the plague,’ he said; ‘but this is my day, and a damned good day it is. I wouldn’t trade back to the old times for anything.’”⁴⁹

The Chauffeur has a rough counterpart in Camus’ novel in the character of Cottard, who benefits from a different kind of leveling and is as happy and remorseless to capitalize on it. Cottard’s guilty conscience and apprehensiveness drive him to the edge of suicide before the plague breaks out (and over the edge once it ends). But once it does spread, he flourishes. The suspension of police activity frees him from his fear of arrest, and he

47. London, *The Scarlet Plague*, 40.

48. *Ibid.*, 117&ff.

49. *Ibid.*, 128.

takes advantage of the sanitary restrictions on commerce to run a flourishing trade on the black market. However, the greatest boon to Cottard is feeling that he is no longer isolated by his anxiousness now that everyone is, to use Othon's words, "under suspicion." Cottard tells Tarrou "the one way of making people hang together is to give 'em a spell of plague."⁵⁰ Because it is not based on care for another but, on the contrary, delights in the propagation of one's own misery, such togetherness appears like a dark caricature or corruption of solidarity.

Although the plague can wreak upheavals, and even, as London envies it, winnow the human population almost to nothing, what it can't do by itself is quell the rivalries and bridge the divisions we live by. As we saw, in the city it puts further pressure on those who are already beleaguered. In London's scenario, it allows the Chauffeur to claim ascendancy by altering the environment enough to change which traits are most adaptive. The underlying divisions, however, remain entrenched. No pathogen can address them; it's up to us.

Camus tells us the citizens of Oran "went on doing business, arranged for journeys, and formed views" because "[t]hey fancied themselves free," but that "no one will ever be free so long as there are pestilences."⁵¹ It is possible to hear in this echoes of the Biblical warning that "the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When people say, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them and there will be no escape." (I Thessalonians 5) However, freedom is never absolute; one cannot even conceive of an unbounded freedom. The challenge is to take cognizance of freedom's boundaries. Ralph Waldo Emerson helps us do so in a way that illuminates the significance of pestilence:

The first and last lesson of the useful arts is that Nature tyrannizes over our works. They must be conformed to her law, or they will be ground to powder by her omnipresent activity... You cannot build your house or pagoda as you will, but as you must. There is a quick bound set to your caprice. The leaning tower can only lean so far. The veranda or pagoda roof can curve upward only to a certain point. The slope of your roof is determined by the weight of snow. It is only within narrow limits that the discretion of the architect may range; gravity, wind, sun, rain, the size of men and animals... have more to say than he.⁵²

50. Camus, *The Plague*, 196.

51. Camus, *The Plague*, 37.

52. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Art" in *Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Vol. VII. (Belknap Press: Cambridge, MA 2007), 20.

It would be surprising if these undeniable constraints on simple building did not apply to larger scale human habitations. For example, the choice of locale for human settlements has traditionally been constrained by the need for access to a water source. Contagion flags another natural stricture our civilization would be wise to observe, since so many of the infectious diseases to smite mankind have been transmitted from wildlife. As Camus depicts, the plague came to man from rodents. It is well known that HIV was transmitted by chimpanzees, influenza by birds, and so on. When forests or grasslands are razed and pressed into service for agriculture, the wildlife that resided there is forced into ever closer proximity with humans and livestock, multiplying opportunities for inter-species viral transmission.⁵³ The origins of the COVID-19 pandemic are being sought in Asia's wet markets, where live animals of different species are brought together to be sold for human consumption and where the virus was first detected.

Camus' claim that "no one will ever be free so long as there are pestilences" could be read as a rejoinder to Hegel's that, in order to become free, man had to live in a world of his own creation. The more ecosystems we take over and transform, the easier it might feel to believe that we now live in such a world. But contagion is a reminder that civilization's success is still contingent on discerning and respecting the natural strictures that limit it. In London's novel, its collapse brings home forcefully that we don't inhabit or rule a world of our creation. After a close encounter with a grizzly, Smith muses,

"Who'd have thought I'd live to see the time when a man would be afraid of his life on the way to the Cliff House. When I was a boy, Edwin, men and women and little babies used to come out here from San Francisco by tens of thousands on a nice day. And there weren't any bears then. No, sir. They used to pay money to look at them in cages, they were that rare." "What is money, Granser?"⁵⁴

In 2020, as its human residents sheltered in place, coyotes took to the streets of San Francisco, where they were chased by crows, frolicked in yards and on rooftops, admired the Golden Gate Bridge and bit a handful of humans who ventured out.⁵⁵ Similar scenes involving different species

53. See Rory Gibb, et al., "Zoonotic host diversity increases in human-dominated ecosystems." *Nature* 584 (2020), 398-402.

54. London, *The Scarlet Plague*, 9

55. Andrew Chamings, "New footage: Coyotes take to SF rooftops, frolic in yards" *SFGate*,

played out in cities worldwide. Clearly, human hegemony over these areas is a fleeting, fragile condition nature can push back against, as Smith acknowledges in retrospect:

‘The fleeting systems lapse like foam’... That’s it – foam, and fleeting. All man’s toil upon the planet was just so much foam. He domesticated the serviceable animals, destroyed the hostile ones, and cleared the land of its wild vegetation. And then he passed, and the flood of primordial life rolled back again, sweeping his handiwork away.⁵⁶

The much more encompassing pushback humanity experiences in London’s narrative marks a significant difference vis-à-vis Camus’ and our own experience. In the first, our species is pushed to the brink of extinction, and civilization gives way to chaos. This is no accident. When Professor Smith sees his local grocery being looted, it signifies far more than such acts do when executed in the context of narrow social unrest: “I did not go to the groceryman’s assistance. The time for such acts had already passed. Civilization was crumbling, and it was each for himself.”⁵⁷ The looters “inflamed themselves with strong drink and committed a thousand atrocities, quarreling and killing one another in the general madness.”⁵⁸

Samuel Scheffler has recently argued that much of what we value in life, we value within the horizon of a confidence, rarely thematized, that our lives, projects and acts are embedded within a history that will outlast our individual existence:

Humanity itself as an ongoing, historical project provides the implicit frame of reference for most of our judgments about what matters. Remove that frame of reference, and our sense of importance – however individualistic it maybe in its overt content – is destabilized and begins to erode. We need humanity to have a future if many of our own individual purposes are to matter to us now. Indeed, I believe... we need humanity to have a future for the very idea that things *matter* to retain a secure place in our conceptual repertoire.⁵⁹

May 8, 2020. <https://www.sfgate.com/living-in-sf/article/New-footage-Coyotes-take-to-SF-rooftops-frolick-15257171.php>.

56. London, *The Scarlet Plague*, 22.

57. *Ibid.*, 79.

58. *Ibid.*, 85.

59. *Death and the Afterlife*. (New York: Oxford Press, 2013), 60.

One of Scheffler's main arguments for this contention is his "doomsday scenario": "Suppose you knew that, although you yourself would live a normal life span, the earth would be completely destroyed thirty days after your death in a collision with a giant asteroid. How would this knowledge affect your attitudes during the remainder of your life?"⁶⁰ Scheffler's answer envisages dismay, grief, and a lack of motivation as our projects largely lose their point. London's is more visceral:

Drunkenness was rife, and often we heard them singing ribald songs or insantly shouting. While the world crashed to ruin about them and all the air was filled with the smoke of its burning, these low creatures gave rein to their bestiality and fought and drank and died. And after all, what did it matter? Everybody died anyway, the good and the bad, the efficient and the weaklings, those that loved to live and those that scorned to live. They passed. Everything passed.⁶¹

Whether one expects humans to become bestial when stripped of the security of the "collective afterlife" or simply unmotivated, it's clearly significant that that afterlife isn't at stake in the current pandemic. The voices of solidarity Rieux dismisses as too eloquent and distant at least offer the bedrock assurance that civilization endures unharmed outside the plague zone.

Nevertheless, contagion does have the ability to wreak changes in a community's way of life.⁶² This is potentially a very broad topic, but here I want to simply indicate one practice of fundamental importance that stands to be transformed by a pestilence: society's relationship to its dead. According to Vico, that relationship – specifically, the practice of burial – is one of the most basic and universal of human institutions. Contagion has the potential to alter and disarticulate even this most basic human institution. Thucydides relates that

as the disaster passed all bounds, men, not knowing what was to become of them, became utterly careless of everything, whether sacred or profane. All the burial rites before in use were entirely upset, and they buried the bodies as best they could. Many, from want of the proper appliances, through so

60. Ibid., 18.

61. London, *The Scarlet Plague*, 90.

62. At this stage, we are probably not in a position to discern clearly how the pandemic will alter our habits, and social and economic practices, but for a historical precedent, see John Hatcher, "England in the Aftermath of the Black Death." *Past & Present* 144 (Aug., 1994), 3-35.

many of their friends having died already, had recourse to the most shameless sepultures: sometimes getting the start of those who had raised a pile, they threw their own dead body upon the stranger's pyre and ignited it; sometimes they tossed the corpse which they were carrying on the top of another that was burning, and so went off.⁶³

So closely is burial linked to our human way of life, that Vico surmises that where humans are not buried, but are left as carrion for animals to prey on, we would find wild fields and empty cities.⁶⁴ In London's depiction, the rotting fields and emptying cities are the stage for chaos: "New York City and Chicago were in chaos... All law and order had ceased. The bodies were lying in the streets un-buried. All railroads and vessels carrying food and such things into the great city had ceased runnings and mobs of the hungry poor were pillaging the stores and warehouses. Murder and robbery and drunkenness were everywhere."⁶⁵

A community's ownership of its land, in Vico's view, is originally established by interring its dead therein.⁶⁶ Thus, the disruption of the burial practice can have significant implications when the dead are exiled from the city, as they are in Camus' novel and at least one location in our contemporary world. After a series of expedients are adopted, including transporting cadavers in recycled coffins to express burials in mass pits,

[f]rom August onwards the plague mortality... continued... far to exceed the capacity of our small cemetery. Such expedients as knocking down walls and letting the dead encroach on neighboring land proved inadequate; some new method had to be evolved... The first step taken was to bury the dead by night... The bodies were piled into ambulances in larger and larger numbers... The corpses were tipped pell-mell into the pits and had hardly settled into place when spadefuls of quicklime began to sear their faces and the earth covered them indistinctively... [H]owever, it became necessary to find new space and to strike out in a new direction. By a special urgency measure the denizens of grants in perpetuity were evicted from their graves and the exhumed remains dispatched to the crematorium. And soon the plague victims likewise had to go to a fiery end.⁶⁷

63. Thucydides, "The Plague in Athens," 277.

64. *The new science of Giambattista Vico*. Translated from the 3d ed. (1744) by Thomas Goddard Bergin & Max Harold Fisch. (Ithaca: Cornell Press, 1994), 87.

65. London, *The Scarlet Plague*, 67.

66. *Vico : the first new science*, ed. Leon Pompa (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2002), 190.

67. Camus, *The Plague*, 177&ff.

The plague does to the citizens of Oran something akin to what the Assyrians did when they compelled the peoples they subjugated to grind their ancestors' bones to dust: it obliges them to exhume and cremate their dead, eroding their foundational tie to their land. The question of whether the dead can be harmed or wronged is contentious, but if they can be, some of the expedients Camus describes adopted to streamline burials seem like strong candidates to do so. Most of those expedients, including mass graves, were reportedly adopted in Iran last year, abrogating traditional funereal rituals in the context of the pandemic.⁶⁸

The upshot of the foregoing discussion of the conditions and consequences of contagion is to suggest that solidarity should be a more inclusive attitude than we might at first have supposed. It is arbitrary to restrict it to my city, my countrymen, my species, or even the living if the dead and members of other species are threatened by it like I am.

Camus highlights the Sisyphean structure of the plague throughout his narrative. Rambert tells Rieux he hasn't understood the plague means "exactly that – the same thing over and over again."⁶⁹ Tarrou cautions Rieux that "your victories will never be lasting." Rieux concurs but rejoins that "it's no reason for giving up the struggle," then admits that the plague means "[a] never ending defeat" for him.⁷⁰ Rieux' bootless struggles, as he views them, parallel those of other characters, perhaps most conspicuously those of Grand, who rewrites the opening sentence of his book over and over. This should come as no surprise, since the novel practically ends with Rieux' patient's reflection "But what does that mean – 'plague'? Just life, no more than that."⁷¹ That is, the plague just brings into relief the general absurdity Camus attributes to life itself. In London's novel, Smith suggests the history of mankind itself might have that same Sisyphean structure: "Nothing can stop it – the same old story over and over. Man will increase, and men will fight. The gunpowder will enable men to kill millions of men, and in this way only, by fire and blood, will a new civilization, in some remote day, be evolved. And of what profit will it be? Just as the old civilization passed, so will the new. It may take fifty thousand years to build, but it will pass. All things pass."⁷² In his "reflections on

68. Melissa Etehad, "Coronavirus deaths in Iran lead to mass burial pits, changing the way families mourn." *Los Angeles Times*, March 18, 2020. <https://lat.ms/32dusxm>.

69. Camus, *The Plague*, 161.

70. *Ibid.*, 128.

71. *Ibid.*, 307.

72. London, *The Scarlet Plague*, 148.

the tedium of immortality,” Bernard Williams speculates that endless life could be deeply unfulfilling if it consisted of “the same kind of events repeated” since “[t]he repeated patterns of personal relations, for instance, must take on a character of being inescapable.”⁷³ But if life is absurd in the way Camus envisages, endless life would only make more evident a pattern that is already there to be discerned in our finite existences.

If our authors are right, existence itself poses the challenge Camus famously articulates in his theoretical writings: we must be able to imagine Sisyphus happy. That is, fulfillment must be found, if anywhere, in a world that perpetually balks the lasting satisfaction of our hopes. However, even if we live in such a world, our condition should also be grasped in light of our differences from Sisyphus. We have already discussed reasons to reject that contagion is punishment, as his endless task expressly was. But by far the more significant difference is that his labors were a solitary affair, while we can stand together against the natural evil of the virus if only, like Rieux, we choose to do so in the face of the adversity and uncertainty this essay has examined.

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El escotoma cultural en tiempos de pandemia. El empobrecimiento de la función simbólica del hombre

The Cultural Scotoma in Times of Pandemic. The Impoverishment of the Symbolic Function of Man

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Abstract

This text addresses the cultural scotoma of these times of pandemic. To do this, we seek to apply the metaphor of the scotoma, used by Oliver Sacks in the clinical setting, expanding it to examine the cultural phenomenon of the pandemic. This scotoma is characterized by the impoverishment of the symbolic function of man. This impoverishment can be seen, for example, in the cultural phenomena of statistical panic and the loss of the most basic rituals, through which man used to face death. The examination of this scotoma is carried out in the light of the philosophical anthropology inspired by Cassirer and Blumenberg, insofar as this anthropology highlights the existence of man in his symbolic function.

Keywords: Blumenberg, Cassirer, fear, Kant, pandemic, scotoma, symbolical function.

Muchas son las lecturas que desde la filosofía intentan abordar el fenómeno histórico-cultural de la pandemia. En el presente texto queremos abordar dicho fenómeno a la luz de la metáfora del escotoma. Para ello, examinaremos en qué consiste el agujero o perturbamiento existencial que estamos viviendo en tiempos de pandemia y que podemos caracterizar como un escotoma que oscurece la forma simbólica como el hombre enfrenta sus miedos. Consideramos que abordar este asunto nos permite examinar nuestro presente desde una antropología filosófica, que teniendo en cuenta la dimensión simbólica del ser humano, pueda asumir las manifestaciones culturales de ciertas enfermedades que no solo afectan a determinados individuos, sino que cuestionan también la comprensión que tenemos del hombre y de su estar en el mundo.

Para realizar este análisis nos basaremos en la antropología filosófica inspirada en Arnold Gehlen, Ernst Cassirer, Helmuth Plessner y Hans

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Blumenberg. Seguiremos también la ampliación metafórica que Oliver Sacks realiza del término médico escotoma, con el cual el neurocientífico inglés buscaba caracterizar una serie de afecciones que no simplemente se localizan en un determinado miembro, sino que alteran nuestra identidad psicósomática más básica, hundiendo al paciente en un agujero o estado de profundo perturbamiento existencial de dimensiones culturales. En este sentido, nos proponemos continuar esta ampliación metafórica del término escotoma llevándola al terreno cultural,¹ para pensar desde ahí una de las dimensiones sociales vinculada a la pandemia, en particular, la elaboración simbólica del miedo.

Para comprender la vivencia de ciertas enfermedades mentales extremas o el olvido de una serie de conceptos y problemas al interior de una determinada episteme, Oliver Sacks realizó la ampliación metafórica del concepto escotoma. Nosotros realizaremos la ampliación de esta metáfora atendiendo a los siguientes pasos: en primer lugar, indicaremos el punto de partida antropológico que seguiremos; en un segundo momento, nos detendremos en el análisis kantiano de la enfermedad mental como un ejemplo del empobrecimiento de ciertas facultades constitutivas del hombre, en particular de la imaginación. A continuación, examinaremos ciertas patologías de la conciencia simbólica como alteraciones de la función básica que configura la existencia humana. Y, finalmente, abordaremos el escotoma cultural que caracteriza a este tiempo de pandemia, a saber, el empobrecimiento de la configuración simbólica del mundo de la vida.

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1. Sacks usa el término médico escotoma para caracterizar determinadas pérdidas de funciones vitales de un individuo; utiliza este término no solo en el terreno visual, sino que lo extiende al campo mental e incluso social e histórico. El escotoma mienta normalmente una pérdida en el campo visual, ya sea de manera absoluta o parcial, rodeada por un campo de visión normal. Es realmente un caso de pobreza en medio de la riqueza, pues lo que realmente sucede es un oscurecimiento de nuestras sensaciones o comprensiones. El término griego *skoto* significa oscuridad. En este sentido, el escotoma es pues una opacidad en medio de la claridad relativa. Sacks amplía el uso de este término para referirse a una serie de fenómenos en los que se obnubila una parte de nuestro campo visual o comprensivo; por ello, suele hablar, por ejemplo, del escotoma científico. El término de escotoma tiene en la obra de Sacks un alcance realmente metafórico. Julia Casas, Elena Guardiola, and Josep Baños, "Los escotomas como metáfora en la obra de Oliver Sacks," *Revista de neurología* 67, no. 5 (2018): 187-191.

1. La oscilación humana entre riqueza y pobreza

Según Hans Blumenberg, la pregunta por el hombre ha sido abordada filosóficamente desde dos tópicos centrales, que responden a la perspectiva de la antropología negativa y a la antropología positiva. Por un lado, se ha considerado al hombre como un ser pobre o, por el otro, como un ser rico.² Cuando se le considera como pobre se asume que no es un ser biológicamente fijado, ni a un determinado ambiente ni a un modo previo de ser. Es pobre en la medida en que no cuenta con los recursos adecuados para existir o continuar viviendo en un momento dado. Su pobreza consiste entonces en que su necesaria apertura al mundo lo expone de tal manera que él no puede subsistir con sus fuerzas originariamente dadas al embate constante del medio en el que habita. En este sentido, la necesidad es para el hombre pobre el impulso a seguir existiendo y sobrevivir en un medio que lo desafía de un modo infatigable. Sin embargo, esta exposición constitutiva es también la fuente de su inmensa creatividad. El hombre se ve abocado a afirmar su existencia de manera creativa, pues, de lo contrario, perecería fácilmente, incluso contando con su originaria dotación natural. En esta consideración del hombre pobre se asume la existencia humana como un deber volcado a suplir las carencias de su constitución primitiva. A veces puede hacerlo y otras veces no. Para él, nada está previamente garantizado; un evento fortuito, por ejemplo, una determinada dolencia o enfermedad, puede hacer que todo lo que hasta ahora se ha conseguido se pierda y que con ello se altere la aparente estabilidad que el hombre ha logrado en su precaria existencia.

Y cuando se le considera como un ser rico, se asume al hombre como contando ya con una dotación plena de capacidades vitales para transformar su entorno y modificarlo a su antojo. En esta perspectiva, el hombre no se encuentra originariamente sometido a las condiciones del medio en el cual está instalado, en la medida en que puede prescindir o disponer de él transformándolo. Si se asume que el hombre se encuentra ya bien dotado, se considera también que sus respuestas son siempre expresión de su libertad inalienable. El hombre rico no es pues un ser precario, que se encuentra abocado en todo momento a sobrevivir, pese a su propia realidad, como lo tiene que hacer siempre el hombre pobre; en este sentido, su respuesta al medio en el que habita es manifestación de su

2. Hans Blumenberg, "Una aproximación antropológica a la actualidad de la retórica," en: *Las realidades en que vivimos*, trad. Pedro Madrugal (Barcelona: Paidós, 1999), 115.

posibilidad de ser, nunca su limitación. Para el hombre rico, su libertad no conoce límites. Para él, todo es pura posibilidad; nada lo limita ni puede limitarlo.

Estas consideraciones iniciales no son empero dos afirmaciones contradictorias que se excluyen mutuamente. Más bien, son dos caras de una misma moneda; y en cuanto tal se implican recíprocamente. La pobreza lleva consigo la fuente de una riqueza; la riqueza implica ella misma una pobreza. Tener en cuenta esta referencia mutua es necesario para evitar caer en abstracciones sobre la condición humana y sobre la forma como los seres humanos podemos experimentar el estar en enfermos y, a la vez, sobreponernos a esta condición.

Consideramos que una antropología filosófica que quiera abordar la experiencia humana del estar enfermo debe poder entonces tener en cuenta la necesaria articulación entre las perspectivas filosóficas que consideran al hombre como un ser pobre y aquellas que lo consideran como un ser rico. En concreto, queremos examinar los aportes de esta articulación para abordar la complejidad existencial y social del fenómeno de la pandemia generado por el Covid-19.

En medio de los acontecimientos del final de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, Heidegger dictó una emblemática conferencia el 27 de junio de 1945 en el Castillo de Wildenstein. Como lo señala Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, esta conferencia tenía como propósito ofrecer a la Facultad de Filosofía de la Universidad de Friburgo, que se refugiaba en el castillo, un marco de comprensión y, por tanto, de consolación, del momento histórico que se estaba viviendo a causa de la devastación generada por la guerra. El tema central de su conferencia fue la pobreza (*Armut*).

La reflexión que emprende Heidegger en esta conferencia tiene como motivo pensar una cita de Hölderlin ubicada en el contexto de la transición espiritual que marcó el paso del siglo XVIII al XIX. En medio de esta conmoción, que es también de cierta manera la experimentada por Heidegger al final de la guerra, el filósofo trae a colación las palabras del poeta cuando dice: “Entre nosotros, todo se concentra sobre lo espiritual, nos hemos vuelto pobres para llegar a ser ricos [*Es konzentriert sich bei uns alles auf's Geistige, wir sind arm geworden, um reich zu werden*]”.³

Para emprender su ejercicio de autocomprensión, Heidegger enmarca históricamente, en un primer momento, el alcance de esta sentencia hólde-

3. Heidegger, Martin. “La pobreza,” en *La pobreza. Presentación de Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe*, trad. Irene Agoff (Buenos Aires: Amorrurto, 2008), 93.

liana, señalando que el “nosotros” al que se refiere la cita es la indicación de un tiempo histórico que coincide justamente con Occidente. A continuación, señala que lo espiritual es aquí entendido como la determinación “a partir del espíritu”.⁴ Esta determinación conlleva a pensar la existencia humana en el contexto de su relación sublime (*erhabene Beziehung*) con todo lo que la rodea. El hombre no es simplemente un ser entre otros y en medio de los otros seres del mundo; su relación con lo que lo rodea es profundamente sublime, en la medida en que él sostiene (*trügen*) todo lo que se da. Y en este sostener el hombre mantiene una relación peculiar con todo lo que hay y sucede en su entorno, permitiendo que todo se dé en él, manteniéndolo bajo su guarda y habitándolo.

En estas consideraciones iniciales se indica la esencia del hombre a partir de la relación. Pero no se trata aquí de la simple y habitual relación entre un sujeto y un objeto. Siguiendo al poeta, esta relación se indica como sublime y con ello se quiere resaltar que el hombre habita (*bewohnt*) el mundo entablando y conservando una relación profunda con todo su entorno. Desde el sentido sublime de esta relación se puede pensar algo así como la pobreza y la riqueza. Obviamente, pobreza y riqueza no significan ahora dimensiones económicas o puramente artificiales; más bien, se trata de modos de ser de la existencia humana que deben ser pensados y asumidos en su profunda imbricación. Solo de esta manera podemos comprender cómo es posible que convirtiéndonos en pobres podamos, a la vez, llegar a ser ricos.

Normalmente, con el uso de las expresiones ser pobre o rico se quiere indicar una cierta relación con el tener. Cuando se dice que alguien es pobre, se señala con ello que *no tiene* recursos, por ejemplo, económicos y que, por tanto, carece de dinero, fortuna o capital para llevar una vida digna o poder conseguir los medios y recursos para ello. Y cuando se dice que se es rico, se indica que se tiene dichos medios para llevar una vida sin apremios, por lo menos aquellos que provengan de la carencia de recursos. No tener o tener marcan entonces la posibilidad de llevar una determinada forma de vida. Pero en el no tener o tener se da también una relación con lo necesario, en la medida en que la pobreza implica carecer de lo necesario y la riqueza un tener más allá de lo necesario. En este sentido, el tener guarda una relación con lo necesario para existir. La necesidad es lo que apremia y en su apremio abre la posibilidad de la libertad.

4. Heidegger, Martin. “La pobreza,” en *La pobreza. Presentación de Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe*, trad. Irene Agoff (Buenos Aires: Amorrurto, 2008), 95.

Cuando se tiene recursos, se puede satisfacer sin apremio las necesidades vitales; y cuando dichos recursos faltan se siente la coacción más extrema de dichas necesidades.

En este sentido, la riqueza no consiste simplemente en la posesión. Riqueza y pobreza tienen una relación paradójica. En efecto, teniendo muchas cosas, se puede, no obstante, ser pobre; y en medio de la indigencia más extrema, se puede empero tener la riqueza de lo simple, porque ya no se necesita de nada más. Esta no necesidad es pues también fuente de una relación carencial de lo que nos agobia en su exceso. Cuanto más agobiados estamos por poseer, más vulnerables nos volvemos.

Esta relación paradójica entre pobreza y riqueza no solo tiene una dimensión económica, afecta también nuestra experiencia de la salud y la enfermedad. Esta relación tiene un lugar en el análisis antropológico de la forma como enfrentamos nuestra vulnerabilidad constitutiva. Según lo señalado por Viktor von Weizsäcker en su antropología pática, la enfermedad tiene que ver con una cierta falta de salud, en la medida en que en el estar enfermo el hombre experimenta la coacción extrema de las necesidades vitales, sin poder por ello atenderlas o satisfacerlas con los recursos naturales originariamente dados.

En este sentido, la enfermedad es pues “el semillero de la mendacidad”⁵ de la vida humana, en la medida en que le revela al hombre la carencia extrema de sus recursos vitales para atender por sí mismo a su sobrevivencia. Por esta razón, en el estar enfermo la necesidad se vuelve realmente apremiante. Aquí el hombre siente por primera vez el desamparo. El hombre que antes creía que contaba con una buena dotación para seguir viviendo, siente que algo le falta y que esta falta lo pone ante el peligro mortal. Esta falta no solo le revela al hombre enfermo una necesidad extrema, sino ante todo le indica que puede morir.

Podemos retomar la idea central de la antropología filosófica de Ernst Cassirer, según la cual el ser humano en cuanto *animal symbolicum* busca en todo momento sustituir aquello que se le presenta como extraño e inaccesible por algo que pueda ser accesible a sus sentidos y comprensión. Para ello, contamos con el don de la palabra y el poder del símbolo. Pero no siempre podemos lograr esta sustitución.

Desde los comienzos de la filosofía, se ha asumido que la riqueza del hombre consiste en poder nombrar la realidad, haciéndola comprensible

5. Viktor von Weizsäcker, *Patosofía*, trad. Dorrit Busch (Buenos Aires: Libros del Zorzal, 2005), 54.

o por lo menos reduciendo la inquietud que nos deja, cuando lo inaprensible irrumpe en nuestro campo experiencial. El *animal symbolicum* compensa esta perplejidad con recursos paradójicos que establecen una línea de continuidad entre comprensión y lenguaje. Pero esta línea puede verse afectada o alterada por diferentes patologías, revelando la fragilidad de nuestra constitución simbólica. A continuación, abordaremos algunas enfermedades que muestran cómo, cuando estamos afectados de esta manera, oscilamos a nivel vital entre riqueza y pobreza.

2. La enfermedad de los grillos

Si bien Kant considera que el llamado sano entendimiento es un don natural que nos permite “la adecuación de los conceptos al fin para [los que] se emplean”,⁶ también es consciente de que dicho entendimiento se puede estropear, no solo en su función para el conocimiento objetivo, sino también en sus tareas prácticas. Gracias a esta adecuación no solo se puede conocer lo que sucede en el mundo, sino también orientar de manera adecuada la vida humana según la obediencia a leyes. Su uso práctico permite llevar una vida conforme a leyes, de modo tal que el ser racional que somos no solo puede conocer fenómenos, sino también “pensar por su cuenta, [...] ponerse en el lugar del prójimo (al comunicar con él), [...] y pensar en todo tiempo acorde consigo mismo”.⁷ Pero puede verse también afectado por la enfermedad o por desórdenes provocados por el mal uso del sano entendimiento común.

En 1764 Kant escribe su pequeño opúsculo precrítico titulado *Ensayo sobre las enfermedades de la cabeza*, en el que aborda de manera directa estos desórdenes y patologías. Según Kant, la alteración del sano entendimiento afecta tanto a la cabeza como al corazón. Estas alteraciones comenzaron a ser estudiadas en el siglo XVIII, cuando se prestó atención “a los aspectos menos agradables de la vida”.⁸ Inicialmente, el estudio de estos aspectos se centró en aquellas alteraciones que provocaban estragos morales en la

6. Immanuel Kant, *Antropología en sentido pragmático*, trad. José Gaos (Madrid: Alianza, 1991), 112.

7. Immanuel Kant, *Antropología en sentido pragmático*, trad. José Gaos (Madrid: Alianza, 1991), 116.

8. Andrew Scull, *Locura y civilización. Una historia cultural de la demencia, de la Biblia a Freud, de los manicomios a la medicina moderna* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2019), 140.

vida privada y social del individuo. Apartándose de la pretensión de los médicos de la época que consideraban de gran utilidad darle al paciente el nombre de su enfermedad,⁹ Kant se propone en su ensayo realizar, más bien, una cierta tipología de la debilidad que afecta a la facultad de juzgar y que tiene un impacto en el modo como un determinado individuo se comporta en sociedad. Siguiendo la escuela wolffiana de psicología, Kant se propone ofrecer una clasificación de la enfermedad mental. Esta enfermedad era normalmente dividida en las alteraciones de la cognición, de los afectos y de la voluntad.

La enfermedad de la cognición fue, a su vez, subdividida en las alteraciones de la percepción, del juicio y de la razón. Por otra parte, la enfermedad de los afectos o del corazón era clasificada, a su vez, en múltiples formas de acuerdo con el deterioro de las pasiones. Y la referida a la voluntad se catalogaba en testarudez, debilidad de la resolución y vacilación. En este contexto, la enfermedad mental era concebida como un cierto desorden en la mente que podía afectar a las diferentes facultades de la cognición y de la acción humana. La taxonomía kantiana está basada en el estudio de las facultades mentales en su poder y en sus desordenes, apartándose así de las consideraciones morales con las que normalmente la psicología de la época abordaba la comprensión y clasificación de las enfermedades. Kant clasifica la enfermedad mental según dos categorías. En la primera se presenta los defectos mentales que se dieron primariamente y que consisten en un desorden innato del cerebro. Aquí las facultades cognitivas nunca logran desarrollarse plenamente. En la segunda categoría básica se encuentran numerosos tipos de la enfermedad mental que pueden surgir por un defecto en el uso inadecuado de nuestras dotaciones naturales, provocando su pobreza. Normalmente, estas alteraciones son llamadas locuras.

En su ensayo de 1764 Kant se aproxima a los trabajos de William Battie, sobre todo su famoso *Tratado sobre la locura (A Treatise on Madness)* de 1758, en el que no solo se tipifica esta patología, sino que se intenta establecer procedimientos terapéuticos, que van desde la intervención quirúrgica hasta el aislamiento social, para evitar así la vergüenza familiar o comunitaria,¹⁰ que incrementa el desamparo del enfermo. Pero para el establecimiento de la tipología de la enfermedad mental, Kant se

9. Immanuel Kant, *Ensayo sobre las enfermedades de la cabeza*, trad. Alberto Rabano y Jacinto Rivera de Rosales (Madrid: A. Machado Libros, 2001), 63.

10. Simon MacCarthy-Jones, *Heiring Voices. The Histories, Causes and Meanings of Auditory Verbal Hallucinations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

basa en la forma como cotidianamente se manifiestan estos fenómenos y no tanto en el trato directo con los locos.¹¹ De esta manera, establece una línea de continuidad entre la salud y la enfermedad, ya que a veces resulta muy difícil discernir entre las diferentes manifestaciones fenoménicas de la enfermedad mental y ciertos comportamientos comunes entre los hombres, ya que incluso las leyes que sigue el espíritu en la vigilia son las mismas que las del sueño. Por ejemplo, cuando se cuenta con buena salud, incluso, “el alma de todo ser humano está ocupada en dibujar todo tipo de imágenes de cosas que no están presentes, o también en completar en la representación de cosas presentes el imperfecto parecido a través de uno u otro rasgo quimérico que la facultad poética inscribe a la vez en la sensación”.¹² Esta continuidad es tan natural como desconcertante es la alteración de la función productiva de la imaginación.

Una de las notas fundamentales del pensamiento moderno fue el establecimiento de un criterio de distinción entre el sueño y la vigilia¹³. Siguiendo estos esfuerzos, Kant señala ahora que, si bien los sueños parecen, *prima facie*, muy reales mientras duran, ya que son representaciones muy intensas en el alma y que incluso llegan a ser tan vívidas como las sensaciones en la vigilia (argumento sugerido ya antes por Descartes), hay que decir también, no obstante, que “los sentidos proporcionan una convicción mucho mayor de las cosas reales que una conclusión racional”¹⁴ o un juego libre de la imaginación. Pero lo sorprendente para Kant consiste en que, si bien se tiene claridad sobre esta distinción, vemos cómo en la vida cotidiana se obnubila, a menudo, o se borra la diferencia

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11. Emil Kraepelin, *Cien años de psiquiatría. Una contribución a la historia de la civilización*. (Madrid: Asociación Española de Psiquiatría, 1999), 98.
 12. Immanuel Kant, *Ensayo sobre las enfermedades de la cabeza*, trad. Alberto Rabano, y Jacinto Rivera de Rosales (Madrid: A. Machado Libros, 2001), 72-73.
 13. Ya en su primera meditación metafísica Descartes establece como criterio inicial la claridad de las representaciones para establecer la distinción entre el sueño y la vigilia: “Tengo que considerar que soy hombre, y que por consiguiente acostumbro a dormir y representarme en mis sueños las mismas cosas, y algunas veces hasta menos verosímiles, que esos insensatos cuando están despiertos. ¿Cuántas veces me ha sucedido soñar, durante la noche, que estaba en este lugar, vestido, cerca del fuego, aunque estuviese dentro de mi lecho y por completo desnudo? Es cierto que me parece ahora que no es con ojos dormidos que miro este papel, y que extiendo esta mano con intención y deliberado propósito, y que la siento: lo que acontece en el sueño no parece, ni tan claro ni tan distinto como todo esto”. René Descartes, *Meditaciones acerca de la Filosofía Primera. Seguidas de las objeciones y respuestas*, trad. Jorge Aurelio Díaz (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2009), 237-239.
 14. Immanuel Kant, *Ensayo sobre las enfermedades de la cabeza*, trans. Alberto Rabano y Jacinto Rivera de Rosales (Madrid: A. Machado Libros, 2001), 75.

entre el sueño y la vigilia, causando enormes estragos en la vida social y comunitaria de los individuos.

En su obra de 1798 *Antropología en sentido pragmático* Kant examina la alteración de la distinción habitual entre el sueño y la vigilia, apelando a la diferencia entre la carencia de una determinada facultad, normalmente denominada como debilidad, y su alteración patológica o enfermedad.¹⁵ En la medida en que esta confusión se asienta en las propias capacidades de la razón, en particular, en la imaginación, podemos considerar estas alternaciones a la luz del desplazamiento de una determinada riqueza a su pobreza, como lo hemos indicado más arriba. Pero este desplazamiento no es el efecto de un cierto límite de la autonomía,¹⁶ sino que radica en la vulnerabilidad antropológica del hombre y en su inevitable debilidad. En su ensayo de 1764 este desplazamiento es examinado por Kant con la formulación “razón invertida [...] o locura”.¹⁷ Según la terminología de la *Antropología en sentido pragmático* las debilidades de la facultad de conocer o razón son denominadas “enfermedades del alma”.¹⁸ Estas enfermedades se caracterizan por ser una alteración o modificación de nuestra aprehensión ordinaria del mundo exterior, causada por un empobrecimiento de nuestras facultades racionales. Estas alteraciones pueden darse en la forma de la alucinación (*Verrückung*), el delirio (*Wahnsinn*) y la manía (*Wahnwitz*).

Mientras estamos despiertos las impresiones sensoriales más vívidas no permiten que las ilusiones y quimeras invadan nuestra atención, pero cuando dormimos, y nuestras sensaciones pierden su protagonismo diurno, estas ilusiones se imponen sin nuestra voluntad, pues ya no son controladas por las sensaciones externas. En la alucinación vivimos como si estuviésemos dormidos, pues no se cuenta ya con una talanquera que impida que las ilusiones y quimeras penetren en nuestra alma. Un hombre trastornado por un estado fuerte de alucinación es como un “hombre que sueña despierto”.¹⁹

15. Gerd Irrlitz, *Kant Handbuch. Leben und Werk* (Stuttgart: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 2002).

16. Susan Meld, *Kant and the Limits of Autonomy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

17. Immanuel Kant, *Ensayo sobre las enfermedades de la cabeza*, trad. Alberto Rabano y Jacinto Rivera de Rosales (Madrid: A. Machado Libros, 2001), 69.

18. Immanuel Kant, *Antropología en sentido pragmático*, trad. José Gaos (Madrid: Alianza, 1991), 118.

19. Immanuel Kant, *Ensayo sobre las enfermedades de la cabeza*, trad. Alberto Rabano y Jacinto Rivera de Rosales (Madrid: A. Machado Libros, 2001), 75.

El poder anticipador de la imaginación, que resulta ser tan importante para el comportamiento práctico en el mundo, es aquí alterado e, incluso, modificado funcionalmente en los casos extremos de alucinación, como cuando el devoto ve la pasión de Cristo en cualquier superficie o cuando la amante ve la silueta de su amado en la luna, aunque para los demás se trate simplemente de una ilusión óptica. Así como en la alucinación se modifica la función de la imaginación, “el miedo hace de los rayos de la aurora boreal lanzas y espadas y, en el crepúsculo, de un indicador del camino hace un fantasma gigantesco”.²⁰

En el delirio se alteran los juicios más inmediatos, que normalmente encuentran su asidero en la experiencia, de manera tal que se actúa en contra de las reglas más generales del entendimiento común. No olvidemos la norma kantiana que rige el conocimiento objetivo y nuestro comportamiento de acuerdo con él: los “pensamientos sin contenido son vacíos, intuiciones sin concepto son ciegas”.²¹ Si bien el hombre afectado por el

20. Immanuel Kant, *Ensayo sobre las enfermedades de la cabeza*, trad. Alberto Rabano y Jacinto Rivera de Rosales (Madrid: A. Machado Libros, 2001), 76. Esta modificación de la función de alerta propia del miedo la podemos ver también expresada en la escena de la montaña descrita magistralmente por Oliver Sacks en su texto *Con una sola pierna*, en la cual narra con un tono autobiográfico el accidente sufrido por él en 1974 en una montaña de Noruega. Después de su travesía para alcanzar la cima, tuvo el encuentro con lo que él denomina la realidad real: “Pisé, prácticamente, lo que tenía delante: un animal enorme echado en el sendero, ocupándolo todo en realidad, y cuya presencia había mantenido oculta la masa redonda del peñasco. Tenía una inmensa cabeza cornuda, un cuerpo blanco impresionante, una enorme cara lisa blanca como la leche. [...] Y en ese momento *cambió*, ante mi vista, dejando de ser majestuoso para ser absolutamente monstruoso. [...] El toro se hizo horrendo... tan horrendo que parecía increíble, horrendo en fuerza, maldad y astucia. Parecía tener de pronto estampado lo infernal en todos sus rasgos. Primero se convirtió en un monstruo, luego en el Demonio. [...] perdí el control de pronto, me dominó el pánico y eché a correr para salvar mi vida querida, me lancé a una carrera frenética a ciegas por aquel sendero empinado, borroso, resbaladizo, que desaparecía a veces entre la niebla. ¡Pánico loco y ciego! No hay nada peor en este mundo, nada. [...] Corría como un loco, con la conciencia de un jadeo intenso y unas pisadas firmes y retumbantes que no sabía si eran del toro o mías, y al instante siguiente estaba tirado al fondo de un despeñadero rocoso poco profundo, con la pierna izquierda grotescamente retorcida debajo del cuerpo y con un dolor en la rodilla como no había sentido en mi vida. Lleno de fuerza y de vigor y al cabo de un instante prácticamente desvalido; en el apogeo y en el esplendor de la salud y al cabo de un instante tullido; con todas las facultades y potencias y al cabo de un instante privado de ellas; resulta difícil de comprender un cambio así, una brusquedad semejante, y la mente busca explicaciones”. Oliver Sacks, *Con una sola pierna*, trad. José Álvarez (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2010), 19-20. Esto que busca ser comprendido es justamente la transformación del ser rico en ser pobre, que hemos venido aquí bosquejando.

21. Immanuel Kant, *Crítica de razón pura*, trad. Mario Caimi (México: Fondo de Cultura

delirio no parece que se haya apartado del mundo objetivo, no obstante, interpreta “la conducta de las otras personas a través de una disparatada locura (*Wahn*) refiriéndola a sí mismo, y cree poder leer en ello quien sabe que intenciones sospechosas que a aquellas nunca se les pasan por la cabeza”.²²

En este sentido, el delirio es una cierta ceguera que obnubila el trato con los demás. Por otra parte, la manía es una fuerte desorganización de la razón, que se enreda en una serie infinita de juicios sutiles sobre argumentos generales, de modo tal que se producen aquí cualquier tipo de ideas sofisticadas y vanas pretensiones. En la manía el enfermo sigue “un curso arbitrario de los pensamientos que tiene su regla propia (subjetiva), pero que es contrario al concordante con las leyes de la experiencia (objetivo)”.²³ En este sentido, la manía es un pensamiento excesivamente subjetivo y en esto radica su pobreza.

En sus textos sobre la enfermedad mental Kant se preocupa no solo por tipificar sus modalidades, sino también por determinar el procedimiento cotidiano de la razón en su perturbación extrema. En una razón perturbada no solo hay una determinada desviación del uso habitual de la razón, que normalmente nos permite tener una visión de mundo en correspondencia con su determinación objetiva; se produce también una “positiva sinrazón, esto es, *otra regla*, una posición enteramente diversa en la que el alma se desplaza, por decirlo así, y desde la cual ve de otro modo todos los objetos, y saliendo del *sensorius communis*, que se requiere para la unidad de la *vida* (animal), se encuentra desplazado a un lugar alejado de él (de donde la palabra *Verrückung* [remoción y locura]; como un paisaje de montañas, dibujado a vista de pájaro, induce a hacer sobre el paraje un juicio enteramente distinto que si se contempla desde la llanura”.²⁴ El hombre trastornado de esta manera vive como en un mundo destrozado.²⁵

Económica, 2009), 100; B75.

22. Immanuel Kant, *Ensayo sobre las enfermedades de la cabeza*, trad. Alberto Rabano y Jacinto Rivera de Rosales (Madrid: A. Machado Libros, 2001), 81.
23. Immanuel Kant, *Antropología en sentido pragmático*, trad. José Gaos (Madrid: Alianza, 1991), 118.
24. Immanuel Kant, *Antropología en sentido pragmático*, trad. José Gaos (Madrid: Alianza, 1991), 137.
25. La caracterización de este desplazamiento del *sensorius communis* que altera la vida ordinaria de un individuo es semejante a lo que Luria, más tarde, caracterizará como la vida de un hombre con su mundo destrozado. Alexander Luria, *El hombre con su mundo destrozado* (México: Paidós, 2014).

En este sentido, la locura no es más que “la pérdida del sentido común y el sentido privado lógico”.²⁶

En estas consideraciones kantianas sobre la enfermedad mental un lugar especial lo ocupa el análisis del fenómeno cotidiano de la hipocondría. Para nosotros, este análisis resulta revelador pues nos permite indicar los dispositivos anímicos que se ponen en juego en esta alteración del *sensorius communis*, en la medida en que muestra las implicaciones vitales del desplazamiento de la riqueza en pobreza.²⁷ Si bien la imaginación tiene un papel determinante en el conocimiento del mundo, pues es “una facultad fundamental del alma humana, que sirve *a priori* de fundamento de todo conocimiento”,²⁸ esta función se ve alterada, cuando no tiene el contrapeso normal de la experiencia, trastocándose así su función, apartándose del *sensorius communis* e imaginando una serie infinita de dolencias y enfermedades completamente figuradas a partir de su propia perturbación. Por esta razón, la hipocondría era considerada en el siglo XVIII una enfermedad inventada,²⁹ en la medida en que se la concebía como una “hechura de la imaginación”.³⁰ El hipocondriaco es entonces un enfermo que en la sensación de su sufrimiento particular “no pide otra cosa que la aprobación de su saber”.³¹ Aquí la pobreza de la imaginación consiste en que trabaja sin control y, por tanto, altera la relación que el paciente tiene con su sensación, de modo tal que lo sentido se convierte realmente en “fingido por la inventiva imaginación como un mal inmi-

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26. Immanuel Kant, *Antropología en sentido pragmático*, trad. José Gaos (Madrid: Alianza, 1991), 141.
 27. En este punto, queremos resaltar los trabajos de Josefa Ros Velasco que muestran la articulación entre la consideración kantiana de la hipocondría y el abordaje blumenberguiano de la enfermedad mental. Josefa Ros Velasco, “The Pathology of Boredom from Contemporary Psychology and Psychiatry,” en *Patologías de la existencia. Enfoques filosófico-antropológicos*, ed. Luisa Rodríguez (Zaragoza: Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza, 2018), 87-99. Josefa Ros Velasco, “Perspectivas filosóficas sobre la hipocondría,” en *Blumenberg: la apuesta por una ilustración tardía*, ed. José Luis Villacañas (Barcelona: Anthropos, 2013), 85-105.
 28. Immanuel Kant, *Crítica de razón pura*, trad. Mario Caimi (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2009), 156; A124.
 29. Roland Lambrecht, *Der Geist der Melancholie. Eine Herausforderung philosophischer Reflexion* (Múnich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1996).
 30. Immanuel Kant, *El conflicto de las facultades en tres partes*, trad. Roberto Aramayo (Madrid: Alianza, 2003), 184.
 31. Hans Blumenberg, *Descripción del ser humano. Edición póstuma a cargo de Manfred Sommer*, trad. Griselda Mársico (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2011), 521.

nente”.³² En el hipocondriaco la imaginación se remonta desde una sensación del cuerpo o del alma hasta configurar un completo disparate, en la medida en que “el paciente siente en sí mismo la ilusión de casi todas las enfermedades de las que oye hablar”.³³

Siguiendo una analogía metafórica, Kant caracteriza a la hipocondría como “la enfermedad de los grillos [*Grillenkrankheit*]”,³⁴ en la medida en que el perturbado por esta deformación de la imaginación no puede descansar en la noche, pues siente el ruido permanente de los grillos. Atendiendo a esta analogía, Kant describe el movimiento de la imaginación en esta enfermedad, indicando que “ciertas sensaciones corporales internas no tanto descubren un verdadero mal existente en el cuerpo, cuanto más bien se limitan a hacerlo notar, y la naturaleza humana es de tal índole (que el animal no tiene), que es capaz de intensificar o de hacer persistente el sentimiento de ciertas *impresiones* locales prestando atención a ellas”.³⁵ En este sentido, la perturbación de la imaginación desbordada exagera “el miedo a la idea de la muerte, acompañado de una angustia de tipo infantil”.³⁶ La imaginación altera la sensación; aunque no exista efectivamente grillos, el hipocondriaco siente, no obstante, su ruido y no puede estar en paz. Siente una amenaza que no lo deja descansar. La imaginación está entonces obnubilada por su propia inventiva, hasta el punto de que siente lo que ella configura. En esto radica pues su pobreza: la opacidad del poder de la imaginación.

3. Las patologías que afectan la configuración simbólica del mundo

La filosofía de Ernst Cassirer aborda la pregunta por el hombre a partir de su configuración simbólica. Para el filósofo neokantiano de la escuela de Marburgo, el hombre no es simplemente un animal racional, como lo concebía antes Kant, sino un *animal symbolicum*. Cassirer radicaliza el idealismo trascendental kantiano, para el cual no podemos conocer las cosas

32. Immanuel Kant, *El conflicto de las facultades en tres partes*, trad. Roberto Aramayo (Madrid: Alianza, 2003), 184.

33. Immanuel Kant, *Ensayo sobre las enfermedades de la cabeza*, trad. Alberto Rabano y Jacinto Rivera de Rosales (Madrid: A. Machado Libros, 2001), 77.

34. Immanuel Kant, *Von der Macht des Gemüts* (Berna: Alfred Scherz Verlag, 1954), 23.

35. Immanuel Kant, *Antropología en sentido pragmático*, trad. José Gaos (Madrid: Alianza, 1991), 131.

36. Immanuel Kant, *Antropología en sentido pragmático*, trad. José Gaos (Madrid: Alianza, 1991), 132.

tal como ellas mismas son, sino solo como ellas se manifiestan en la experiencia. Pero la novedad fundamental de su kantismo es el desplazamiento del concepto de sustancia al de función, aplicado tanto a lo material como a lo espiritual y a la propia conciencia. Este desplazamiento no solo resulta fundamental para la comprensión del verdadero alcance del conocimiento científico, sino también para la comprensión de la función simbólica que tienen ciertas enfermedades en la vida de un individuo.³⁷

Según Cassirer, el símbolo no es una realidad puramente objetiva, susceptible de ser examinada con los recursos propios de la investigación científica que trata estados de cosas; más bien, se trata de una ley o forma que nos permite acceder al conocimiento de ciertos objetos o campos de la experiencia. Su abordaje es pues asunto de la filosofía, en particular de su dimensión trascendental. En este contexto, Cassirer suele hablar no tanto de símbolo sino de la “forma simbólica”. Así, “nuestra conciencia no se da por satisfecha recibiendo impresiones exteriores, sino que enlaza y penetra toda impresión con una actividad libre de expresión”.³⁸ Y este enlace es lo que denominamos función simbólica en la medida en que encarna todas las formas más elementales del espíritu humano, ya que son su “autorrevelación”.³⁹ Gracias a esta función lo objetivo (*Gegenwartliches*) se convierte pues en algo espiritual (*Geistiges*) a través de un signo e imagen.⁴⁰

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37. Para Cassirer, no podemos ya definir la razón humana en sentido sustancialista o en términos ontológicos, debemos pues avanzar hacia su comprensión funcional, es decir, debemos comprenderla como un modo de organizar nuestra experiencia humana. Y este modo tiene una dimensión histórica y cultural, en la medida en que está enraizado en el mundo vital del hombre que configura e interpreta el mundo. Por otra parte, gracias al concepto de función Cassirer en el tomo III de su obra fundamental, *Filosofía de las formas simbólicas*, abre un novedoso campo de comprensión de las enfermedades mentales o psíquicas, en la medida en que se aparta de una consideración sustancialista, para abrirse a su abordaje histórico y simbólico. En este sentido, no se debe investigar solo la etiología de una determinada dolencia o enfermedad, sino considerar también su función en la vida de un individuo o comunidad, abriendo así el campo para su abordaje histórico y simbólico. Jeremy Heis, “Ernst Cassirer’s *Substanzbegriff* und *Funktionsbegriff*”. *The Journal of the International Society for the History of Philosophie of Science* 4, no. 2 (2014): 241-270.
38. Ernst Cassirer, *Esencia y efecto del concepto de símbolo*, trad. Carlos Gerhard (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1989), 163.
39. Ernst Cassirer, *Filosofía de las formas simbólicas*, trad. Armando Morones (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1976), I, 18.
40. El reto fundamental de la filosofía consiste, según Cassirer, en mostrar cómo es posible “transformar el mundo pasivo de las meras impresiones, en las cuales parecía primero estar atrapado el espíritu, en un mundo de la pura expresión espiritual”. Ernst Cassirer, *Filosofía de las formas simbólicas*, trad. Armando Morones (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1976), I, 21.

Para Cassirer, el símbolo no es pues una envoltura accidental del pensamiento, sino su órgano necesario de concepción y expresión. El espíritu no se encuentra simplemente inmerso en un mundo objetivo; este mundo se despliega en y a partir de la libre autoconfiguración del espíritu. En este sentido, lo objetivo no es la mera limitación del espíritu, sino su posibilidad más propia. Pero esta posibilidad es también imposibilidad, en la medida en que se puede constreñir el despliegue de una determinada capacidad, como sucede en el caso de la enfermedad. Es decir, es tanto riqueza como pobreza. Lo simbólico no es entonces algo objetivo, estático y ya plenamente garantizado; más bien, se trata de una dimensión funcional que, dependiendo de ciertas condiciones particulares, puede o no desplegarse. Es tanto posibilidad como limitación. En este sentido, la forma simbólica permite organizar la experiencia humana con todas sus contradicciones reales. Por esta razón, podemos encontrar en esta organización también la contrariedad, el desacomodo y la alteración funcional de una determinada posibilidad.

En comparación con los animales el hombre vive en una realidad compleja, muy rica e inaprensible; es decir, vive en una dimensión simbólica. Según Cassirer, el animal vive sin conocer la distancia con el medio en el cual interactúa; “El animal *vive* en su ambiente sin oponerse a él de ese modo y sin representárselo en virtud de esa contraposición. Esa conquista del mundo como representación es apenas el fin y el fruto de las formas simbólicas, esto es, el resultado del lenguaje, mito, religión, arte y conocimiento teórico”.⁴¹ El hombre encara la realidad no de manera directa, sino que se mueve en su propia red simbólica con diferentes formas de expresión, que generan sus propias leyes y principios, que no se pueden ajustar mutuamente ni pueden completarse o reunirse en una perspectiva de un único cosmos cultural que, finalmente, cambie la contingencia y la fugacidad de cada perspectiva.⁴² En este sentido, una mirada a la orientación simbólica del mundo humano resulta ser útil para la comprensión de la enfermedad tanto mental como física en su propia historicidad constitutiva.⁴³

41. Ernst Cassirer, *Filosofía de las formas simbólicas*, trad. Armando Morones (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1976), III, 325.

42. Peter Müller, *Ernst Cassirers «Philosophie der symbolischen Formen»* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2010).

43. Norbert Andersch, “Symbolische Form und psychische Erkrankung. Bewusstheit als «Matrix mentaler Funktionsräume»,” *Grenzgebiete der Wissenschaft*, 64, no. 3 (2015): 195-214. Aquí podemos encontrar un vínculo metodológico entre Kant y Cassirer

En particular, la filosofía de Cassirer permite preguntar por el significado de las distintas funciones simbólicas para la comprensión del mundo y de la acción del hombre afectado por una determinada patología. Surge aquí la necesidad de investigar cómo el hombre puede lidiar normalmente con la realidad a partir de diferentes formas simbólicas y con ello configurar para sí mismo en el curso de su vida espacios de experiencia y de acción llenos de sentido y cómo, a la vez, se pueden dar ciertos trastornos en el campo de estas relaciones simbólicas funcionales. La llamada conciencia humana radica entonces en el campo de tensión entre la autocentración y la creación de formas simbólicas en el intercambio vital con su medio ambiente cultural. De esta manera, el hombre gana su autocomprensión natural y extiende continuamente nuevos espacios de forma, resonancia e influencia.⁴⁴

Esta ampliación de la conciencia se articula en el espacio del discurso vivo, que en cuanto tal es la manifestación histórica de la autorrevelación del espíritu. Pero no debemos olvidar que esta articulación no es algo ya dado de antemano ni estable, en la medida en que puede ser alterada o modificada de múltiples maneras y según ciertas circunstancias. Por ejemplo, si bien el *homo loquax* puede perder el habla, como ocurre en el caso de la afasia, ello no quiere decir que “se haya perdido alguna facultad psíquica de hablar o formar oraciones. No existe tal facultad, tal capacidad de hablar independiente de las palabras que vienen a constituir las oraciones del discurso vivo”.⁴⁵

No olvidemos que el lenguaje no es una sustancia determinada y fija, sino una autoconfiguración espiritual o función simbólica. En este sentido,

en su abordaje de la experiencia de la enfermedad mental en el hombre. No solo se debe indagar en las causas y consecuencias de una determinada patología, es pues necesario poder adentrarse en la forma como una determinada dolencia o enfermedad se manifiesta ya en la cotidianidad e, incluso, se debe estar atento también a su dimensión simbólica e histórica. Esta orientación comenzó en los años veinte del siglo pasado a partir de los trabajos asociados a la filosofía de las formas simbólicas de Ernst Cassirer y de la neurología y psiquiatría de Kurt Goldstein (1878-1965) y Ludwig Binswanger (1881-1966). Este último fue el primero de los psiquiatras que se apartó del psicologismo y se vinculó a la fenomenología, en la medida en que postulaba que la conciencia no era una sustancia, sino que podía ser definida en términos de intencionalidad y sentido. Françoise Dastur, and Pilippe Cabestain. *Daseinsanalyse: Fenomenologia e Psicanálise* (Rio de Janeiro: Via Verita Editora, 2015).

44. Wolfgang Blankenburg, *Der Verlust der natürlichen Selbstverständlichkeit. Ein Beitrag zur Psychopathologie symptomarmer Schizophrenien* (Berlín: Springer, 1973).

45. Ernst Cassirer, *Filosofía de las formas simbólicas*, trad. Armando Morones (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1976), III, 250.

lo que realmente se pierde no son las palabras, sino su articulación en un discurso vivo. Nos encontramos aquí de nuevo con la tesis que hemos querido sostener en el presente trabajo, según la cual el estar enfermo es realmente el desplazamiento de una riqueza que se ha convertido en pobreza: “La carencia del habla no significa necesariamente la carencia total de palabras”.⁴⁶ Es decir, esta carencia implica la desarticulación de un determinado horizonte de sentido comunitario. En la afasia lo que se ha alterado entonces es la capacidad de expresión y formulación simbólica, es decir, la constitución de un mundo compartido de sentido y significación⁴⁷.

En este contexto, podemos definir la salud mental como la capacidad humana de crear formas simbólicas, establecer intercambios entre ellas, vincularlas a una totalidad de sentido y encontrar, con su ayuda, las condiciones para la afirmación del sí mismo y de su medio. Por otra parte, la enfermedad o desorden mental surge pues, independiente de su modulación, cuando este normal rendimiento cultural no tiene ya más éxito o es insuficiente, es decir, cuando una forma simbólica particular colapsa o nace una cierta incapacidad que modifica el equilibrio entre diferentes niveles simbólicos. Cuando esto ocurre, se destruye entonces el intercambio entre el individuo y su medio ambiente y la realidad pierde su sentido parcial o totalmente. En efecto, un espacio simbólico que ya ha sido construido y está consolidado puede caer en crisis, pues no hay nada que asegure su permanente estabilidad, es decir, se puede perder el sentido, las perspectivas colapsan y fallan las posibilidades de control del cuerpo, el alma y el espíritu, o simplemente se rompen las imágenes del mundo y se producen pérdidas irre recuperables de la sensación espacio temporal. Pero el individuo puede reaccionar a estas pérdidas, evitando

46. Ernst Cassirer, *Filosofía de las formas simbólicas*, trad. Armando Morones (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1976), III, 251.

47. Según Cassirer, “la teoría de la afasia eligió desde un principio una determinada ruta que conduce al problema general del símbolo, aun cuando ciertamente no siempre logró apearse a esa ruta en todas sus fases, reconociéndola clara e inequívocamente desde un principio”. Ernst Cassirer, *Filosofía de las formas simbólicas*, trad. Armando Morones (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1976), III, 252. Esto sucedido así porque la psicología, en su pretensión de proceder según el canon médico, convirtió el lenguaje en una capacidad sustancial del hombre ya plenamente dada y con ello obnubiló su dimensión funcional y simbólica. En este sentido, la teoría médica de la afasia, anclada en el sensualismo, es realmente un caso extremo de “ceguera simbólica”. Ernst Cassirer, *Filosofía de las formas simbólicas*, trad. Armando Morones (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1976), III, 253. Es decir, un cierto escotoma en el sentido señalado por Sacks u opacidad funcional.

la tensión, reduciendo la complejidad o recurriendo a patrones de pensamiento antiguo y a modelos de conducta aparentemente ya superados.

Para Cassirer, la dimensión antropológica de la función simbólica la podemos examinar también a partir de la atención de ciertas patologías, que no solo se circunscriben a las alteraciones del lenguaje, sino que cubren, igualmente, el campo de los llamados trastornos “agnósticos o aprácticos”.⁴⁸ Como ocurre en el caso del enfermo de Goldstein y Gelb, la ceguera de las formas puramente ópticas implicaba también una cierta anomalía del lenguaje con respecto a las personas sanas, por ejemplo, la pobreza en el uso de expresiones metafóricas. Ciertamente, hay alteraciones de la función simbólica del hombre que no se reducen a ser meras carencias del habla, sino que implican un trastorno en las “condiciones de posibilidad del lenguaje, del conocimiento perceptual y del actuar”.⁴⁹

Este trastorno se da de manera integral, en la medida en que afecta la función simbólica del hombre, que no se reduce a la expresión lingüística, ya que el lenguaje es una variación de la forma simbólica que lo constituye y, por tanto, dicha forma no se reduce a su manifestación. Pero entre estas diversas alteraciones no se da una relación causal entre sí, por ejemplo, la amnesia de nombres no se relaciona causalmente con la falencia categorial; más bien, dichos trastornos son perturbaciones de una misma actitud básica.

En la *Filosofía de las formas simbólicas* Cassirer señala que su trabajo consiste en justificar la multiplicidad y variedad de la experiencia humana, así como aclarar los fenómenos desde la economía de sus formas simbólicas posibles y más básicas. Esto no solo es válido para la explicación y comprensión de los diversos modos de configuración normal del mundo cultural humano, sino también para el estudio de diversas patologías de la conciencia simbólica, en particular aquellas vinculadas con el lenguaje, la cognición y la acción. Para Cassirer, en el proceso de configuración de la conciencia el individuo y los grupos elaboran sus relaciones con el medio a partir de un fundamento común originario más allá de la complementariedad idealista de la relación sujeto-objeto. La relación activa entre el hombre y su medio atraviesa una secuencia de pasos en cuyo recorrido se experimenta un cambio característico en la forma común de la formación del concepto. Esta relación es pues la diferenciación lógica de los conte-

48. Ernst Cassirer, *Filosofía de las formas simbólicas*, trad. Armando Morones (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1976), III, 258.

49. Ernst Cassirer, *Filosofía de las formas simbólicas*, trad. Armando Morones (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1976), III, 259.

nidos de la experiencia y su clasificación en un sistema estructurado de dependencias, que forman el núcleo del concepto de realidad y, con ello, nuestra conciencia del cambio.

Un capítulo fundamental del trabajo de Cassirer lo constituye su comprensión de lo que él denomina la patología de la conciencia simbólica. Aquí el filósofo se centra en el abordaje psicopatológico a partir del campo vivo de tensión entre el individuo y su entorno social, es decir, la tensión abierta entre la autocentración del sujeto y la civilización, esto es, la tensión existente entre las diversas metamorfosis desplegadas en las formaciones simbólicas. Para Cassirer, la conciencia no es una cosa que pueda ser estudiada y comprendida de una manera objetiva, sino una relación funcional, que en sí misma es dinámica y, por tanto, susceptible de modificaciones y alteraciones estructurales. La conciencia no puede ser pues encontrada en un determinado órgano, ni identificada con él.⁵⁰

La atención a determinadas patologías nos permite vincular nuestra comprensión de la estructura normal de la conciencia con el viraje hacia problemas filosóficos de la cultura universal. En este sentido, podemos decir que la valoración de una patología no se basa, por tanto, en el mero cumplimiento de una determinada acción, sino en la atención de la totalidad a partir de una actividad concreta, ya que, por ejemplo, la afasia “no consiste en la pérdida de una facultad, sino en el cambio y la transformación de un proceso psíquico-espiritual altamente complejo”.⁵¹ Y la *apraxia* no consiste tampoco en no poder realizar un movimiento a voluntad, sino en que un miembro determinado está “desintegrado del proceso espiritual total”.⁵²

50. En este sentido, su trabajo alienta a psicólogos y neurólogos a ampliar la perspectiva orgánico-clínica para comprender modelos funcionales de la conciencia. Norbert Andersch, “Symbolic Form and mental illness,” en *The Philosophy of Ernst Cassirer: A Novel Assessment (New Research in the History and Historiography of Philosophy)*, ed. Tyler Fridmann (Berlín: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 163-198.

51. Ernst Cassirer, *Filosofía de las formas simbólicas*, trad. Armando Morones (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1976), III, 324.

52. Ernst Cassirer, *Filosofía de las formas simbólicas*, trad. Armando Morones (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1976), III, 311. Si bien Liepmann había centrado su investigación en el peculiar carácter psicológico de los trastornos denominados *apraxia*, en los cuales una determinada extremidad no podía realizar los movimientos que la otra era capaz de realizar, y en los cuales el paciente no se comportaba como un sujeto unitario con todas sus riquezas en plenitud, Cassirer entendió, no obstante, que en estos casos se estaba frente a una desintegración peculiar: “El enfermo no designaba nunca los actos de esa mano como suyos; de ninguna manera los consideraba como actos que le correspondieran, lo cual expresaba hablando de ellos en tercera persona. Resulta indudable que los trastornos patológicos de este tipo

Podemos decir entonces que la salud mental es la capacidad del hombre para estabilizar los niveles de significación de las diversas formaciones de modelos antiguos e introducir en ellos un equilibrio estable con el medio ambiente, creando así un nuevo modelo dinámico de la configuración simbólica (forma simbólica). Este equilibrio articula diferentes niveles de sentido integrándolos y permite encontrar un equilibrio personal entre la vida central del individuo y las exigencias del medio, a cuyos resultados se adiciona la tradición cultural. Las alteraciones y desórdenes mentales son pérdidas de este equilibrio en varios niveles de la fundación de sentido.

Ciertamente, estas pérdidas pueden producirse por influencias orgánicas o interactivas condicionadas por el medio; pero se trata siempre de interacciones mediadas simbólicamente. Estos desórdenes o pobrezas funcionales muestran siempre una pérdida de la complejidad individual y de la formación simbólica dinámica. En efecto, el colapso de un contexto particular de tensión puede ser compensado en general por otro dinamismo funcional, pero la inmersión de muchos niveles de sentido conduce a un lanzamiento de energía desatada que activa de nuevo una dominancia de plantillas preformadas y de configuraciones de modelos complejos que interactúan entre sí.

Si bien la riqueza de las configuraciones simbólicas que constituyen a un individuo en un determinado contexto cultural puede verse afectada e, incluso, empobrecida, por una enfermedad, también es cierto que en medio de este trastorno funcional se da, a menudo, la ocasión para otra reconfiguración de la riqueza simbólica originaria, en la medida en que se logre establecer un nuevo equilibrio. Así pues, en la medida en que estas interrupciones de la función simbólica del individuo se acrecienten, hay pobreza cuando la tensión entre la intencionalidad y el espacio de resonancia permanecen constantemente interrumpidas y no se puede ya reconstruir un equilibrio intercambiable. Esto no solo sucede a nivel

tienen una importancia decisiva para toda la psicología de la acción y nos permiten penetrar más profundamente en los problemas centrales de la voluntad y de los movimientos voluntarios". Ernst Cassirer, *Filosofía de las formas simbólicas*, trad. Armando Morones (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1976), III, 311. Estos casos son también considerados por Sacks, cuando señala, por ejemplo, que "una paciente con sensaciones elementales perfectas en las manos, pero sin poder alguno, al parecer, para integrar esas sensaciones como percepciones relacionadas con el mundo y con ella misma; que no podía decir: «percibo, reconozco, quiero, actúo» en relación con sus manos «inútiles»". Oliver Sacks, *El hombre que confundió a su mujer con un sombrero*, trad. José Álvarez (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2019), 88-89.

individual, sino que también se da a nivel colectivo. Veamos ahora cómo ocurre esto en tiempos de pandemia.

4. El escotoma cultural

Después de su accidente en las montañas de Noruega, Oliver Sacks experimentó en carne propia una afección extrema que caracterizó como un escotoma, para describir con ello el trauma de la pérdida sensorial de su pierna izquierda. Sacks señala que el escotoma “es un agujero en la realidad misma, un agujero tanto en el tiempo como en el espacio, y, en consecuencia, es *imposible* concebirlo como algo con un término y un fin. Al tener el carácter de «agujero de la memoria», de amnesia, entraña también una sensación de intemporalidad, de infinitud. Esta característica de intemporalidad, de limbo, es algo inherente al escotoma”.⁵³ Lo vivido por él después del accidente fue realmente un escotoma existencial con “una base orgánica y un determinante orgánico clarísimos”.⁵⁴

La pobreza que caracteriza al escotoma es la de una sombra u opacidad en medio de la claridad. Esta situación ambivalente es, sin duda, fuente de un profundo desconcierto y desesperación interior. Esta perplejidad lleva al médico paciente a la aventura de “explorar un territorio sin mapas que quedaba fuera del alcance de todos los mapas”.⁵⁵ Lo realmente inquietante era sentir la pasividad extrema de su pierna izquierda, de aquel órgano que antes lo había vivido como fuente de movimientos voluntarios. Ahora sentía que su pierna se hundía en el limbo de la impasividad más desconcertante. Si bien tenía aún la pierna, ella realmente no existía, en la medida en que no podía cumplir su función orgánica fundamental, el poder ser una extremidad en movimiento.

Este desconcierto es narrado por Sacks de la siguiente manera: “Estaba en realidad «allí» en una especie de sentido ordinario, fáctico: estaba virtualmente allí, pero no estaba viva, sustancial o «realmente» allí. No era una pierna real, no tenía nada de real, aquello que había allí delante de mí era mera apariencia”.⁵⁶ Ciertamente, era la vivencia de un escotoma existencial, en la medida en que la riqueza de la presencia se difuminaba

53. Oliver Sacks, *Con una sola pierna*, trad. José Alvarez. (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2010), 96-97.

54. Oliver Sacks, *Con una sola pierna*, trad. José Alvarez. (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2010), 96.

55. Oliver Sacks, *Con una sola pierna*, trad. José Alvarez. (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2010), 98.

56. Oliver Sacks, *Con una sola pierna*, trad. José Alvarez. (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2010), 110.

en la pobreza de la virtualidad, ya que se había perdido su función fundamental. En este sentido, podemos decir que el órgano no se reconocía en su saber hacer y poder inmediato. Su virtualidad era entonces una cierta agnosia del miembro, su opacidad.

Sacks vincula este escotoma existencial con lo que le pasa también a un afásico con las palabras, ya que, como lo hemos señalado antes siguiendo en este punto a Cassirer, en la afasia, si bien aún se cuenta con palabras, no se puede empero articular un discurso vivo, pues el enfermo ha sufrido un trastorno en su forma simbólica básica. El escotoma así vivido afecta no solo a un determinado miembro del cuerpo, sino a la integridad del paciente. En efecto, hay ciertas lesiones que afectan la integridad de un individuo y no simplemente a uno de sus órganos, pues en estos casos se trata de una “lesión desconectadora”.⁵⁷ En esta desconexión el paciente experimenta realmente el mundo como un mundo destrozado.

Siguiendo la amplificación metafórica que hace Sacks del término escotoma, queremos indicar ahora cómo en estos tiempos de pandemia asistimos a lo que podríamos denominar un escotoma cultural, es decir, una opacidad en la función básica de nuestra identidad o forma simbólica, en términos de Cassirer. Este agujero cultural consiste pues en el empobrecimiento de nuestras respuestas mediatas frente a la omnipotencia de la realidad. Según Blumenberg, el ser humano no es solo un *animal symbolicum*, sino un ser que, para sobrevivir, necesita poner a distancia el absolutismo de la realidad. En un primer momento, al hombre se le presenta la realidad como despiadada, indomable y prepotente; para sobrevivir a semejante embate debe poder ponerla a distancia, pues de lo contrario quedaría aniquilado por este absolutismo de la realidad o, por lo menos, paralizado frente a su omnipresencia.

Esta presencia avasalladora de la realidad es lo *Unheimlich* (lo siniestro y espantoso) en sentido freudiano, aquello “que afecta las cosas conocidas y familiares desde tiempo a tras”.⁵⁸ Esto que no es familiar y conocido es pues fuente de espanto, en la medida en que provoca un terror atroz. En general, lo verdaderamente avasallador es todo lo que no se ha presentado de manera previsible, pues permanece oculto, aunque presentimos, no obstante, que su poder se puede manifestar irrumpiendo en todo lo familiar y cotidiano. En la medida en que no podemos dominarlo, esto

57. Oliver Sacks, *Con una sola pierna*, trad. José Alvarez (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2010), 116.

58. Sigmund Freud, *Obras completas*, trad. Luis López-Ballesteros (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1981), III, 2484.

secreto y oculto es impenetrable, pues nuestra mirada no puede acceder a él y responder a sus desafíos con precaución; sin embargo, presentimos su fuerza avasalladora como algo que nos deja en una profunda incertidumbre, ya que se “desvanecen los límites entre la fantasía y la realidad”.⁵⁹ Siguiendo a Otto Rank, Freud vincula esto siniestro con el doble (*Doppelgänger*) o imagen en el espejo; este doble o la imagen oscura de nuestra vida es pues la muerte. En este sentido, el absolutismo de la realidad es a la vez la “omnipotencia de la muerte”.⁶⁰ Esto que no puede ser dominado es tanto realidad como muerte; por esta razón, es la fuente de nuestros más profundos temores, de esos miedos más arcaicos que se vinculan a la angustia infantil de perderlo todo.

Esta realidad omnipotente, que es tan enigmática como siniestra, revela la espantosa irrelevancia del hombre a nivel global. Frente a la omnipotencia de la realidad está la impotencia, no menos absoluta, del hombre. Una realidad que se ha vuelto avasalladora nos hunde en un profundo desconcierto, ya que sentimos que en ella no hay lugar para los intereses de supervivencia y de sentido para los hombres. En tiempos de pandemia esto es justamente lo que experimentamos como lo más espantoso: la vida humana se ha vuelto irrelevante. En medio del confort del mundo contemporáneo, todo se ha tornado superfluo, porque ya nada puede detener encarar la muerte. Todas nuestras riquezas son realmente hoy fuente de pobreza. Este es nuestro agujero escotómico que nos impide tomar aliento para respirar. Pero no olvidemos que, como lo hemos señalado antes, tornarnos pobres puede ser también fuente de una sutil riqueza, en la medida en que sintiéndonos pobres buscamos hacernos fuertes y ricos, es decir, ponernos a salvo de aquel poder absoluto que nos puede avasallar. En la emergencia sanitaria que hoy estamos viviendo el reto fundamental que todos enfrentamos es justamente cómo poder ponernos a salvo.

Blumenberg insiste, de múltiples maneras, en que el *status naturalis* de la cultura y con ello de toda la configuración simbólica de la vida humana es lo que él denomina absolutismo de la realidad. Así el ser humano, que “no tenía en su mano, ni mucho menos las condiciones determinantes de su existencia – y, lo que es más importante, no creía tenerlas en su mano”,⁶¹

59. Sigmund Freud, *Obras completas*, trad. Luis López-Ballesteros (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1981), III, 2500.

60. Sigmund Freud, *Obras completas*, trad. Luis López-Ballesteros (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1981), III, 2494.

61. Hans Blumenberg, *Trabajo sobre el mito*, trad. Pedro Madrigal (Barcelona: Paidós, 2003), 11.

ha buscado a lo largo de su historia el espacio más adecuado para poder sobrevivir reduciendo, en todo momento, lo inhóspito y extraño. En la Modernidad este espacio de reducción se realiza a partir de la autoafirmación humana representada en el modelo del conocimiento científico, que busca someter y poner bajo su control el mundo de la vida.

La búsqueda de esta autoafirmación se expresa en “la laboriosidad y el autoaccionamiento de las formas científicas de trabajo”,⁶² que quieren asegurar y configurar técnicamente el mundo de la vida. Por ejemplo, vemos hoy cómo frente a la amenaza de la inminencia de la muerte la confianza moderna está puesta, justamente, en el emprendimiento empresarial para encontrar, producir y distribuir con prontitud una vacuna que aparte de nuestro mundo el peligro pandémico. En este sentido, la confianza en la vacuna se ha convertido en el gesto prometeico que nos permite pensar que podemos huir de las ondas de la muerte, como aquel naufrago que mirando el impetuoso mar examina su experiencia exclamando que, “en realidad, el absurdo domina el mundo”.⁶³

Querer escapar del naufragio es, sin duda, el deseo que mueve hoy la cultura. Pero en este deseo se muestra, a la vez, el carácter ambiguo del proyecto moderno de la autoafirmación humana, a saber, su escotoma histórico y cultural. En la medida en que se quiere mandar sobre la realidad, estableciendo a toda costa estrategias de seguridad en todas las esferas de la vida, estamos expuestos también a innumerables imprevistos, convirtiéndonos en seres medrosos y altamente vulnerables. Nuestros esfuerzos de bioseguridad incrementan pues la emergencia de nuevas vulnerabilidades, tanto a nivel económico y social, como en el plano de la salud pública.

Desde los inicios de la vida humana el miedo ha cumplido una fusión antropológica fundamental, servir como fuente de recursividad para poner a salvo la vida, permitiendo así desplegar los mecanismos necesarios para salirle adelante a futuras amenazas. El miedo es entonces un “dispositivo emocional *provisorium*”,⁶⁴ en el sentido de la *morale par provision* cartesiana, ya que configura nuestras emociones y pensamientos para asumir

62. Hans Blumenberg, *La legitimación de la edad moderna*, trad. Pedro Madrigal (Valencia: Pre-Textos, 2008), 231.

63. Hans Blumenberg, *Naufragio con espectador. Paradigma de una metáfora de la existencia*, trad. Jorge Vigil (Madrid: Visor, 1995), 72.

64. Michael Heidgen, “Permanentes Provisorium. Hans Blumenbergs Umwege: Zur Einleitung,” en *Permanentes Provisorium. Hans Blumenbergs Umwege*, ed. Michael Heidgen, Matthias Koch y Christian Köhler (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2015), 10.

el hecho de que “no existe nada que esté enteramente en nuestro poder con excepción de nuestros pensamientos”.⁶⁵ Pero este dispositivo se puede recargar, llegando incluso al caso extremo de opacar su función adaptativa.

Como lo señalamos anteriormente, cuando nos detuvimos en el análisis kantiano de la enfermedad de los grillos, la riqueza de la imaginación que nos permite anticiparnos ante situaciones inesperadas puede también alterarse y llevarnos a suponer una serie infinita de enfermedades, que solo existen virtualmente, impidiéndonos vivir y estar en calma. En esta alteración se oscurece la función preventiva de la imaginación. Una imaginación desbordada puede ser fuente tanto de creación artística como de la emergencia de enfermedades como la hipocondría. Esto sucede no solo a nivel individual, sino también en el plano social y cultural. Por ejemplo, como ocurre con lo que hemos designado aquí el escotoma cultural en medio de la pandemia.

Podemos observar el despliegue de este escotoma en dos casos particulares, el pánico estadístico y la desaparición de los rituales. Desde el punto de vista emocional la pandemia ha generado, por un lado, un estado permanente de ansiedad y temor, sin ofrecer dispositivos emocionales de contención y mediación. La sociedad de la información, que administra no solo lo que se considera como verdadero y falso, sino también emociones y sentimientos sobre lo que está aconteciendo, ha perfilado los recursos simbólicos que disponemos para estar alerta. Esta situación configura un estado de inseguridad permanente que expone al individuo a la crudeza y omnipotencia de la realidad, sin mediación alguna. La matematización del mundo de la vida se concreta hoy en el deseo desproporcionado de contar amenazas y peligros, provocando lo que podemos denominar un estado hipocondríaco generalizado.

En este desenfreno por el cálculo ha surgido lo que Kathleen Woodward caracteriza como el pánico estadístico, es decir, la producción de una inseguridad constante que nos impide anclarnos en el mundo de la vida. La permanente información de estadísticas sobre la condición del mundo incrementa la inseguridad vital, hundiéndonos, por tanto, en la banalización del peligro y del necesario estado de alerta. “La estadística es la atmosfera misma que respiramos, el clima extraño en que vivimos, la emisión continua de la vida [...] de los miedos”.⁶⁶ En estos tiempos de

65. René Descartes, *Discurso del método, dióptrica, meteoros y geometría*, trad. Guillermo Quintás (Madrid: Alfaguara, 1981), 20.

66. Kathleen Woodward, “Statistical Panic”, *Differences. A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 12, no. 2 (1999): 180.

pandemia los sentimientos y emociones se hunden en los agujeros de los datos y los números.

Por otro lado, esta generalización del miedo tiene como consecuencia una desaparición del papel de los rituales en nuestra vida comunitaria. El hombre no solo es un *animal symbolicum*, necesita también del ritual para encarar la crudeza de la realidad. El lenguaje, el símbolo y el ritual son la expresión histórica de la función simbólica fundamental que configura nuestra identidad personal, social y cultural. A través de los ritos los seres humanos buscamos compensar la ausencia de sentido que experimentamos frente a la inclemencia del absolutismo de la realidad. Esta compensación tiene también una función protectora.

En medio de la vulnerabilidad frente a los poderes avasalladores de la realidad, el hombre cuenta con la articulación de tres sistemas inmunológicos. El primero es de origen biológico y opera de manera automática y sin mediación de la intervención de la conciencia. Sobre este sistema se ha levantado también un sistema socio-inmunitario que ha configurado ciertas formas de vida y estructuras sociales para defender al individuo en comunidad. Este sistema lo constituye las diversas formas jurídicas y las estructuras sociales de protección; por ejemplo, la serie de medidas de bioseguridad tomadas para permitir, en medio del peligro, la interacción social a distancia. Y, finalmente, cuenta también con un sistema simbólico o psicoimmunológico, por medio del cual el hombre puede “sobrellevar más o menos bien su vulnerabilidad ante el destino, incluida la mortalidad, a base de antelaciones imaginarias y del uso de una serie de armas mentales”.⁶⁷ En este sentido, el *animal symbolicum* es también *homo immunologicus*. El rito cumple esta función social, en la medida en que articula en la práctica lo que el símbolo une y protege.

Pero en la sociedad del espectáculo la función inmunológica del rito se empobrece y oscurece. En estos tiempos de pandemia experimentamos también la desaparición de los rituales como un escotoma cultural, en el que la fuerza vinculante del ritual se vive en el mundo virtual como un significante sin significado. La pandemia nos ha lanzado a la pobreza del ejercicio de un ritual virtualizado que no genera comunidad, en la medida en que no nos permite habitar un mundo compartido.

Por ejemplo, por razones de salubridad los rituales de despedida de los seres queridos que han fallecido se han visto reducidos a su mínima

67. Peter Sloterdijk, *Has de cambiar tu vida. Sobre antropológica*, trad. Pedro Madrigal (Valencia: Pre-Textos, 2012), 24.

expresión y se han convertido en formas banalizadas propias de la sociedad del espectáculo. En medio de la emergencia sanitaria no hay lugar ya para despedir a los muertos en comunidad; es decir, se ha empobrecido el espacio y el tiempo del duelo. No olvidemos que “en el rito funerario el auténtico sujeto del duelo es la comunidad. La comunidad se impone a sí misma el duelo ante la experiencia de la pérdida”.⁶⁸ Pero esta imposición se reemplaza hoy por necesidades higiénicas y el duelo se hunde en un mutismo realmente escalofriante.

Igualmente, se ha impuesto, con razones, la exigencia del distanciamiento social que, aunque se pregona que es tan solo físico y por beneficio de la comunidad, incrementa, no obstante, el sentimiento de desamparo frente al absurdo del absolutismo de la realidad, hundiéndonos en la tristeza de tener que encarar solos la muerte. Este escotoma cultural no es otra cosa más que la tiranía de la presencia; y su pobreza consiste entonces en el oscurecimiento del arte de la distancia, de esa posibilidad del *animal symbolicum* de “no dejar que la realidad sea una señal incondicional de la reacción programada del comportamiento”.⁶⁹ Poner la realidad a distancia nos permite abrirle un espacio al mundo de la vida y no precipitarnos en la *nuda vida*. Esta es justamente la pobreza que estamos viviendo hoy en estos tiempos de pandemia; esa pobreza que nos hunde en la opacidad de nuestros recursos simbólicos para encarar lo que nos sucede en todo momento. En estos tiempos de pandemia nos enfrentamos al hecho crudo de no poder poner a distancia la omnipotencia de la muerte.

Como lo hemos señalado al principio de este trabajo, no hay pobreza sin riqueza, ni claridad sin un oscurecimiento parcial de lo que se presenta a nuestra mirada. En este sentido, es propio del escotoma cultural de estos tiempos de pandemia tener un carácter ambiguo: en la medida en que cierra posibilidades abre también nuevos desafíos simbólicos que deben ser acogidos en comunidad. El incremento del pánico estadístico y el empobrecimiento del potencial simbólico de los ritos, exigen desplegar otras formas de encarar nuestros temores más básicos para poner a distancia el absolutismo de la realidad y poder así continuar sobreviviendo. Estas nuevas formas implican recuperar el sentimiento de solidaridad que nos hermana al dolor y sufrimiento del otro. Si la zona de la sentimentalidad de la que habla Jünger en sus consideraciones sobre el dolor se caracteriza

68. Han Byung-Chul, *La desaparición de los rituales. Una topología del presente*, trad. Alberto Ciria (Barcelona: Herder, 2020), 24.

69. Hans Blumenberg, *Descripción del ser humano. Edición póstuma a cargo de Manfred Sommer*, trad. Griselda Mársico (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2011), 468.

por la frialdad, la disciplina y el aceramamiento del rostro, que representa a un hombre “situado fuera de la zona del dolor”,⁷⁰ la recuperación del empobrecimiento de la función simbólica, que caracteriza al escotoma cultural de estos tiempos de pandemia, debe implicar el desmonte del rostro de esta frialdad.

Este desmonte trae consigo también la superación de la negación del dolor, que se expande en la sociedad paliativa convirtiendo la vivencia del sufrimiento humano tan solo en una mera negatividad. En la sociedad paliativa, que busca de manera instrumental sobrepasar el umbral del dolor, “el hombre se cree a salvo, pero es solo una cuestión de tiempo que los elementos lo arrastren al abismo”.⁷¹ Sobreponerse al dolor implica empero poder desplegar una extraña economía, que en medio de la pobreza descubre una nueva riqueza. La experiencia escotómica del empobrecimiento de la función simbólica del hombre puede ser contrastada por la resistencia en la proximidad. No olvidemos que la experiencia del desamparo nos lleva a encontrarnos en la proximidad. Ya desde muy temprano el hombre encontró en la casa el lugar del amparo. En este sentido, en medio de las medidas de higiene que pregonan el distanciamiento para la protección de uno mismo y del otro, debemos poder recuperar hoy los ritos ancestrales del regreso a casa, donde la proximidad y el contacto sean verdaderos gestos de cuidado y donde el lenguaje, que es propiamente el hogar del hombre, sea un espacio que “protege, arropa y reconforta. La palabra hace las veces de abrigo y el texto es su tejido”.⁷² Hoy se impone la necesidad de poder hablar sobre todo aquello que nos perturba en estos tiempos de pandemia. Pero no se debe hablar a la medida de la mera información, se requiere poderlo hacer de tal modo que la función simbólica que nos caracteriza como seres humanos se refuerce.

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70. Jünger Ernst, *Sobre el dolor*, trad. Andrés Sánchez Pascual (Barcelona: TusQuets editores, 1995), 70.

71. Han Byung-Chul, *La sociedad paliativa. El dolor hoy*, trad. Alberto Ciria (Barcelona: Herder, 2021), 44.

72. Esquirol Josep Maria, *La resistencia íntima. Ensayo de una filosofía de la proximidad* (Barcelona: Acantilado, 2015), 158.

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As Emoções na Pandemia
The Emotions of the Pandemic



Em direção à compreensão das emoções na pandemia: a solidão e seu significado epistêmico*

Towards an Understanding of Emotions in the Pandemic: Loneliness and its Epistemic Meaning

FLAVIO WILLIGES**

Abstract

Emotions elicited by the threat of the coronavirus and social distancing measures are usually characterized in a negative way in the literature about the pandemic. This paper argues that this is not true for all emotions. Based on philosophical and empirical studies of loneliness, I contend that transient feelings of loneliness felt during the pandemic contribute to epistemically recognize what is significant or important to us in terms of social connection and fulfillment. Part of my argument depends on conceiving loneliness not only as an episodic “inner” emotion but rather as a pervasive emotion that involves psychic and bodily feelings, especially those related to how we apprehend the spatiality of the world. Finally, I also claim that the structure and content of loneliness help to explain why the pandemic should be seen as an epistemic transformative experience.

Keywords: Covid-19, emotions, loneliness, SARS-CoV-2, transformative experience.


1. Introdução

A pandemia da Covid-19 veio acompanhada de uma série de respostas emocionais. Com efeito, estudos realizados nos estágios iniciais da pandemia mostraram que não apenas profissionais da saúde como médicos e enfermeiros, mas também pessoas comuns, com menor risco de contaminação pelo vírus, experimentaram formas intensas de medo, ansiedade, mau-humor e depressão¹. Em estágios subsequentes, o isolamento

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de infectados, as medidas de distanciamento social e o *lockdown* adotado em algumas cidades para conter o avanço do vírus, despertaram sentimentos de desconforto, irritabilidade, preocupação, tristeza, solidão e nostalgia².

A amplitude e intensidade das emoções disparadas pela pandemia tem sido objeto de atenção tanto de pesquisadores das ciências da saúde, quanto das ciências humanas. Nos estudos filosóficos, as avaliações da nova paisagem emocional variaram não apenas quanto aos aspectos analisados, mas também quanto à interpretação do significado das mudanças emocionais provocadas. As análises com foco na moralidade destacaram o papel positivo que emoções morais como a compaixão e a empatia desempenharam na percepção das necessidades de outros e para promover respostas altruístas de cuidado e solidariedade social³. Já pesquisadores interessados na política das emoções têm defendido que o compartilhamento do medo na mídia e redes sociais seria perigoso, uma vez que poderia gerar mudanças no clima social, o que, por sua vez, provocaria a recusa de direitos e liberdades civis em detrimento de valores como estabilidade e segurança⁴. No âmbito da epistemologia, onde se insere a contribuição deste artigo, os estudos propriamente filosóficos, se concentraram principalmente nas atitudes de negacionismo científico frente a origem e periculosidade do vírus, sendo que as análises direcionadas para a compreensão de uma eventual contribuição ou prejuízo epistêmico oriundo das emoções ficaram em segundo plano⁵ ou

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1. Nicola Montemurro, "The emotional impact of COVID-19: From medical staff to common people". *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity* 87, (July 2020): 23-24. Felipe Ornell et al., "Pandemic fear and COVID-19: mental health burden and strategies". *Brazilian Journal of Psychiatry* 42, no. 3, (2020): 232-235. DOI:10.1590/1516-4446-2020-0008.
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 5. Carel e Kidd desenvolveram um importante estudo que apresenta uma caracterização da pandemia como experiência transformativa, o que envolve a ideia de transformação epistêmica, mas sem analisar mais amplamente como as emoções cooperam para esse tipo de transformação, tal como procuro desenvolver aqui. Ver Havi Carel, and Ian James Kidd. "Pandemic transformative experience: Havi Carel and Ian James Kidd explain how covid-19 is changing us." *The Philosophers' Magazine* 90, 3rd Quarter (2020): 24-31.

não foram desenvolvidos⁶.

Nesse artigo eu pretendo contribuir para o estudo do papel epistêmico das emoções na pandemia a partir da abordagem da emoção da solidão, explorando, em especial, um papel positivo da experiência da solidão no autoconhecimento valorativo e reconhecimento de bens sociais para uma vida boa. Em situações normais, o conhecimento valorativo tende a permanecer implícito. Com o irrompimento da pandemia e a intensificação das emoções, em particular de sentimentos de solidão, as fontes de significado e importância subjacentes à experiência ordinária tornaram-se manifestas. Esse artigo desenvolve um exame da natureza da solidão experimentada na pandemia, explorando seu vínculo com a apreensão daquilo que é de significado e importância em relação ao convívio e sociabilidade.

O artigo está dividido em três seções. Na primeira seção, eu desenvolvo, a partir da abordagem dos sentimentos psíquicos e das emoções de Michael Stocker, uma caracterização da solidão na pandemia como uma emoção que atua como pano de fundo, estruturando nossas atividades práticas e teóricas e, ao mesmo tempo, como uma emoção dotada de conteúdo cognitivo. Na segunda seção é desenvolvida uma análise mais fina das experiências corporificadas da solidão. A pretensão da segunda seção é mostrar que a solidão não é meramente uma experiência psíquica, interior, mas também uma experiência corporal, uma espécie de tonalidade afetiva ampla que envolve corpo e mente. Na terceira seção, examino mais diretamente o papel epistêmico da experiência emocional da solidão e, finalmente, na quarta seção, indico como as características esboçadas cooperam e enriquecem a tese de Carel e Kidd do caráter transformativo da experiência da pandemia.

2. Sentimentos psíquicos e corporais de solidão

A solidão é uma experiência subjetiva dolorosa que consiste em se sentir isolado, separado de outras pessoas e dos bens ou vantagens que o convívio social produz⁷. “Sentir-se sozinho” (em inglês usualmente referido pelo termo *loneliness*) difere, nesse sentido, de “estar sozinho”

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6. Neil Levy, and Julian Savulescu. “Epistemic responsibility in the face of a pandemic.” *Journal of Law and the Biosciences* 7, no. 1 (May 2020): 1-17. Ernesto Perini-Santos. “When Two Crises Meet – The COVID-19 Pandemic and Science Denialism.” *Hypotheses: Academy Blogs*, (2020), <https://zif.hypotheses.org/749>.
 7. John G. McGraw. “Loneliness, its nature and forms: an existential perspective.” *Man and World* 28, (January 1995): 43-64. Tom Roberts, and Joel Krueger. “Loneliness and the Emotional Experience of Absence.” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*. (2020): 1–20.

(em inglês, *solitude*). “Sentir-se sozinho” é uma condição subjetiva de relativa aflição emocional, em virtude da experiência de desconexão com outros relevantes ou ausência de vínculo social significativo. “Estar sozinho”, por outro lado, é um estado objetivo considerado valioso para muitas pessoas e sem nenhum sinal de aflição psicológica, pois podemos, mesmo isolados, sentirmo-nos plenamente conectados com outros, sem desconfortos e anseios por contato social⁸.

Os sentimentos de desconexão e desamparo que constituem a solidão (subjetiva) podem variar desde *formas crônicas* de desconexão, geralmente acompanhados de sentimentos de vazio, falta de sentido e abandono, com o desenvolvimento de distúrbios de comportamento, até formas relativamente *transitórias e suaves*, particularmente quando as condições aflitivas são avaliadas como temporárias. Na sua forma crônica, a solidão representa um risco para o bem-estar físico e saúde mental⁹, sendo uma emoção dolorosa e até mesmo aterradora, podendo gerar “um ciclo persistente e auto-sustentado de pensamentos negativos, sensações e comportamentos”¹⁰. Mas ela também pode, mesmo tendo uma valência negativa e dolorosa, assumir formas não-patológicas ou incapacitantes, especialmente quando a solidão é transitória. Alguns estudos têm mostrado que as experiências de solidão na pandemia foram principalmente de tipo transitório, como um sentimento ocasional e emocionalmente manejável da ausência de contato significativo e interação social¹¹. Nesse sentido, a solidão própria da pandemia não tem sido usualmente caracterizada por sentimentos persistentes de vazio e desconexão, comportamentos autodestrutivos ou estados de paralisia. Ela se caracteriza principalmente como uma percepção de mudança e ausência, um tipo de emoção que não bloqueia a autopercepção de si, daquilo que é pessoalmente valorizado e

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8. Para uma análise mais detalhada das diferenças entre solidão (loneliness) e solitude, ver Valéria Motta, and Lisa Bortolotti. “Solitude as a Positive Experience: Empowerment and Agency.” *Metodo* 8, no. 2 (May/Jun 2020): 119-147. DOI:10.19079/metodo.8.2.119.
 9. Debanjan Banerjee, and Mayank Rai. “Social isolation in Covid-19: The impact of loneliness.” *International journal of social psychiatry* 66, no.6 (April 2020). 525-527. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020764020922269>
 10. John T. Cacioppo, and William Patrick. *Loneliness: human nature and the need for social connection*. (New York: W.W Norton & Company, 2008), 07.
 11. Dunigan Folk et al. “Did Social Connection Decline During the First Wave of COVID-19: The Role of Extraversion.” *Collabra: Psychology* 6, (July 2020): 1-13. Kasley Killam. “In The Midst Of The Pandemic, Loneliness Has Leveled Out.” *Scientific American*, August 18, 2020, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/in-the-midst-of-the-pandemic-loneliness-has-leveled-out>.

do lugar de outros em nossa experiência, revelando um potencial de auto-compreensão, transformação moral e redirecionamento existencial.

Um dos propósitos centrais desse ensaio é mostrar que nos casos em que a solidão não envolve fatores de risco para a saúde mental e comportamentos autodestrutivos, ela pode levar a um aprofundamento da experiência na direção da percepção do valor dos outros, de nossa vulnerabilidade a eles e do tipo de significação que costumamos encontrar no contato social, como certas formas de intimidade, amizade e partilha, os quais vieram à tona no contexto disruptivo da pandemia. A pretensão geral desse ensaio, portanto, é oferecer uma visão mais nuançada do impacto das emoções durante a pandemia, indicando que mesmo emoções negativas, que envolvem algum grau de dor, podem guardar lições importantes sobre o domínio valorativo.

A tese que as emoções podem desempenhar um papel epistêmico significativo tem sido defendida mais comumente nas teorias cognitivistas das emoções, as teorias que concebem emoções como estados dotados de intencionalidade (elas são “sobre algo”) e com algum tipo de análise valorativa dos seus objetos ou situações, feito do ponto de vista daquele que experimenta a emoção. No interior dessas teorias há ao menos duas maneiras de pensar o trabalho cognitivo das emoções. A primeira, mais comum nas teorias que tomam as emoções como estados afetivos episódicos, com duração determinada e ligadas à uma situação (o medo que sinto ao ver o cachorro latindo e mostrando os dentes, por exemplo), concebe a função cognitiva de modo similar ao funcionamento das percepções. As emoções desempenhariam funções epistêmicas ao revelarem propriedades avaliativas de objetos e situações (a periculosidade do cão)¹². Uma segunda possibilidade de compreensão do papel cognitivo das emoções tem sido articulada na tradição fenomenológica¹³. Os estudos de Matthew Ratcliffe sobre sentimentos existenciais têm permitido pensar

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12. Catherine Z. Elgin “Emotions and Understanding”. in *Epistemology and Emotions*, ed. Georg Brun, Uvli Dogouglu, and Dominique Kuenzle (Hampshire: Ashgate publishing Limited, 2008), 33-50. Peter Goldie. “Emotion.” *Philosophy Compass* 2, no. 6 (November 2007): 928-938; Michael S. Brady. *Emotional Insight: The epistemic Role of Emotional Experience*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
 13. Matthew Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being: Phenomenology, psychiatry and the sense of reality* (Oxford:Oxford University Press, 2013), 2. David Weberman. “Heidegger and the Disclosive Character of the Emotions.” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 34, no. 3, (1996):379-410. Gabriel Henrique Dietrich. “A dimensão afetiva da existência humana à luz da fenomenologia hermenêutica: o caráter revelador das emoções em Ser e Tempo.” *Griot: Revista de Filosofia do Centro* 20, no.1 (2020): 51-60.

estados afetivos como estruturas amplas ou “modos de encontrar-se no mundo” que atravessam e revelam a totalidade (interna e externa/corpo e mente) de nossa experiência como sendo de um certo modo¹⁴. Estados afetivos teriam uma função epistêmica na tradição fenomenológica por atuarem como pano de fundo de todo “encontro” com o mundo, tanto teórico, quanto prático. Nessa seção, eu ofereço uma caracterização da solidão a partir da análise das emoções de Michael Stocker que combina elementos dessas duas tradições de análise das emoções, na medida que concebe as emoções como entidades duradouras que atuam como um background experiencial, ao mesmo tempo que admite uma intencionalidade direcionada e o potencial cognitivo das emoções. Procurarei mostrar que a experiência subjetiva da solidão na pandemia não pode ser pensada unicamente em termos de sentimentos psíquicos de desconexão e avaliações sobre ausência de contato significativo, mas como uma emoção global, que inclui sentimentos corporais do espaço ao redor. Como uma emoção abrangente, a solidão atua na estruturação de aspectos relevantes de nossa experiência, sem deixar de ter um objeto intencional: a ausência.

Michael Stocker desenvolveu uma abordagem das emoções que concebe as emoções como entidades complexas, irreduzíveis a outros estados mentais como juízos, crenças ou desejos. Embora aceite a contribuição cognitiva das emoções, ele se desvia da tradição cognitivista ao argumentar que emoções não ocorrem unicamente de forma episódica, mas também como backgrounds afetivos para nossas atividades práticas e teóricas. Stocker explorou essa característica das emoções inicialmente mediante a abordagem dos sentimentos psíquicos¹⁵, mas depois ampliou a tese da impregnação afetiva da experiência humana, defendendo que toda nossa experiência é afetivamente estruturada. Como ele afirmou num ensaio de 2004, referindo-se às emoções: “na minha visão, as emoções podem ser difusas, pervasivas, e duradouras, formando nosso background, bem como o tom, a cor, o gosto afetivo, a sensação das atividades, relações e experiências”.¹⁶ Emoções são entendidas aqui como um pano de fundo afetivo de nossas experiências em geral. Stocker chegou a pensar nas emoções nesses termos pois estava buscando uma imagem não-funcionalista da psique humana, uma imagem alternativa ao modelo

14. Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, 2.

15. Michael Stocker. “Psychic feelings: their importance and irreducibility.” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 61, no. 1 (March 1983): 5-26.

16. Michael Stocker. *Thinking about feeling. Contemporary Philosophers on Emotions edited by Robert C. Solomon*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 137.

tradicional do desejo-crença. No contexto de uma crítica às teorias biológico-funcionalistas da agência prática, ele diz que “uma caracterização da nossa psique sem a afetividade é ou incompleta ou uma descrição de uma pessoa radicalmente deficiente”¹⁷. Uma forma mais concreta de compreender a diferença – que ele pretende apontar – que as emoções e sentimentos psíquicos fazem na experiência humana consiste em notar como a apatia, o desinteresse, a depressão em oposição à leveza, envolvimento e o alto astral fazem em nossas atividades teóricas e práticas. Essas “tonalidades afetivas da alma” podem tornar essas atividades e a própria vida em geral experiências estimulantes, envolventes ou, em casos negativos, indiferentes e frias. Ao chamar atenção para esse aspecto abrangente das emoções e sentimentos psíquicos, Stocker pretendia mostrar que a ação intencional não pode ser reduzida ao esquema funcionalista do desejo-crença, desconsiderando a afetividade. As emoções fazem uma diferença fundamental para o tipo de envolvimento que mantemos com a realidade, podendo ser entendidas, nesse sentido, como “um modo de estar no mundo”, o qual pode variar da simples apatia até formas de envolvimento intenso e apaixonado. A sugestão aqui, portanto, é que as emoções em geral não são episódios afetivos isolados, mas uma estrutura ampla, de fundo, que está na base de todo nosso “encontro” com o mundo e com outros, doando sentido e envolvimento à experiência e realidade. Pretendo aplicar agora essa caracterização das emoções como formas difusas de “estar no mundo” para pensar a solidão na pandemia. Para tornar mais claro esse ponto convém examinar mais de perto a natureza da solidão.

Roberts e Krueger sustentaram que a solidão é essencialmente uma emoção de ausência, ou seja, é uma experiência afetiva dirigida àquilo que falta, que não está aí. Como eles dizem, “algumas emoções dizem respeito *essencialmente* àquilo que está faltando, que está fora de alcance ou não ocorrendo. O luto, anseio, a saudade, sentir saudades de casas (*homesickness*), o amor não-correspondido, a nostalgia, por exemplo, são tipos de consciência (frequentemente dolorosa) da ausência de algum objeto, pessoa ou característica”¹⁸. Como uma resposta afetiva que concerne essencialmente à ausência, Roberts e Krueger argumentaram que a solidão pode ser entendida numa estrutura dupla: (1) ela envolve uma proto-atitude em relação a uma coisa ou qualidade ausente, tal como um desejo ou atitude de

17. Stocker, “Psychic feelings: their importance and irreducibility”, 7.

18. Tom Roberts, and Joel Krueger. “Loneliness and the Emotional Experience of Absence.” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*. (2020): 2.

admiração, vontade ou aprovação. (2) envolve uma consciência complexa da ausência da coisa que não pode ser tornada presente; que não pode ser facilmente encontrada, gerada ou trazida de volta¹⁹.

Como disposição ou atitude em relação a um bem ausente, a solidão torna-se acessível na experiência de diferentes formas. Em alguns casos, a consciência da ausência é largamente intelectual e noutros casos “o agente tem uma consciência significativamente corporal, visceral”²⁰. Embora apontem para um sentido corporal da solidão, Roberts e Krueger não desenvolveram uma análise mais detalhada da corporeidade da solidão. No que segue, eu pretendo mostrar que parte da consciência complexa da ausência que dá conteúdo à solidão está associada com o modo como ela é sentida corporalmente. Isso nos ajudará a entender a solidão como uma emoção difusa, capaz de alterar nossa experiência do mundo, em parte a partir de como a integração do corpo com ambientes é sentida, sem abandonar seu significado epistêmico ou cognitivo.

Como o corpo sente a solidão? A análise das propriedades qualitativas das emoções tem indicado que em certos estados de fundo emocional como o estresse ou certas formas de depressão, há uma referência fundamental à corporeidade. Dizemos que nos sentimos “sobrecarregados” sob estresse e, na depressão, “esgotados e sem forças”²¹. Emoções como a ansiedade são sentidas como inquietude corporal. Pessoas que sentem certas formas de vergonha e timidez também sentem o corpo no espaço como parte de uma experiência hostil, como um incômodo ou estorvo, mostrando dificuldades para manter contato visual e posicionar membros como braços e mãos. No caso da solidão, uma primeira referência às experiências físicas ou viscerais aponta para um desejo intenso de conexão, um desejo frequentemente identificado com o desejo de comida e bebida para aliviar as sensações desprazerosas, algo que às vezes também é referido através da ideia de uma “fome interna” associada com a solidão²².

19. Ibid., 03.

20. Ibid. É interessante notar, nesse ponto, que Stocker também reconheceu que emoções e sentimentos psíquicos podem ser sentidos no corpo. Ele lembra, por exemplo, de um grupo de sentimentos psíquicos “envolvidos no desejo sexual, na exultação ao escalar um penhasco difícil e em certas formas de desorientação e tensão”. Conforme Stocker, “Psychic feelings: their importance and irreducibility”, 07.

21. Marcelo Lopes. “Afetividade existencial, Memória corporal e Intersubjetividade: Contribuições Fenomenológicas para a Filosofia da Psiquiatria.” (Tese de Doutorado. Universidade Federal de Santa Maria, 2018), 8-9.

22. Fay Bound Albert. *A biography of loneliness: The history of an emotion*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 180.

A solidão é, assim, sentida como uma experiência corporal de vazio, de um vazio sentido “dentro” do corpo e de um anseio corporal pelo que está ausente.

Uma segunda estratégia de construção da corporeidade da solidão apela para a “materialidade” da solidão, pensada em termos de objetos materiais, como objetos de casa (fotografias de família, roupas, móveis) e outros objetos pessoais que se tornam salientes nas experiências de solidão associadas ao luto. A historiadora Fay Alberti observa que “ao lado das narrativas verbais e gestos, objetos materiais são meios através dos quais estruturamos nossos mundos físicos e mentais e comunicamos nossas experiências emocionais para outros e nós mesmos”²³. A solidão poderia ser pensada nesse sentido como uma experiência de deslocamento, como mudança nas relações com o mundo material a que pertencemos. “Por que os objetos materiais contam histórias sobre quem somos, e onde estamos no mundo, eles tornam-se especialmente importantes quando outros aspectos de nós mesmos e nossas identidades são destruídos e distantes”²⁴. É nesse sentido que os objetos da pessoa amada na perda (como na viuvez) são relevantes para capturar um sentido corporificado da solidão como uma experiência estendida na cultura material, semelhante ao potencial da música para gerar contextos integradores de consciência emocional²⁵. Objetos e espaços físicos aparecem aqui envolvidos na fenomenologia emocional da solidão.

Tanto as sensações corporais, quanto a “materialidade” dos objetos de alguém que se foi ajudam a pensar na solidão como algo sentido de modo mais abrangente do que aquele referido através dos anseios e sentimentos “internos” de ausência e desconexão. Contudo, a despeito desses dois importantes sentidos em que podemos falar de uma experiência ampliada da solidão, eu gostaria de explorar ainda um terceiro aspecto, este associado com a percepção do espaço ao redor pelo corpo, mais especificamente do espaço desabitado, vazio. Importantes ferramentas para acercar esse sentido corporal da solidão são as imagens (fotografias) e textos literários, especialmente o diário e os testemunhos, textos cujo registro subjetivo e vivenciado (ainda que pelo filtro da escrita na intimidade) rastreiam de perto as sutilezas físicas e psicofísicas da solidão. Como ponto de partida para exploração da dimensão corporal visada, cito

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Joel Krueger, and Thomas Szanto. “Extended Emotions.” *Philosophy Compass* 11, no.12 (December 2016): 863-878.

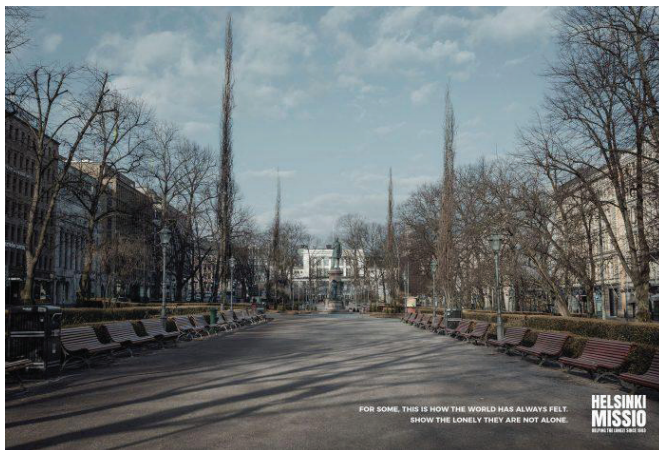
um relato do diário de Etty Hillesum, uma jovem judia que foi prisioneira no gueto de Westerbork, na Holanda, e depois enviada à Auschwitz. Na intimidade do seu diário, ela vivencia e descreve a lembrança de seu amante como um “tormento físico”:

E assim fui para casa com os sentimentos mais contraditórios: revoltada com ele, porque o achei cruel e rude, e enternecida, cheia de um bom sentimento humano de amizade e ao mesmo tempo com uma fantasia erótica muito estimulada, induzida pelos seus gestos refinados. E por alguns dias não pude fazer nada além de pensar nele; na verdade não se pode chamar de pensar, era mais *um tormento físico*. Seu corpo grande e ágil me ameaçava por todos os lados, estava por cima de mim, debaixo de mim, por toda parte, ameaçava me esmagar, eu não podia mais trabalhar e pensava horrorizada, meu Deus, o que foi que inventei, fui lá para um tratamento psicológico, para trazer alguma clareza a mim mesma, e agora isso, algo pior do que eu jamais havia experimentado²⁶.

Hillesum descreve aqui o engajamento afetivo com o objeto de seu desejo como algo mais que um “pensamento” ou “lembrança” da pessoa amada. Os pensamentos são descritos como um “tormento físico”, como uma ameaça “por todos os lados”, “por cima”, “debaixo”, “por toda parte”, “esmagando-a”. De modo similar, podemos articular as qualidades sentidas da solidão como uma apreensão física, sentida, *do vazio ao redor*. Essa percepção pode ser pensada tanto em termos do corpo isolado literalmente, como ocorre com as pessoas deixadas sozinhas em unidades de tratamento intensivo da Covid-19, quanto pela experiência de vazio e silêncio em casas e ruas na pandemia, o que origina uma apreensão sensorial bastante clara de deslocamento, dando saliência à sensação de um “eu” isolado, marcado pela distância e separação. O recurso ao eu, no entanto, deve ser bem entendido. Não se trata meramente de uma sensação psicológica, interior, de separação. A sensação de vazio pode ser captada corporalmente, tal como nos passeios ou imagens por ruas vazias de grandes cidades nos primeiros registros do *lockdown*. Esse sentido espacial da solidão foi explorado no material de uma campanha publicitária da entidade finlandesa Helsinki Missio. A campanha consistiu em mostrar pontos movimentados de Helsinque, tal como uma praça vazia por causa do coronavírus, acompanhadas pela mensagem: “para algumas

26. Etty Hillesum. *Uma vida interrompida*. Trans. Mariângela Guimarães (Belo Horizonte: Editora Âyiné, 2019), 47.

pessoas, o mundo sempre pareceu ser assim. Mostre aos solitários que eles não estão sozinhos”²⁷.



Fonte: Foto de uma peça da campanha finlandesa da Helsinki Missio.

Embora a referência seja objetiva, ao isolamento social propriamente dito, as imagens lembram claramente que sentir-se sozinho não é apenas certo tipo de sentimento psíquico, mas também uma sensação corporal que lugares vazios trazem à tona. Considere, por exemplo, a experiência de caminhar na rua para fazer compras. Usualmente essa experiência é acompanhada de sons, pessoas e uma certa agitação ambiental. Sob a pandemia, grande parte do foco dessa prática foi transferido para uma percepção da ausência de outras pessoas, fazendo o espaço ao redor adquirir uma “realidade” contemplativa, com certo teor estético, em relação à experiência usual. Essas experiências de diferenciação da apreensão do espaço ativadas pela pandemia especialmente em ambientes urbanos, podem ser notadas também no ambiente natural. A pandemia promoveu, nesse sentido, uma forma de apreensão da espacialidade que é solidária à experiência subjetiva da solidão, uma experiência que consistiu em sentir nosso corpo isolado, tal como ocorre quando passeamos numa praia vazia ou ao notar a vastidão do universo mirando o céu à noite num local isolado.

27. “Scandinavian Way. Finlandeses usam quarentena para campanha de apoio a solitários.” Scandinavian Way, acesso em 20 de abril de 2020, <https://scandinavianway.com.br/finlandia-campanha-solidao-pandemia-coronavirus/>

Ainda na direção de uma caracterização da solidão como experiência de deslocamento e vazio em relação ao espaço ao redor, o romance *A tréguia*, de Mario Benedetti, apresenta fragmentos de experiências na forma de diário que traduzem igualmente esse sentimento de vazio ambiental que venho considerando parte de uma experiência ampliada da solidão, de uma solidão que se faz sentir no corpo. No dia 7 de julho, por exemplo, o personagem de Martin Santomé registra um passeio à beira-mar nos seguintes termos:

Domingo, 7 de julho [...] Assim, com a praia vazia, as ondas se tornam impotentes, governam sozinhas a paisagem. Nesse sentido, eu me reconheço lamentavelmente dócil, maleável. Vejo esse mar implacável e desolado, tão orgulhoso de sua espuma e de sua coragem, levemente salpicado de gaivotas ingênuas, quase irreais, e de imediato me refugio numa irresponsável admiração. Mas depois, quase em seguida, a admiração se desintegra e eu passo a me sentir indefeso como um molusco, com um seixo rolado. Esse mar é uma espécie de eternidade²⁸.

O sentimento corporal de solidão foi capturado aqui na imagem da praia vazia, explorando a contradição entre a pequenez humana, como um “seixo rolado”, frente a amplidão espacial de um mar “que é uma espécie de eternidade”, lembrando, como nas imagens de cidades desertas, um vazio ao redor, como se self e realidade perdessem sua integração. Tanto na fotografia da praça vazia, quanto na narrativa literária de Benedetti, a evocação imaginativa guarda um lirismo que revela a solidão não apenas como algo interno, mas parte de um conjunto complexo de sensações psicofísicas que inundam nossa experiência, moldando nossa interação com a realidade e com outros. Se poderia falar aqui de uma forma de *retraimento* do mundo em relação ao sujeito, uma experiência de separação, principalmente em virtude da vivacidade que o espaço “vazio” assume, indicando de modo vívido a ausência de uma realidade compartilhada. Esse “sentimento espacial” que foi parte integrante da vivência da pandemia, ajuda a mostrar que a solidão não é um mero estado psíquico, mas um modo de estar num mundo onde, em boa medida, o mundo aparece como algo que não pode ser vivido em comunhão ou convívio.

Essas referências permitem caracterizar a emoção solidão como uma emoção ampla, que envolve sentimentos corporais de um mundo distante,

28. Marcelo Barbosa Alcaraz. “O imaginário da solidão em espaços (auto) biográficos” (Tese Doutorado, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, 2014), 55-56.

que pode ser visto, contemplado, mas não vivido plenamente, ao lado de sentimentos “internos” de desconexão e ausência. As caracterizações da solidão como “um sentimento reduzido de contexto e conexão” ou como “carecer de participação no mundo” podem ser entendidas, nesse sentido, como tendo uma referência tanto corporal, quanto psicológica²⁹.

Para as finalidades deste ensaio, é suficiente chamar a atenção para esses aspectos corporificados da experiência de solidão, de modo a ilustrar como ela pode assumir um sentido abrangente em nossa experiência, como uma tonalidade afetiva ampla. Na próxima seção, eu examino como esse sentimento amplo de solidão na pandemia (corporal e consciente) revela conhecimento valorativo.

3. A solidão existencial e a apreensão de estruturas de significado e importância

Na seção anterior desenvolvi uma abordagem da solidão que indica que a mesma pode ser construída como uma emoção ampla, que não apenas é sentida na mente, mas também através do modo como nosso corpo sente e interage com o espaço. Essa análise deixa em aberto como as emoções em geral e a solidão em particular podem ser informativas ou revelar aspectos da realidade e sobre nós mesmos, particularmente em relação ao conteúdo valorativo. Stocker enfatizou que o papel epistêmico é constitutivo das emoções, mesmo se concebidas como um background afetivo de nossas atividades práticas e teóricas. Ao caracterizar os sentimentos psíquicos, que são qualidades afetivas da alma ou psique e parte da afetividade em sentido amplo, ele indica que existem ao menos três categorias desses sentimentos: (1) os sentimentos psíquicos “da pessoa”, os quais representam a qualidade afetiva interna ou subjetiva de nossa vida mental: “há aqueles que parecem não ter objeto e, ao menos primariamente caracterizam a psique como, por exemplo, sentir-se animado, cheio de energia psicológica ou mental, ter alto astral”; (2) os sentimentos psíquicos que são da pessoa, mas se “dirigem ao mundo”: “sentimentos que tem um objeto e assim são sobre o “mundo” como, por exemplo, sentir-se animado com ou interessado em algo”; (3) os sentimentos psíquicos “do mundo”: “aqueles que são sobre ou até mesmo parecem estar no mundo,

29. Karin Dahlberg. “The enigmatic phenomenon of loneliness” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being* 2, no. 4 (2007): 197.

como, por exemplo, ver que algo é interessante”³⁰. Para a análise do papel epistêmico da solidão, é fundamental compreender os sentimentos e emoções do segundo tipo, aqueles que se dirigem ao mundo e não dizem respeito unicamente à pessoa. Os casos paradigmáticos de emoções desse tipo examinados por Stocker são sentimentos e emoções como o *interesse* e a *preocupação*. Quando estamos interessados ou preocupados com algo direcionamos nossa atenção para todo tipo de informação ou evidência que corresponda ao objeto de nosso interesse e preocupação.

Quando alguém está interessado em algo, sua presença ou ausência pode ser especialmente intensa: numa festa, o olhar de quem está com fome pode ser atraído pela comida, o colecionador busca as antiguidades [...] para alguém possuído por um entusiasmo universal, como ocorre de vez em quando com os místicos e com as crianças, tudo pode ser visto com intensidade e pode atrair a atenção e a imaginação. Em suma, a atenção e o interesse têm interconexões conceituais muitos fortes”³¹

A preocupação e o interesse atuam como fontes de saliência, isto é, acionam estados de alerta com potencial de dirigir a atenção a objetos e eventos importantes ou significativos para o tipo de interesse, para os objetivos que buscamos. Como vimos, a solidão é essencialmente uma emoção que reage à ausência e compartilha a dimensão cognitiva de outras emoções sinalizando “aquilo que falta”, “que não está presente”. Roberts e Kruger tem argumentado que quando nos sentimos sozinhos, nossa atenção se dirige à ausência ou falta de outros significativos ou de qualidades valiosas da experiência com outros³². A contribuição epistêmica da solidão não fica restrita, contudo, à promoção de um tipo de engajamento que favorece a atividade intelectual em relação às pessoas ou situações ausentes, como se ela fosse uma força motivadora da cognição por sua atuação em processos atencionais. Ela faz mais do que dirigir nossa atenção para aqueles que amamos e com os quais não podemos conviver ou para as coisas que gostaríamos de ter, mas não estão disponíveis. Emoções como a solidão não são apenas configurações afetivas que chamam a atenção ou ativam a apreensão de informações sobre estados de coisas. As emoções *revelam* valor. O tipo de conteúdo revelado aqui não é meramente fático, mas da ordem da importância e do cuidado. É porque

30. Stocker, “Psychic feelings: their importance and irreducibility”, 9-10.

31. Ibid., 18.

32. Roberts, “Loneliness and the Emotional Experience of Absence.”, 2.

meus amigos e família *importam* a mim, porque *me preocupo* com eles, que me sinto sozinho e desconectado por sua ausência. A solidão oferece o que poderia ser chamado de *autoconhecimento valorativo*, o conhecimento do tipo de pessoas que somos, dos compromissos que assumimos e das coisas que nos importam, especialmente nossa dependência ou vulnerabilidade aos outros e ao mundo social. Como diz Stocker “as emoções podem também *revelar* valores: que elas contêm, e que ajudam a estruturá-las”³³. Perceber-se sozinho, contrariado e entristecido pela ausência de contato social mostra que, além de notar certos fatos e ter certas crenças, *valorizamos* a presença de certas pessoas e bens ligados à sociabilidade. Antes da pandemia, podíamos perceber o valor da amizade, do convívio familiar ampliado ou mesmo de experiências de contato social no trabalho. Em seguida, a ficar sabendo e de reagirmos emocionalmente à pandemia, a visão dessa importância e significado se alterou, mostrando que algo sério e significativo estava em jogo. Usando uma formulação de Nussbaum, poderíamos dizer que a solidão faz um “juízo sobre coisas importantes”. Ela torna transparente algo significativo, de importância, que está na base da experiência e usualmente não é percebido. Roberts e Krueger resumem essa dimensão de importância ativada pela solidão ao observar que,

O que essencialmente importa a uma pessoa que sente solidão é inacessibilidade de certos bens sociais mais intensos, como companhia, apoio moral, contato físico e afeição, simpatia, confiança, romance, amizade e a oportunidade de agir e interagir – e assim de ser feliz – como um ator social. Esse espectro de bens dá suporte, reforça e sustenta muitos de nossas relações humanas mais valiosas [...] embora muitos episódios de solidão envolvam anseios relativamente fugazes, alguns inconsequentes, por gratificações corriqueiras nas trocas sociais, há bens interpessoais profundos em questão aqui também: ser intelectualmente e emocionalmente apoiado por outros, receber confirmação, validação e amor; ser capaz de expressar e cultivar aqueles aspectos da própria identidade que tem uma forma essencialmente social³⁴.

Se aceitamos essa descrição da solidão como uma emoção complexa que revela o que é de significado e importância, fica fácil compreender o tipo de informação avaliativa presente na solidão: ela indica que a ausência de certos bens sociais, certas formas de convívio, são custosas. O nível de aflição pode variar. Em casos de solidão patológica, a ausência de bens

33. Michael Stocker, and Elizabeth Hegeman. *Valuing Emotions*. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 56.

34. Roberts, “Loneliness and the Emotional Experience of Absence.”, 7.

sociais pode ser sentida como algo terrível, como fonte de sofrimento. Em casos de solidão transitória, a aflição é manejável e ajudando-nos a formar uma concepção mais objetiva, precisa, do sentido e valor daquilo que está ausente. Bem entendido, o desvelamento das dimensões significativas da experiência levado a cabo pela experiência emocional da solidão não é um processo que depende unicamente dessa emoção. Emoções sempre aparecem em *clusters*, uma conduzindo à outra³⁵. A solidão desencadeia sentimentos de tristeza, depressão ou pode vir acompanhada de uma preocupação amorosa em relação àqueles com quem nos importamos e não estão próximos. Quando esses sentimentos não nos dominam, eles cooperam para direcionar o foco atencional, apreender o significado de outras pessoas e do contato social para uma vida de propósito, de plenitude existencial.

4. A solidão e a pandemia como experiência transformativa

Ao intensificar as emoções, a pandemia abriu a possibilidade de percepção de um registro de nossa experiência que usualmente permanece implícito. Como colocou Havi Carel,

Estados anormais ou “patológicos” podem lançar luz sobre estados ordinários (“normais”) através de caminhos que revelam e tornam explícitos processos, ideias e modos de comportamento que normalmente permanecem tácitos. Os estados patológicos podem, de modo único, fazer o trabalho epistêmico adicional ao revelar, e assim tornar aberto à investigação, estruturas tácitas de expectativas, significado, e inteligibilidade que são amplamente invisíveis em condições normais³⁶.

Havi Carel e Ian Kidd (2020) têm defendido, nessa direção, que a pandemia, por sua anormalidade e intensidade, foi uma experiência transformativa. Uma experiência transformativa é uma experiência que altera radicalmente as pessoas que passam por ela: “a pessoa que passa por uma experiência transformativa não é mais a mesma pessoa de antes; elas foram transformadas em seus valores, compromissos, objetivos e aspirações”³⁷. Ao menos dois aspectos são necessários para considerar uma

35. Carolyn Price. *Emotion*. (London: Polity Press, 2015).

36. Havi Carel, and Ian James Kidd. “Pandemic transformative experience: Havi Carel and Ian James Kidd explain how covid-19 is changing us.”, 13.

37. Ibid.

experiência transformativa: ela deve provocar transformações pessoais e epistêmicas: “ela precisa transformar nossa personalidade, valores e objetivos e também precisa nos dar um novo conhecimento, um conhecimento que não obteríamos de outro modo”³⁸. Nessa seção, eu pretendo mostrar, em consonância com a tese de Carel e Kidd, que as emoções são componentes fundamentais para uma compreensão do tipo de revelação epistêmica constitutivo das experiências transformativas e, por conseguinte, para uma compreensão mais completa da pandemia como experiência transformativa.

A noção de experiência transformativa foi formulada inicialmente por Laurie Paul. Paul enfatiza em sua análise que as experiências transformativas possuem uma dimensão qualitativa que não pode ser conhecida *de antemão*, sem passar pela experiência mesma. Ou seja, embora possamos ter uma compreensão especulativa ou teórica acerca do que significa ter uma certa experiência (como ser pai ou participar de uma guerra), só compreendemos realmente o que é a experiência quando passamos por ela.

Quando uma pessoa tem um tipo novo e diferente de experiência, um tipo de experiência que ensina a ela algo que ela não teria aprendido sem ter esse tipo de experiência, ela tem uma *transformação epistêmica*. Seu conhecimento do que algo é, e seu ponto de vista subjetivo, muda. Com essa nova experiência, ela ganha novas habilidades para cognitivamente entreter certos conteúdos, ela aprende a entender as coisas de um modo novo, e pode até mesmo obter novas informações³⁹.

Paul articula aqui um tipo de conhecimento fenomenal que difere e não pode ser reduzido ao conhecimento proposicional. Esse conhecimento, contudo, é distinto da mera experiência fenomênica não-interpretada, de simples *qualia*, como emoções brutas ou conteúdos afetivos não-articulados. Podemos compreender claramente esse aspecto através da emoção da solidão. Na solidão, a transformação cognitiva envolve uma fenomenologia única que inclui qualidades sentidas de sofrimento e desconforto como respostas à ausência. Os sentimentos de dor que acompanham a solidão são qualitativamente muito diferentes de outros tipos de dor. Não se trata de uma diferença de grau. Trata-se de um tipo de experiência qualitativa (dolorosa) que “fere” de um modo particular. O sofrimento carrega uma mensagem de abandono ou isolamento em relação

38. Ibid.

39. Laurie Paul. *Transformative Experience*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

aos outros. Ou seja, a experiência fenomenal reconhece nossa vulnerabilidade aos outros, tanto no sentido de uma plenitude existencial que não é alcançada individualmente, quanto da percepção de que essa condição é aflitiva e deve ser remediada. A solidão expõe, nesse sentido, a fragilidade da nossa existência, sua necessidade de conexão e do calor que acompanha a convivialidade, de um modo particular e muito mais profundo que qualquer apreensão proposicional ou via inferências baseadas em experiências prévias. Pode-se afirmar, nesse sentido, que o conteúdo qualitativo de emoções como a solidão é essencial à compreensão do sentido de transformação epistêmica promovido pela pandemia, pois é através do “tormento físico” e psíquico que a solidão (em conjunto com outras emoções) tem promovido que aprendemos a olhar de modo novo, qualitativamente distinto, para aqueles que são de importância e para o lugar da sociabilidade em nossas vidas. A pandemia é uma experiência anormal, disruptiva, que revelou “nossa vulnerabilidade corporal, a fragilidade de nossos modos de vida admitido, a precariedade do mundo que habitamos”⁴⁰. Uma parte fundamental dessa percepção está vinculada com as emoções, em especial com a solidão, uma vez que sem o tipo de experiência de desconexão abrangente, ao mesmo tempo espiritual e corporal, proporcionado pela emoção da solidão, nossa perspectiva epistêmica em relação ao valor de outros relevantes e da sociabilidade não sofreria alterações profundas. A pandemia nos ensinou a entender as coisas de um modo novo, com novas conexões, em grande medida em virtude das emoções que despertou.

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40. Ibid., 14.

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What is it to Lose Trust? Covid-19 Pandemic, Extended Minds and Shared Feelings

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Abstract

Since the emergence of the Covid-19 outbreak, the world has faced profound changes, with different levels of impact on human experience. Besides immediate health, economic, and political issues, psychological and existential impacts have also emerged. It is no exaggeration to say that even our taken-for-granted, embodied being in the world has profoundly changed, with collectively felt impacts. In this paper, I argue for a general description of the Covid-19 experience. I suggest that *loss of trust* emerges as a pervasive dimension of these strange times, de-structuring the whole web of human relations since then. As an essentially affective category, trust can be described at the most basic level as a pre-intentional bodily orientation towards ourselves, others, and the world in general. A critical point is that loss of trust cannot be described as an internal and individual emotion, but rather, as an essentially relational and socially extended affective phenomenon. Another critical point is that, due to social distancing measures, loss of trust has to be understood mostly as a technologically scaffolded form of emotional sharing. I end by calling attention to the potential and present mental health impacts of losing trust.

Keywords: Covid-19, existential feelings, extended mind, pandemic, trust.

1. Introduction

Since the emergence of the Covid-19 outbreak, the world has faced profound changes, with different levels of impact on human experience. Besides immediate health, economic, and political issues, psychological and existential impacts have also emerged. It is no exaggeration to say that even our taken-for-granted, embodied being in the world has profoundly changed, with collectively felt impacts. In this paper, I argue for a general description of the Covid-19 experience in terms of *loss of trust*. The loss of this important dimension of human experience emerges as a pervasive dimension of these strange times, de-structuring the whole web of human relations since then. As an essentially affective

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category, trust can be described at the most basic level as a pre-intentional bodily orientation towards ourselves, other people, and the world in general.

In what follows I examine the structure of this general background feeling of trust (section 2). Next, I develop a phenomenological account regarding the formal structure of the Covid-19 experience in terms of loss of trust (section 3). A critical point to be assessed is that trust (and its loss) cannot be described as an internal and individual explicit emotion, but rather, as a collectively felt atmosphere, which I present as an instance of the extended mind thesis (section 4). Another critical point is that, due to social distancing measures, loss of trust has to be understood mostly as a technologically scaffolded form of emotional sharing (4.1). In the end, I call attention to the potential and present mental health impacts of losing trust, and the implications for our general sense of hope (4.2).

2. Background Affectivity and the Pandemic

Recent debates in philosophy, psychology, and cognitive sciences emphasize the role of emotions as constituting the basic layer of our mental life. Classical and contemporary phenomenological research, in particular, stressed the experiential dimension of emotions and its relation to taxonomic and ontological issues. Because of their intrinsic connection with other intentional states, as well as their pervasive trait in human experience, emotions were addressed by nearly every classical phenomenologist. More recently, the so-called second-wave phenomenological approach to emotions has paid considerable attention to these phenomena, especially based on the interaction between analytic philosophy of mind and embodied, non-representationalist cognitive sciences.¹ Here I am going to focus on the phenomenon of trust, based on these recent phenomenological approaches to emotion and its renewed concern about the nature and taxonomy of affective phenomena. In particular, I argue that trust comprises a peculiar type of background existential feeling, as articulating the general sense of “how one finds oneself in the world as a whole”.²

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1. Thomas Szanto and Hilge Landweer, “The phenomenology of emotions – above and beyond ‘What it is Like to Feel’”, in *The Routledge Handbook of Phenomenology of Emotion*, ed. Thomas Szanto and Hilge Landweer (New York: Routledge, 2020), 1-38.
 2. Matthew Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being: Phenomenology, Psychiatry and the Sense of Reality*

Broadly speaking, feelings encompass all forms of felt emotional experience, capturing the phenomenal and qualitative elements of these experiences. By virtue of their eminently experiential function, feelings figure as an intrinsic aspect of emotions in some approaches, while in others they play a secondary and thus dissociable role from emotional states.³ In this sense, feelings are broader and more basic states when compared to emotions, because not every *felt* state emerges from emotion, and because they don't need to exhibit a complex cognitive structure as in the case of emotions.⁴ A subclass of this affective phenomenon has been recently identified in neurobiological and phenomenological literature, as pertaining to a non-explicit, non-declarative, and pre-conceptual dimension.⁵ Some approaches thus maintain that an adequate taxonomy of emotional experience should accordingly encompass these background affective phenomena, insofar as they provide the very basic affective orientation for living organisms in their interaction with the world.

The neurobiological treatment pioneered by Damasio considered background emotions as comprising different regulatory and autonomic bodily processes that together contribute to the "feeling of life itself".⁶ These processes are a composite expression of various bioregulatory reactions, such as homeostatic and metabolic processes, pain and pleasure behaviors, reflexes, etc., that collectively govern thought and action.⁷ In general lines, background emotions consist of processes *in* the body, even if we are not immediately aware of them. But they also differ from unconscious states, insofar as we can become aware of them by focusing

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

3. Gerhard Thonhauser, "Feeling", in: *Affective Societies – Key Concepts*, eds. Jan Slaby and Christian von Scheve (London/New York: Routledge, 2019), 52-60.
4. Emilia Barile, "Are Background Feelings Intentional Feelings?" *Open Journal of Philosophy*, 04, 2014: 560-1.
5. Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error. Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain* (New York: Quill, 1994); Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (New York: Harvest edition, 1999); Antonio Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza. Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2003); Matthew Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being: Phenomenology, Psychiatry and the Sense of Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Matthew Ratcliffe, "The feeling of being". *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 12. (2005): 45-63; Matthew Ratcliffe, "The Phenomenology of Existential Feeling", in *Feelings of Being Alive*, eds. J. Fingerhut and S. Marienberg (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 23-54; Matthew Ratcliffe, *Experiences of Depression: A Study in Phenomenology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
6. Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, 150.
7. Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza*, 44.

attention. They refer rather to a general a-specific or objectless orientation of life itself. By way of definition, background emotions comprise “low-grade, inconspicuous affective states that constitute the tacit backdrop of experience and subtly organize thought and behavior”.⁸ From a strictly neuroscientific perspective, Damasio provides compelling physiological evidence for the existence of these background emotions and their experiential counterparts, background *feelings*. Background feelings thus emerge as physiological indexes of the condition of the body as a whole, in the form of an awareness of complex bodily changes. They are in this sense the “momentary parameters of the organism’s inner bodily state”, and are accordingly described as internal bodily phenomena, in terms of an “image” of the bodily landscape.⁹

More recently, from a phenomenological perspective, Matthew Ratcliffe provided a compelling analysis of a subclass of these background affective phenomena. According to Ratcliffe, some bodily feelings are not only directed to the body as its intentional object. Rather, they refer to a pre-intentional dimension connecting body and world, which provides a distinct affective quality or “sense of reality” regarding the whole situation *through* the experience of the body.¹⁰ More than mere evaluative reports about the relationship between organism and environment, certain bodily feelings *structure* intentional experience as a whole, since all intentional states are invariably constituted by an affective-experiential background. These bodily states, however, are neither deprived of intentionality nor relate only to the body as its object. On the contrary, objects, people, events are experienced through the mediation of these bodily feelings.¹¹ They do not refer exclusively to the body or the world but rather encompass the general relation between them, providing “ways of finding oneself in the world”, and functioning as the background of all experience, thought, and action.¹²

Ratcliffe suggests that some uses of the word “feeling” refer to a distinct phenomenological category, which presents two central characteristics: first, they are strictly bodily feelings; second, they are background orientations through which experience is structured. These are called *existential feelings* and function as the primordial context of all intentional

8. Varga & Krueger, *Background Emotions, Proximity and Distributed Emotion Regulation*, 271.

9. Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens*, 286; Damasio, *Descartes’ Error*, 150–151.

10. Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being*.

11. Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being*;

12. Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, 37.

direction. Since they structure intentionality, such feelings are constant in our lives, although rarely salient. Nonetheless, because of the implicit presence of these feelings in common experience, some disruptive cases like psychiatric conditions provide the appropriate locus for analysis, since we can observe a drastic alteration in this basic affective level when mental pathologies occur. Slaby & Stephan additionally suggested distinguishing different levels of situational specificity and conceptual impregnation in this affective dimension. The variation would range from basic to more sophisticated levels, such as pure existential feelings that reflect basic bodily functioning; feelings of basic familiarity and security related to the social and physical environment, up to conceptually sophisticated and emotional feelings in mood-like variations.¹³ In this case, psychiatric conditions should not be conceived as the only way to access these background feelings.

These background “existential” feelings thus amount to the affective and pre-intentional position of our being in the world, as “structures of relatedness between self and world”, and our more general sense of “how one finds oneself in the world as a whole”.¹⁴ Unlike Damasio’s internalist/representationalist picture of background emotions, existential feelings provide the general affective orientation that structures our bodily phenomenology as inseparable from our situation in the world. In Ratcliffe’s picture, there is a fundamental interdependence between these background states and the way we find ourselves in the world. By structuring our “existential situation”, existential feelings constitute also the space of possibilities in which one inhabits. Now, given some background affective orientation, some possibilities may appear as salient or heightened, while others appear as non-existent, diminished, for example in psychiatric cases.¹⁵ These background affective phenomena thus play an important role in providing the basic structure of our intentional life, insofar as they are not only internal bodily markers, but they also generally shape the contents of cognition and open the experiential world in specific ways.

From a phenomenological point of view, Ratcliffe’s existential feelings promote an important improvement in Damasio’s theory of background emotions. Despite Damasio’s enormously valuable contributions to the neuroscience of emotions, it fails to provide an adequate account

13. Jan Slaby & Achim Stephan, “Affective intentionality and Self-consciousness”. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 17 (2008):510.

14. Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, 37.

15. Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being*; Ratcliffe, *Experiences of Depression*.

for the connection between background feelings and our general world experience. In this sense, while Damasio's background feelings can be regarded as intentional in a weak sense¹⁶ – as related to the body itself, Ratcliffe's existential feelings relate to the pre-intentional experience of self and world connection.

In what follows, I want to suggest that a very basic background feeling has become salient since the emergence of the Covid-19 outbreak. As such, it can be described in dynamic terms of trust and its loss, as comprising the most basic affective layer of our experience during these times.

3. “Reciprocal Distrust and Extravagant suspicion”: Covid-19 Emergence and the Loss of Trust

When discussing the impairment of interpersonal relationships in schizophrenia cases, Ratcliffe pointed out the strong correlation between traumatic experiences and the onset of psychosis.¹⁷ He also presented the reasons for accepting a link between traumatic experiences and the way implicit bodily retention of trauma tends to undermine subsequent interpersonal relations. Ratcliffe's general hypothesis is that the experiential changes at the onset of psychosis derive from the loss of a basic sense of *trust* fostered by trauma. Trust is thus described as a “bodily, affective set of interpersonal expectations which develop through patterned interactions with caregivers and later come to regulate encounters with people more generally”.¹⁸ It is this basic bodily sense situated at the pre-inten-

16. Barile, *Are Background Feelings Intentional Feelings?*

17. Matthew Ratcliffe, “Selfhood, Schizophrenia, and the Interpersonal Regulation of Experience”. In *Embodiment, Enaction, and Culture: Investigating the Constitution of the Shared World*, eds. Durt, C., Fuchs, T. and Tewes, C. (Cambridge/ Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2017).

18. *Ibid.*,161. From a developmental point of view, the idea is that the achievement of secure emotional bonds at the beginning of life tends to create a primitive sense of trust in caregivers on the part of the infants, which later becomes widespread for people and situations in their wider environment. Infants who for some reason fail to establish an initial harmonic relationship with their caregivers tend to present future interpersonal difficulties, based on a pervasive sense of insecurity and threat. This failure to establish an initial harmonic relationship can occur in many ways, but the main one has to do with the development of traumas during this phase. In these cases, the presence of traumatic memory, especially in cases of child trauma linked to triggering elements, may somehow promote the rupture of existential trust that manifests itself in the emergence of psychosis.

tional level of experience, which further enables judgments in terms of trusting *B* to do *P*.

In this sense, all intentional forms of trust such as self-directed trust, trust in others, and trust in the world rely on this a “primitive, affective, non-conceptual form of trust”.¹⁹ More generally, we can say that all the modalities of intentionality depend to some extent on this affective dimension, thus giving trust a transcendental function. It is only based on an archaic experience of trust, which is originally intersubjective and affective in kind, that we developmentally acquire and consolidate our safe anchoring in the world.²⁰ Trust thus emerges as a general sense of confidence that enables our being at home in the world. It is an inconspicuous, atmospheric feeling that encompasses the whole web of intentional relationships we are capable of. In normal situations we trust ourselves (for example, our bodies as properly functioning), others (as trustworthy), and the world (as a safe place to develop our projects). Our intentional life thus embodies a pervasive, but sometimes unstable “span of trust” that runs our entire existence from “blind devotion and loyalty” to “paranoid vigilance and corrosive distrust”.²¹

In a classical formulation, Baier presents trust as “accepted vulnerability to another’s possible but not expected ill will (or lack of good will) toward one”.²² In trust there is thus the anticipation of others’ good will, assuming that they will not take advantage of my vulnerability. Interestingly enough, Baier also renders trust in terms of a feeling, as a mental phenomenon that is simultaneously cognitive, affective, and conative. This “feeling of trust” somehow disposes of us in webs, climates, or atmospheres of confidence. In this case, we rarely notice trust, until it is broken. Especially significant for our current situation is the metaphor Baier provides of trust as something similar to the air we breathe: “we inhabit an atmosphere [of trust] and notice it as we notice air, only when it becomes scarce or polluted”.²³ Because of its implicit nature, trust phenomenality depends on intense forms of disappearance or damage, as

19. Ibid., 150.

20. István Fazakas & Tudi Goz , T, “The Promise of the World: Towards a Transcendental History of Trust”. *Husserl Studies*, 36 (2020): 169–189. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10743-020-09264-9>.

21. Nicolas de Warren, “Trust”, in *The Routledge Handbook of Phenomenology of Emotion*, eds. Thomas Szanto and Hilge Landweer (New York: Routledge, 2020), 522–531.

22. Annette Baier, “Trust and Antitrust”. *Ethics*, 96 (1986): 235.

23. *Idid.*, 235.

in the case of betrayal, for example. De Warren puts it similarly, by saying that “the emotional presentness of trust is nowhere more manifest as when it becomes lost”.²⁴

Since the emergence of the Covid-19 outbreak a similar phenomenon has taken place with profound impacts in our taken-for-granted, embodied being in the world. Ratcliffe, for example, opts for the term “disorientation” to describe the Covid-19 experience.²⁵ He distinguishes two different types of disorientation and opts for a more encompassing, *existential* disorientation to describe the pandemic experience.²⁶ Disorientation now appears as “an experience of uncertainty that further incorporates a sense of being unable to depend on others”, as not contingent and inescapable.²⁷ Mostly because of social distancing measures, we have lost not just “what was habitually taken for granted”, but also the proper “means to reorientate oneself”.²⁸ Nonetheless, Ratcliffe subsumes different types of loss of trust to disorientation experiences and maintains that a more profound, non-localized loss of trust refers to the interpersonal domain only, as other people now appear as potential forms of threat. Despite agreeing with some of Ratcliffe’s formulations, I maintain that the erosion of trust should not be considered as related to the interpersonal dimension *only*. Surprisingly enough, Ratcliffe only mentions what he calls “collective disorientation”, by saying that “we’re all in this together”, without tackling the nature of these experiences, however.²⁹

I think that the Covid-19 experience promoted a more basic kind of loss of trust, not only restricted to the interpersonal dimension. Such trust collapse can be described as a *global* phenomenon, where “global” points to at least two directions:

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24. de Warren, *Trust*, 526.
 25. In this case, “Covid-19 experience” does not refer to the experience of the disease only but refers rather to the global phenomenon marked by the emergence and presence of the SARS-CoV-2 in our lives. Since the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak, it is possible to say that even our most basic intentional experience has become inseparable from the spectral presence of the virus itself, in which everyday activities have become mediated by the implicit calculation of contamination risks, exacerbated attention to bodily signs of infection, increased hygiene care, etc.
 26. Matthew Ratcliffe, “Disorientation, Distrust and the Pandemic”, *Global Discourse An interdisciplinary journal of current affairs*. (In press). <https://doi.org/10.1332/204378921X16158114033083>.
 27. *Ibid.*, 1-2
 28. *Ibid.*, 2.
 29. *Ibid.*, 4.

1. Global loss of trust refers to an *existential* dimension, as comprising the *whole* experiential world, and encompasses the totality of our intentional relations;
2. “Global” conveys also a collective, shared sense, and refers to an essentially intersubjective experience of loss of trust. I address this second sense in Section 4.

These two different senses of trust loss contrastively point to something important that now appears as absent. Most of the time the way experience incorporates possibilities depends on a mode of anticipation based on the certainty of its actualization.³⁰ In interpersonal relationships, for example, under normal conditions, I assume that the people I met are healthy, without the need to pay attention to signs of infection or physical distancing in our bodily interactions. Were it otherwise, the general mode of encountering other people in the world would be marked by insecurity and inability to connect. This shows that common experience usually rests on a basic, non-conceptual form of trust, whose function is to give experience a stable and coherent character. When this confidence falters, we experience something like a general, pre-reflexive sense of absence, something that disrupts the ordinary flow of experience. In the case of the Covid-19 pandemic, what we experience is a disruption, a change in the general organization of the world as a whole, where even the most usual, everyday tasks have been dramatically altered. Such changes, for example, involve uncommon rituals to get safe, such as hand-washing, mask-wearing, social distancing measures, etc. The simple idea of going to a grocery store now involves a whole new level of explicit calculation of risks and measures of safety to be taken.

As Carel, Ratcliffe, and Froese put:

We may distrust the air we breathe and the surfaces we touch, while strangers suddenly seem unpredictable sources of potential danger. [...] A pervasive sense of uncertainty can make one doubt and question every bodily discomfort (is my throat sore? what was that cough?) and also arises during routine activities, such as handwashing and cleaning surfaces. Have I done it well enough? The remaining doubt (did I wipe off everything?) can dismantle an everyday, habitual confidence, reshaping it into a mould of distrust, compulsion, and anxiety.³¹

30. Edmund Husserl, *Experience and Judgment*, trans. J. S. Churchill and K. Ameriks (London: Routledge, 1973).

31. Havi Carel, Mathew Ratcliffe, and Tom Froese, “Reflecting on experiences of social

As a result of this structural modification, the normally taken-for-granted sense of being at home in the world provided by the pre-reflective trust has been eroded. For this very reason, trust now emerges in its visibility as a background feeling that we never pay attention to. It is the *feeling* of its absence that gives us the awareness that something important is now missing, as an authentic manifestation of something *uncanny* in our lives.³²

Interestingly enough, as the past pandemic narratives show, this uncanny feeling of something missing has been, most of the time, accompanied by negative appraisals and disturbances in the normal flow of life. Mutual distrust and suspicion, for example, were the baseline pattern of interpersonal encounters in the past, as shown in the impressive report of Priest Manzoni of the plague in 1630:

While [...] the heaps of dead bodies lying before the eyes of the living made the city a vast tomb, there was something more afflicting and hideous still – *reciprocal distrust* and *extravagant suspicion*; and this not only between friends, neighbors, and guests; but husbands, wives, and children, became objects of terror to one another; and, horrible to tell! even the domestic board and the nuptial bed were dreaded as snares, as places where poison might be concealed.³³

An updated version of the pandemic-related emotional distress also appears in a surprisingly predictive book on the psychology of pandemics from 2019.³⁴ Taylor shows that pandemics are generally associated with all kinds of uncertainties:

Uncertainty about getting infected, uncertainty about the seriousness of infection, uncertainty about whether the people around you are infected, uncertainty about whether objects or surfaces (e.g., money, doorknobs)

distancing". *The Lancet*. Jul, 396(2020): 2. doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(20)31485-9.

32. Kevin Aho recently addressed pandemic through the lens of the Heideggerian concept of *unheimlichkeit*, as disrupting our "homelike" being in the world. By examining how our experience of temporality, lived-space, and intersubjectivity were compromised, Aho sustains that pandemic experience has somehow undermined our "ability to be", or make sense of things. Kevin Aho, "The Uncanny in the Time of Pandemics: Heideggerian Reflections on the Coronavirus". *Gatherings. The Heidegger Circle*. Annual Volume 10, 2020.
33. Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed. From the Italian of Alessandro Manzoni* (London: Richard Bentley, 1834): 384, my emphasis.
34. Steven Taylor, *The Psychology of Pandemics: Preparing for the Next Global Outbreak of Infectious Disease* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019).

are infected, uncertainty about the optimal type of treatment or protective measures, and uncertainty about whether a pandemic is truly over.³⁵

There is a huge demand to tolerate a certain degree of uncertainty for those who live in pandemic times. Similarly, those who are unable or, for some reason unwilling to accept uncertainty are likely to experience “considerable distress”, says Taylor.³⁶ Granted, intolerance to uncertainty and overestimation of threat are the main vulnerability factors during pandemics. This is something I will get back to later on (Section 4.2).

Whilst Covid-19 proceeds we see this global uncertainty in almost every place of our lives. This is shown by the erosion of trust not just in interpersonal relations, but also in governments, public health policies, science, vaccines, political institutions, official numbers and data (mostly due to conspiracy theories), our own bodies, and the list goes on.

4. Extended Minds and Shared Feelings

Phenomenologically speaking, affectivity encompasses multiple phenomena unified by the basic trait of non-reducibility to mental states. On the contrary, the wide range of affective phenomena links together the experiences of the body, self, and world.³⁷ This position lies in sharp contrast to more conventional views in mainstream philosophy of mind and psychology, which locates mental states, including emotions, *inside* our heads. We can certainly say that phenomenologically oriented views on affectivity are thus fully compatible with a perspective “beyond affective internalism”.³⁸ Similarly, some recent trends in philosophy of mind and cognitive sciences understand the mind’s emotional makeup as essentially *extended* towards our broader environment.

The *extended mind thesis* (EMT) claims that some cognitive processes are not restricted to intracranial mechanisms only, but can also be conceived as extended toward some pieces of the environment, incorporating them as part of the cognitive processes in a functional way, through

35. Taylor, *The Psychology of Pandemics*, 43.

36. *Ibid.*, 43.

37. Thomas Fuchs, “The Phenomenology of Affectivity”. In *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Psychiatry*, eds. Fulford, Davies, Gipps, Graham, Sadler, Stanghellini & Thornton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013): 612-628.

38. Felipe León, Thomas Szanto & Dan Zahavi, “Emotional sharing and the extended mind”. *Synthese* 196-12 (2019):1. DOI 10.1007/s11229-017-1351-x.

a parity principle between internal and external elements.³⁹ According to this picture, the mind has to be re-conceptualized not only as fundamentally embodied, but also as constituted by some extraneural and extra bodily processes, incorporating portions of the environment in important ways. Here, the classical example is the coupling of Otto, an Alzheimer's patient with his notebook, that provides him with dispositional beliefs functionally equivalent to his biological memory. The idea is that at least in some cases we can identify the vehicles of cognition as extended towards the environment with a set of conditions to be met, in order to secure the parity between internal and external bearers of cognition.⁴⁰

Recently, an additional step has been proposed in the literature, by considering the mind's emotional makeup "beyond brain and body".⁴¹ The main idea is that an exhaustive description of human affectivity – both in philosophical and empirical levels – can only be reached by considering the outside world and the material vehicles of emotion beyond the spatial limits of living organisms. Initially, this may sound a little bit odd, since emotions and affective processes, in general, have been traditionally described as subjective states, mostly composed of internal bodily feelings and personal experiences. So how can we conceive of essentially personal and individual mental states as *extended* beyond the physical confines of individual organisms? Since emotions and feelings fundamentally involve phenomenal and qualitative aspects it seems, at least in principle, difficult to understand what it means to say that emotional phenomena can be properly extended.⁴²

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39. Andy Clark & David Chalmers, "The extended mind". *Analysis*, 58(1) (1998): 7–19.
40. We can find different reactions to the parity principle demand in the extended mind literature. For example, Gallagher, argues for a liberal interpretation of the parity principle, as he considers cognitive processes constituted through practices that occur within social and cultural institutions. This more liberal view stands in contrast to a more conservative one, in which the measure of cognition extension is still in the head. Slaby opted for an "integrationist" approach, by understanding the dynamics between organism and environment as a hybrid system. Shaun Gallagher, "The socially extended mind". *Cognitive Systems Research*, 25–26 (2013): 4–12; Jan Slaby, "Emotions and the extended mind". In *Collective emotions. Perspectives from psychology, and sociology*, eds. C. v Scheve & M. Salmela (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): 32–46.
41. Giovanna Colombetti & Joel Krueger, "Scaffoldings of the affective mind". *Philosophical Psychology*, 28, 8 (2015):1157–1176; Giovanna Colombetti & Tom Roberts, "Extending the extended mind: The case for extended affectivity". *Philosophical Studies*, 172,5 (2015):1243–1263; Achim Stephan, Sven Walter & Wendy Wilutzky, "Emotions beyond brain and body". *Philosophical Psychology*, 27, 1 (2014): 98–111.
42. Clark & Chalmers' inaugural conception of EMT readily distinguished between cognitive processes and phenomenal consciousness, and immediately ruled out the

One first step towards the clarification of what EMT means regarding affectivity depends on an appropriate understanding of the *direction* of the affective extension. For example, while Colombetti & Krueger, and Colombetti & Roberts point to the contribution of material underpinnings of affectivity (diaries, clothing, religious artifacts, technological devices), other approaches call attention to the extension towards other individuals or collectives.⁴³ This last version points to the idea that emotional *sharing* must be constitutive of emotional extension, as in the case of infant-care-takers or romantic couples interactions. There is a sense in which the joint awareness of others' emotional expression mutually constrains and constitutes the authentic sharing of emotional experiences. In this picture, there is also room for the recognition of more complex emotional extension, such as those distributed around cultural environments, as diachronically constraining the experience of certain places and people.⁴⁴

A general agreement among emotional extension supporters is the favoring of a componential view on emotions, in order to get emotional extension right.⁴⁵ Asking whether emotions can be extended, thus equals asking about which components of emotional phenomena can be extended.⁴⁶

hypothesis of phenomenal consciousness extension. See also León, Szanto & Zahavi, *Emotional sharing and the extended mind*.

43. Shaun Gallagher & Anthony Crisafi, "Mental institutions". *Topoi*. 28 (1) (2009): 45–51; Shaun Gallagher, "The socially extended mind". *Cognitive Systems Research*, 25–26 (2013):4–12; Joel Krueger & Thomas Szanto, "Extended emotions". *Philosophy Compass*, 11(12) (2006): 863–878; Jan Slaby, "Emotions and the extended mind". In *Collective emotions. Perspectives from psychology, and sociology*, eds. C. v Scheve & M. Salmela (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): 32–46; Thomas Szanto, "Why Should We Give a Damn? On Sharing Emotions". *The Philosopher*, 108, No. 4 (2020).
44. This involves taking into account a more liberal view on EMT, as it considers the individual mental extension towards a broader social, cultural, and institutional dimension, constrained by collective norms, as in Gallagher & Crisafi, *Mental institutions*, and Gallagher, *The socially extended mind*. See also Keith Harris, "Group minds as extended minds". *Philosophical Explorations*, 23 (3) (2020):1-17. DOI: 10.1080/13869795.2020.1799663;
45. In the growing scenario of emotion research, the componential view argues that emotional phenomena are complex phenomena, mostly related to cognitive, neurophysiological, motivational, behavioral, expressive, and phenomenal aspects. See Klaus R. Scherer, "What are emotions? And how can they be measured?". *Social Science Information*, 44,1 (2005): 695–729; See also León, Szanto & Zahavi, *Emotional sharing and the extended mind*; Stephan, Walter & Wilutzky, *Emotions beyond brain and body*; Colombetti & Roberts, *Extending the extended mind: The case for extended affectivity*; Varga & Krueger, *Background Emotions, Proximity and Distributed Emotion Regulation*.
46. Again, this is a controversial issue. Following Clark & Chalmers, Colombetti & Roberts

A particular version of the EMT I want to sustain here is that the phenomenal component of emotional phenomena can extend to and incorporate other people's emotions by a specific kind of emotional *sharing*, in a relationship of constitutive integration.⁴⁷ Affective processes are thus properly extended only when *shared*, as recently proposed by León, Szanto & Zahavi. In the same vein, asking whether extended emotion thesis succeeds, involves asking what *kind* of affective phenomena can be extended.⁴⁸ As I consider trust (and its loss) a background affective phenomenon, my main focus is to provide an adequate account of how background and existential feelings can be *socially extended*, as incorporating other people's background emotions and feelings in a constitutive way.⁴⁹

In a similar direction, Varga & Krueger recently addressed the possibility of a distributed, socially extended conception of background emotions.⁵⁰ Here, I assume their proposal as providing a conceptual gain in relation to both Damasio's (body-centered) and Ratcliffe's (world-directed, but still individualistic) approaches to background affective phenomena. According to Varga & Krueger's picture, background emotions are constitutively dependent on interpersonal interactions. From a developmental point of view, due to sensory-motor skills and interpersonal interactions already present in newborns it is possible to conceive the mind's affective dimension as "public" from the very beginning.⁵¹ Background emotions thus reflect basic *proximity* to others. This is an important result, as it goes against and beyond an individualistic picture of background emotions.⁵² There is a sense in which background emotions constitutively reflect our basic proximity to others, as dependent on dyadically distributed cognitive processes that span multiple agents, in terms of a "fundamental feeling

are skeptical about the possibility of phenomenal extension in the case of affective phenomena, while León, Szanto & Zahavi endorse phenomenal extension. I argue for this last version.

47. León, Szanto & Zahavi, *Emotional sharing and the extended mind*.

48. A sufficiently general taxonomy of affective states thus must involve a vast array of phenomena that can be distinguished around different criteria. Affective phenomena can be roughly divided into episodic emotions, affects, moods, feelings, temperaments, and the recently recognized dimension of background and existential feelings. See Szanto & Landweer, *The phenomenology of emotions – above and beyond 'What it is Like to Feel'*.

49. León, Szanto & Zahavi, *Emotional sharing and the extended mind* only mention this possibility, without further development.

50. Varga & Krueger, *Background Emotions, Proximity and Distributed Emotion Regulation*.

51. *Ibid.*, 271.

52. *Ibid.*, 272.

of interpersonal connectedness".⁵³ As socially extended, one's background affective phenomena can now literally extend towards other people's affective states, by incorporating them as an integral part of their own affective lives. The phenomenal character of a particular emotional experience can be socially extended only by presenting a relation of constitutive interdependence (not only coupling) with the phenomenal character of other person's emotional experience, without implying a collapse in the limits of individual phenomenality, however.

Let me consider now some of the formal requirements for a genuine theory of emotional extension. León, Szanto & Zahavi, for example, addressed the main conditions for emotional sharing. Insofar as it presents a relational structure similar to joint attention phenomena, one must outline at least two main points in order to properly *share* an emotion:

1. According to the *Reciprocal Other-awareness* condition, an emotion must be felt *together* with others to be shared, as *our* emotion, rather than simply *mine*. An authentic instance of emotional sharing thus depends on my *awareness* that I am not the only one who feels *x* or *y*. I must, moreover, be aware that others around me are jointly feeling *x* or *y*, reciprocally influencing each other's emotional experience, at the same time. *Reciprocity* is thus a necessary condition, otherwise, we would call this emotional state only an instance of empathetic experience.⁵⁴
2. On the other hand, the *Integration* condition suggests that we should distinguish emotional sharing from other modalities, such as emotional contagion or affective mimicry since they lack the first-person plural character of emotional sharing. In emotional integration, we can find different degrees of togetherness, as we become more and more integrated into an emotional dynamic. An important requirement is that emotional sharing doesn't need to imply numeric indistinction between individuals or blurring the boundaries between individual emotional phenomenology.⁵⁵

53. Ibid., 272.

54. León, Szanto & Zahavi, *Emotional sharing and the extended mind*; Dan Zahavi, "You, Me, and We: The sharing of emotional experiences". *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 22(1–2), (2015): 84–101.

55. León, Szanto & Zahavi, *Emotional sharing and the extended mind*; Zahavi, *You, Me, and We: The sharing of emotional experiences*. Thomas Szanto presented additional criteria for emotional sharing, such as the sharing of the same concerns, sense of commonality, and the reciprocal influence between emoters. Szanto, *Why Should We Give a Damn? On Sharing Emotions*. John Michael distinguished between four approaches to emotional sharing. These different proposals are not in fact incompatible, according to the author. The incompatibility arises only if we understand shared emotions as a *natural kind*. Shared emotions thus make up a heterogeneous set of overlapping phenomena, and the difference between different conceptions merely reflects the

These two conceptual requirements *plus* the interpersonal constituents of background feelings now allow me to approach the emotional extension of trust and its loss in the Covid-19 experience.

According to the *reciprocal other-awareness* requirement, in order to properly share broken trust, we must have at least a pre-reflective awareness of the others' global loss of trust. In this case, I am fully aware of not being the *only one* who feels this way; I somehow *feel* that my fellow human beings are also feeling suspicious, or have lost some level of global trust, because of the spread of the virus. There is a collective felt loss of trust, acknowledged by a plurality of individuals. Besides being reciprocally aware of each other's lack of trust, there is also room for experiential differentiation between them. Additionally, the *integration* requirement presents broken trust from a first-person plural point of view, as *our* broken trust. Here, again, self-other differentiation is still operative, because the personal dimensions, qualities, and tonalities of trust loss are maintained. The idea of a co-constitution and complementarity between experiences does not rule out the distinction at the fine-grained phenomenological level, nor suggests some kind of numerical indistinction between individual experiences.

There is an additional worry, however, in approaching affective extension in Covid-19 experience. Mostly due to social distancing measures, also the way we share these experiences has changed.

4.1 Technologically Scaffolded Loss of Trust

Supporters of the *Extended Emotion Thesis* already stressed the need for a theory able to deal with technologically mediated forms of emotional sharing, like social media, instant messaging apps, and video conferencing softwares.⁵⁶ This is a pressing issue because in some sense online forms of sociality can "no longer be considered a minor facet of interpersonal experience".⁵⁷ Technological forms of interaction have become an "increas-

presence of different explanatory purposes. John Michael, "What Are Shared Emotions (for)?" *Front. Psychol.* 7:412 (2016). doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00412.

56. Krueger & Szanto, *Extended emotions*; León, Szanto & Zahavi, *Emotional sharing and the extended mind*; Szanto, *Why Should We Give a Damn? On Sharing Emotions*.
57. Lucy Osler, "Feeling togetherness online: a phenomenological sketch of online communal experiences". *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 19 (3), (2019): 569. DOI: 10.1007/s11097-019-09627-4.

ingly significant, if not central, way of encountering other people”.⁵⁸ Now, mostly because of social distancing measures, we have seen an impressive increase in the use of these tools.

Despite the current centrality of these technologically mediated forms of interpersonal encounter, standard approaches to emotional sharing rely mostly on “spatio-temporal proximity of two or more individuals” that are “perceptually co-present to each other”.⁵⁹ On the other hand, Internet-based communication has allowed for new forms of interpersonal encounters, emotional sharing, and emotional regulation, not restricted to face-to-face interactions anymore.⁶⁰ This proves to be a step beyond León, Szanto & Zahavi, insofar as we can now speak of a supra-individual emotional sharing and emotion regulation through “techno-social niches” not limited to face-to-face encounters.⁶¹

Another distinctive feature of these techno-social niches is that they are hyper-social.⁶² In other words, due to the pervasive presence of the Internet and its enabling devices in our lives, the emotional presence of others is now increasingly conspicuous, as they perform their emotional repertoires in real-time. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the internet’s hyper-sociality presents us with a paradoxical landscape: instead of simply isolating people in their homes, the sum of social distancing measures *plus* the increasing use of these techno-social niches has heightened the sharing of information, and *a fortiori*, of emotions –mostly negative. An important phenomenological finding concerning online encounters is that these are not essentially different in *kind* from offline ones, but only in *degree*. By the same token, the sense of togetherness as part of a “we” found in online forms of sociality cannot be neatly detached from its offline counterparts.⁶³

Technologically scaffolded forms of sharing thus prove to be effective in conveying our collective felt loss of trust. As an essentially affective and relational category, trust lends itself to an analysis in terms of these

58. Osler, *Feeling togetherness online: a phenomenological sketch of online communal experiences*, 569-70.

59. León, Szanto & Zahavi, *Emotional sharing and the extended mind*, 11.

60. Joel Krueger & Lucy Osler, “Engineering Affect: Emotion Regulation, the Internet, and the Techno-Social Niche”. *Philosophical Topics* 47 (2), (2019):205-231.

61. *Ibid.*, 211.

62. *Ibid.*

63. Osler, *Feeling togetherness online: a phenomenological sketch of online communal experiences*.

techno-social niches. Here, particularly important for an analysis of emotional sharing is the disruptive phenomenality of trust through loss. One of the most salient patterns of internet usage since the beginning of the pandemic has been the monitoring of negative/distressing news. Granted, this behavior consolidates a shattering in the levels of trust, such as tracking the number of infections, death tolls, mismanagement of some countries, access to conspiracy theories, etc. Interestingly enough, even text-based platforms registered these changes in our emotional landscape.⁶⁴ Additionally, an important consequence of the loss of trust is the mental burden and emotional distress people are facing since then.⁶⁵

4.2 *Excursus: Mental Health and Radical Hope*

Since the first known case of the virus infection in late December 2019, and after The World Health Organization declared the novel coronavirus outbreak a global pandemic in March 2020, Covid-19 emergence rapidly increased human vulnerability in several levels.⁶⁶ As the pandemic developed around the world, we have seen new ways of being vulnerable (most of them already anticipated by experts since the beginning of the outbreak), such as loss of income, social support, lack of appropriate health care, the impact of social distancing measures and lockdown policies, school dropout, alcohol and drug misuse, often followed by child abuse and domestic violence, and marginalization and stigmatization of affected communities.⁶⁷

Along with these new vulnerability factors, pandemic-related impacts on people's mental health have also been identified, mostly due to emotional distress and the emergence of negative feelings, such as rage, anger, frustration, guilt, fear of contagion, grief, pathological mourning,

64. A recent analysis of the number of tweets related to the Covid-19 pandemic reported that the most used emojis during this period are the *face with medical mask*, *nauseated face*, *microbe*, among others. These are now considered to be "the coronavirus emojis". Emojipedia, "Spread of the Coronavirus Emoji". Retrieved 20 April 2021, from <https://blog.emojipedia.org/spread-of-the-coronavirus-emoji/>.

65. There are also positive aspects of sharing we-spaces through techno-social niches. The felt presence of these social possibilities and the regulative resources they offer can be extremely important in negotiating difficult periods of our lives, especially during pandemic times.

66. Domenico Cucinotta & Maurizio Vanelli, "WHO declares Covid-19 a pandemic". *Acta Biomed*; 91 (2020): 157–60; The Lancet, "Editorial: Redefining vulnerability in the era of Covid-19". *The Lancet*, 395(2020). [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30757-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30757-1).

67. The Lancet, *Editorial: Redefining vulnerability in the era of Covid-19*.

etc.⁶⁸ The results have been devastating, since then. The general rates of different populations have shown a significant increase in the symptoms of depression, anxiety, stress related to Covid-19, phobic anxiety, panic buying, mood disturbances, sleep disturbances, fatigability, pathological mourning, alcohol misuse, etc.⁶⁹ The increase of obsessive-compulsive disorder symptoms has also been reported.⁷⁰ People diagnosed with Covid-19 likewise have shown psychological instability and high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms.⁷¹ Post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms have also been found in healthcare professionals working on the front line, along with feelings of guilt, and moral injury.⁷² On the other hand, people with previous history of mental illness exhibit a higher risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection, when compared to those without mental disorders.⁷³ This is so because “[r]isk factors for infection with SARS-CoV-2 and a severe course of Covid-19 include severe mental illness, alcohol or drug misuse, and homelessness, all of which are associated with other risk factors such as comorbid physical condition”.⁷⁴ As human vulnerability increases during the Covid-19 pandemic, global loss of trust comprises a significant layer of this traumatic experience.

The kind of loss I’ve been talking about along this work need not be assessed as a static, unchangeable state, however. Otherwise, losing trust would amount to the total collapse of meaningful projects and human orientation towards the future. Even the kind of global loss of trust and future orientation are to some extent connected to a sense of hope, a sense

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68. Eduard Vieta, Víctor Pérez & Celso Arango, “Psychiatry in the aftermath of Covid-19”. *Rev Psiquiatr Salud Ment.* Apr-Jun;13(2) (2020):105-110. doi: 10.1016/j.rpsm.2020.04.004.
69. Moreno et al., “How mental health care should change as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic”. *The Lancet Psychiatry* Vol.7, 9 (2020): 1–6. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(20\)30307-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(20)30307-2).
70. Mona F. Sulaimani & Nizar H. Bagadood, “Implication of coronavirus pandemic on obsessive-compulsive-disorder symptoms”. *Rev Environ Health*.31;36(1), (2020):1-8. doi: 10.1515/reveh-2020-0054. PMID: 32866131.
71. Moreno et al., *How mental health care should change as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic*.
72. Ibid.
73. Hao Yao, Jian-Hua Chen & Yi-Feng Xu, “Patients with mental health disorders in the Covid-19 epidemic”. *The Lancet Psychiatry*.7(4) (2020). doi: 10.1016/S2215-0366(20)30090-0.
74. Moreno et al., *How mental health care should change as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic*, 814.

that “something good will emerge”.⁷⁵ Despite the collapse of trust, and the ruin of previously established meanings before the Covid-19 crisis, we can still maintain something that Ratcliffe, following Lear (2006) called *radical hope*. Radical hope is not an attitude with some content, but rather “a context in which states of the kind ‘I hope that *p*’ are possible”.⁷⁶ Radical hope brings us a “sense” of the future as open, indeterminate, as somehow “offering certain kinds of possibility, principally some vague sense of the good that attitudes including intentional hope depend upon”.⁷⁷

In this context, losing trust amounts to rendering hope “fragile” and potentially restricting the scope of hope contents. A traumatic event of global proportions such as a pandemic, especially during a time of ubiquitous and real-time technological communication has the force of profoundly shaking the ingrained trust constitutive of our being in the world, bringing us a general sense of threat and vulnerability. Good news is that hope *fragility* does not need to amount to hope *loss*. Despite the present difficulties imposed by the pandemic situation, and those that will certainly come as a result of it, we still have time to rebuild measures that foster trust, and as a result, hope.

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75. Matthew Ratcliffe, “What is it to lose hope?” *Phenom Cogn Sci* (2011).DOI 10.1007/s11097-011-9215-1.
76. Jonathan Lear, *Radical hope: Ethics in the face of cultural devastation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Ratcliffe, *What is it to lose hope?*, 4.
77. Ratcliffe, *What is it to lose hope?*, 5.

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Life Uprooted. Social and Moral Challenges of Woe

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Abstract

Entering into dialogue with Simone Weil, this article contributes to the identification of woe as a social and psychological phenomenon that should not remain hidden and minimized anymore. Affliction is described as a kind of extreme suffering that causes a partial or total loss of self-appropriation (the possibility of inhabiting the own self and the world), self-blame and self-shame. Moreover, it is accompanied by social degradation, marginalization, guilt and shame, such that institutions and even social theories can feed its perverse inertia. Woe has such overwhelming destructive power that any socio-political order that causes it should be completely reformed. Because of its opacity, it poses a considerable moral challenge too, one that I propose to tackle by exploring the possibilities of compassion, care and attention as resources for moral agents. Finally, only by restoring the conditions for a re-rooting in life and in the world is it possible to re-appropriate one's self lost in *malheur*.

Keywords: attention, care, self-appropriation, Simone Weil, suffering.

1. Introduction

Simone Weil's reflections on woe have triggered a crucial debate that contemporary social philosophy has ignored. In the midst of her other contributions, the very identification and description of woe and its consideration as a key social, moral and political phenomenon situates Weil among the most important philosophers of 20th century, a radically independent thinker whose philosophical legacy has not yet been fairly recognized.

In this article, I seriously engage Simone's Weil thought, inasmuch as a dialogue with her can be extremely fruitful to thinking about current problems in social philosophy, and argue that woe (*malheur*) should be placed at the center of moral thinking. Taking woe seriously entails the need to reconsider classic notions of guilt, punishment, care and justice. Weil's vindication of the importance of woe in the context of her social and mystic philosophy *post mortem Dei* also represents a critique of the Judeo-Christian cultural tradition that set up this phenomenon as we know and experience it.¹

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Woe is a kind of extreme suffering that wholly affects a person's social, physical and psychological life. Weil thought that the French term *malheur* was perfect for the phenomenon she wanted to describe, and that there was no clear synonym in other European languages² (*malheur* means “distressing situation that painfully affects [the sufferer]”), thus emphasizing the suffering somebody feels, together with *accident fâcheux* (“unfortunate accident”) and *malchance* (“misfortune”).³ Surprisingly, it seems that the Spanish word *desgracia* is even more appropriate to her description of the phenomenon than the French *malheur* (it has five meanings, including “situation of a person who suffers a painful process”, “bad luck” and “situation of one who has lost grace or friendship.”⁴ Moreover, in Spanish *caer en desgracia* means “to lose one's reputation”, a social degradation. It is indeed difficult to translate the term into English, with translators using “affliction” and “misfortune” and thus emphasizing one or another aspect of the phenomenon based on the context.⁵

As described by Simone Weil in *L'amour de Dieu et le malheur*⁶, woe can be caused by all the circumstances that can cause any other kind of suffering or pain, including social injustice and political repression (poverty, slavery, totalitarianism, colonialism and patriarchal oppression as well), misfortune (including accidents and illness), various kinds of

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1. Etymologically, the English term “dis-grace” (like the Spanish *des-gracia*) refers to the negation of a state of grace i.e. the loss of God's favour, under the assumption that a personal God gives and takes gifts and punishments following his will, which is unknown and probably incomprehensible to human beings. The non-religious synonym of the term “disgrace” is “misfortune”, which does not seem to refer directly to any divine providence, but simply to random luck, a lack of any order, *logos* or supreme rationality beyond what happens in the realm of human affairs. Francisco Fernández Buey, *Sobre Simone Weil. El compromiso con los desdichados* (Barcelona: El Viejo Topo, 2020).
 2. Simone Weil, “L'amour de Dieu et le malheur,” in *Ouvres* (France: Gallimard, 1999).
 3. According to the Dictionnaire Larousse 2019. <https://www.larousse.fr> consulted on 30 July 2019
 4. According to the *Diccionario Usual of the Real Academia Española*, <https://del.rae.es> consulted on 30 July 2019.
 5. For example, the novel by Russell Banks and the homonymous film *Affliction*, directed by Paul Schrader, are exemplary depictions of Simone's Weil *malheur*. Another term is “wretchedness”, a word that means extreme unhappiness or misfortune, and also contempt and “being despicable”. In this article, I will use as synonyms the original French term and the English “woe” (“great sorrow or distress”) and “affliction” (“a cause of pain or harm”/ “the state of being in pain”), although none of the English terms include the social effects of the situation, such as social degradation. The translations from the dictionaries are mine.
 6. Weil, *Ouvres*.

trauma, social isolation and extreme social pressure (or by a combination of the foregoing). What distinguishes woe from other kinds of suffering is that it includes social degradation or a perception that one is subject thereto. Others tend to shame and blame the unfortunate person, thus adding further humiliation to their situation and stigmatizing them. Compassion is nearly impossible because those who have not experienced *malheur* cannot imagine how extreme it is and those who have been touched by it lack the resources to help anybody. Contempt for oneself and even a feeling of culpability burn in the soul. Victims of *malheur* seem to become accomplices to their situation, which injects the poison of an inertia that impedes any effort they may make to liberate themselves. It is a depersonalizing, persistent, overwhelming suffering; one in this situation cannot conceive the end, which easily leads into desperation. From the *ethic* point of view, the experience of *malheur* is very difficult, if not impossible, to understand.

Woe is something other than suffering. Suffering relates to an unpleasant feeling that may or may not be existentially relevant for the person enduring it; suffering and pain can be momentary, inconsequential or integrated within a more or less satisfactory personal narrative, as in birth pain/suffering or the overcoming of an illness⁷. There are degrees of suffering and pain but there are no degrees of woe, for there are no degrees of unbearableness. Simple physical pain does not necessarily mark the soul, but very long or frequent physical suffering can turn into *malheur*, which then becomes something else, something more serious, “an uprooting of life” that affects all the dimensions of life – social, physical and psychic.

2. Effects and dimensions of woe

a. Uprooting

To be uprooted from life means that one does not feel or is not considered to be completely alive, present, as if one was not fully existing in society, one's own body or inner life: it is a state of alienation from social, physical and psychological human roots, i.e. one's own social relations and roles, physical integrity and personality are severely damaged or broken. Primo Levi described this state of uprooting when he described the conditions under

7. Noelia Bueno-Gómez, “Conceptualizing Suffering and Pain”, *Philosophy, Ethics, and Humanities in Medicine* 12, n.º 7 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13010-017-0049-5>

which human beings were *annihilated in life* in Nazi extermination camps⁸.

These three dimensions of uprooting are intimately related. Extreme suffering and/or pain affects the whole psychophysical person, not his body or his mind independently, because the physical and psychological realms are interlaced.⁹ The destruction of the personality transforms persons into something like mere things.¹⁰ The social dimension accompanies the other two: a victim of extreme suffering cannot or is not allowed to play common social roles or is segregated from society, as often happens to people interned in hospitals or institutions (prisons, asylums and orphanages). Any variety of social marginalization, exclusion, persecution, oppression or social pressure can be a part (and cause) of woe. Situations of woe are not easy to identify: the person affected may be unable to categorize her situation, may be not conscious of it or may be unable to recognize it herself; others may be unable to read the signs of the extreme damage – particularly because the same circumstance can cause woe to one person but not to another. Woe is subjective in this sense, although both the personal and social response to it and the related modulations are socially constructed and culturally influenced.

I propose using Stoic terms to understanding the uprooting from life caused by woe as the loss of one's own primary self-appropriation and any possible appropriation thereafter.¹¹ In woe, I may lose what is most familiar to me, *the* thing that allows me to bear myself and to grasp external objects, inasmuch as external things are perceived as myself being affected by them. As a moral agent, a human being naturally has a certain self-perception and self-appropriation. When in woe, one can lose the appropriation of oneself, meaning that the primary impulse to

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8. Primo Levi, *Se questo è un uomo* (Torino: Einaudi, 2005). See also Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 2004).
 9. Neurological and phenomenological studies have clearly and convincingly described such correlation. Antonio Damasio and Hanna Damasio, "Minding the Body", *Daedalus* 135, n.º 3 (2006): 15-22, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20028048>. Oron Frenkel, "A Phenomenology of the "Placebo Effect": Taking Meaning from the Mind to the Body", *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 33, n.º 1 (febrero de 2008): 58-79, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jmp/jhm005>; Drew Leder, *The Absent Body* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990).
 10. Weil, *Ouvres*, 697.
 11. According to the Stoics, perception (*aistheseis*) and self-perfection are essential to ascertaining the *proton oikeion*, that which is most appropriate to us (to our "nature" or physis); and that which is most appropriate to human beings is reason (logos), which coincides with the logos of nature. See von Arnim, *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta* (Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner, 1968).

preserve and maintain oneself is jeopardized (such is the case for animals too), as is self-perception, one's drive and initiative.¹² This is what woe destroys, and the depth of such destruction is the reason why *malheur* is, as punishment, always disproportionate (even when the purpose of the crime was to destroy other persons). Moreover, the fact that woe exists and that we can cause woe to others albeit unintentionally is a good reason to argue against punishment, both in education and in the penal system.

b. Social degradation

In a situation of woe one falls on the scale of social consideration and is excluded from social institutions, or at least experiences the feeling that such degradation occurs.¹³ This can manifest in several ways. For example, the totalitarian Nazi program included a deliberate social degradation aimed at destroying all the social links of the persecuted, to killing their moral person and eventually their individuality. A similar process was used by the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union, where any woman whose husband had been arrested would immediately file for divorce to preserve her children's lives.¹⁴ This process paralleled the elimination of the legal person and, once in the Nazi extermination camps, the murder of the moral person and her individuality before killing her completely; treating the Jews and other persecuted people as guilty of an unknown crime led the rest of society to assume that they were in fact guilty of something and, in the end, responsible for their situation.¹⁵ Disgrace parallels marginalization;¹⁶ one descends on the social scale and is blamed for her own miserable situation.¹⁷

12. Klein mentions these three elements of the Stoic *oikeiosis* accounts: the primary impulse "to preserve and maintain its own constitution", self-perception and motivation (with self-perception as a prerequisite thereof). Jacob Klein, "The Stoic Argument from Oikeiosis", *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 50 (2016): 164 <https://ancphil.lsa.umich.edu/oxford-studies-in-ancient-philosophy/about/>

13. Weil, *Ouvres*, 694.

14. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

15. *Ibid.*

16. Iris Marion-Young considers that marginalization is one of the five faces of oppression. She defines marginalization as the expulsion of "a whole category of people from useful participation in social life and thus potentially subjected to severe material deprivation and even extermination." Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 53.

17. The English-language term "disgrace" means "loss of reputation or respect as the result of a dishonourable action" (noun) and "bring shame or discredit on" (verb) (according

c. *Blame and self-culpability*

The tendency to blame the victims of social injustice for their miserable situation is hardly new.¹⁸¹⁹ The criminalization of victims of social suffering (for example, the criminalization of poverty as described by Wacquant)²⁰ is a perverse biopolitical mechanism: institutions and society tend to blame individuals instead of accepting that the causes of suffering can be structural, because this may otherwise be used as a reason for social change. For example, assuming that poverty is a result of an unfair economic system would compel us to change this system, whereas thinking that wealth is a result of individual capacities, effort and labor is coherent with the idea that one meets the fortune she deserves, being poor is simply the result of not having striven enough and there is no need to change the economic and social system. Widespread, this is the perverse reasoning of liberal work ethics.²¹ In the midst of emergent racist tendencies, day after day we must recall that the refugees reaching

to the Oxford Dictionary Lexico, <https://www.lexico.com>, consulted on 30 July 2019). This is included in the phenomenon described by Weil, but it is not equivalent to it. However, it is an interesting term, because it presupposes an association between the loss of respect and “dishonorable actions”, as if public recognition and respect were reliable signs of morality. In a similar sense, *misérable* in French (as in Hugo’s novel) and *miserable* in Spanish both mean poor, insufficient, insignificant and villainous or contemptible.

18. Pedro Cabrera, *Huéspedes del aire. Sociología de las personas sin hogar en Madrid* (Madrid: UPCO, 1998).
19. Various European laws and regulations, including the way in which asylums and charity institutions were organized since the 15th century, explicitly assume a connection between poverty and delinquency. This connection was clear in the Spanish *Ley de vagos y maleantes* (“Law on Lazy People and Thugs”) and the *Ley sobre estados peligrosos y medidas de seguridad* (August 5, 1933), approved by the Republican Government and later substituted by the Francoist regime by the *Ley sobre peligrosidad y rehabilitación social* (*Ley 16/1970 de 4 de agosto*), which still associated poverty and delinquency and also discriminated homosexuals. This Francoist law was not completely abolished until 1995. On the association of poverty and shame, see Amartya Sen, *La idea de la justicia* (Madrid: Taurus, 2009); Robert Walker, *The Shame of Poverty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
20. Loïc Wacquant, *Castigar a los pobres* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 2010).
21. The origins of the links between Protestant ethics and the origins of capitalism were described by Weber, Max Weber, *Die Protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (Berlin: Holzinger, 2016), along with the development of the liberal work ethic, which argues for the moral legitimacy of richness inasmuch as it has been gained by legal means (even if the legal means are not particularly fair). A criticism of the liberal work ethic can be found in Henry David Thoreau, “Life without Principle”, *The Atlantic Monthly* 12, n.º 71 (1863): 484-95.

European coasts or the US border are not delinquents and are not guilty of any crime or immoral act.²² Blaming people in woe is extremely unfair for several reasons. When woe is caused by social or political orders or institutions, it is simply wrong (and tendentious) to blame the individual, and a way that those who profit from the existing institutions have to maintain them and their privileges. That persons in woe blame themselves and that they are found guilty of their own terrible sufferings is crucial to understanding power and to critically evaluating political and social systems.

d. *Shame and self-shame*

Shame can be imposed on others through rituals or public criticism, but it is usually a self-imposed emotion²³ that appears when I feel I am in a situation in which I think I should not be, when I have been seen doing something that I assume should not be seen or when certain parts of my body or my character that I have been taught should be hidden appear in the public eye. The extreme suffering of another human being is difficult to see by the people outside this situation, a situation which the other seeks to avoid and is afraid of. This may explain the tendency to shame people in woe: we tend to consider shameful such things that we do not want to see or have been taught should not be seen. The psychological mechanism of self-shame runs in parallel: being in woe, I can easily react by assuming that nobody seeks my company, because I myself in this situation am uncomfortable with being seen, with something that should remain hidden and maybe disappear.

Shame and self-shame, blame and self-blame, and marginalization are mechanisms used to avoid facing the social, political and moral responsibility of creating habitable institutions, as well as social and personal relations that do not cause extreme suffering, and in which there are resources to face its consequences when it is not avoidable. Such mechanisms of woe are not inertial and unchangeable: a better understanding of the dimensions and psychological and social dynamics of the phenomenon is a first step to dismantling it, with the further aim of reconstructing affliction in a way that does not add greater suffering beyond unavoidable suffering,

22. The reasons for opening borders given by Bregman are very convincing, although space constraints preclude discussion of this problem. Rutger Bregman, *Utopia for Realists: How We Can Build the Ideal World* (Little, Brown and Company, 2017).

23. Robert C. Solomon, *Ética emocional. Una teoría de los sentimientos* (Barcelona: Paidós, 2007).

which includes creating socio-political systems that have reduced social suffering to its minimum and have eradicated extreme social suffering.²⁴

3. The destructiveness of woe and Weil's ascetic-mysticism

a. *The necessary order of what happens*

The destructive power of *malheur* takes on mystical value for Weil, although she explicitly affirms that woe is not God's mode of teaching.²⁵ Woe is not deliberately sent by God to a specific person for a particular reason, it is ultimately distributed without any deliberate cause particular to one or another person. Of course, God knows that woe, pain and suffering exist and they exist as opportunities, so to speak. Weil thinks that pain is the only possible physical contact that we can have with the necessity that constitutes the order of the world. Pleasure does not have the same effect because it does not force us, it does not entail the "impression of need". For her, true wisdom, knowledge and virtue consists in knowing and accepting the order of the world, Weil's version of the Stoic *amor fati*.²⁶ However, necessity is not simply everything that exists as it exists: Weil distinguishes between "gravity", a kind of downward force that explains human abjection and drives passions and evil desire, and "grace" or divine favor, which can escape circumstances and even gravity. However, in order to be ready to receive grace, one must accept an emptiness in oneself without trying to look for it.²⁷

Woe is destructive. "To destroy" means to reduce or annihilate the entity of something or somebody. Destruction is a reduction or an annihilation. Weil distinguishes between "destruction" (something that has been created turns into nothing) and "decreation" (something that has been created turns into something "increated", not created). She thinks that what exists has been created by God, but the act of creation of something as imperfect as human beings and their affairs by a supreme

24. See Pierre Bourdieu et al., *The weight of the world: Social suffering in contemporary society* (Stanford University Press Stanford, 1999); and Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, and Margaret M. Lock, *Social suffering* (Univ. of California Press, 1997), on the concept of and approach to "social suffering".

25. "Le malheur est bien autre chose qu'un procédé pédagogique de Dieu", *L'Amour de Dieu et...*, in Weil *Ouvres*, 702.

26. "L'Enracinement", in Weil, *Ouvres*, 1210.

27. Cahiers de Marseille, Cahier VI, in Weil, *Ouvres*, 813 *et seq.*

being would be impossible unless he (God) partially renounces himself. According to Weil, God withdraw in order to let human beings be. In her work *L'Enracinement*, she does not think of God as a personal being that intervenes in human affairs with particular ends²⁸ but, on the contrary, as the existence itself of the world functioning according to necessary laws. God renounces being everything in order to create human beings. Human beings should renounce being something (their “being” or personality, will and desires) in order to freely give back their existence to God, i.e. they should reject God’s authorization to live outside him: coming back to him means letting him love himself through us. This makes sense: God is perfect; he is the only being able to perfect love. The perfect relation of love would be that between God and himself.²⁹

Malheur causes a bad destruction of the self because it destroys it from the outside.³⁰ This is bad because it impedes the deliberate destruction of the self that Weil found necessary as part of the mystic-ascetic path, which includes renouncing the self, one’s own passions and will, but not thought: the mystical aim is not ceasing thought (which would be a form of fanaticism) but ceasing thinking about our thoughts and substituting them for thoughts about the eternal wisdom, i.e. God. Mystical emptiness would consist of a fusion of wisdom and love or more precisely, in ceasing to be particular beings to become a medium through which wisdom and love express themselves. Weil thinks that this perfect destruction of the self is the best preparation for woe because it entails a perfect acceptance of what exists. When *malheur* affects a person who is ready to assume it, then the plenitude of the cross lays in, the perfect fulfilment of the human in its existence. This plenitude still demands certain attitudes from the *malheureuse*: it is crucial to avoid any consolation so as to feel the pure necessity of what is happening.

Weil identifies two kinds of consolation: comforting beliefs created by imagination such as immortality, the idea that they are a payment for one’s own sins or even that they respond to a providential order of the events, and the psychological resource of fragmenting extreme sufferings into smaller parts in order to endure them or even the mere thought that they have a beginning and may have an end. The effort that Weil demanded from herself is more than heroic: to live fully, consciously, concentrated,

28. Weil, *Ouvres, 1203 onwards*.

29. “L’amour de Dieu et...”, in Weil, *Ouvres*, 698-699.

30. Simone Weil, *La Pesanteur et la Grâce* (Paris: République des Lettres, 2016).

presently and without any relief from the extreme effects of *malheur* (which she experienced working in the factories under oppressive conditions and bearing terrible migraines) from feeling God's abandonment in such situation and emptiness while still focusing attention on God (that is, on what exists), loving one's own suffering because it exists. God then fills up such an emptiness. But this is not something one should expect or even hope for.³¹

Assuming these ideas, Weil argues that we must strive to avoid woe in order to be sure that if it comes, it is a result of the necessary immutable order of things, not a personal desire or the result of social injustice. This idea is crucial to understanding both her thought and her life.

On one hand, she engaged sincerely and decisively with the fight against social suffering in her time, understanding that this engagement was part of her responsibility as a human being in a world full of suffering. As a result of this engagement she decided to experience on her own the extreme living conditions of the factory workers and peasant laborers of her time in France, which made her better able to appreciate the extreme difficulties of maintaining a sense of self-respect and dignity under extreme oppression.³²

One reason for expecting *malheur* would then be to think that it is necessary to have felt it in order to know how to better face it and fight against it when it is caused by social structures, in spite of the aforementioned difficulties to helping others when one finds themselves in woe, even if one is able to recover from it. Woe hinders even the capacity of thought, as Weil herself noted while working in the factories, feeling the "temptation" to renounce thought to reduce the moral suffering she felt.

On the other hand, beyond her social engagement, Weil had a kind of "vocation for woe" she felt was her destiny. She did not want her affliction to be the result of a personal desire, but of the necessary order of things, feeling the physical and metaphysical need to sacrifice herself, which is key to understanding the circumstances of her death. It would have been easy to surrender to the enemy in 1943 occupied France and come to an

31. Simone Weil, "Cahier VII", in *Écrits de Marseille 1941-1942 (Oeuvres Complètes IV)* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009).

32. After a certain degree of oppression, she thinks that obedience becomes abnegation (the fact of being convinced that one obeys voluntarily) because a human being cannot accept the idea of being absolutely subject to another person, so if he cannot escape from this bending, he finally convinces himself that he obeys voluntarily. In this way servitude causes the loss of self-respect when one being that is constitutively free but whose freedom is denied finally accepts this loss as if it were something he wants. Weil, *La Pesanteur et la Grâce*.

easy death, she says to Schumann in a letter³³, but she expected her death to be the logical conclusion of her life. She refused to eat enough and took unimaginable efforts to force her body and mind in the service of wisdom and goodness. She could not have had a long life because she extended her moral and intellectual engagement up to total self-sacrifice. She had the feeling of what A. Thévenon called “absolute justice”, the idea that I do not have the right to anything because so many other human beings do not have the right to anything.³⁴

b. Against necessity: what we should change

It is a wise attitude to accept what we cannot change, said Epictetus in *Enchiridion*, but the difference between what we can change and what we cannot is hardly obvious. Moreover, the “capacity” to change things is relative and depends to a certain degree on our will and abilities. At this point it is very important to be aware of the tendency to naturalize unfair social structures and institutions, to conceive of them as if they were part of a “natural necessity”, of the unchangeable order of things. As causes of present and future *malheur*, poverty, slavery, marginalization, oppression, the criminalization of immigration and poverty and the mode of development we have undertaken based on inequality and the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources are not “natural” or “necessary facts” we cannot but accept. They are the result of human decisions and organizations that human beings can change.

The perspective changes if we assume that there is no supreme being distributing the amount of suffering in the world, which depends exclusively on human organizations and institutions and, in some cases, on truly unavoidable causes or accidents. Without divine providence in the background, the possibility of understanding woe as something one may benefit from in any way is reduced, if not lost, because even if experiencing woe may be useful to understanding it, to helping others or to knowing our own limits and developing a certain resilience or strength, it is such an extreme situation that it proves almost impossible to overcome and be able to grasp the dimensions of the experience (i.e. not having lost the capacity for thought and being fully aware of the situation) and use this for the benefit of others or personal growth.

33. Simone Pétrement, *Vida de Simone Weil* (Madrid: Trotta, 1997), 698.

34. Simone Weil, *La condición obrera* (Buenos Aires: El cuenco de plata, 2010), 271.

Renouncing the self is not desirable per se if we do not accept the idea of the possibility of fusing with divinity, and it should then be reframed as an inner exercise of renouncing those parts of ourselves we dislike because we consider them harmful for others or for ourselves. The idea of emptying ourselves of our thoughts in order to make space for divine thoughts of goodness and wisdom is extremely beautiful, but there are no eternal thoughts of wisdom and goodness independent of human experience, which does not imply an argument for the inexistence of wisdom and goodness, but rather a denial that they are eternal, essential, immovable, divine and have an existence of their own.

Given its destructive power, *malheur* is unlikely to provide a lesson from which we can learn. An annihilated or extremely reduced (in her capabilities) human being can hardly learn. Weil's idea that suffering and pain are the only resources we have to learn so as to accept the necessity of that which we cannot change due to a necessity on our bodies must be rethought as well. If we need to learn this lesson (I think we need to learn the opposite, i.e. that we can and must change things) there is already enough unavoidable suffering. In her particular combination of fighting against social suffering and a personal vocation for suffering, Simone Weil agreed with this latter idea: that there is enough unavoidable suffering and that any social oppression that causes woe is not justified.³⁵

4. Moral challenges

a. *Against woe as punishment*

How does others' affliction concern us as moral agents? What moral resources do we have to approach someone in woe, when relief is nearly impossible and an abyss seems open up between her extreme suffering and me; when the most common reactions to *malheur* are fear and flight, horror and rejection, a kind of fear of contagion, a paternalistic attitude of care that can easily worsen the situation or overwhelming impotence, beyond culpability, self-culpability, shame and self-shame?³⁶

35. Weil, *La Pesanteur et la Grâce*.

36. Weil thinks that only those souls fully occupied by Christ are able to support others in their affliction (*L'Amour de Dieu et le malheur*, in Weil, *Ouvres*). She refers to the rare quality of a particular pure (and supernatural) goodness in which she believed. From a secularized perspective, the challenge of supporting afflicted persons persists, even in a more pressing way.

From my point of view, when it comes to *malheur*, we should begin by avoiding moral judgment. This is also a way of interrupting its perverse inertia, because it stifles blaming and shaming, and it can paralyze or minimize marginalization. Woe is so extreme that nobody deserves it, and due to its subjective dimension and its opacity, nobody has the moral authority to judge the actions and reactions of people in this situation, even if it may be of course necessary to protect others from them if they become aggressive. From the perspective of restorative justice, legal or moral penalty is only justified in the sense of a dialogue and an exchange that aims to repair the damage caused (for example, returning the stolen money and something else as compensation) to allow for peaceful coexistence and to avoid future damage to others.³⁷

As a result, the social institutions designed to repair the damage caused or to avoid future damage to others may cause a certain social suffering for the perpetrators of the crimes, but suffering per se should never be the goal of the administration of justice in a democratic country of morally autonomous individuals, and woe should never be the result. At this point, I must say that Simone Weil's ideas about the legal administration of penalties do not coincide with my own position. In her work *L'Enracinement*³⁸ she considers punishment as one of the needs of the human soul. She does not agree with penal punishment as a way of imposing pressure and fear in society, but she considers that penal punishment should be geared toward the restoration of justice (after somebody breaks the law) by inflicting pain on the criminal's body. For her, penal punishment should be a kind of honor that eliminates the stigma of the delinquent and in no case should punishment be exercised against a victim of *malheur*. This function of penal punishment would be completely achieved if the criminal agrees to the punishment. It seems that Weil considered penal punishment (organized in a certain way) as a kind of favor or opportunity that society gives a criminal to redeem herself through pain and suffering (she affirms that the penalties should be designed based on the severity of the crimes and not the damage to

37. However, causing suffering to convicts once they are found guilty of a crime (be it true or not) has been a function of penal systems throughout history and the world. Foucault analyzed the different kinds of penal systems as ways of executing different forms of power in his work *Surveiller et punir*. Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975). On the functions of the penal sanctions that cause pain, see also Antonio Madrid, *La política y la justicia del sufrimiento* (Madrid: Trotta, 2010), who affirms that penal pain confirms the cognitive accession to the law.

38. Weil, *Ouvres*, 1039-1040

society). She does not reject the death penalty. I agree with her view that the degree of (relative) immunity should decrease as you go up the social scale (not the opposite) and that *malheur* should not be considered a crime and that crimes committed by people in *malheur* should have strong attenuators), because this incorporates a sense of positive discrimination in favor of those who have specific difficulties in life due to social injustice or personal misfortune. However, I do not agree with Weil's idea that there is a "need for punishment" intrinsic to the human condition, and much less with the idea that it is a function of the law to use physical punishment as a means of teaching. The goal of the law should be to ensure the coexistence of free individuals. The role of educational systems should be to promote the exercise of responsibility that can contribute to developing autonomous individuals able to assume the consequences of their actions without the need for any external authority that judges and punishes them.

If we admit the possibility of doling out woe for the crime of causing woe, then we accept an eye for an eye and do not effectively try to reduce the *malheur* in the world, but simply use it for further purposes (such as retaliation or punishment). Woe is something that needs to be combated as intrinsically bad. This fits into a theory of justice such as Marion-Young's: we do not only have to care about the distribution of resources, but also social goods and the conditions people need to develop and express their capacities freely. Justice means providing the best social conditions to avoid oppression and social suffering, including what we might call "social *malheur*".

However, justice is not enough to deal with woe, because not every situation of woe depends on a social injustice and because once that the damage is done and the shadows of *malheur* blanket a person awaiting suffering in front of us, then the situation demands something else. It is not enough to assure a fair distribution of resources so that this person can develop and express their capacities freely because this person is somehow broken, disconnected from herself.

b. Compassion, care and attention

It is sometimes impossible to recover from *malheur*. But still, we must be there for others even though recovery is not possible. The question is how. How can we help a person recover her self-appropriation, her relationship with herself?

Compassion and care seem to be two good candidates, but they are problematic. Compassion is an emotion relevant to ethics, since it enables us to vividly represent another's suffering, which is a sound foundation on

which to base help.³⁹ Thanks to compassion, we are much more conscious of our own vulnerability;⁴⁰ sharing in the suffering of another may help to better understand her situation, but it may be also paralyzing. Moreover, as Nussbaum concludes in her extensive work on moral feeling, feeling compassion does not guarantee moral action. Compassion requires a kind of moral imagination, imagining the situation of the other, and this seems impossible in the case of *malheur*, because those who do not know it cannot know how it is and those who have been “mutilated” by it are not in a condition to help anybody, much less themselves.⁴¹ Beyond this gap in the process of empathizing with another’s woe, there is the problem of communicating extreme suffering, which impedes the affected person from expressing what kind of support they need: “Anyone has received one of the blows that cause a being to writhe on the floor like a half-crushed worm will not find words to express what happens to him.”⁴²

What about care, in a moral sense? Ever since Carol Gilligan stressed the moral importance of the frequently feminine, silent and silenced activities of care, further theoretical developments have even proposed care in opposition to justice as a moral concept (for example, Virginia Held)⁴³, although this was not Gilligan’s original intention, who thought that both care and justice were different moral manifestations.⁴⁴ Caring consists of satisfying a person’s needs and has a “nutritive” dimension (in the sense of providing what is needed to live and develop); it requires the caregiver’s engagement with the person cared for. It is undeniable that the need for care falls within the human condition, as Held states, and even the Stoics attributed to *oikeiosis* the meaning of relationships with family members that nourish each other to maintain the group (which should be extended to the entire human community, as stated by Hierocles)⁴⁵. However, assuming that we all need care and we all should care for our relatives and friends when they need it, this does not mean that care is the appropriate moral

39. Solomon, *Ética emocional. Una teoría de los sentimientos*; Antonio Damasio, *El error de Descartes* (Barcelona: Editorial Crítica, Grijalbo–Mondadori, 2006).

40. Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics* (Blackwell, 1993).

41. “L’amour de Dieu...”, in Weil, *Ouvres*.

42. *Ibid.*, 694.

43. Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005),

44. Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice. Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1982).

45. Hierocles, “Elementos de ética, Extractos de Estobeo y Glosas de la Suda”, *Revista de Filología Clásica y Hebrea* 65, no. 193 (2014). Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca.

answer to every moral question. Excessive or inappropriate care can be undesirably paternalistic or require the stressful self-sacrifice of the caregiver. Paternalism would result in a denial of the moral personality of the person being cared for or, in another words, the annihilation of her autonomy and her freedom, if the caregiver treats the person requiring care as if she could not decide on her own when she has not in fact lost her capacity to decide. When the relationship of care is stressful for the caregiver, then she runs the risk of losing her capacity for action, due simply to exhaustion.⁴⁶

A person in woe may need care, but, as in the case of justice, care may be not enough. Moreover, he may be unable to ask for care and he may reject care even if he needs it (he may think that he does not deserve it). Even when certain care is needed and provided, and even if this care needs to be paternalistic because the person in woe is unable to decide for himself, the goal should still be kept in mind: to restore his freedom and his autonomy, his capacity to think, decide and act following his own thoughts and decisions.

The only way to reconstruct the appropriation of one's self lost in *malheur* is to restore the external circumstances for that relationship to be reconstructed: social bonds and a place in the world, while avoiding shame, blame and the stigma associated with both of them. A place in the world in a similar sense to Hannah Arendt's concept of worldliness⁴⁷ includes certain physical conditions, like a home, water, food and healthcare (which may be considered to be the result of care if the person is unable to provide themselves with such resources), but also the assumption of responsibilities, tasks and projects, inasmuch as it is possible. Still, what kind of social bond can we propitiate? What do we say to a mother whose husband and 12-year-old daughter have died of cancer and cannot even get up most days to go to work and feels incapable of caring for her elderly ill mother, thus eliciting suicidal thoughts? How do we communicate with an old friend who we've recently run into living many years as a beggar after his wife abandoned him, having been fired from his job because of alcoholism and recently violently attacked on the street where he lives? How can we approach a victim of sexual slavery who is afraid of reporting her situation because she is an illegal immigrant who was sold by her own family? What more can be done beyond fighting for fair structural condi-

46. Feder Kittay, "The Concept of Care Ethics in Biomedicine", in *Bioethics in Cultural Contexts*, ed. Marcus Rehmann-Sutter Düllel and Dietmar Mieth (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2006).

47. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998),

tions, remedying the abuse (as appropriate), ensuring the care they need and providing a place in the world?

Again, Weil makes a highly valuable contribution to this question: attention. Although attention is not proposed as a moral concept, it deserves being considered as such.⁴⁸ For Weil, attention is a kind of meditation in which one suspends her thoughts, leaving the mind empty and open to be penetrated by knowledge and wisdom, by the “bare truth”. Transferred to the moral realm, paying attention to the other means being heedful, being there without preconceived ideas (with an “empty mind”) about what the other can expect or need from us, being permeated by the “bare truth” of the other’s extreme suffering, which may be simply inapprehensible by rational means. Attention is the purest way of being there for the other without doing anything else. It means that the person matters to you and presupposes that you do not blame or shame her for her situation. I do not intend to say that attention is the definitive, sole or “purest” moral attitude. It is one among others including care, compassion, love, forgiveness, responsibility, a sense of justice, etc. But it may be a resource in a situation of woe because it does not demand anything from the other (who probably cannot do anything), does not impose anything on the other, does not require exactly imagining the other’s situation, is coherent with other possible needs of justice and care and is a good start to restoring the external circumstances for the relationship of appropriation or familiarity of the person in woe with herself and it does not run the risk of being paternalistic.

5. Conclusion

Woe is not a naturally given phenomenon that we cannot change. It is not simply that it can be caused by social or political oppressive institutions or by perverse individuals or organizations, and that, considering its extremely destructive nature, we should abolish those institutions and dismantle such organizations. Woe itself also entails social and cultural dimensions that can be either fed or interrupted by certain institutions

48. In fact, Weil proposes the concept of “attention” in *Réflexions sur le bon usage des études scolaires en vue de l’amour de Dieu* (Weil, *Attente de Dieu*), in which she reflects on how school exercises can help students cultivate their capacity for concentration in order to progress in their spiritual or religious development. The aim of the exercises would not be to find the solution, but to improve students’ capacity for concentration, for attention, which in the end will serve to better attend God, i.e. it is the best mode of prayer for Weil. In any case, finding the solution to a geometry problem or the best translation of a Latin text would be equivalent to connecting with the divine truth.

or customs. Marginalization, shame and blame contribute to feeding its perverse inertia, to such a point that they are internalized by the persons in woe, who also tend to feel ashamed and guilty of their extreme suffering, in an interminable circle that further exacerbates the “uprooting” of life and the loss of self-appropriation. Marginalization and self-marginalization feed into each other and the moral challenge is huge, for the moral agent face great difficulties in even imagining the enormous suffering of others; the person in woe may reject any help (she does not feel worthy of accepting it or simply does not see any end to her situation) and thus any attempt to express compassion and care can be impossible or ineffective, even if the moral agent has been able to overcome the first stumbling block: not judging the other’s situation, actions and reactions.

If woe consists of a loss of self-appropriation and any appropriation thereafter, i.e. a loss of any familiar way of inhabiting ourselves and the world, then it seems that the only way of overcoming this situation (and helping others overcome it) is by restoring the internal and external uprooting in the self and the world, restoring the house’s broken foundations. Attending the person in woe may be the only way of being there for her without judging, without expecting anything, proving that the social bonds are not completely broken and that there is still a place in the world for her. With this, I do not seek to dismiss the material circumstances of this place in the world, which is social inasmuch as we are relational beings, but it is also physical in the sense that we need somewhere to take refuge, feel secure and nurture ourselves and those we are responsible for. Coherently, the structure of the re-rooting needs to be material and moral. Morally, if the relationship with others proves to be recoverable, then the kind relationship with oneself may be recoverable too. Even if it is sometimes impossible to recover from *malheur*, nobody knows if recovery is possible, and even if it is not possible, nobody deserves to be abandoned.

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Philosophical Practice as a Way to Address the Students' Existential Problems during the Pandemic

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Abstract


This article is devoted to the study of the academic and existential problems of students during the pandemic. The authors conducted sociological surveys among first- and second-year students of a higher educational institution, where they analyze students' attitudes towards distance learning and identify the most pressing existential problems of students. The authors concluded that during the quarantine period, learning has lost its semantic basis. The reason for this is the inability of the education system to respond to the challenges of the new educational format, as it develops in accordance with the modern technology, as modern pedagogy develops, as a rational system of objective knowledge, and as it does not take into account the internal, value-based meanings of education itself. The authors see a solution to this problem in shifting the emphasis from transferring knowledge to helping students find personal meanings that coincide with the objectives of philosophical practice. The authors give examples of how the techniques of philosophical practice could unlock students' potential in understanding and solving existential problems.

Keywords: death, existence, freedom, loneliness, meaning of life, pandemic, philosophical practice, SARS-CoV-2.

1. Introduction

In the spring of 2020, due to the spread of the coronavirus, the Russian government decided to transfer educational institutions to a distance-learning format. There were active discussions about the readiness of educational institutions to work remotely. During its implementation, educational institutions faced a number of problems, which were associated with the organization of teaching in the new conditions. The

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pandemic led to the destruction of the habitual existence of students, who faced uncertainty. This uncertainty became a part not only of the learning process, but also of other aspects of their lives. Students encountered restrictions of freedom for an indefinite period. They faced the dilemma of how to deal with forced isolation. The choices were either to accept isolation as a necessity or to express their dissatisfaction with the limitations imposed; to choose freedom or to prioritize security; to succumb to despondency or to try to find new meanings for themselves in the new situation; to experience loneliness, isolation or to appreciate the opportunity to face oneself. As Todd Dubose pointed out, for many people the viral pandemic has also become an existential pandemic. The pandemic exposed the problems of human existence and forced us to think about finding solutions to them.¹ The pandemic was not only a biological threat to humanity, it also had a devastating effect on other aspects of human life and led to a revision of the system of values. In this respect, the pandemic situation is unique because it has created the conditions for people to discover their potential to make sense of and transform their own existence.

The aim of our study is to investigate the educational and existential problems of students during the pandemic. This requires solving the following tasks: to identify the main positive and negative aspects of distance learning; to determine the students' attitude to distance learning; to identify the most urgent existential problems of the pandemic; and to consider some ways to solve existential problems through philosophical practice.

To identify educational and existential problems during the pandemic and to determine attitudes towards distance learning we used sociological surveys. One hundred first and second-year students participated in the surveys. We also worked on existential problems during online learning using philosophical practice. In developing the methodology for these classes, we proceeded from the assumption that during the quarantine period, for many students, learning had lost its usual meaning because students encountered uncertainty where none had existed before. Their attitudes changed because the uncertain situation required skills of self-determination that many did not possess. It was necessary to look for internal reserves either to strengthen the old system of values, or to develop new values and ideological orientations and new ways of imple-

1. Todd DuBose, "When COVID-19 Meets Pandemic Hope: Existential Care of, and in, the Impossible," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 60, no. 5 (2020): 564-570. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167820944645> .

menting them. Philosophical practice under these conditions was able to provide effective assistance in finding the individual inner reserves to solve learning and existential problems.

Assuming that education plays a decisive role in a student's life, how it is possible to express this role in the new context? Education is associated with the search for one's place in the world. If a student does not get an answer to the question about the personal meaning of this process for the present or the future, this may be a symptom of an incipient existential crisis. One task of the practicing philosopher is to detect the manifestations of this existential crisis in a timely manner and to suggest ways out of it, and such therapeutic work can be done using the teaching material of philosophy.

We believe that the pandemic indicated the most significant problem of modern education: the depreciation of learning because modern universities aimed at the formation of professional skills, with little attention paid to the transmission of culture. What saves a person in difficult times is not only the ability to solve practical problems, but also a stable system of values and principles that effectively guide him. According to Ortega y Gasset, who wrote about this problem at the beginning of the twentieth century, "life is a chaos, a tangled and confused jungle in which man is lost".² However, an individual can avoid feelings of loss and despair and can find their way through this forest of life if they have clear, consistent worldviews, values, and principles. This allows the individual to continue a meaningful existence even in such moments when life is tragic and full of uncertainty.

2. Middle

Distance learning in higher education institutions in Russia was introduced in March 2020. Since February 8, 2021, the majority of educational institutions have returned to face-to-face education. During this period, higher educational institutions passed a serious test of their strength and efficiency. The media actively discussed the emerging trends: from unconditional support to the total rejection of the distance format. In our study, we identify the attitudes of the students to distance learning and the main positive and negative aspects of digital learning using a sociological survey

2. Jose Ortega y Gasset, *Mission of the University* (London: Routledge, 2014), 31-32, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315008059>.

of 100 first- and second-year students at South Ural State University of Humanities and Education (Chelyabinsk, Russia).

The first questionnaire included the following questions:

- 1) How do you feel about distance learning?
Answer options: a) negative; b) positive; c) neutral.
- 2) What do you see as the benefits of distance learning?
- 3) What do you see as the disadvantages of distance learning?

When asked about the attitude towards distance learning, 50% of students took a neutral position, while 20% of students expressed a positive attitude, 30% negative. Students named the possibility of independent planning their study and leisure time as an advantage of distance learning (30%). Many students noted that they did not need to spend time and money on travelling to the university or on eating in the canteen or cafe (28%). They used the time they saved for recreation. They had the opportunity to sleep, engage in physical activities, watch movies and TV shows, read books, pursue hobbies, and communicate with friends on social networks.

Students noted that this format gives them more freedom, as it is easier to avoid excessive control by teachers (15%). Some students wrote that in some classes they purposely did not turn on the video camera in order to do other things during classes. Interviewees agreed that distance learning exacerbated existing educational problems. The most important of which is the poor teaching of some subjects, the consequence of which is students' lack of interest in, and motivation to study, these disciplines. They did not see the point of some subjects, considering them useless for their professional activities.

Some students said that the decrease in external control led them to find themselves unable to regulate and organize their own learning activities. Some, on the contrary, came to the realization that distance learning contributes to a deeper understanding of the educational material if it is studied independently (10%). Some respondents stressed that distance learning allows the teacher to implement the principle of humanistic pedagogy—an individual approach to each student interested in the subject (8%). Mastering this format makes learning more flexible, personalized and effective.

A positive aspect of distance learning was the more comfortable educational environment. Speaking in front of the teacher and other students in a virtual room does not lead to stress. Chatting facilitates

personal communication with the instructor (5%). The distance format creates an atmosphere of trust, because of the informal nature of the virtual rooms (4%).

Regarding the negative sides of distance learning, we note the problem of economic inequality. Not all students had access to this format of education. Some of them returned to their parents' homes in the countryside, but not all such houses have computers or quality internet connections. Not all students' families have a sufficient income to provide for distance learning at home, especially large families, which may require a separate room and personal computer for each student. For some students an Internet connection was inaccessible solely because of its cost (8%). Students noted that teachers simply did not take this inequality into account. This led to misunderstandings and conflicts.

Another problem of distance learning was that it took a lot of time and effort (30%). Students explained that, for some subjects, distance learning resembled a parody of traditional education. Teachers did not explain the material but passed their work on to the students in the form of homework. Some instructors did not conduct classes at all, but simply posted learning materials on the electronic platform for independent study. Students were forced to master the material on their own. Some instructors had no idea what distance learning was or how to organize it.

Another problem of distance learning was the difficulty of organizing dialogue between teachers and students (25%). Students noted their weak involvement in the discussion of educational material. During the discussions, they exchanged opinions, but did not interact with each other and there was not enough feedback from teachers. Not all instructors analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of submissions, limiting themselves to formal evaluation. Some students did not turn on their cameras during classes, because of their unwillingness to put their everyday life on display, and the loss of eye contact leads to a decrease in the productivity of classes.

Distance learning also made the mastering of the practical part of their studies more difficult (25%). Some students also noted the low level of digital competence of teachers (8%)—not all teachers could conduct video lectures and seminars and not all had the skills to interact with students online. Some students noted that distance learning requires interactive forms of classes other than lectures and seminars.

Another problem of distance learning was that it causes, directly or indirectly, health issues. According to some students, distance learning was associated with headaches, problems with vision, and weakness (4%).

The survey data revealed both positive and negative evaluations of the distance format. For the students, negative assessments were related to the overload of study material and the lack of experience of the teachers in an online mode. It was difficult for instructors, using an unfamiliar distance format, to build fruitful communication with students and have students interact with each other. They had to figure out how to integrate traditional lectures and seminars into the new interactive format. For many, this task proved impossible.

Every interaction with the world contains a degree of uncertainty. People experience a variety of external influences that they are unable to control. Despite the fact that life takes place in uncertainty, people are always looking for something stable in their existence. When a person encounters uncertainty, they have to go beyond the boundaries of their familiar territory. For many, this is a dangerous venture, however, it can be a very valuable experience teaching a person to work with their anxiety.³

The pandemic and the containment measures associated with it proved a serious test for people. It was an apogee of uncertainty, restricting freedoms and changing the way people lived. The pandemic deprived some people of a stable income or a productive education. It jeopardized established social ties and led to isolation and loneliness. The pandemic brought the threat of sudden illness and death. It demonstrated the unpredictability of the future and the powerlessness of human beings who want to control everything that happens to them. In this way, the pandemic became the embodiment of human anxiety associated with existential questions.

Our study also investigated which existential problems were most urgent for students. The survey revealed a number of problems that can be graded according to the degree of relevance: the restriction of freedom was relevant for 30% of students; loneliness for 30%, the meaning of life for 29%; the fear of death for 11%. Analyzing the data obtained, we can say the limitation of freedom became one of the main sources of discontent and anxiety. It is no coincidence that students used comparisons of the pandemic restrictions to house arrest and prison in describing their condition.

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3. Veronika Bogdanova, "Worldview attitudes of the existential psychotherapist (on the materials of Rimās Kočiūnas' seminar "The Picture of Human Life and the Therapeutic Process: An Introduction of the Existential Psychotherapist". *Society and Power* 2, no. 82 (2020): 96. <https://doi.org/10.22394/1996-0522-2020-2-90-101> .

Existence always manifests itself in a series of choices. The more possibilities people see for themselves, the more they feel their existence and freedom. In this sense human freedom means the very possibility of freedom.⁴ Students felt the absence of many opportunities during the pandemic. Previously, these opportunities had enriched their lives with events, gave expression to a range of emotions and feelings. Responding to the question, "What important opportunities have you lost during the pandemic?", students noted that now they cannot move freely around the city, visit public places, meet with friends and relatives, or quietly study in a familiar format. They keenly felt the conflict between their circumstances and their needs.

The restriction of freedom narrowed the students' circle of communication, leading to a sense of abandonment. The survey showed that 50% of students experienced a lack of communication although this did not cause them deep and strong feelings. 30% of students experienced loneliness in an acute form, for 15% the situation did not lead to an aggravation of loneliness.

The greatest frustration was the lack of meaningful social connections. This includes the inability to meet a loved one or friends, the loss of leadership positions in the student group, or the loss of the usual support of their social network. The feeling of loneliness was accompanied by anxiety, irritability, apathy, and sadness. When asked how students free themselves from these experiences, the following answers were received: communication with friends and relatives with the help of messaging apps (30%), watching movies and TV series (25%), reading books (8%), computer games (14%), creative activities (8%), sports and yoga (9%), self-reflection and self-discovery (6%).

Most students solved the problem of the lack of communication with the help of mobile communication. People, who before the introduction of restrictive measures had a weak dependence on social contacts, chose other ways to overcome the negative feelings associated with loneliness. We cannot say that the introduction of restrictive measures disconnected people, but rather that hidden problems in relationships were revealed. Superficial relationships revealed their instability, but deep relationships grew stronger.

4. Martin Heidegger, *Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit. Einleitung in die Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1982), 135.

The desire of students to escape from the experience of loneliness through immersion in entertainment (movies, TV shows, computer games) may be a sign of the search for new values. The existential emptiness that had arisen needed something to fill it. Entertainment created the appearance of variety in life. Physical activity (sports, yoga, etc.) to relieve stress on a physical level was not as common. Few people escaped loneliness by reading. Although it should be borne in mind that reading paper books as a rule is accompanied by the use of social networks, which, in fact, is also reading.

Fewer students turned to creativity and self-reflection. This suggests that it was easier for students to escape loneliness by external forms of activity or by shifting their attention to entertainment. However, the main result of successfully combating loneliness is overcoming the fear of it. This is possible when a person accepts his or her loneliness as a basic state of being and works with it. Working with loneliness implies self-reflection. Self-reflection is aimed at understanding that loneliness can become a productive and creative state for a person. By immersing oneself in loneliness, one reveals one's inner reserves. Self-knowledge and self-development actualize "being for oneself". Individuals themselves determine their state of mind and are the creators of their own lives. A self-conscious person often discovers for themselves the world of creativity, because, having understood themselves, they strive to express themselves creatively.⁵

Overcoming the fear of loneliness largely depends on the ability of the individual to give value and importance to their life.⁶ We assumed that self-isolation must have affected the students' ideas of the meaning of life.⁷ It was necessary to find out how. The students had to choose one statement that corresponded to their inner state. The results showed that 45% of the students felt that their life became less meaningful. However, this did not

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5. Veronika Bogdanova, "Philosophical Practice of Solitude: Existential Expansion of the Boundaries of Consciousness," *Philosophical Thought* 10 (2017): 126-138, <https://doi.org/10.25136/2409-8728.2017.10.22289> .
 6. Didac Macia, Gabriele Cattaneo, Javier Solana, Jose Tormos, Alvaro Pascual-Leone and Bartrés-David Faz, Meaning in Life: A Major Predictive Factor for Loneliness Comparable to Health Status and Social Connectedness, *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (February 2021), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.627547> .
 7. Dominik Borawski, Anna Siudak, Anna Pawelec, Bartłomiej Rozpara and Mateusz Zawada, "The interplay between loneliness, mindfulness, and presence of meaning. Does search for meaning matter?" *Personality and Individual Differences* 172 (April 2021). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2020.110580> .

cause them strong negative feelings. Only 15% of the students experienced profound experiences related to the loss of meaning in their lives. These students faced a lack of stable value orientations. They felt a sense of the absurdity of existence, and this led to the experience of existential guilt. Existential guilt occurs when a person realizes the imperfection of their life, the inconsistency of reality with their feelings, thoughts and desires. The inconsistency of their way of life and their expectations leads to questioning the meaning of life. The students' situation served as an external stimulus for understanding themselves existentially. Students felt the need to define their value priorities, to free themselves from illusory ideas about their own lives. Twenty percent of the students indicated that self-isolation did not affect their ideas of the meaning of life. The foundations of their worldview were stable and did not falter; they were tested by this critical situation, and 10% felt the meaninglessness of life in the period both before and after the pandemic measures. These students are the most sensitive to their existences, but they have not yet found ways to uncover them. In addition, 10% of students discovered new meanings for themselves during this period. These students occupy an active social position and participate in a variety of youth movements related to leisure and educational activities. During the pandemic, they felt that other people needed their help, and they were ready to support them emotionally and financially.

During the pandemic, some people faced existential anxiety due to the awareness of the possibility of sudden illness and even death. However, many students did not feel vulnerable in this regard. According to the survey, 75% of students thought about death during the pandemic, but the thought of death did not cause lasting and intense distress. 15% of students did not think about death at all. Only 10% of students experienced the fear of death in an acute form.

We can interpret these results in the light of the notion that people look to the future. They are unable to be phenomenologically aware of their own mortality, but the subject of their experience may be another's death. If death takes away relatives and loved ones, one feels helpless and powerless. Survivors become aware of their own finitude, the uncertainty of their life situation, which shifts their attention from images of the future to the fragile present and opens to them the value and uniqueness of the present moment.

3. Conclusion

Modern pedagogy does not take into account the inner, valuable meanings of education itself. In our opinion, this is the main problem characteristic of different formats of education. When organizing the educational process, teachers should proceed from the needs of their students. Acquired knowledge must be essentially necessary for students' lives.⁸ Teaching should be personalized as much as possible and pedagogical means should be varied so that the students can realize their personal choice, based on their own value orientations.

The pandemic has shown how capable (or incapable) the educational system is of responding to challenges. Unfortunately, the answer is disappointing. Students were unprepared for the changes in education. They felt the need for spiritual growth but did not find adequate ways to implement this need.

Having analyzed the results of the survey, we concluded that it is necessary to shift the emphasis in education from transferring knowledge to helping people find personal meaning. This coincides with the tasks of philosophical practice, which provides an opportunity to apply abstract ideas as a tool for clarifying the meaning of individual existence. Philosophical practice is a way of taking care of oneself. It can help person to analyze their personal life experience and to help identify the solutions to many problems.⁹ It is directed at the comprehension of life and its transformation. Philosophical practice is aimed at self-knowledge, which occurs when facing life's challenges.¹⁰ Based on the experience accumulated by the philosophical tradition, philosophical practice becomes a kind of intellectual therapy, allowing an understanding of the problem and the selection of suitable solutions.

The survey showed that the most urgent problem was the limitation of students' freedom. Moreover, it was less a question of restricting the freedom of action because no one could avoid the pandemic measures, and more about a deeper understand of inner freedom, a human asset which no one can take away. The inner freedom of existence is the ability

8. Jose Ortega y Gasset, *Mission of the University* (London: Routledge, 2014), 43, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315008059>.

9. Sergey Borisov, *Philosophical practice in the modern world: challenges and answers: monograph* (Chelyabinsk: SUSU, 2019).

10. Sergey Borisov, "Philosophy as a project: descriptors of self-knowledge," *SHS Web of Conferences* 72 (November, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20197204006>.

to be open. According to Fromm, openness is the ability to see the world objectively, getting rid of “dreams of omniscience and omnipotence”.¹¹ Openness promotes adaptability because it is based on trust in life, and it sets more flexible programs of behavior. Existentially closed people stubbornly resist reality, trying to repeat the program of behavior that has long since exhausted itself, even when they see its futility.

The strength of resistance to reality is directly proportional to the strength of the mental suffering undergone. When an individual returns to openness, they mitigate their suffering or get rid of it altogether. This aspect of openness is embodied in the central principle of Taoism, *wu wei* (“non-action”). Its essence is spontaneously living in the present without interfering with the course of things that are not in one’s power to control. By obeying the natural course of events, one becomes an organic part of the unified flow of changes, feels a part of existence and gains inner peace and freedom.¹² The students found the introduction to Taoism in philosophy classes and the transfer of the principles of Eastern philosophy useful for everyday life. As a practice, we asked students to do two exercises. One exercise on contemplation, which helps students be attentive to themselves and the world around them and maintain a feeling of presence in the present.¹³ The other exercise, called “Be yourself,” develops the ability to listen to oneself and behave with others as one behaves alone with oneself.

The next layer of existential problems (loneliness and the meaning of life) we decided to work through with an appeal to the philosophical schools of antiquity. Since one of the main problems of distance learning was superficial communication and a lack of communication in general, it was decided to choose a role-playing game as a form of conducting classes. The game was conducted in several stages. The first stage was preparatory, students joined the closed network community “Ethics of Life. The Experience of Ancient Thinkers”. Then we divided them into groups of five to six persons. Each group was introduced to the contents

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11. Erich Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism* (London; Boston: Unwin Paperbacks, 1986), 201.
 12. Kai Liu, “How I faced my coronavirus anxiety,” *Science* 367, no. 6484 (2020): 1398. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.367.6484.1398>.
 13. Veronika Bogdanova, “Phenomenology of reduction of consciousness: comparativist approach,” *SHS Web of Conferences: International Scientific Conference: Achievements and Perspectives of Philosophical Studies* 72. (November, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20197203045>.

of a passage describing the basic principles and lifestyle of a certain philosophical school (the Pythagorean School, the Cyrenaic School, the Cynic School, the Epicurean Garden, the Stoic School, and the Neoplatonist School). We tasked each group with drawing up a “code of life” for their philosophical school. The code had to contain at least eight rules of life. The rules had to be stated in such a form that their practical application was understandable. All codes were posted at the social network. In the second stage, the instructor assigned roles to representatives of the schools of philosophy. To each student we assigned a specific role, which they had to keep secret from the others. We paired up students so that their roles did not overlap. For seven days, we asked each student to formulate exercises for their partner that would correspond to the code of life of the philosophical school that they had been given. Naturally, one could not specify one’s own philosophical school when formulating a task. The invented tasks were sent to the teacher and the partner. The partner had to send their task to their partner, do the exercise which was assigned to them, and, if desired, present a report on the task to their partner and to the teacher. They presented reports in the form of an argument on a designated topic, a written reflection on the task, a photo report, a video report, a drawing, etc. The main goal of the work was to develop and apply philosophical practices in everyday life, assess their potential for self-knowledge, self-development, and meaningful interaction with oneself and others. In the final stage, we tasked students with determining which philosophical school their partner belonged to. After the final stage, if desired, students could share their impressions and thoughts on the activity.

The experience of the game showed that the students not only understood the ideas of the ancient thinkers they also succeeded in infusing philosophy with their own unique understanding and life experiences. The main value of their work was that they understood ancient philosophy in their own context. The assignment to come up with exercises that could be done practically (i.e. realized in everyday life) and which corresponded to the ideas of the school of philosophy, led to the students trying to live the ideas of ancient philosophy in their modern lives. An interesting synthesis was formed between the ancient principles of life and modern ways of taking care of oneself, which the students invented or found independently in various sources of information. A curious discovery was that some students performed not only their partner’s assignments, but also their own, which indicates the interest and involvement in the process of self-knowledge, in spite of the workload of other academic subjects.

Some students shared in personal communications that it was inter-

esting to get to know their partners in a new way. In classrooms, you get a superficial impression of a person who exists with you in the same space, spends quite a lot of time with you, but does not show themselves in an online environment at all. It is another thing to observe how a person lives when they exist in conditions that are familiar and comfortable for them. Students could see the people surrounding them, how they build relationships with each other, what they like to do. When one sees the innermost area of the Other's life, one establishes a more trusting, valued relationship.

The student-generated philosophical practices have potential for the resolution of existential problems. Horužij, based on the works of Foucault, identified four characteristics of philosophical and spiritual practices, which were evident in the students' assignments. The first characteristic is teleological—the achievement of a specific goal. A state of calmness and serenity, when a person is not overwhelmed by misfortune, acted as a goal.¹⁴ We offered students quite a few tasks covering the emotional, will, value and meaning spheres of personality, with which we aimed to combat affects such as anger, irritation, fear, insensitivity, and frustration due to unrealized desires. There were tasks allowing the understanding, uncovering and experiencing of the phenomena that give meaning to human life such as joy, happiness, beauty, etc. It is necessary to note, that practicing philosophy in everyday life produces a deep comprehension of them. According to Bugental, a person's life is their own only when they are immersed in the "inner stream of consciousness". Consciousness has not only a reflexive level; it may be pre-reflexive or pre-verbal. It is much more expansive than can be contained in words.¹⁵ Only having experienced a phenomenon in a concrete situation is it possible to move to the level of reflection and to reason about it. Some of the tasks were aimed at addressing the world of sensations, perceptions, impulses, bodily awareness, emotions, and feelings for further work with the ideas and thoughts that emerge from them. This is the second characteristic of philosophical practices, the holistic or the involvement in the practice of the self at all levels. To explain one's emotional state, to work with it, can only be done this when a person allows themselves to experience it at all levels.

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14. Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-82* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 300, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-09483-4>.
 15. James Frederick Thomas Bugental, "The betrayal of the human: Psychotherapy's mission to reclaim our lost identity". In *The evolution of psychotherapy: The second conference*, ed. Jeffrey K. Zeig (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1992), 155-164, <https://doi.org/10.1176/ps.45.1.84-a>.

Philosophical practices presuppose a radical transformation of one's entire being because they give rise to a new awareness of corporeality. Corporeality does not lend itself to reflexive control, but it can influence the level of receptivity of the spiritual experience. These practices, from simple physical exercises and work to cultivating moderation in the satisfaction of vital needs, were aimed at cultivating self-discipline, strengthening the body and the will.

The third characteristic is the participation of another in the transformation of the individual in acquiring self-knowledge.¹⁶ Self-knowledge is dialogic at its core so it is possible to cognize oneself through the spiritual experience of other people. Many of the student tasks and exercises were aimed at building harmonious relations with the world and with other people. There were moral exercises (tasks for understanding of the essence of good, the value of friendship, respect for the humanity of another person), exercises for development of communication skills, the establishment of friendly relations, expressions of gratitude, work with people's conscience. This involved the emotional-volitional and value-semantic spheres of the personality. The exercises allowed students to trace the experience of communication with the world, to learn better, to see how a person builds communication with other people, what for them is valuable and significant in communication.

The fourth characteristic of the practices is the realization of conversion-as-self, the essence of which is the return to the self. By the return to the self we understand the finding of the true "I" that lies in the depths of the experiential subject. Many of the students' assignments contained moments of self-determination in terms of values. We asked them to think about what happiness, freedom, and fate are. We also asked them to keep a psychological diary, allowing them to reflect on their own being and their attitude to it. We offered tasks for working with memory and thinking. Work with memory helps the individual to connect the past and the present, to create, based on knowledge of the past and the present, a self-image that will serve as the basis for defining their personal development. Memory is necessary for the preservation and further use of our life experiences. Techniques of developing critical thinking help to eliminate contradictory attitudes. They free the consciousness from false values and lead a person to a sense of authenticity and fullness of life.

16. Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-82* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 294, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-09483-4>.

The experience of the pandemic led us to the following conclusions. It is impossible to rise above the pandemic situation and avoid a potential existential crisis without communication and cooperation. Distance learning should not take away this important component of human existence. This format offers a wide range of technical possibilities for creating a space for open dialogue (messengers, social networks, chat rooms, virtual rooms, etc.). A space for dialogue is necessary in order to share thoughts, feelings, and experiences, and to provide each other with emotional support.

During distance learning, students found it difficult to meet their cognitive needs, which primarily manifested themselves in the need to expand the boundaries of the knowledge of the surrounding reality, to gain new experiences and find meaning in their lives. It was possible to diagnose cognitive deprivation. The students witnessed the break-down of their routine, which they had to reorder. Cognitive deprivation made it impossible to understand what was happening or to develop a strategy that would allow them to regulate the course of their lives. During the pandemic, people felt helpless, that they could not create the necessary conditions for themselves and could not plan their own lives.¹⁷

In such a difficult situation, the teacher's main task is to help students get out of a state of helplessness. This is possible when they are able to look at the phenomena and events of their lives in a detached way. Only by being a reflective observer is it possible to have a meaningful attitude towards life. Without a reflective position, it will be difficult to overcome uncertainty in a crisis. People who overcome the dissolution in their circumstances of life reach a philosophical level and can make sense of their lives. In a critical situation, they reduce uncertainty by identifying connections, relationships, an awareness of goals, and the direction of their own activity. In their mind, they transform the chaos of events into order, achieving inner equilibrium. However, the discovery of meanings is only part of the desired result—more important is the actualization of meaning, which one can accomplish through philosophical practice. The exercises offered by philosophical practice help to create new possibilities for self-realization. Through philosophical practice, the individual gets to know himself and to discover the personal meanings of any activity (including learning).

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17. Deblina Roy and Kritika Sinha, "Cognitive biases operating behind the rejection of government safety advisories during COVID19 Pandemic," *Asian Journal of Psychiatry* 51 (June 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajp.2020.102048>.

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The Ethics of Social Distance and Proximity in the City

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Abstract

The genealogy of ethics starts in the polis. Plato and Aristotle had an optimistic view of polis life, even though Plato was born shortly after the plague of Athens, an experience that left a deep imprint in his society, and interestingly not a very good opinion of democracy. The idea of the polis as the ideal locus for human flourishing can be contested because we do not share the same face-to-face form of life with the ancient polis-dwellers. Contemporary megacities do not harbor an agora in which citizens debate current affairs. Such debates have shifted to social media. It is worth investigating the value of face-to-face interaction even today. Despite the risk of spreading airborne lung diseases like the Corona virus, the possibility of face-to-face interactions allows the cultivation of attention necessary for ethics. Knowing your neighbor by acquaintance, seeing her face every day can make pedestrians better attuned to the need to protect her in times of the pandemic, by maintaining distance and wearing a mask. If this is indeed the case, then it has implications for urban design: urban density can be designed in a way that affords functional proximity (the likelihood of encounters) and more humane neighborhoods.

Keywords: attention, density, ethics, infection, polis, proximity, space syntax.

1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected large cities like New York, London, Milan and Wuhan especially badly. It might appear that authoritarian regimes like the Chinese model were more successful in containing the spread of the disease than Western democracies. While it is possible to set up barricades and forcefully separate family members under an authoritarian regime, this would go deeply against the grain of any culture steeped in democratic ideals. It is much easier for authoritarian regimes to impose draconian measures on their populace, for it is a matter of one person, or a few people agreeing on a course of action and enforcing it with the arsenal of means available to state power (the military, the police, charging high fines for those who disregard the rules).

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By contrast, democracies act from a delicate balance between the state government, local municipal governments and the civil society. Because of this, a democracy is not only a system of political rule, but an ethos, a way of life, often also finding expression and being shaped by the built environment.¹

Ancient Athenian democracy famously ended with the plague which devastated the city in 430 BC, and rendered it an easy prey for Spartans, a notably far more authoritarian culture. Josiah Ober has argued that because democracies like Athens are such intricate systems of aggregating and aligning knowledge, they are more vulnerable to such complete disasters than top-down models of government.² However, vulnerability does not imply a more inferior system, rather it points to its complex and easily disturbed balance, requiring numerous actors and factors to work together. This is even more true of contemporary democracies, which arose from a development that Charles Taylor has called a “modern social imaginary”, according to which public spaces belong to the civil society and act as a tribunal to those in political power.³ As John Dewey expresses it, democracy starts in neighborhoods,⁴ and is based on a faith in human equality.⁵ As Jonathan Wolff and Avner de-Shalit have argued, whenever something is developed or torn down in a city, values are expressed.⁶ Therefore, fighting pandemics democratically would need to root in an ethics, a code of conduct against the spread of infectious diseases, not only for individual citizens, but also as a structural consideration when establishing frameworks of everyday life in policies and city planning. It would require “infraethics”, that is structural “conditions of possibility of

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1. Josiah Ober, *Democracy and Knowledge: Innovation and Learning in Classical Athens* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 199-204; Ludger Schwarte, “Gründen und Abreißen. Der Platz der Architektur im System der Philosophie,” in *Architektur und Philosophie. Grundlagen, Standpunkte, Perspektiven*, ed. Jörg H. Gleiter and Ludger Schwarte (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2015), 21-38.
 2. Josiah Ober, *Democracy and Knowledge: Innovation and Learning in Classical Athens* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).
 3. Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).
 4. John Dewey, “The Public and Its Problems,” in *The Later Works, 1925-1927*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston and Bridget A. Walsh (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), 367.
 5. John Dewey, “Creative Democracy – The Task Before Us,” in *The Essential Dewey. Vol. 1. Pragmatism, Education, Democracy*, ed. Larry A. Hickmann and Thomas M. Alexander (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), 340-344.
 6. Jonathan Wolff, “Inequality and the City,” talk at University of Bern, 6 December 2018.

morality”,⁷ such as urban policies conducive to responsible health practices and built environments suitable to non-isolating social, or rather physical distancing.⁸

2. Ethics in the City

The genealogy of ethics starts in the polis. In *The Republic*, one of the founding works of philosophy, Plato introduces the idea of justice with his model of the just city, the Kallipolis, or the city of the beautiful and the good.⁹ In *Politics*, Aristotle defines human beings as political animals, and considers the polis as the kind of setting in which we flourish best, in which there are the most opportunities to practice the virtues.¹⁰ Plato and Aristotle had an optimistic view of polis life, even though Plato was born shortly after the plague of Athens, an experience that left a deep imprint in his society, and interestingly not a very good opinion of democracy. The philosophers’ ideal of the polis as the ideal locus for human flourishing can be contested because early agrarian city-states relied on a massive slavery industry to provide sustenance for their populations,¹¹ which means that the good life they provided was a good life only for some. While slavery was not questioned by Aristotle and Plato, it can hardly be defended in today’s day and age, though it has not been completely eradicated. Another reason for questioning the relevance of the ancient polis is that we do not share the same face-to-face form of life. Contemporary megacities do not harbor an agora in their midst in which citizens debate current affairs. Such debates have shifted to social media, and are constantly in danger of manipulation by bots provoking scandals in order to influence network users, fake news and algorithm black-boxing. It is worth investigating the

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7. Luciano Floridi, “Infraethics – on the Conditions of Possibility of Morality,” *Philosophy & Technology* 30, (2017): 391-394, 391.
 8. Floridi is referring to a digital infrastructure that enables values such as privacy and trust, but the idea of infraethics is applicable more generally to urban policies and the built environment which can be designed to facilitate ethics or to hinder it.
 9. Plato. *Republic [Politeia], Volume I: Books 1-5*, ed. and transl. Christopher Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 527c2.
 10. Aristotle. *Politics* (London: Longmans, Green, and co., 1877), 1253a37.
 11. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, “Der griechische Staat,” in *Aufsätze und Vorreden aus dem Nachlaß*. Vol. 1. (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1921); James C. Scott, *Against the Grain. A Deep History of the Earliest States* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2017).

value of face-to-face interaction even today; after all, people still physically take to the streets when they are passionate about an issue, be it in form of protests or pride parades.

Emmanuel Levinas grounds ethics in an encounter with the face of the Other, a stranger.¹² Like Hannah Arendt, he too wrote in the aftermath of the Holocaust, in which millions were murdered by an impersonal bureaucratic system. Like Arendt, he privileged the value of the face-to-face encounters as a means of avoiding atrocities. This is plausible in the light of recent empirical findings, such as the fact that advances in imaging technology that render a distant target's face more clearly visible have resulted in fewer hits by human-operated guided missiles.¹³ Cities generate the kind of proximity that multiplies possible encounters with the face of the Other, the stranger, the rural migrant, the refugee, or perhaps the grumpy elderly neighbor wearing a face mask during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, a steady stream of faces in megacities have deadening effects on the beholder, as Georg Simmel observed at the beginning of the previous century, and city-dwellers are forced to develop a tunnel vision to shield themselves from too much stimulation.¹⁴ In today's information and image deluge, attention has become an even scarcer resource.¹⁵ Therefore, cities do not automatically lead to the kind of cultivation of attention that ethics necessitates.

3. Relationships of Proximity and Distance in the City

The nexus between ethics and city planning was especially salient in the beginning of the previous century, when growing cities needed to support booming populations and the squalid living conditions for the workers have become insupportable.¹⁶ Modern architecture arose partly in response to those challenges. For instance Le Corbusier's utopian

12. Emmanuel Levinas, "Ethics as First Philosophy," in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Sean Hand (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 75–87, 82–84.

13. Oliver Müller, "Warum »autonome« Waffensysteme Gegenstand der Philosophie sein sollten." *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 44, no. 3 (2019).

14. Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and the Mental Life," in *The Blackwell City Reader*, ed. G. Bridge and S. Watson (Oxford and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell), 11–19.

15. James Williams, *Stand out of Our Light: Freedom and Resistance in the Attention Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

16. Friedrich Engels, *The Conditions of the Working Class in England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

masterplan for a city, *La Ville Radieuse*, premised on the egalitarian ideal that every inhabitant should be exposed to the same amount of sunshine.¹⁷ The idea was a city strictly divided into pre-defined functional zones, with a large residential area made up of identical housing. Equality was interpreted as uniformity, which led to the much criticized sterile facelessness associated with modern architecture. Similarly, today's smart cities often repeat modernist attempts at better cities by creating distinct functional zones, such as in Songdo, South Korea. They seem to share Le Corbusier's assumption that there is an impartial point of view from which cities can be master-planned – for Le Corbusier it was the view from the airplane, as aviation was just developing,¹⁸ and for IT companies like IBM it is the point of view of big data that they conceive of as impartial.¹⁹ It seems to be the case that every new technology is taken as tantalizingly promising to solve the most pressing societal problems (and these hopes never seem to be realized).

Wolff and de-Shalit have argued for a different take on equality, not as an equal distribution of something (money, or in this case space or sunshine), but as a relation among people.²⁰ This understanding of equality is helpful when arguing for a non-foundationalist ethics of city planning, in which there is no substantial, pre-fabricated concept of good cities. Rather than assuming that a dense enough city would civilize its inhabitants, or that a master plan would render them more equal, we might ask in which particular and different ways do cities mediate relations between people, and how is density well designed. If democracy is to be understood as a faith in human equality, then the way to realize it in actual cities is to contribute to progress in equality.

It is for instance possible to distinguish between physical and functional proximity, wherein the latter is the likelihood of encountering another person.²¹ So for instance, it has been observed that physical

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17. Alan Stoekl, "Solar Le Corbusier," in *Philosophy and the City: Interdisciplinary and Transcultural Perspectives*, ed. Keith Jacobs and Jeff Malpas (London: Roman & Littlefield, 2019).
 18. Christine Boyer, "Aviation and the Aerial View: Le Corbusier's Spatial Transformations in the 1930s and 1940s," *Diacritics* 33, no. 3/4, (2003): 93-116.
 19. O. Söderström, T. Paasche, F. Klauser, "Smart Cities as Corporate Storytelling," *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 18, no. 3, (2014): 307-320.
 20. Jonathan Wolff and Avner de-Shalit, *Disadvantage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 6.
 21. H.T. Reis, "Propinquity," in *Encyclopedia of Social Psychology*, ed. R. F. Baumeister & K. D. Vohs (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2007), 709.

distance often also signifies social distance, and that the rich and the poor tend to live far apart in cities.²² Functional distance can be investigated in terms of space syntax, as developed by architects at the University College London, by studying a neighborhood's integration, that is, how many corners need to be turned for someone to walk from there to a public space.²³ A neighborhood is well integrated if less discrete spaces need to be traversed to arrive to public spaces such as a square; it is segregated if the opposite is the case, as in the 16th-century Jewish Ghetto in Venice, where gondoliers were much less likely to wander into its canals based on the city's sheer physical design.²⁴ A neighborhood's segregation therefore implies a functional distance: one is less likely to accidentally bump into its inhabitants while aimlessly exploring the city. In the case of the Jewish Ghetto, this functional distance, alongside with more obvious measures of segregation such as ghetto walls, exoticized and ostracized the inhabitants. Functional distance can be studied from within a neighborhood, as well. As the urbanist and activist Jane Jacobs suggested in the 1960s, mixed-use neighborhoods rather than functional residential zones are more conducive to liveliness on the streets. If there are shorter blocks, shops, entertainment venues and residences in the same street, people are much more likely to encounter and know each other at least by sight, since they have more reasons to walk in their own neighborhood.²⁵

4. Spatial Inequalities

Paying attention to spatial inequalities is one way of reflecting on the manner in which the city mediates relations between people. While moralizing geometry might seem curious at first, this is exactly what following scholars in urban studies and urban sociology are proposing. This was already done in the 1960s as a form of criticism of modern architecture,

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22. Bourdieu, Pierre, "Site Effects," in *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).
 23. Bill Hillier and Laura Vaughan, "The City as One Thing," *Progress in Planning* 67, no. 3: 205-230, 7.
 24. D. Volchenikov and Ph. Blanchard, "Ghetto of Venice: Access to the Target Node and the Random Target Access Time," *Physics & Society*, 16 Oct 2007, <https://arxiv.org/pdf/0710.3021.pdf>, Accessed 6 May 2021.
 25. Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (London: Penguin Books, 1972).

for instance in Henri Lefebvre's ideas on the social production of space.²⁶ More recent research in urban sociology ties into Lefebvre's ideas, but with the caveat that, while he implied that there was some primordial, unproduced, pastoral spatiality to yearn for, it is by contrast worth considering Martina Löw's view that *all* spaces are socially produced.²⁷ Then an ethical reflection on spatial inequality would not only be about exposing the ways in which living in a certain location reifies one's social status, but an analysis of the various different ways it can contribute to social and health-related disadvantages, but also possible advantages. The social production of spaces is not just to be exposed but – to add a further point to Löw's account – itself ethically critiqued. In terms of space syntax, it is possible to analyze how a city's spatiality both reflects and shapes society²⁸, and how it “narrates” a culture.²⁹

In times of social distancing, it is instructive to study the ways in which cities mediate proximity and distance, be it in the physical sense of creating neighborliness by means of adjacency, or in the functional sense by mediating the likelihood of encounter between people. Space syntax has shown that functional distance of segregated neighborhoods is correlated with poverty, poor health and greater vulnerability during public health crises. For instance London's Soho neighborhood has been shown to be particularly segregated at the street level and it was particularly severely affected by the cholera outbreaks in the late nineteenth century.³⁰ Also it is important to consider how encounters are mediated among inhabitants within neighborhoods. It might *prima facie* seem that the denser a neighborhood, the worse the health conditions of its inhabitants. But this is only partially true because it depends on the design of density. For instance, during the Chicago heat wave of 1995, there was a striking difference between the mortality rates of two neighborhoods. Little Village was much denser than North Lawndale, and it consisted of a mixed-use network of residential areas and shops. However, it was North

26. Henri Lefebvre, “La production de l'espace.” *L'homme et la société. Revue internationale de recherches et de synthèses sociologiques*, (1974): 31-32; 15-32.

27. Martina Löw, *Vom Raum aus die Stadt denken* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2018), 7-24.

28. Bill Hillier and Laura Vaughan, “The City as One Thing,” *Progress in Planning* 67, no. 3: 205-230.

29. Sophia Psarra, *Architecture and Narrative: The Formation of Space and Cultural Meaning* (London: Routledge 2009).

30. Laura Vaughan, *Mapping Society: The Spatial Dimensions of Social Cartography* (London: University of London Press, 2018), 33-38.

Lawndale that manifested a ten times higher mortality rate.³¹ Presumably the design of Little Village allowed for more sociability among the inhabitants which eased relations of mutual help in times of need. It is plausible that during the Covid-19 crisis, similar patterns might emerge: it need not be the densest neighborhoods that are the most vulnerable (even though slums as poor dense places are undeniably very vulnerable to epidemics), but those that are segregated and without possibilities of non-overwhelming encounters on the streets that would enable the kinds of casual acquaintanceships that facilitate neighborly help (for instance in the form of grocery shopping).

Experience in New York has shown that denser neighborhoods that had larger public parks – like Manhattan – were less affected by the disease than less dense ones with less access to public recreational space – like Queens.³² More possibilities of accidental encounters in controlled settings such as parks contributes to *less* infections, perhaps because people are more able to pay attention to others and the distance they are keeping. Ironically, functional *proximity* seems to afford the luxury of social, or rather physical *distancing*.³³ More possibilities of controlled non-programmed encounters in Little Village, Chicago, contributed to better acquaintance among its inhabitants and more neighborly help during the heat wave than in the less dense North Lawndale. Therefore, it is not density per se that makes cities dangerous during health crises, but poorly designed density. If democracy starts in neighborhoods, and if it is an egalitarian way of life, as John Dewey suggested, then spatial factors contributing to inequality in neighborhoods, such as functional distance, are an important consideration.

The complex balance of actors in democratic cities precludes an authoritarian government planning spatial relations in a top-down manner. Rather, they need to be negotiated and won over in a case-by-

31. Eric Klinenberg, *Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 109.

32. Novakovic, Stefan. 2020. "Will Covid-19 Spell the End of Urban Density? Don't Bet on It." <https://www.azuremagazine.com/article/will-covid-19-spell-the-end-of-urban-density-dont-bet-on-it/>. Accessed 24 April 2020.

33. Although space syntax analyses have shown that the design of *indoor* spaces like offices or hospitals should minimize chance encounters and therefore increase functional distance as a form of social distancing in order to minimize possible viral transmissions (Leslie Dietz et al, "2019 Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic: Built Environment Considerations to Reduce Transmission," *mSystems* 5, no. 2 (2020:), e00245-20, 8-9).

-case manner, in participative urban planning methods that involve the everyday life perspectives of the residents.

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Varia



La modernità cartesiana: un paradigma di interpretazione

Cartesian Modernity: A Paradigm of Interpretation

ALFREDO GATTO *

Abstract

Descartes is usually considered as the father of Western rationalism and the thinker who made the *cogito* and the subjective element the cornerstone of philosophical investigation. This article aims to analyze the history of this hermeneutic paradigm by verifying the main turning points which transformed this reading into the traditional approach to Cartesian thinking and modern philosophy. Starting from M. Heidegger's analysis, the article proceeds backwards and identifies the main phases of this interpretation giving a sharper focus on F. Nietzsche, F. W. J. Schelling, G. W. F. Hegel and, lastly, I. Kant. At the end of the analysis, the article highlights the significant continuity of the different interpretations: even those philosophers, such as Heidegger and Nietzsche, who radically questioned the Cartesian modernity paradigm, assumed the same interpretation which supported that paradigm among their premises and allowed this interpretation to prosper and dominate the hermeneutic scene still nowadays.

Keywords: Descartes, cogito, german idealism, Heidegger, modern philosophy, Nietzsche.

1. Le immagini di Descartes

L'idea che Descartes sia il fondatore della modernità filosofica in quanto pensatore del soggetto rappresenta un presupposto che sembra sottratto, per definizione, ad ogni istanza critica. È difficile avvicinarsi alla riflessione cartesiana senza partire dalla premessa che il fulcro della sua riflessione risieda nella centralità assegnata al *cogito*. Si tratta, in sostanza, di un'interpretazione da manuale, quasi fosse la condizione che sorregge ogni indagine che voglia fare luce sul pensiero di Descartes.

Il presente articolo non intende discutere la liceità di un simile approccio storiografico, ma si propone di ricostruirne parte della genesi, sottolineando come tale costruito ermeneutico possieda una sua specifica storia. Il *cogito* e la conseguente importanza dell'elemento rappresentativo,

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infatti, non hanno sempre costituito, *sic et simpliciter*, il cuore del cartesianismo, o il necessario punto di partenza per sondare e vagliare la speculazione cartesiana. In realtà, ripercorrere la storia della ricezione del pensiero del filosofo francese significa farsi strada in un vero e proprio multiverso, in un prisma che raccoglie e diffonde la luce di una molteplicità vastissima di interpretazioni. A tal proposito, possiamo ritrovare il Descartes “fisico”, anti-scolastico e anti-aristotelico, che penetra nelle Provincie Unite grazie alla mediazione del professore di medicina e botanica Henricus Regius e di Adriaan Heereboord e Cornelis van Hogelande;¹ il Descartes “novello Vanini”, il cui scetticismo diviene la via maestra per inoculare il veleno di un ateismo che viene esposto al pubblico ludibrio dal rettore dell’Università di Utrecht, l’aristotelico Gijsbert Voetius, e dai teologi riformati di Leida Jacobus Revius e Jacobus Triglandius;² il Descartes “pelagiano”, che difende una nozione di arbitrio sottratta alla condizione delle creature *post-lapsum* e in grado perciò di fondare un sapere autonomo;³ il Descartes “apologeta”, capace, in virtù dei presupposti della sua ontologia della natura, di spiegare efficacemente, e una volta per tutte, il miracolo eucaristico;⁴ il Descartes “fisiologo e anatomista” di Claude Clerselier, interessato ad offrire al pubblico un’immagine del filosofo più variegata, che assumerà un ruolo decisivo nella ricezione del cartesianismo in Italia, ad opera soprattutto di Vitale Giordani, professore di fisiologia alla Sapienza di Roma nell’ultimo scorcio del XVII secolo;⁵ il Descartes pensatore delle “verità eterne”, la cui natura creata è interpretata da Robert Desgabets come la premessa indispensabile per operare una radicalizzazione del lascito cartesiano;⁶ il Descartes più propriamente “metafisico”, oggetto

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1. Thomas Arthur McGahagan, *Cartesianism in the Netherlands. 1639-1676. The New Science and the Calvinist Counter-Reformation* (Ph.D. Thesis, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1976).
 2. Theo Verbeek, *René Descartes and Martin Schoock: La Querelle d’Utrecht* (Paris: Les impressions nouvelles, 1988); cfr. inoltre Aza Goudriaan, *Jacobus Revius: A Theological Examination of Cartesian Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).
 3. Emanuela Scribano, *Da Descartes a Spinoza. Percorsi della teologia razionale nel Seicento* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1988).
 4. Jean-Robert Armogathe, *Theologia Cartesiana. L’explication physique de l’Eucharistie chez Descartes et dom Desgabets* (La Haye: Nijhoff, 1977).
 5. Per uno sguardo generale sulla ricezione del cartesianismo in Italia, cfr. Giulia Belgioioso, *La variata immagine di Descartes. Gli itinerari della metafisica tra Parigi e Napoli (1690-1733)* (Lecce: Milella, 1999).
 6. Emmanuel Faye, “The Cartesianism of Desgabets and Arnauld and the Problem of the Eternal Truths”, in *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy* (vol. II), ed. D. Garber (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 193-209; Patricia Easton, “What is it at Stake in the

dell'interesse e dell'ossessione dei vari Leibniz, Malebranche e Spinoza, tutti ugualmente interessati a pensare con e attraverso il filosofo francese.

L'elenco potrebbe certamente essere più esaustivo, e concentrarsi sulle varie stazioni del cartesianismo in Germania e Inghilterra⁷ e sugli infiniti rivoli della tradizione post-cartesiana francese.⁸ Questa breve descrizione, tuttavia, ci offre perlomeno uno scorcio delle prospettive che il pensiero di Descartes poteva proporre ai suoi interpreti. Ora, se in alcuni dei casi elencati la *cogitatio* rappresentava uno strumento euristico, certo importante, ma non ancora oggetto di quel processo di ipostatizzazione che costituisce il cuore della nostra pre-comprensione del lascito cartesiano, è legittimo provare a ricostruire la storia di questa prospettiva ermeneutica e verificare in che modo la storiografia abbia concentrato l'attenzione su tale aspetto, trasformandolo nell'elemento precipuo della propria ricostruzione. Insomma, come si è arrivati all'immagine di Descartes che abbiamo ereditato nella seconda metà del XX secolo e che ha costituito l'obiettivo polemico di quei processi decostruttivi che hanno dominato parte della tradizione filosofica contemporanea? Per fornire una risposta, inevitabilmente parziale, a tale interrogativo possiamo assumere come punto di partenza una delle principali interpretazioni novecentesche di Descartes per procedere poi a ritroso, alla ricerca dei vari snodi di questo paradigma di lettura.

2. Il Descartes di Heidegger

L'importanza di Descartes all'interno dell'interpretazione della storia della metafisica tratteggiata da Martin Heidegger è confermata dalla costanza dei riferimenti presenti nelle opere del filosofo tedesco.⁹ Soprattutto a partire dai corsi su Nietzsche degli anni '30 e dal saggio *L'epoca dell'immagine del mondo*, Heidegger ritorna di continuo sui testi cartesiani, facendo di Descartes il perno della filosofia moderna. Nella lettura di Heidegger, Descartes fonda la modernità filosofica imponendo al centro della propria indagine lo spazio sovrano della *cogitatio*. Con

Cartesian Debates on Eternal Truths?", *Philosophy Compass* 2, no. 4, (2009): 348-362.

7. Francesco Trevisani, *Descartes in Germania. La ricezione del cartesianismo nella Facoltà filosofica e medica di Duisburg (1652-1703)* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1992); Arrigo Pacchi, *Cartesio in Inghilterra: da More a Boyle* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1973).
8. Tad Schmaltz, *Radical Cartesianism. The French Reception of Descartes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
9. Per un'ampia ricostruzione del rapporto tra i due autori, cfr. Riccardo De Biase, *L'interpretazione heideggeriana di Descartes. Origini e problemi* (Napoli: Guida, 2005).

Descartes la verità è preda di una mediazione metafisica che fa dell'ente il contenuto della rappresentazione di colui che intende conoscere il mondo, determinando le condizioni della conoscenza. La totalità dell'ente si scopre così soggetta ad un *subiectum* e la trascendentalità del pensiero si impone come il *dominus* di ogni certezza.

È grazie a Descartes, infatti, che l'ente viene determinato per la prima volta «come oggettualità del rappresentare, e la determinazione della verità come certezza del rappresentare».¹⁰ L'intera metafisica moderna, figlia dello scarto inaugurato dal filosofo francese, diviene comprensibile solo a partire dall'affondo cartesiano. Grazie a Descartes, l'uomo si trasforma in «quell'essente su cui ogni essente si fonda nel modo del suo essere e della sua verità. L'uomo diviene il centro di riferimento dell'essente in quanto tale».¹¹ Attraverso la *cogitatio*, in sostanza, è affermata tanto la relazione immediata ed essenziale tra il mondo e il soggetto, quanto la dipendenza formale del primo nei confronti del secondo. Il *cogito* è quindi sempre, e inevitabilmente, un *cogito me cogitare*. Come precisa Heidegger nel corso dedicato al nichilismo europeo,

cogito sum non dice né soltanto che penso, né soltanto che sono, né che dal fatto del mio pensare consegue la mia esistenza. La tesi esprime una connessione tra *cogito* e *sum*. Dice che io sono in quanto colui che rappresenta, che non soltanto il mio essere è essenzialmente determinato da questo rappresentare, ma che il mio rappresentare, in quanto *re-praesentatio* determinante, decide sulla presenza (*Präsenz*) di ogni rappresentato.¹²

Affermare *ego cogito, ergo sum* significa dunque riconoscere che la totalità dell'essere è riportata all'azione dell'autocoscienza del soggetto umano, padrone delle determinazioni e signore dei suoi contenuti. Il mondo si trasforma in un *positum* a disposizione di un soggetto che si appropria degli enti individuati dalla sua *cogitatio*.

L'interesse dell'interpretazione di Heidegger non risiede tanto nella lettura – come vedremo, abbastanza classica – del pensiero di Descartes, ma nella connessione stabilita tra l'alba cartesiana del pensiero moderno

10. Martin Heidegger, *Die Zeit des Weltbildes* (1938), in *Holzwege*, Bd. V (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Klostermann, 1977), 87; trad. it., *L'epoca dell'immagine del mondo*, in *Sentieri erranti nella selva*, a c. di V. Cicero (Milano: Bompiani, 2002), 105.

11. *Ibid.*, 106 (Bd. V, 88).

12. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Bd. VI.2, (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Klostermann, 1961), 143; trad. it., *Il nichilismo europeo*, in *Nietzsche*, a c. di F. Volpi (Milano: Adelphi, 2005), 668.

e il suo tramonto nietzschiano. Secondo Heidegger, infatti, la riflessione di Nietzsche porta a compimento l'accelerazione metafisica inaugurata da Descartes. Sul piano metafisico, «la dottrina di Nietzsche, che riduce tutto ciò che è, così com'è, a proprietà e prodotto dell'uomo, non fa che portare a compimento l'estremo sviluppo di quella dottrina di Descartes secondo la quale ogni verità viene fondata riconducendola all'auto-cerchezza del soggetto umano». ¹³ Nietzsche darebbe vita ad una «metafisica della soggettività incondizionata della volontà di potenza», ¹⁴ portando alle estreme conseguenze le premesse del discorso cartesiano. ¹⁵

Heidegger è perfettamente consapevole di quanto tale parallelo posso apparire ardito, sia per le critiche che Nietzsche non risparmia a Descartes, sia alla luce della più classica lettura che interpreta la speculazione del filosofo tedesco come dissoluzione della modernità cartesiana. Tuttavia, Heidegger invita i suoi lettori a penetrare tale superficie ermeneutica, spingendosi più a fondo:

Ci si lascia ingannare dalla storiografia che può facilmente constatare che tra Descartes e Nietzsche intercorrono due secoli e mezzo. La storiografia può far notare che Nietzsche sostiene manifestamente dottrine diverse e che addirittura si oppone con la massima nettezza a Descartes. Ora, non è che noi crediamo che Nietzsche insegni la stessa identica dottrina di Descartes, ma affermiamo anzitutto una cosa di gran lunga più essenziale, cioè che egli pensa lo Stesso nel compimento storico essenziale. Con la metafisica di Nietzsche incomincia la storia del compimento di ciò che, in metafisica, si avvia con Descartes. ¹⁶

I due autori, in sostanza, sarebbero uniti da un rapporto più essenziale, che ci permette di ripensare Descartes e Nietzsche come l'alfa e l'omega dell'avventura della metafisica moderna. Entrambi assumono come centro nevralgico delle rispettive riflessioni la funzione assunta dal soggetto e l'impossibilità di dissociare la nozione di verità dalla sua apprensione soggettiva. Al netto dell'esteriorità del suo rifiuto, pertanto, Nietzsche non avrebbe compreso la continuità sostanziale del proprio

13. Ibid., 642 (Bd. VI.2, 113).

14. Ibid., 698 (Bd. VI.2, 177).

15. Sulla soggettività cartesiana come modello per comprendere la nozione di soggetto in Nietzsche, si tenga presente, pur all'interno di un contesto differente, il contributo di Isabelle Wienand, "Writing from a First-Person Perspective: Nietzsche's Use of the Cartesian Model", in *Nietzsche and the Problem of Subjectivity*, eds. J. Costâncio, M. J. M. Branco, B. Ryan (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 49-64.

16. Martin Heidegger, *Il nichilismo europeo*, 657-658 (Bd. VI.2, 131-132).

legame con Descartes. L'interpretazione di Heidegger estende perciò il paradigma classico con cui interpretare Descartes alla filosofia moderna nel suo insieme, applicandolo alla stessa speculazione nietzschiana.

A questo punto, possiamo compiere un passo indietro, e analizzare alcuni dei giudizi su Descartes presenti nel *corpus* nietzschiano, mettendo in luce come la stessa interpretazione cartesiana di Nietzsche, in linea con quella sviluppata da Heidegger, si iscriva in un *leitmotiv* interpretativo ancora precedente.

3. Il Descartes schopenhaueriano di Nietzsche

È necessario anzitutto rilevare come la conoscenza che Nietzsche possedeva della filosofia cartesiana non fosse il frutto di uno studio meditato dei testi di Descartes, ma dipendesse, quasi esclusivamente, dalla lettura di fonti secondarie.¹⁷ Il *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie* di Friedrich Ueberweg, innanzitutto, e ad un più profondo livello filosofico sicuramente il taglio interpretativo proposto da Arthur Schopenhauer.¹⁸ Secondo il filosofo di Danzica, Descartes aveva prodotto un'accelerazione decisiva nella storia del pensiero, tanto da poter essere considerato «a buon diritto il padre della filosofia moderna, anzitutto ed in generale perché ha avviato la ragione a reggersi sulle proprie gambe».¹⁹ Il merito di Descartes attiene all'ambito gnoseologico, e nello specifico alla centralità di quell'elemento soggettivo che ha trasformato gli enti mondani in rappresentazioni. Il pensiero di Descartes costituisce così una prima germinale formulazione della propria stessa riflessione, ma con una distinzione di capitale importanza. Se il *cogito, ergo sum* del filosofo francese equivale allo schopenhaueriano “il mondo è una mia rappresentazione”, è pur vero che a dover essere posta in risalto non è l'immediatezza cartesiana del soggetto, ma la mediatezza dell'oggetto.

La lettura di Nietzsche conserva alcuni tratti della ricostruzione schopenhaueriana; a cambiare è però il giudizio di valore che l'accompagna. Nel

17. Nikolaos Loukidelis, “Quellen von Nietzsches Verständnis und Kritik des cartesischen cogito, ergo sum”, *Nietzsche-Studien* 34, no. 1 (2005): 300-309.

18. A questo proposito, si tenga presente il volume di Giuliano Campioni, *Les lectures françaises de Nietzsche* (Paris: Puf, 2001).

19. Arthur Schopenhauer, *Parerga und Paralipomena: Kleine Philosophische Schriften*, in *Sämtliche Werke*; trad. it., *Parerga e paralipomena*, a c. di G. Colli e M. Carpitella (Milano: Adelphi, 1981), vol. I, 19.

corpus nietzschiano il nome di Descartes compare relativamente spesso: tra le svariate occorrenze, Descartes può essere chiamato in causa per produrre un conflitto tra la tradizione francese e quella tedesca,²⁰ o per rappresentare il pensatore del metodo *par excellence*, tanto da spingere l'autore a citare, nella prima edizione di *Umano, troppo umano*, un passaggio tratto dal *Discorso sul metodo*. Ad ogni modo, Descartes è nominato con più frequenza quando l'interesse di Nietzsche è rivolto alla nozione di soggettività e all'indagine sui fondamenti del razionalismo moderno.²¹ A questo proposito, i riferimenti sono quasi esclusivamente negativi.

In linea con lo sfondo ermeneutico disegnato da Schopenhauer, Descartes è considerato il padre della *ratio* moderna, un pensatore disposto a riconoscere «soltanto l'autorità della ragione».²² L'obiettivo polemico di Nietzsche è legato, in particolare, all'istituzione cartesiana della *cogitatio*: ad essere contestata con veemenza è l'idea che al *cogito* di Descartes possa essere attribuito un grado di certezza immediata. Secondo il filosofo tedesco, si tratta di una pura ingenuità: se analizziamo senza pregiudizi l'espressione «*ego cogito*», troviamo una serie di «asserzioni temerarie» – che «sia *io* a pensare, che debba esistere un qualcosa, in generale, che pensi, che pensare sia un'attività e l'effetto di un essere che è pensato come causa, che esista un «*io*», infine, che sia già assodato che cos'è caratterizzabile in termini di pensiero».²³ Nietzsche sta cercando di decostruire dall'interno la convinzione che gli oggetti rappresentati nel *cogito* e dal *cogito* appartengano al soggetto che li pensa, quasi vi fosse un *dominus* sovrano e cosciente capace di disporre a piacimento dei contenuti della propria rappresentazione. È vero il contrario: «un pensiero viene quando è «lui» a volerlo, e non quando «io» lo voglio»; è allora «una falsificazione dello stato

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20. «Lo «spirito tedesco» è aria viziata, *per me*; faccio fatica a respirare in mezzo a questa sporcizia in *psychologicis* divenuta istinto, che si rivela in ogni parola, in ogni espressione di un tedesco. Non sono mai passati attraverso un diciassettesimo secolo di duro esame di se stessi, come i Francesi; un La Rochefoucauld, un Descartes sono cento volte superiori per rettitudine ai primi fra i Tedeschi, che finora non hanno avuto un solo psicologo», Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce homo*, a c. di F. Masini e R. Calasso (Milano: Adelphi, 1970), vol. VI, t. III, 371.
 21. Su questo specifico aspetto, si vedano le riflessioni svolte da Alain De Libera, *L'invention du sujet moderne. Cours du Collège de France 2013-2014* (Paris: Vrin, 2015), 107-146.
 22. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Al di là del bene e del male*, a c. di F. Masini (Milano: Adelphi, 1972), vol. VI, t. II, 90; cfr. inoltre Friedrich Nietzsche, *Frammenti postumi: 1884-1885*, a c. di S. Giametta (Milano: Adelphi, 1975), vol. VI, t. II, frammento 34 [35], 110: «Abelardo voleva portare la ragione nell'autorità della Chiesa; alla fine Descartes trovò che ogni autorità è solo nella ragione».
 23. F. Nietzsche, *Al di là del bene e del male*, 20 (il corsivo è nel testo).

dei fatti dire: il soggetto “io” è la condizione del predicato “penso”. *Esso* pensa: ma che questo “esso” sia proprio quel famoso vecchio “io” è, per dirla in maniera blanda, soltanto una supposizione, un’affermazione». ²⁴

In questa prospettiva, l’attività del pensiero non è un mezzo per conoscere, ma rappresenta uno strumento per «indicare e ordinare l’accadere», ²⁵ ossia ciò che accade al pensiero. Insomma, ci capita di pensare, ci imbattiamo in un’idea, ma non ne siamo i proprietari, perché non ne incarniamo il fondamento causale. D’altra parte, «nessuno è più oggi tanto innocente da porre ancora, alla maniera di Descartes, il soggetto “io” come condizione del “penso”». ²⁶ La convinzione secondo cui l’*ego* sia il fondamento del *cogitare*, o il pensiero sia un’attività per la quale è necessario supporre un soggetto, costituisce un’assunzione indebita. ²⁷ Il soggetto descritto da Descartes non può quindi rappresentare la «misura del reale» (*Maaß des Wirklichen*). ²⁸ In effetti, aggiunge il filosofo tedesco, che il pensiero possa incarnare tale *mensura* «è un goffo *non plus ultra* di una credulità moralistica [...], è in sé una pazza affermazione contraddetta ogni momento dalla nostra esperienza». ²⁹ Nietzsche decide allora di invertire l’ordine di priorità metafisica posto a fondamento della riflessione cartesiana: al posto del *cogito, ergo sum*, in cui è il soggetto a dedurre la necessità della propria esistenza, egli afferma «*sum, ergo cogito*», ³⁰ sottolineando la natura passiva del pensiero.

Non diversamente dalla lettura proposta da Heidegger, Nietzsche tratteggia un’immagine di Descartes ben precisa e determinata. Il filosofo

24. Ibid., 21 (il corsivo è nel testo).

25. F. Nietzsche, *Frammenti postumi: 1884-1885*, frammento 40 [20], 323.

26. Ibid., 323.

27. «Nel famoso *cogito* è contenuto 1) si pensa, 2) e io credo di essere io ciò che pensa, 3) ma anche ammesso che questo secondo punto rimanesse in sospeso come cosa di fede, anche quel primo “si pensa” contiene già un credere, e cioè che il “pensare” sia un’attività per la quale si debba pensare un soggetto, anche se non personale – e nient’altro significa l’*ergo sum*! Ma questa è la fede nella grammatica, qui si pongono già le “cose” e le loro “attività”, e siamo lontani dalla certezza immediata. Lasciamo quindi cadere anche quel “si” problematico, e diciamo *cogitatur* come fatto, senza frammischiarvi articoli di fede», Ibid., frammento 40 [23], 325-326.

28. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Frammenti postumi: 1885-1887*, a c. di S. Giametta (Milano: Adelphi, 1975), vol. VIII, t. I, frammento 2 [93], 95.

29. Ibid., 95.

30. Friedrich Nietzsche, *La gaia scienza*, a c. di G. Colli e M. Montinari, con la coll. di S. Giametta e M. L. Pampaloni (Milano: Adelphi, 1967), vol. V, t. II, 159: «Per l’anno nuovo. Io vivo ancora, io penso ancora: io devo vivere ancora perché devo ancora pensare. *Sum, ergo cogito: cogito, ergo sum*».

francese è il pensatore del soggetto e della centralità assegnata alla *cogitatio*, ed è proprio per *queste* ragioni che incarna un “moderno” approccio meritevole di una particolare attenzione critica. Ciò che divide i due autori risiede nella vastità del loro sguardo prospettico: nel caso di Heidegger, infatti, lo stesso Nietzsche rientra nella storia di questa tradizione metafisica e del conseguente oblio dell’essere che ne consegue, e richiede dunque di essere superato. Se il Nietzsche “storico” si serve del paradigma cartesiano per marcare con più forza le ragioni che lo spingono ad abbandonare la modernità inaugurata da Descartes, il Nietzsche “heideggeriano” è l’ultima stazione che ne esplicita tutte le premesse, ponendo le condizioni di un suo definitivo abbandono. E tuttavia, i due autori condividono, nella sostanza, la stessa interpretazione di Descartes, una lettura che è stata paradossalmente canonizzata da quella tradizione idealista contro la quale entrambi levarono a gran voce i loro strali.

4. Il Descartes idealista

Nel paragrafo precedente abbiamo visto come Nietzsche abbia criticamente attribuito a Descartes la stessa posizione filosofica che Schopenhauer giudicava il maggior contributo cartesiano alla storia della filosofia. A cambiare, pertanto, è il giudizio di valore, non le premesse delle loro rispettive interpretazioni. Ad ogni modo, è necessario compiere un ulteriore passo indietro per ritrovare le linee guida che hanno rappresentato la stessa pre-comprensione dell’ermeneutica nietzschiana. È doveroso quindi tornare ad Hegel,³¹ e in particolare alle sue *Lezioni sulla storia della filosofia*.

Descartes vi occupa un ruolo paradigmatico: secondo Hegel, il compito principale che la filosofia moderna pone a se stessa è quello di conciliare l’opposizione tra la dimensione soggettiva delle rappresentazioni e il suo contenuto determinato. In questa prospettiva, la figura di Descartes assume veri e propri tratti eroici: il suo merito consiste nell’aver istituito per la prima volta la correlazione immediata tra il pensare e l’essere, riconducendo il secondo nell’orizzonte posizionale del primo. Da questo momento, l’ente non è più pensato come un’oggettività indipendente, ma in quanto contenuto dell’auto-affermazione riflessiva di un soggetto. Hegel può allora a buon diritto affermare che il filosofo francese

31. Roberto Morani, *Soggetto e modernità. Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger interpreti di Cartesio* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2007).

è «un eroe, che ricominciò da capo l'impresa, e restituì alla filosofia quel terreno, al quale essa tornò soltanto adesso dopo trascorsi mille anni».³²

L'importanza di Descartes – lo «spirito» della sua filosofia – non si riduce a tale gesto fondativo, ma risiede nell'accelerazione che ha imposto alla storia della filosofia nel suo insieme. Ciò, tuttavia, non impedisce ad Hegel di formulare alcuni rilievi critici. La riflessione cartesiana rimane preda di una sostanziale unilateralità: una volta posta la diade essere-pensiero,³³ Descartes assume l'identità tra i termini di tale rapporto in modo astratto, ossia senza quel processo di mediazione che sottrae alla relazione la sua immediatezza. Il procedere cartesiano rimane perciò «indefinito, formale e senza profondità»,³⁴ e non è in grado di derivare, dall'immediata equivalenza di essere e pensiero, una specifica identità al proprio contenuto: «poiché in quel pensare "io penso" io sono un singolo, sta davanti agli occhi il pensiero come un che di soggettivo; perciò non si fa vedere già l'essere nel concetto del pensiero stesso, ma si avvanza solo in generale verso la separazione».³⁵

L'interpretazione hegeliana trova conferma nella lettura proposta da Schelling, a riprova di un *idem sentire* che caratterizzava l'approccio idealista alla speculazione di Descartes. Schelling conserva tanto la centralità dello slancio cartesiano nella storia della filosofia, tanto la necessità di procedere oltre la verità intuita, ma non pienamente sviluppata, dal filosofo francese. Anche per Schelling, infatti, la semplice certezza soggettiva guadagnata da Descartes – dunque: la sua incapacità di elevarsi «sino al pieno idealismo» – non deve adombrare la svolta prodottasi alla luce della sua riflessione. Certo, il nesso logico presentato da Descartes è meramente soggettivo e l'"Io penso" privo dell'elemento vivificante costituito dalla mediazione;³⁶ la certezza guadagnata, inoltre, non è in grado di

32. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie III*, Bd. XX, in *Werke*, XX Bde. (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Suhrkamp, 1971), 123; trad. it., *Lezioni sulla storia della filosofia*, a c. di E. Codignola e G. Sanna, vol. III, Tomo II (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1967), 70.

33. Cfr., ad esempio, il passo seguente: «La determinazione dell'essere è nel mio io: questo legame è esso medesimo il Primo. Il pensiero come essere e l'essere come pensiero, ecco la mia certezza, l'io», *Ibid.*, 78 (Bd. XX, 131).

34. *Ibid.*, 90 (Bd. XX, 144).

35. *Ibid.*, 91 (Bd. XX, 145).

36. «Ma noi possiamo risalire ancor più indietro ed anzi revocare in dubbio lo stesso "Io penso" – almeno nel significato che esso ha incontestabilmente in Cartesio. Dell'affermazione: Io penso ci sono infatti due cose distinte a fondamento: 1°) ciò che in me pensa, per es., colui che in questo momento, appunto, dubita, 2°) ciò che riflette su questo pensare o dubitare; soltanto in quanto *quest'ultimo* riconosce quel primo

travalicare una dimensione empirico-immediata e può ben essere «cieca e inconsiderata». ³⁷ Ma queste osservazioni critiche, legittime e necessarie, non devono spingerci a sottovalutare la portata storica della fondazione cartesiana:

Preso però in un senso più alto, nel *Cogito ergo sum*, o nella decisione di ritenere dapprima ogni cosa come dubbia sino a quando non fosse stata collegata in qualche maniera con quell'unica certezza immediata, c'era il più risoluto distacco da ogni autorità; con tale decisione la filosofia conquistava la libertà che essa non poteva più perdere di nuovo da questo momento in poi. ³⁸

Schelling, pertanto, condivide con Hegel tanto la nozione dell'importanza capitale incarnata da Descartes, quanto quella dell'opportunità di procedere oltre, incorporando e sviluppando le felici intuizioni cartesiane.

Partendo da una delle più influenti interpretazioni di Descartes proposte nel XX secolo, siamo giunti così sino alla lettura del pensiero cartesiano sviluppata dai principali autori dell'idealismo tedesco. A questo punto, due osservazioni di carattere generale dovrebbero imporsi alla nostra attenzione. In primo luogo, possiamo rilevare l'uniformità delle chiavi di lettura proposte: che si tratti di Hegel o Nietzsche, Schelling o Heidegger, tutti gli autori presi in esame ritengono che Descartes abbia svolto un ruolo centrale all'interno della storia della filosofia moderna. Che Descartes possa essere a buon diritto considerato un eroe, poco importa; ad essere rilevante è però il fatto che nessuno tra i pensatori analizzati abbia dubitato che il ruolo fondativo assunto da Descartes dipenda dalla rilevanza dell'*ego cogito*. Il filosofo francese è allora il pensatore moderno per eccellenza perché ha posto e imposto sulla scena del pensiero la *cogitatio*, vero e proprio principio cardine della riflessione moderna. In secondo luogo, è interessante notare come anche chi si propone, come Nietzsche e Heidegger, di liberarsi criticamente dal peso metafisico ereditato dalla tradizione moderna e cartesiana, assuma la stessa immagine di Descartes

come identico con sé dico: Io penso. L'io penso non è dunque, nella sua verità, qualcosa d'immediato; esso sorge soltanto mediante la riflessione che si rivolge in me al mio atto di pensare, il quale atto di pensare del resto ha luogo anche indipendentemente da colui che riflette su di esso», Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *Zur Geschichte der Neueren Philosophie*, Bd. X, in *Schellings Sämmtliche Werke*, XIV Bde., hrsg. von K. F. A. Schelling (Stuttgart und Augsburg: Cotta, 1856-1861), 11; trad. it., *Lezioni monachesi sulla storia della filosofia moderna*, a c. di G. Durante, intr. di G. Semerari (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1996), 13.

37. Ibid., 13.

38. Ibid., 10 (Bd. X, 8).

“costruita”, per ragioni strategiche e retoriche, da Hegel e Schelling, vale a dire da coloro che hanno contribuito ad ampliare e rafforzare proprio quel canone.

Si tratta, a nostro parere, di un dato meritevole del massimo interesse. Tuttavia, prima di sviluppare tali considerazioni, possiamo compiere un ulteriore passo indietro, concentrando l'attenzione sull'ultima stazione del nostro viaggio a ritroso nella storia della filosofia, analizzando l'interpretazione di Descartes offerta da Kant nella sua *Critica della ragion pura*.

5. Il Descartes di Kant

Analizzare a livello testuale il ruolo svolto da Descartes nel pensiero kantiano,³⁹ e in modo particolare nella prima *Critica*, non è un compito semplice: nel *corpus* di Kant, infatti, non sono presenti citazioni dirette e letterali tratte dalle opere cartesiane. Ciò pone, naturalmente, dei dubbi sulla reale conoscenza del filosofo tedesco. Certo, se prestiamo fede alla biblioteca ricostruita da Arthur Warda,⁴⁰ è innegabile che Kant possedesse le edizioni latine della *Geometria*, delle *Meditazioni* e dei *Principi della filosofia*. Tuttavia, un esame più attento dei riferimenti a Descartes presenti nell'*opus* kantiano non può non rilevare come essi siano, nella maggior parte dei casi, generici se non errati.

Un caso su tutti è offerto dalla prima edizione della *Critica*, in particolare laddove Kant discute, nel secondo dei quattro celebri paralogismi, la semplicità dell'Io. Criticando il contenuto del paralogismo, il filosofo tedesco chiama direttamente in causa il *cogito* cartesiano: «La *presunta inferenza* cartesiana – *cogito, ergo sum* – è di fatto tautologica, in quanto il *cogito* (*sum cogitans*) esprime immediatamente la realtà».⁴¹ In questa sede, Kant considera il *cogito, ergo sum* cartesiano alla stregua di un sillogismo, contraddicendo la funzione che Descartes aveva attribuito ad esso. O meglio, lo interpreta esattamente come Descartes aveva specificato non dovesse essere interpretato. Tra i vari luoghi testuali, possiamo citare un passaggio tratto dalle *Seconde Risposte*:

39. Per uno sguardo ampio e generale, cfr. Michel Fichant, Jean-Luc Marion, *Descartes en Kant* (Paris: Puf, 2006).

40. Arthur Warda, *Immanuel Kant Bücher* (Berlin: Verlag von Martin Breslauer, 1922).

41. Immanuel Kant, *Critica della ragion pura*, trad. it. a c. di C. Esposito (Milano: Bompiani, 2004), 1255 (A 355; AK 04 224) (il corsivo è nostro).

Quando ci accorgiamo di essere cose pensanti, questa è una nozione prima, che non viene conclusa in base a sillogismo alcuno; e neanche quando qualcuno dice, *io penso, dunque sono, ossia esisto*, egli deduce dal pensiero l'esistenza attraverso un sillogismo, ma la viene a conoscere per semplice intuito della mente come una cosa per sé nota, come risulta dal fatto che, se l'avesse dedotto attraverso un sillogismo, avrebbe prima dovuto conoscere questa premessa maggiore, *tutto ciò che pensa è, ossia esiste*; senz'altro, invece, la apprende piuttosto a partire dal fatto che esperisce in sé che non è possibile che pensi se non esiste.⁴²

Esaminando il passo di Kant alla luce di quello cartesiano, è difficile non accorgersi di quanto Kant contraddica *in toto* lo spirito del *cogito, ergo sum* cartesiano. È naturale quindi applicare, nello specifico, a Descartes la considerazione che Jean-Marie Beyssade ha formulato, in generale, per tutti i pensatori oggetto dell'attenzione critica di Kant: tali autori, lungi dall'essere analizzati nel loro contesto teorico e storico, si rivelerebbero figure funzionali all'andamento speculativo del discorso kantiano.⁴³ Ora, che la posizione cartesiana sulla natura non sillogistica della sua celebre proposizione fosse chiara ed inequivocabile, lo dimostrano le osservazioni di Hegel e Schelling, e più tardi dello stesso Heidegger, tutti perfettamente consapevoli dell'impossibilità di considerare l'atto costitutivo della *cogitatio* in termini sillogistici.⁴⁴ È più che naturale dunque chiedersi quanto

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42. René. Descartes, *Opere: 1637-1649*, a c. di G. Belgioioso, con la coll. di I. Agostini, F. Marrone e M. Savini (Milano: Bompiani, 2009), 867 (AT, VII, 140) (il corsivo è nel testo).
43. Jean-Marie Beyssade, "La critique kantienne du «cogito» de Descartes (sur le paragraphe 25 de la Déduction transcendantale)", in *Kant et la pensée moderne: alternatives critiques*, éd. C. Ramond (Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 1996), 49. Su questo specifico aspetto, cfr. inoltre Jean-Marie Beyssade, "Descartes' 'I am a Thing That Thinks' versus Kant's 'I Think'", in *Kant and the Early Moderns*, eds. D. Garber, B. Longuenesse (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 32-40.
44. Analizzando il *cogito* cartesiano, Hegel si accorse dell'errore di lettura compiuto da Kant: la proposizione *cogito, ergo sum* «viene da un lato considerata come un sillogismo: dal pensiero si dedurrebbe l'essere. Specialmente Kant sollevò contro tale collegamento l'obiezione che nel pensare non è contenuto l'essere, il quale sarebbe altro dal pensare [...] Per un sillogismo occorrono tre membri; qui ne occorrerebbe dunque un terzo, dal quale fossero mediati pensare ed essere: e non c'è. Il "dunque", che unisce i due termini, non è il "dunque" d'un sillogismo: la connessione fra essere e pensare è posta immediatamente», Hegel, *Lezioni sulla storia della filosofia*, 78-79 (Bd. XX, 131-132). Sulla stessa linea interpretativa possiamo trovare anche Schelling: «Cartesio voleva quindi trovare un punto in cui pensiero o rappresentazione (giacché egli non fa distinzione fra le due cose) ed essere immediatamente coincidono in una sola cosa – e questo punto egli credette di averlo trovato col suo *Cogito ergo sum* [...] Nel *Cogito ergo sum* Cartesio credette di aver conosciuto pensiero ed essere come

fosse profonda la conoscenza della riflessione cartesiana posseduta da Kant, in particolare se consideriamo una nota aggiunta alla psicologia razionale nella seconda edizione della *Critica*, che conferma l'imprecisione della lettura kantiana:

L'io penso è una proposizione empirica e contiene in sé la proposizione: io esisto. Non posso dire, però: tutto ciò che pensa esiste, poiché in tal modo la proprietà del pensiero farebbe sì che tutti gli enti che la possiedono divenissero enti necessari. Pertanto la mia esistenza non può essere considerata come inferita dalla proposizione: io penso, come riteneva Cartesio (altrimenti dovrebbe esser fatta precedere la premessa maggiore: tutto ciò che pensa esiste), piuttosto la mia esistenza è identica a tale proposizione.⁴⁵

L'esempio discusso è forse il più adamantino ed inequivocabile, ma possiamo ritrovare altri passaggi della prima *Critica* che confermano il quadro d'insieme, soprattutto per ciò che concerne il ruolo strategico assunto da Descartes all'interno dell'andamento speculativo kantiano. Ad esempio, nel quarto paralogismo dedicato allo scetticismo che avvolge l'esistenza del mondo esterno, Kant si riferisce direttamente al filosofo francese. Descartes è chiamato qui ad interpretare il ruolo dell'idealista empirico, ossia di colui che dubita della realtà della materia oggetto della rappresentazione. La posizione incarnata, in senso lato, da Descartes, è considerata in termini positivi, perché predispone il pensiero a riflettere criticamente sull'immediatezza del dato sensibile: chi procede in questo modo può essere perciò legittimamente considerato «un benefattore della ragione umana, nella misura in cui ci costringe a tenere gli occhi ben aperti persino di fronte al più piccolo passo dell'esperienza comune».⁴⁶

immediatamente identici. Giacché egli nega nel modo più reciso in dilucidazioni posteriori che la proposizione: *Cogito ergo sum* sia da lui intesa come un sillogismo», Schelling, *Lezioni monachesi sulla storia della filosofia moderna*, 11 (Bd. X, 9). Lo stesso dicasi per Heidegger: «Solo ora vediamo perché l'*ergo* non può essere inteso come il connettore di due parti di un sillogismo. La presunta premessa maggiore – *is qui cogitat, est* – non può mai essere il fondamento del *cogito-sum*, perché quella premessa maggiore è desunta dal *cogito-sum* [...] Non è l'io sono che viene inferito dall'io rappresento, ma l'io rappresento, secondo la sua *essenza*, è ciò che l'io sono – ossia colui che rap-presenta – mi ha già fornito [...] La tesi è una *conclusio*, ma non nel senso della conclusione di un sillogismo composto da premessa maggiore, premessa minore e conclusione. E' *conclusio* in quanto implicazione immediata di ciò che, per *essenza*, è coappartenente ed è posto al sicuro nella sua coappartenenza», Heidegger, *Il nichilismo europeo*, 667 (Bd. VI.2, 142).

45. Kant, *Critica della ragion pura*, 615-617 (B 422; AK 03 275-276).

46. *Ibid.*, 1283 (A 377-378; AK 04 237). Kant confermerà il suo giudizio positivo anche nella

Nel caso in esame Kant assume la *vulgata* che vedeva nel dubbio metodico cartesiano la messa in questione della realtà del mondo esperibile; tuttavia, non diversamente da Kant, Descartes considerava questo passo come un presupposto metodologico funzionale alla fondazione dell'ordine epistemico. È forse possibile, pertanto, come ha suggerito Jean Ferrari, che Kant abbia identificato in Descartes l'approccio di alcuni "cartesiani" – uno su tutti, Malebranche – che mettevano realmente in dubbio non tanto la possibilità di fondare una conoscenza del mondo sensibile, ma la possibilità di dimostrarne la reale esistenza.⁴⁷

La nostra analisi della presenza cartesiana nell'opera di Kant potrebbe continuare, ma i due esempi chiamati in causa, uniti all'assenza di citazioni circostanziate dei testi di Descartes, dovrebbero fornirci indizi sufficienti per riconoscere quanto la conoscenza del filosofo tedesco fosse non solo limitata – soprattutto se confrontata con la precisione dei riferimenti che troviamo in Hegel e Schelling –, ma frutto di una lettura poco interessata a cogliere i dettagli e le reali implicazioni della speculazione cartesiana. È più probabile allora che il Descartes kantiano rappresenti uno strumento euristico e retorico iscritto nelle pieghe dell'andamento argomentativo dello stesso Kant. In effetti, il Descartes della *Critica della ragion pura* sembra assumere i tratti del personaggio concettuale tratteggiato da Gilles Deleuze e Félix Guattari,⁴⁸ chiamato ad indossare i panni del perfetto oppositore dell'idealismo trascendentale kantiano. In tal senso, il Descartes di Kant svolge una funzione strategica simile a quella assunta – certo in un contesto differente e alla luce di premesse in parte inconciliabili – negli altri autori sin qui analizzati. Inoltre, anche il Descartes descritto da Kant viene considerato attraverso il filtro dell'*ego cogito* e della soggettività, e poco importa se in termini critici o positivi. Ad essere importante, invece, è un fatto, a suo modo, storico: come ha suggerito Yvon Belaval, Kant ha avuto il merito di collocare Descartes al centro del dibattito tedesco, risvegliando l'interesse per il filosofo francese in un contesto teorico ancora dominato in gran parte dalla *lectio* leibniziana.⁴⁹ Kant può dunque a buon

Confutazione dell'idealismo inserita nella seconda edizione della *Critica*: l'approccio cartesiano è ancora considerato «ragionevole e conforme a un modo di pensare filosoficamente fondato: e cioè di non ammettere alcun giudizio decisivo prima che venga trovata una dimostrazione sufficiente», *Ibid.*, 427 (B 275; AK 03 191).

47. Cfr. Jean Ferrari, *Les sources françaises de la philosophie de Kant* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1979), 61.

48. Cfr. Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1991).

49. Cfr. Yvon Belaval, *Leibniz critique de Descartes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), 537.

diritto essere considerato il tramite filosofico dell'interesse nutrito per la filosofia cartesiana dall'idealismo tedesco. Infine, è interessante rilevare come sia stato lo stesso Schelling a dare sostanza filosofica a tale proposta storiografica, affermando che Descartes «trovò in Germania il primo fondamento del suo sistema di pensiero». ⁵⁰

6. Il personaggio Descartes

Sulla stessa scia di Kant, anche Hegel, Schelling, Nietzsche e Heidegger hanno fatto di Descartes una maschera necessaria a dare origine e forma alla loro storia della metafisica o anti-metafisica. In tutti questi casi, Descartes si è rivelato una figura dinamica funzionale a far risaltare, con la maggior forza possibile, le esigenze delle loro riflessioni. Ecco allora che a cambiare è, al massimo, la profondità dello sguardo ermeneutico, non la funzione svolta dal filosofo nelle rispettive speculazioni. Che si tratti del campione di una modernità in grado di camminare sulle proprie gambe, o di una tappa decisiva nel processo che conduce all'oblio di una verità più originaria, Descartes assume *sempre* un ruolo decisivo, e *sempre* alla luce della centralità assegnata al *cogito*. Il nostro percorso a ritroso nella storia della filosofia può fermarsi quindi a Kant, e da lì risalire nuovamente alla nostra contemporaneità, perché è forse proprio attraverso Kant che Descartes ha cominciato ad indossare una delle sue molteplici maschere metafisiche e ad incarnare un ruolo dinamico, dando linfa e sostanza alla riflessione degli autori che se ne serviranno.

Possiamo a questo punto riprendere le brevi osservazioni avanzate in precedenza. Abbiamo visto come a differenti livelli Kant, Hegel e Schelling abbiano interpretato Descartes in termini positivi, come sprone indispensabile alla messa in questione dell'immediatezza del dato sensibile o come l'autore che, liberandosi di ogni pregressa autorità, abbia permesso alla filosofia moderna di procedere in piena autonomia. Lo sfondo di tali letture era sempre caratterizzato dal filtro offerto dall'elemento soggettivo, con particolare riguardo per la funzione assunta nel pensiero cartesiano dall'*ego cogito*. Nietzsche e Heidegger hanno invertito il giudizio di valore dei precedenti autori, confermandone tuttavia lo sfondo interpre-

50. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *Philosophische Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie oder Darstellung der reinrationalen Philosophie*, Bd. XI, in *Schellings Sämtliche Werke*, 264; trad. it., *Introduzione filosofica alla filosofia della mitologia*, a c. di L. Lotito (Milano: Bompiani, 2002), 21.

tativo. Nietzsche, infatti, condivide e recupera l'immagine di Descartes ereditata dalla tradizione, interpretando il ruolo del filosofo francese all'interno della filosofia moderna sulla scorta del primato attribuito al soggetto. Nietzsche finisce così per attribuire criticamente a Descartes la posizione filosofica che Hegel e Schelling giudicavano uno dei maggiori contributi del filosofo alla storia della filosofia. La differenza concerne "solamente" il valore da attribuire all'impresa cartesiana: se per Hegel il *cogito* di Descartes riconduce positivamente, e per la prima volta, l'essere al pensiero, per Nietzsche, al contrario, allontana l'uomo dalla comprensione della propria natura.

Un discorso analogo può essere fatto per lo stesso Heidegger, al netto delle ovvie differenze rilevate in precedenza. È doveroso quindi riconoscere l'effettiva prossimità dei due gruppi di interpreti che abbiamo discusso nel presente articolo. Benché il giudizio diverga, i vari autori sono tutti concordi nel riconoscere a Descartes un ruolo decisivo, e per le identiche motivazioni, vale a dire per la funzione architettonica svolta dalla *cogitatio*. Anche Heidegger, pertanto, assume *in toto* i tratti salienti delle precedenti interpretazioni, e poco importa che lo faccia nel tentativo di affrancarsi dalla storia di una metafisica che ha fatto dell'oblio dell'essere e della centralità dell'*ego cogito* i suoi tratti distintivi. Ad essere degno di nota, infatti, è che il filosofo tedesco, lungo il sentiero già battuto da Nietzsche, non abbia messo in questione le premesse del costruito ermeneutico che ha sorretto quella modernità filosofica da cui riteneva necessario affrancarsi. Insomma, Nietzsche e Heidegger procedono alla decostruzione della ragione moderna assumendo come punto di partenza la lettura di Descartes canonizzata proprio dagli autori che hanno radicalizzato positivamente il gesto cartesiano – quello stesso gesto che ha inaugurato un'epoca destinata per loro a tramontare. Per quanto possa apparire paradossale, entrambi si propongono di erodere alla radice il canone moderno, ma nel far ciò assumono acriticamente la stessa interpretazione che l'ha sorretto, permettendole così di prosperare e di continuare ad imporsi sulla scena.

In conclusione, possiamo limitarci ad avanzare due questioni, senza la pretesa di rispondere in questa sede. Innanzitutto, vista la plurivocità delle interpretazioni cartesiane elencate in sede introduttiva, perché si è imposta *questa* specifica lettura? Era la lettera del testo cartesiano ad imporla, o sono state le esigenze degli autori che se ne sono serviti ad imprimerle la forza necessaria per emergere? Inoltre, vista la sostanziale uniformità delle letture cartesiane che si sono succedute a partire da Kant, è realmente possibile mettere in crisi i presupposti della modernità filo-

sofica, sulla scia di Nietzsche e Heidegger, senza porre in questione, *uno actu*, il canone con cui è stata interpretata? È legittimo allora chiedersi se per eroderne il fondamento non sia invece necessario tornare ai testi cartesiani, fornendo un'altra lettura e, con essa, un'altra storia, sottraendo così alla modernità le premesse della propria auto-interpretazione.

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Paul Ricœur: traços do religioso numa filosofia sem absoluto

Paul Ricœur: Traces of the Religious in a Philosophy without Absolute

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Abstract

This paper assesses the ways in which Transcendence and the question of God appear in the philosophy of Paul Ricœur. Taking stock of the debate on the theological turn of French phenomenology, the paper aims to show the unique position held by Ricœur among French phenomenology and hermeneutics, in that in spite of his Christian faith, Ricœur strove to put forward a philosophy of limits 'without absolute' while, at the same time, developing inquiries in phenomenology and hermeneutics of religion. The paper follows the development of Ricœur's thought on this matter, from his early phenomenological works, through the hermeneutical turn and until the essay of fundamental anthropology of *Oneself as Another*, unpacking the Kantian and Hegelian influences, the approach on religion 'within the limits of reason alone' and also the way in which the Kantian undertones of hermeneutics as philosophy of finitude at the same time open the space to hope and imagination. Ricœur's philosophy therefore appears as a rigorous descriptive and interpretive effort that strives not to mix the genres of discourse, while, at the same time, we can still find some ethical and supra-ethical traits in his practical philosophy that do stem from his Christian faith – but whose status is inspirational and therefore does not dent the overall theoretical framework of his philosophy of limits.

Keywords: french phenomenology, hermeneutics, religious belief, Ricœur.

1. Introdução

Pode um crente fazer abstração – no sentido de colocar em *epoché* – da sua crença religiosa, e suspender o juízo sobre o fundamento último da existência dessa mesma crença (Deus) quando o que estiver em causa for o exercício dessa atividade tão próxima da busca pelos fundamentos (ou da constatação da putativa ausência dos mesmos, ou da impossibilidade de os conhecer), o questionamento filosófico? Ou será que, pelo contrário, toda a filosofia que inquiria sobre a doação de

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sentido de tudo aquilo que aparece estaria de tal modo ‘contaminada’, no caso do crente, pela crença religiosa que a sua subjetividade emprestaria à sua investigação, que a condição a que estaria condenado seria necessariamente a de acabar por provar pelos meios da investigação filosófica a sua crença inicial, quer o fizesse conscientemente ou não? Por outras palavras: estaria este círculo hermenêutico inerentemente viciado, padecendo daquilo a que, em termos contemporâneos, se costuma designar o ‘viés de confirmação’? E, no caso da adesão à fé cristã, seria então toda a filosofia avançada por filósofos que também são cristãos, de algum modo uma ‘filosofia cristã’, no sentido da inserção no círculo hermenêutico entre a fé e a razão, o que, *eo ipso*, faria com que as suas conclusões ou descobertas carecessem de sentido caso lhes fosse retirado o alegado pressuposto ontológico fornecido pela fé?

Estes problemas são antiquíssimos e marcaram, em certa medida, uma parte da história da filosofia ocidental, tal como a conhecemos. E foi por isso sem surpresa que os vimos ressurgir, em contexto renovado, na década de 1990 em França, a propósito de uma alegada ‘viragem teológica’ da fenomenologia francesa, surgida no modo de acusação na pena de Dominique Janicaud¹. Segundo Janicaud, autores como Levinas, Michel Henry, Jean-Louis Chrétien ou Jean-Luc Marion teriam traído a intenção inicial e fundadora da fenomenologia husserliana, a de se ater às ‘coisas mesmas’ num registo que é o da fenomenalidade imanente, reintroduzindo por isso no campo fenomenológico um ‘para lá’ que a abria a uma Transcendência da qual não há propriamente intuição. Assim, argumenta Janicaud, estes autores transcenderiam os limites fenomenais da experiência e, com isso, abandonariam o projeto da fenomenologia husserliana enquanto ‘ciência rigorosa’ o que, na prática, quererá apenas dizer que, do ponto de vista metodológico, as suas filosofias já não seriam propriamente uma fenomenologia mas uma espécie de mistura fenomenológico-teológica.

Um papel mais curioso e, até certo ponto, exemplar, é reservado a Ricœur neste diagnóstico. Ricœur que, nunca tendo renegado a sua fé cristã de obediência protestante, fazia no entanto questão de não querer ser considerado um ‘filósofo cristão’, esforçando-se por isso, pelo menos na sua filosofia da maturidade, por distinguir os dois níveis de discurso, o da pertença cristã motivada pela sua fé (e muitas vezes alimentada

1. Dominique Janicaud, *Le tournant théologique de la phénoménologie française* (Paris: Éditions de l'Éclat, 1991).

por uma reflexão de hermenêutica bíblica) e o da investigação filosófica propriamente dita. O mesmo Ricœur que, no entanto, tantas vezes foi atacado, e a sua filosofia menosprezada, por suspeitas de um alegado cripto-cristianismo.

O objetivo deste artigo é o de analisar a forma como a Transcendência aparece (ou não) na filosofia ricœuriana, sobretudo (mas não só) nas suas incursões na fenomenologia e na hermenêutica. Ao levar a cabo esta análise, fica evidente a resposta à primeira pergunta que poderia ser enunciada: terão razão as acusações de cripto-cristianismo levantadas contra Ricœur? E a esta questão a resposta será um rotundo não, em virtude de duas razões: primeiro, a já aludida distinção entre os níveis de discurso e o rigor metodológico invocado por Janicaud (como se verá, o diagnóstico da filosofia ricœuriana feito por Janicaud acaba por não estar, em minha opinião, longe da verdade); segundo, e de forma mais substancial, a adesão da hermenêutica ricœuriana à tese da finitude e aos limites estabelecidos pelas antinomias kantianas, contra a posição (filosófica) de qualquer absoluto.

Com isto, entenda-se, não estarei a fazer qualquer comentário sobre a justeza (ou falta dela) do diagnóstico de Janicaud relativo a Levinas, Marion, ou qualquer um dos outros autores sobre os quais se pronuncia nesta querela que, apesar das aparências, é mais do que ‘franco-francesa’, na medida em que não incide apenas na filosofia francesa ou sequer nas relações específicas entre o método fenomenológico e a teologia cristã; bem para lá disso, retoma a questão da relação entre a crença na existência de Deus e as consequências disso mesmo num discurso de tipo racional. Não estarei, por conseguinte, a negar o interesse ou a fertilidade de pensamentos que, como o de Emmanuel Falque, se propõem “atravessar o Rubicão”². Mas estarei a reiterar a tese de Janicaud segundo a qual Ricœur, pelo menos na filosofia da maturidade, acabava por não o fazer. Esta interpretação relativamente sincrónica do pensamento ricœuriano não pode, contudo, ignorar o desenvolvimento do mesmo. Isto é, a conclusão sincrónica é baseada numa análise diacrónica das diferentes formas como esta questão foi aparecendo na filosofia ricœuriana ao longo do seu desenvolvimento.

Sendo assim, distinguirei, para efeitos de análise, a filosofia do jovem Ricœur (aquela que tem lugar, grosso modo, antes da viragem hermenêutica da década de 1960) da forma como esta questão é pensada

2. Emmanuel Falque, *Passer le Rubicon. Philosophie et théologie: Essai sur les frontières* (Bruxelles: Lessius, 2013).

depois da consolidação da hermenêutica ricœuriana como uma filosofia da finitude, a qual coincide, em minha opinião, com a circunscrição do ‘conflito de interpretações’ no âmbito de uma ‘filosofia dos limites’ de âmbito kantiano.

Porém, a afirmação desta tese não significa a impossibilidade de detetar, por assim dizer, traços do religioso (da fé na Transcendência, e da forma como essa crença é vivida pessoalmente ou na religião organizada e apela a uma hermenêutica crítica) na filosofia de Ricœur; e precisamente por eles existirem é que todas estas questões podem ser levantadas; será tarefa do artigo detetar estes traços ou ressonâncias, dentro dos limites traçados pela filosofia ricœuriana.

Assim, num primeiro momento (secção 2), o artigo parte da filosofia do primeiro Ricœur, na qual, na verdade, a referência à Transcendência era ainda mais explícita, através da influência de Gabriel Marcel. Na secção seguinte (3), que é a secção central e mais extensa do artigo, é mostrado o impacto da viragem hermenêutica nesta filosofia e a posição de uma filosofia da finitude ‘sem absoluto’ no debate entre Kant e Hegel. Ver-se-á, aí, o que significa a ‘filosofia dos limites’ e a adesão à tese hermenêutica relativa à finitude da compreensão humana. Já na secção 4, que precede a brevíssima conclusão, explica-se a relação entre o momento propriamente dito da fenomenologia da religião enquanto ponto de partida de uma hermenêutica como recolção do sentido, e a chamada ‘hermenêutica da suspeita’, vendo-se de que forma a filosofia dos limites e a rejeição da apreensão filosófica do absoluto não impedem estas investigações sobre a fenomenologia e a hermenêutica da religião. Finalmente, na última secção são mostradas algumas das consequências destes ‘traços do religioso’ na antropologia filosófica e na filosofia prática de Ricœur, distinguindo bem dois planos: se, por um lado, a posição filosófica do Ricœur da maturidade (sobretudo o de 1990, de *Soi-même comme un autre*³) denota aquilo a que ele próprio chamava um “agnosticismo filosófico”, por outro lado, a filiação cristã de Ricœur permite-nos detetar um conjunto de traços de origem religiosa com relevância sobretudo na sua filosofia prática, e invocar-se-ão três: os limites da autonomia do sujeito, a lógica da dádiva fundada na superabundância da graça, e o perdão. A isto se chamarão os traços do religioso numa filosofia sem absoluto.

3. Paul Ricœur, *Soi-même comme un autre* (Paris: Seuil, 1990).

2. A ligação à Transcendência na filosofia do jovem Ricœur

A abordagem diacrónica do pensamento de Ricœur, no que diz respeito à relação com a Transcendência, não pode deixar de mencionar alguns aspetos do seu percurso biográfico. É certo que este método é em si mesmo indiciador de alguma mistura de géneros nesta análise, correndo até o risco de incorrer em algum psicologismo; mas tal é impossível de evitar quando aquilo que está em causa é, precisamente, a relação entre o plano da fé e aquilo que se poderia chamar, tomando de empréstimo um conceito proveniente de outro contexto, o ‘plano de imanência’ do pensamento ricœuriano; ainda para mais quando se está perante, como será mencionado na segunda secção deste artigo, a acusação de alegada má fé por parte de Ricœur. Recorramos, então, a alguns elementos biográficos.

É possível afirmar que na sua juventude Ricœur foi influenciado quase em igual medida por Husserl, Karl Jaspers e Gabriel Marcel. É evidente que, de todos, Husserl foi aquele que do ponto de vista filosófico mais marcou Ricœur e a imersão no método fenomenológico foi para ele uma aprendizagem de rigor, quase uma ascese filosófica que, verdadeiramente, nunca o abandonou; mas, ao mesmo tempo, já se fazia sentir uma atitude filosófica a denotar, por um lado, um estilo conflitual (certamente inspirado por Jaspers e pela figura conceptual da *Liebender Kampf*) que mais tarde, na viragem hermenêutica, resultaria na conceptualização do ‘conflito de interpretações’ e, por outro, uma vontade de arbitrar entre essas diferentes perspetivas ou conciliá-las parcialmente, num movimento que é, em meu entender, um processo de alargamento de perspetiva sobre os fenómenos. Ora, isto é evidente na forma como, na primeira fase da sua filosofia propriamente dita (e não abordando aqui os escritos mais precoces, datados da década de 1930, e que mostram um cristianismo com grandes preocupações sociais e até um interesse significativo em Marx), aquela que se desenvolve no pós-guerra e tem em 1950 um ano marcante, não só com a publicação da tradução comentada das *Ideen*⁴ de Husserl, mas também com a publicação de *Le volontaire et l'involontaire*⁵, as análises eidéticas, rigorosas, do campo prático da ação humana e das estruturas da vontade e do involuntário, são contrabalançadas pelo projeto de inscrever a filosofia da vontade no horizonte de uma ‘poética da vontade’ mais próxima

4. Edmund Husserl, *Idées directrices pour une phénoménologie*, traduction avec introduction et notes de Paul Ricœur (Paris: Gallimard, 1950).

5. Paul Ricœur, *Philosophie de la volonté I. Le volontaire et l'involontaire* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1950).

do contacto com a Transcendência. E isso é sobretudo devido à influência em Ricœur do pensamento de Gabriel Marcel, com quem também existia proximidade pessoal⁶. Por essa via, temas como os da encarnação, ou do mistério (que Ricœur opõe à figura jaspersiana do paradoxo⁷) entram no campo de preocupações da filosofia ricœuriana.

É assim que surge a temática da Transcendência nesta primeira fase da sua obra. Com efeito, Ricœur afirma que apesar de as relações entre o voluntário e o involuntário se revelarem sob o signo do conflito, a intenção do livro é “compreender o mistério como reconciliação”⁸ e que o objetivo último seria “o apaziguamento de uma ontologia paradoxal numa ontologia reconciliada”⁹. E de onde viria essa ontologia reconciliada? De uma reflexão sobre o que seria uma liberdade concebida perante a Transcendência, já que “a Transcendência é aquilo que liberta a liberdade da culpa [*faute*]”¹⁰. Por conseguinte, *Le volontaire et l'involontaire* coloca deliberadamente a questão da Transcendência entre parênteses para se dedicar ao método fenomenológico, descritivo, das estruturas da vontade e do involuntário mas nessa altura é anunciado o horizonte no qual o projeto de toda a filosofia da vontade se inscreveria: o de remover esse parênteses no qual quer a culpa, quer a Transcendência eram colocadas, para efeitos das análises fenomenológicas descritivas.

Ora, se é verdade que a *faute* (entendida simultaneamente enquanto falta que se comete e consciência interiorizada da mesma sob a forma da culpa) foi de facto retirada do parênteses aquando do segundo tomo da *Filosofia da Vontade*¹¹ e da viragem hermenêutica que ele inaugura, também o é que a Transcendência não o foi. A intenção estava lá, mas aquilo que foi projetado como sendo o potencial terceiro volume da *Filosofia da Vontade*, e que seria dedicado à poética da vontade, não chegou nunca a ser escrito, apesar de Ricœur mais tarde ter dedicado outras obras quer à

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6. Veja-se, a este respeito, a biografia de Ricœur escrita por François Dosse, *Paul Ricœur, les sens d'une vie (1913-2005)* (Paris: La découverte, 2007), sobretudo o capítulo 2 “Le cercle de Gabriel Marcel et la filiation réflexive”, 28-37.
 7. Ricœur, *Gabriel Marcel et Karl Jaspers. Philosophie du mystère et philosophie du paradoxe* (Paris: Temps Présent, 1947).
 8. Ricœur, *Le volontaire et l'involontaire*, *op. cit.*, 21.
 9. *Ibid.*, 22.
 10. *Ibid.*, 31.
 11. Relembre-se que a *Filosofia da Vontade* teve dois tomos: o primeiro, *Le volontaire et l'involontaire*, e o segundo, *Finitude et culpabilité*, o qual se subdivide em duas obras, publicadas simultaneamente num só volume em 1960, *O Homem Falível e A Simbólica do Mal*.

imaginação quer ao fenómeno poético. E isto por motivos muito específicos: os da subscrição da tese hermenêutica da filosofia da finitude, “sem absoluto” – o que, na verdade, tirando a Transcendência do domínio do conhecimento, a abre, no fundo, ao domínio da imaginação. Vejamos com maior detalhe este movimento na próxima secção.

3. A viragem hermenêutica: uma filosofia da finitude sem absoluto

Na interpretação sincrónica do pensamento de Ricœur que aqui se propõe, assumem importância decisiva as teses adotadas a partir do início da sua ‘viragem hermenêutica’. Em bom rigor, a ‘fase hermenêutica’ do pensamento ricœuriano também não é monolítica, contendo diferenças significativas consoante a ênfase está na micro-hermenêutica do duplo sentido dos símbolos¹² (fase da década de 1960) ou na macro-hermenêutica dos textos¹³ (fase das décadas de 1970-1980) mas, apesar dessas diferenças, algumas teses mantêm-se constantes e, em meu entender, inalteradas durante todo o percurso subsequente do pensamento ricœuriano.

Uma dessas teses advém da adesão de Ricœur ao diagnóstico hermenêutico relativo à finitude da compreensão e da interpretação humanas e que, no fundo, o coloca, pelo menos a este respeito, do lado de Kant, contra Hegel, e rejeitar a ideia de ‘Conhecimento Absoluto’, tal como ela aparece na *Fenomenologia do Espírito*, ou na *Enciclopédia* de Hegel. Detenhamo-nos um pouco mais em cada um dos aspetos inerentes a este posicionamento teórico.

Em primeiro lugar, a tese hermenêutica de inspiração kantiana. Num texto relativamente pouco conhecido, e datado de 1971, Ricœur afirma:

Diria, hoje, que todas as hermenêuticas são kantianas na medida em que a impotência do autoconhecimento é a contraparte negativa da necessidade de decifrar signos em mim ou fora de mim. É o carácter limitado do autoconhecimento que impõe a estratégia direta de interpretação¹⁴.

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12. Sobretudo em *A Simbólica do Mal* e *Le Conflit des interprétations. Essais d'herméneutique* (Paris: Seuil, 1969).
 13. Sobretudo em Ricœur, *Du texte à l'action. Essais d'herméneutique II* (Paris: Seuil, 1986).
 14. Esta passagem provém do prefácio de Ricœur a uma obra de Don Ihde, um dos seus primeiros intérpretes americanos. Veja-se Ricœur, “Foreword” in Don Ihde, *Hermeneutic Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press 1971), xvi.

Nesta passagem estão na verdade imbricadas duas teses: a primeira, que Ricœur repete várias vezes ao longo da sua fase hermenêutica, é a de que a sua ‘hermenêutica do si-mesmo’, ou seja, a interpretação que os agentes podem fazer das suas próprias existências (incluindo a sua consciência e o que está para lá dela mas a afeta) é indireta, porque implica a ‘via longa’ do ‘grande desvio’ pela cultura e teorias da interpretação necessárias para que se decifrem a si mesmos – e nisto Ricœur contrapõe o seu próprio posicionamento ao da alegada ‘via curta’ de Heidegger, na qual os existenciais seriam derivados da analítica existencial-temporal do *Dasein*. Já a segunda tese é a que faz derivar a finitude da autocompreensão de uma finitude da compreensão humana *tout court*. Isto é: a nossa compreensão de nós mesmos é finita e tem de passar pela mediação da arte da interpretação com a ajuda das diferentes teorias e símbolos produzidos culturalmente porque a nossa compreensão é necessariamente a de seres finitos o que, *eo ipso*, coloca todo o esforço rigoroso de pensamento digno desse nome nos limites das antinomias kantianas, tal como foram estabelecidas na *Crítica da Razão Pura*. É isto apesar de, naquilo que à primeira vista pode parecer um paradoxo, existir um tipo de ‘dialética’ específica (vagamente inspirada por Hegel) na própria noção de conflito de interpretações, porquanto as teses em oposição tendem a produzir uma posição nova, um alargamento de perspetiva, mas em sentido meramente hermenêutico (e não metafísico); o que leva Ricœur, no final da década de 1960, a caracterizar a sua filosofia, na senda de Eric Weil, como a de um ‘neokantiano pós-hegeliano’ e, mais tarde, nos anos 1980, a declarar inclusivamente o ‘luto de Hegel’, em virtude do desenvolvimento de uma filosofia ‘sem absoluto’. Não será porventura desprovido de interesse analisar com maior detalhe algumas destas passagens.

Na verdade, é possível argumentar que a adesão à ideia de deixar o ‘absoluto’ fora da esfera da filosofia vinha a maturar na filosofia de Ricœur já desde a década de 1950, e que ela se relaciona de alguma forma com o seu protestantismo. Com efeito, Ricœur publica, em 1956, um texto à laia de homenagem póstuma ao seu amigo Pierre Thévenaz e intitulado “Un philosophe protestant: Pierre Thévenaz”. E veja-se como caracteriza Ricœur a abordagem de Thévenaz:

a Cruz de Cristo, puro evento, tocou essa inteligência anunciando-lhe a morte do deus filosófico, o fim da teologia filosófica, e ao libertá-la para uma filosofia sem absoluto¹⁵.

15. Ricœur, “Un philosophe protestant: Pierre Thévenaz” in *Lectures 3. Aux frontières de*

Parece-me que este posicionamento de Thévenaz, para quem, sublinha Ricœur, não há teologia filosófica mas uma filosofia *perante Deus*¹⁶ acabou por ser marcante para Ricœur e, com isso, foi determinando uma ausência cada vez maior da questão da Transcendência nos seus escritos puramente filosóficos, e reservando a fé para o seu foro pessoal, sem prejuízo das análises fenomenológicas da crença religiosa ou das análises hermenêuticas dos escritos bíblicos – sempre entendidas, quer uma, quer outra, como análises descritivo-interpretativas de uma experiência existente (a da fé, a experiência religiosa) mas que, evidentemente, não caberia à filosofia tentar provar ou demonstrar.

E é com estes aspetos em mente que é possível entender a abordagem kantiana de Ricœur em relação à religião: a de abordar nos limites ‘da simples razão’. De facto, é significativo que seja num texto dedicado à liberdade, entendida em sentido religioso – “La liberté selon l’espérance” –, que Ricœur avance a caracterização da sua filosofia como um kantismo pós-hegeliano. Nesse texto, publicado em *Le conflit des interprétations*, aquilo de que se trata é de uma hermenêutica da liberdade religiosa entendida enquanto “explicitação das significações da liberdade que acompanham a explicitação da palavra fundadora ou, como se diz, da proclamação do kerigma”¹⁷. Neste caso, a “liberdade de acordo com a esperança” é baseada na possibilidade de uma reconciliação tendo em vista a esperança na ressurreição de Cristo; e, aqui, as noções-chave a reter são mesmo as de ‘possibilidade’ e ‘esperança’, na medida em que se opõem ao reino da necessidade ou à certeza apodíctica; e daí que a filosofia da religião de Ricœur abra inevitavelmente para o domínio da imaginação:

Ela [a esperança] está ligada à imaginação, na medida em que esta é a potência [*puissance*] do possível, e a disposição do ser para o radicalmente novo. A liberdade segundo a esperança, expressa em termos psicológicos, mais não é do que essa imaginação criadora do possível.¹⁸

Para Ricœur, seguindo Moltmann, o kerigma da esperança remete para uma ‘a-lógica’, na medida em que, perante a morte e a “abundância do sem-sentido [*non-sens*], responde uma “superabundância do sentido”

la philosophie (Paris: Seuil, 1994), 247.

16. Ibid., 248.

17. Ricœur, “La liberté selon l’espérance”, in *Le conflit des interprétations*, *op. cit.*, 393.

18. Ibid., 399.

(tema que, como veremos na última secção, é um ‘traço do religioso’ na filosofia de Ricœur), i.e., um “excesso de sentido”.

Porém, se o “excesso de sentido” é em si mesmo “a-lógico”, de que maneira pode ele sequer ser pensado, como é que “dá que pensar”, como Ricœur afirmava dos símbolos, na conclusão da *Simbólica do Mal*? Ora, é aqui que se joga o núcleo principal da questão espinhosa: pode abordar-se filosoficamente tal excesso de sentido, aquele que está envolvido na própria possibilidade de Deus ou, neste caso, da sua ressurreição? Ricœur pensa que sim, desde que ele seja pensado nos “limites da simples razão”¹⁹, i.e., confinado numa “filosofia dos limites” e colocado simplesmente enquanto horizonte. E é nesta ocasião que Ricœur anuncia a abordagem do seu kantismo:

O kantismo que eu agora quero desenvolver é, paradoxalmente, mais a fazer do que a repetir; seria qualquer coisa como um kantismo pós-hegeliano, para tomar de empréstimo a Eric Weil uma expressão que, ao que parece, ele aplicava a si mesmo.

(...)

Na minha opinião, é essa troca e essa permuta que ainda estruturam o discurso filosófico de hoje. E é por isso que a tarefa é a de os pensar sempre melhor, ao pensá-los em conjunto, um contra o outro e um através do outro²⁰.

Já foi aqui explicado como a inspiração hegeliana está ligada à dialética assumida pelo próprio conflito de interpretações. Mas, neste caso, a questão fundamental, a saber, a que incide nos limites do que podemos legitimamente aspirar a conhecer, é determinada pela postura kantiana. E como? Aqui entra a razão enquanto horizonte:

Essencialmente pela função de horizonte que a razão assume na constituição do conhecimento e da vontade. Quer isto dizer que me coloco diretamente na parte dialética das duas *Críticas* kantianas: Dialética da razão teórica, Dialética da razão prática. Uma filosofia dos limites que é ao mesmo tempo uma exigência prática de totalização: eis, para mim, a contraparte filosófica do kerigma da esperança, a aproximação filosófica mais cerrada da liberdade segundo a esperança. A dialética, em sentido kantiano, é, para mim, a parte do kantismo que não só sobrevive a uma crítica hegeliana mas que triunfa sobre todo o hegelianismo²¹.

19. Ibid., 402.

20. Ibid., 403.

21. Ibid., 403-404.

Por conseguinte, Ricœur recusa, em Hegel, o sistema e a absolutização do olhar retrospectivo. Recusa, portanto, como se tornará claro no terceiro volume de *Temps et récit*, a ideia da ‘mediação total’ do Espírito, o ‘eterno presente’, a ‘efetividade do presente’. Neste último livro, Ricœur, ao considerar a filosofia hegeliana da história, insiste que é preciso

admitir a finitude do ato filosófico no qual consiste a compreensão de si da consciência histórica. Essa finitude da interpretação significa que todo o pensamento pensante tem as suas pressuposições que não domina (...) A partir daí, saindo do hegelianismo, é preciso ousar dizer que a consideração *pensante* da história tentada por Hegel era ela própria um fenómeno hermenêutico, uma operação interpretante, submetida à mesma condição de finitude.²²

A este respeito, insiste Ricœur, a caracterização do hegelianismo como um ato finito de interpretação (e, logo, falível) que, por conseguinte, acrescenta-se, tem também de se colocar nos limites das antinomias kantianas, faz com que “já não pensemos como Hegel, mas depois de Hegel”²³ e, a propósito disso, chega a invocar um “luto de Hegel”²⁴ que, na verdade, é também um luto da possibilidade do Absoluto em sede estritamente filosófica até porque, como Ricœur afirmou múltiplas vezes, por exemplo no *Cours sur l’herméneutique* ministrado em Lovaina no início da década de 1970, “entre o saber absoluto e a hermenêutica, é preciso escolher”²⁵.

Voltando a “La liberté selon l’espérance”, percebe-se que esta rejeição do absoluto no domínio da filosofia, e esta inscrição nos limites kantianos, atiram a própria transcendência para o domínio da *esperança* – o que supõe uma crítica da ilusão transcendental: “O domínio da esperança é exatamente da mesma extensão que a região da ilusão transcendental. Eu espero aí onde necessariamente me engano, ao formar objetos absolutos: eu, liberdade, Deus”²⁶. Entende-se a posição de Ricœur. Se existe uma diferença entre o entendimento e a razão, entre aquilo que pode ser conhecido e dele se formar legitimamente um objeto, e aquilo que pode meramente ser pensado, então, a questão de Deus será definitivamente remetida para a esperança:

22. Ricœur, *Temps et récit. Tome III. Le temps raconté* (Paris: Seuil, 1985), 372.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ricœur, *Cours sur l’herméneutique* [Curso policopiado] (Louvain: Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, 1971-1972), 228.

26. Ricœur, “La liberté selon l’espérance”, *op. cit.*, 405.

é por haver um pensamento legítimo do incondicionado que a ilusão transcendental é possível; esta não procede da projeção do humano no divino mas, pelo contrário, do preenchimento do pensamento do incondicionado no modo do objeto empírico; é por isso que Kant pode afirmar: não é a experiência que limita a razão, mas a razão que limita a pretensão da sensibilidade a estender o nosso conhecimento empírico, fenomenal, espaço-temporal, à ordem numenal²⁷.

Ricœur afirma que todo este movimento que vai do pensamento do incondicionado, passa pela ilusão transcendental, e culmina na crítica dos objetos absolutos, é essencial para o regime de sentido que é o da esperança. A totalidade, mesmo no domínio da razão prática, é exigida, mas nunca é dada²⁸. A questão última da religião torna-se, então, como para Kant, a pergunta sobre o que me é permitido esperar. Em última instância, torna-se igualmente importante para Ricœur a questão do mal radical, que faz com que os “limites” se apliquem não só ao domínio teórico, como ao prático. Para Ricœur, em suma, um dos males específicos, tanto no domínio teórico como no prático, é a falsa síntese e a falsa criação de objetos absolutos, os quais podem ser ambos fonte de alienações específicas do humano; e a esperança numa restauração mais integral do humano, aquela que, nesta hipótese, aponta para Deus, é deixada no âmbito de um horizonte aberto à imaginação e à interpretação. Esta é igualmente a razão pela qual Ricœur não renega a crítica, inclusivamente a crítica ateia, da religião, como possível libertação de alienações específicas; em “Religion, athéisme, foi”, chega inclusivamente a conceptualizar a possibilidade de uma “fé pós-religiosa”²⁹ da mesma forma como também avança, em *De l'interprétation*³⁰, a hipótese de uma “fé pós-crítica”, em sentido que explicitaremos na próxima secção.

Mas faça-se, então, um ponto de situação. Se, pelas razões que foram já invocadas, se consegue perceber por que razão a filosofia de Ricœur é ‘sem absoluto’ e o que, a partir da viragem hermenêutica, isso significa para a relação dessa filosofia com Deus / a Transcendência, falta explicitar três elementos: 1) o que isso implica para a forma como Ricœur definia a relação da sua filosofia com a religião e, evidentemente, sobretudo com o cristianismo, apesar das suspeitas a esse respeito; 2) o ponto culmi-

27. Ibid., 406.

28. Ibid., 407.

29. Ricœur, “Religion, athéisme, foi” in *Le conflit des interprétations*, op. cit., 431.

30. Ricœur, *De l'interprétation. Un essai sur Freud* (Paris: Seuil, 1965).

nante desta evolução na forma como a relação com a Transcendência foi pensada nesta filosofia e que, em meu entender, aparece no final de *Soi-même comme un autre*; 3) de que maneira se encontra, ainda assim, uma fenomenologia hermenêutica da religião nesta obra, e de que forma é que ela se insere na polémica gerada em torno da ‘viragem teológica’ da fenomenologia francesa. Trataremos os primeiros dois pontos no que resta desta secção, deixando o último para a breve próxima secção.

Talvez se entenda melhor o posicionamento de Ricœur em relação à primeira questão se se tiver em conta o quadro polémico que a contextualiza. Ao longo da sua carreira Ricœur foi, como já se aludiu, acusado de ser um ‘filósofo cristão’ no sentido pejorativo de promover um cripto-cristianismo. Esta acusação foi explicitamente formulada por Badiou que, a propósito de *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli*³¹, escreveu: “Tal como Descartes, Ricœur avança mascarado”³². Ora, tal acusação carece de sentido, pelos motivos já invocados: não só a adesão assumida de Ricœur ao protestantismo, como também a manutenção da sua filosofia nos limites kantianos que acabámos de mostrar. E daí Ricœur, numa passagem muito tardia, já perto do momento da sua morte, se definir, usando uma expressão que me parece feliz, como sendo simultaneamente um “filósofo enquanto tal” e um “cristão de expressão filosófica”. Nesta passagem encontra-se, em resumo, grande parte daquilo que nesta secção foi mostrado:

Não sou um filósofo cristão, como o afirma o boato que corre sobre o assunto, num sentido voluntariamente pejorativo, ou mesmo discriminatório. Sou, por um lado, um filósofo enquanto tal, até um filósofo sem absoluto, preocupado, dedicado e versado na antropologia filosófica cuja temática geral se deixa captar sob o título de antropologia fundamental. E, por outro lado, sou um cristão de expressão filosófica, tal como Rembrandt é um pintor enquanto tal e um cristão de expressão pictórica, e Bach um músico enquanto tal e um cristão de expressão musical³³.

No seguimento desta passagem, Ricœur clarifica ainda que dizer “filósofo cristão” é “enunciar um sintagma” e que isso deve ser distinguido da situação do filósofo profissional que também é um “cristão que filosofa”; clarificando que tal situação tem a sua dinâmica, sofrimentos e pequenas

31. Ricœur, *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli* (Paris: Seuil, 2000).

32. Alain Badiou, “Le sujet supposé chrétien de Paul Ricœur. À propos de *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli*”, *Élucidation* 6 (7): 19-24.

33. Ricœur, *Vivo até à Morte, seguido de Fragmentos*, trans. Hugo Barros e Gonçalo Marcelo (Lisboa: Edições 70, 2011), 85.

felicidades específicos, mas que tal não enfraquece em nada a liberdade de pensamento e a autonomia própria da pesquisa filosófica, nem a estruturação do seu discurso³⁴. Tal pertença dupla (ser-se cristão e filósofo) pode gerar controvérsias, assume Ricœur, mas, nesse caso, aquilo de que se trata é de “dar razão de” (*logon didonai*), expressar os seus melhores argumentos, sem cair na mistura entre géneros ou confusão entre propósitos.

Pois bem, o ponto culminante desta separação, para responder à segunda questão enunciada acima, é o do parágrafo final de *Soi-même comme un autre* onde Ricœur, discorrendo sobre a fonte da injunção ética (esse Outro que apela a que eu aja eticamente), admite ser impossível saber de onde ou de quem ela vem:

Talvez o filósofo, enquanto filósofo, deva admitir que não *sabe* nem *pode* dizer se esse Outro, fonte da injunção, é um outrem que eu possa encarar ou que me possa encarar, ou os meus antepassados, dos quais não há nenhuma representação, a tal ponto a minha dívida para com eles me é constitutiva, ou Deus – Deus vivo, Deus ausente – ou um lugar vazio. Nessa aporia do Outro, o discurso filosófico para³⁵.

Ricœur viria a considerar esta passagem como sendo uma marca distintiva do seu “agnosticismo filosófico” o que, mais uma vez, reforça a tese da separação dos dois registos que se tem vindo aqui a explanar. E, aliás, não terá sido por acaso que para a versão final de *Soi-même comme un autre* Ricœur tenha escrito um estudo de ontologia, “Vers quelle ontologie”, o qual termina com a passagem que acaba aqui de ser citada e que, na verdade, substitui dois outros estudos de hermenêutica bíblica, “Le soi dans le miroir des écritures” e “Le soi mandaté”³⁶, os quais faziam originalmente parte das Gifford Lectures dadas por Ricœur em Edimburgo em 1986. Como se verá na próxima secção, apesar da separação dos registos, Ricœur sempre continuou a praticar exercícios de hermenêutica bíblica. Mas a substituição destes dois estudos de hermenêutica bíblica pelo estudo

34. Ibid., 85-86.

35. Ricœur, *Soi-même comme un autre*, op. cit., 409.

36. Estes dois estudos foram posteriormente republicados postumamente na versão mais recente de *Amour et justice* (Paris: Seuil, 2008), pelas afinidades temáticas entre esses estudos e o estudo que dá o nome ao livro “Amour et Justice”. Se “Le soi mandaté” e “Le soi dans le miroir des écritures” foram, como se disse, escritos em 1986, já a versão original de “Amour et justice” foi um texto escrito em 1989 e proferido aquando da receção do prémio Leopold Lucas em Tübingen, tendo sido publicado originalmente na Alemanha, em versão bilingue, em 1990. Tratam-se, portanto, de textos do mesmo período da produção de Ricœur.

de ontologia em *Soi-même comme un autre*, obra que, em grande medida, era a súpula de quase toda a filosofia de Ricœur até 1990, e o facto de esse estudo, e o livro, acabarem neste registo agnóstico, testemunham precisamente esta vontade de separação dos registos. Vejamos, então, que lugar ocupa a fenomenologia e a hermenêutica da religião neste contexto.

4. Fenomenologia e hermenêutica da religião

Fenomenólogo de formação, não é surpreendente que quando Ricœur pretenda abordar a religião o faça, em primeira instância, recorrendo ao método fenomenológico. No entanto, no contexto da sua filosofia, não se trata tanto de tentar buscar a origem última do fenómeno tal como ele aparece à consciência, mas antes de complementar a descrição da imanência fenomenal com um ato de imaginação que instaura uma hermenêutica, precisamente em virtude dos limites que foram abordados na secção anterior.

Assim, e em diversas instâncias da sua filosofia, aquilo que está em causa é a adoção de um método de fenomenologia hermenêutica no qual o fenomenólogo é convidado a reconstituir ou, como advoga Ricœur, a “repetir em imaginação e em simpatia” os fenómenos que povoam a consciência religiosa, para os poder descrever e analisar. Quer isto dizer que para que o método eidético possa tratar o fenómeno do religioso, tem de imaginar partilhar a adesão da consciência religiosa à crença³⁷. Mas isto, note-se, sem que o fenomenólogo tenha efetivamente de crer: o ato de imaginação apenas pressupõe ‘simpatia’ para com essa crença³⁸. É este o método que Ricœur adota em *A Simbólica do Mal*, a obra que inaugura a viragem hermenêutica. Aí, trata-se de analisar a experiência da confissão da culpa adveniente da consciência de se ter cometido uma falta, de se estar em falta e, por isso, de entender a passagem entre a falibilidade e a ação culpada, marcada pelo mal, tal como ele se expressa em diferentes símbolos culturais e diversos fenómenos religiosos.

A função da fenomenologia da religião é um pouco mais tarde situada e problematizada no contexto do conflito entre interpretações radicalmente opostas da consciência humana. Nesse contexto, a fenomenologia da religião acaba por abrir a um estilo específico de interpretação, o da

37. Veja-se a nota dos tradutores n.º 2 de *A Simbólica do Mal*, *op. cit.*, 19-20.

38. Veja-se André LaCocque e Paul Ricœur, *Penser la Bible* (Paris: Seuil, 1998), 14.

hermenêutica como ‘recolecção do sentido’ (ou, como Ricœur também lhe chama, ‘restauração do sentido’), oposto a uma ‘hermenêutica da suspeita’, expressão entretanto tornada muito popular, mas cuja origem se reporta precisamente a Ricœur e, mais especificamente, à obra sobre Freud, datada de 1965. Nesta obra, a fenomenologia hermenêutica da religião acaba por estar inextricavelmente ligada à ‘hermenêutica do si-mesmo’. Vejamos alguns destes aspetos com maior detalhe.

É sabido como Ricœur toma a decisão de atravessar o continente freudiano. Fá-lo precisamente em virtude da vontade de se confrontar com uma hipótese antitética em relação à sua pesquisa anterior. Ricœur já tinha abordado, embora de forma muito sucinta, a hipótese do inconsciente, em *Le volontaire et l'involontaire*; mas, para uma filosofia do sentido como é a fenomenologia, a psicanálise freudiana e a hipótese lançada pelas suas tópicas tinha sempre necessariamente de aparecer como estando nos antípodas dos pressupostos fenomenológicos. E foi precisamente isso que atraiu Ricœur: investigar, utilizar e circunscrever a hipótese da ‘consciência falsa’.

Em *De l'interprétation* Ricœur explica que o seu ponto de partida é o diagnóstico de um problema a afetar o próprio campo hermenêutico enquanto tal, o facto de ele estar “quebrado” em virtude da inexistência de uma hermenêutica geral capaz de determinar, de uma vez por todas, as regras da interpretação:

Eis essa dificuldade, precisamente aquela que colocou a minha pesquisa em movimento: não há hermenêutica geral, não há cânone universal para a exegese, mas antes teorias separadas e opostas no que diz respeito às regras de interpretação. O campo hermenêutico, cujo contorno exterior traçámos, está ele próprio quebrado³⁹.

Ricœur prossegue, precisando que, em vez de tentar elencar de forma completa e exaustiva os diferentes estilos hermenêuticos possíveis (algo que, de resto, seria impossível), é mais frutífero analisar a tensão mais extrema, a saber, aquela que existe entre, por um lado:

a hermenêutica concebida como a manifestação e a restauração de um sentido que me é endereçado à maneira de uma mensagem, de uma proclamação ou, como por vezes se diz, de um kerigma; e, por outro, concebida como uma desmistificação, como uma redução de ilusões⁴⁰.

39. Ricœur, *De l'interprétation*, op. cit., 37.

40. Ibid.

Por conseguinte, conclui Ricœur, a hermenêutica é movida por uma motivação dupla: vontade de escuta e vontade de suspeita, as quais desembocam ou na iconoclastia ou na restauração do sentido, sendo que ambas as possibilidades estão interligadas.

Ora, a ‘vontade de escuta’ caracteriza, segundo Ricœur, a atitude da fé. É aqui, na atitude de uma hermenêutica que visaria uma ‘restauração do sentido’ que encontramos a fenomenologia da religião em sentido clássico, sendo que Ricœur cita Leenhardt, Van der Leeuw, e Eliade como exemplos desta via⁴¹. Ricœur chama-lhe uma “fé razoável” e coloca-a no horizonte de uma “segunda inocência” que, atravessando a crítica, se converteria numa “fé pós-crítica”, isto é, como foi invocado acima, que faria a crítica dos ídolos para melhor interpretar os símbolos. Aqui, a fé seria a de uma revelação através da palavra divina. A análise visaria descrever mas não reduzir os fenómenos a uma explicação causal; e a descrição daquilo que é vivido como sagrado seria, portanto, um esforço através da imaginação: participo “na crença na realidade do objeto religioso, mas num modo neutralizado: creio com o crente, mas sem pôr absolutamente o objeto da sua crença”⁴². Já o contrário desta posição, sabemos-lo, é o exercício da suspeita, segundo o qual, seguindo Marx, Nietzsche ou Freud, a consciência seria consciência falsa. Não é objetivo deste artigo reconstituir as teses da hermenêutica da suspeita mas que seja suficiente relembrar aqui que é por causa da travessia da suspeita que, para Ricœur, surge a necessidade de uma “hermenêutica do si-mesmo” enquanto arte de interpretar, ciência mediata do sentido⁴³: é por a consciência imediata ser fonte de ilusão que a compreensão se torna um esforço hermenêutico de interpretação indireta; é por isso que a autocompreensão implica a decifração indireta de determinadas expressões, símbolos, índices de um sentido cifrado que precisa de ser decifrado.

Ora, também aqui, na obra de 1965, o divino, o completamente Outro cuja palavra interpela o crente e cuja interpretação uma hermenêutica como restauração do sentido visaria interpretar, é colocado apenas como horizonte: “o horizonte é a metáfora daquilo que se aproxima sem nunca se tornar objeto possuído”⁴⁴. Também aqui, a presença do mal é índice de finitude e interdição de passagem ao saber absoluto, enquanto a recon-

41. Ibid., 38.

42. Ibid., 39.

43. Ibid., 44.

44. Ibid., 548.

ciliação apenas se anuncia como esperança, e alimentada pela lógica da superabundância, algo que veremos mais em detalhe na próxima secção. A consequência deste percurso é “a morte do objeto metafísico e religioso”⁴⁵. Recusando a reificação do horizonte em objeto, Ricœur recusa também a idolatria; matando o ídolo e recuperando o símbolo, o objetivo de Ricœur também é recuperar a hermenêutica da religião, entendida sempre como visando um *telos* não objetificado mas apenas esperado, imaginado e interpretado. O que, no caso das religiões do livro, e no caso do cristianismo protestante de Ricœur, implica sobretudo uma hermenêutica textual dos documentos que suportam a crença⁴⁶.

Em meu entender, foi esta recusa de sair do campo da fenomenalidade imanente e esta abordagem descritiva rigorosa da fé que, em vez de absolutizar o objeto analisado, abre para a interpretação e a imaginação, que levou Janicaud a elogiar a abordagem ricœuriana. Com efeito, para Janicaud os discursos filosófico e teológico não se devem confundir; o que não significa que um crente cuja filosofia se recuse a dar este passo não possa, simultaneamente, encetar estudos de hermenêutica bíblica, o que foi precisamente aquilo que Ricœur fez.

É sabido como o livro de Janicaud deu azo a uma polémica que se estendeu pelos anos seguintes, primeiro com a publicação de um conjunto de textos da autoria de Michel Henry, Jean-Luc Marion, Jean-Louis Chrétien e Ricœur, no seguimento de uma conferência organizada por Jean-François Courtine que em seguida editou essa publicação⁴⁷; e, depois, com a publicação, por Janicaud, de *La phénoménologie éclatée*⁴⁸. Sabe-se, igualmente, que as respostas destes autores foram diferenciadas, tendo sido, entre os visados, Marion quem mais alimentou o diálogo⁴⁹, e que outros autores, como Derrida ou Jocelyn Benoist, participaram lateralmente no debate. No entanto, e como é fácil de adivinhar, com Ricœur não chegou propriamente a haver polémica, ainda que Ricœur se tenha pronunciado.

O texto de Ricœur a este propósito, intitulado “Expérience et langage dans le discours religieux”, publicado no volume organizado por Courtine,

45. Ibid., 553.

46. Ibid., 568.

47. Jean-François Courtine, Michel Henry, Paul Ricœur, Jean-Luc Marion, Jean-Louis Chrétien, *Phénoménologie et Théologie* (Paris: Critérian, 1993).

48. Dominique Janicaud, *La phénoménologie éclatée* (Paris: Éditions de l'Éclat, 1998).

49. Jean-Luc Marion, *Étant donné. Essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation* (Paris: PUF, 1997).

e republicado em *Lectures 3* com o título “Phénoménologie de la religion”⁵⁰, insiste na forma como uma fenomenologia da religião desemboca numa hermenêutica da religião, a qual é necessariamente atravessada por mediações cuja natureza é linguística, cultural e histórica. Para Ricœur a religião é como a linguagem: só se efetiva em diferentes línguas. Por conseguinte, não há “fenomenologia da religião” no abstrato: o que há é uma hermenêutica textual ou uma hermenêutica das escrituras; ou, por outras palavras, a universalidade do fenómeno religioso é difícil ou mesmo impossível de captar uma vez que mesmo os fenómenos religiosos mais básicos, como o da fé ou da resposta à vocação, não são compreendidos sem mais na sua suposta imediatez, mas antes necessariamente mediados de acordo com regras que são sempre históricas e contextuais, imanentes à própria religião da qual fazem parte. Por conseguinte, nesta fase, Ricœur renuncia até a uma fenomenologia do fenómeno religioso entendido na sua universalidade, admitindo que o máximo que lhe é possível é restringir-se aos traços hermenêuticos gerais de uma só religião, o que o leva à interpretação da Bíblia. Para além disso, e mais uma vez, advoga o método que invoca a imaginação e a simpatia que, por isso, não requer a adesão do leitor propriamente dita, apenas a reconstituição e a consideração da sua hipótese.

Desta feita, Ricœur considera que ainda se está no domínio de uma fenomenologia hermenêutica da religião, embora esta fenomenologia hermenêutica seja radicalmente situada. Por conseguinte, o ponto de vista não é o de uma história comparada das religiões o que, para Ricœur, implicaria a adoção de um ponto de vista ‘neutro’, desinteressado – o que também não é o caso. Com efeito, o ponto de vista de Ricœur não é neutro; porém, argumenta ele, ao considerar outras religiões, que não a sua, aquilo que lhe é requerido é o mesmo exercício de imaginação e simpatia que ele espera dos leitores não cristãos quando leva a cabo exercícios de hermenêutica bíblica.

Neste texto, Ricœur avança ainda um passo importante quando, ao invocar mais uma vez a figura do horizonte, liga-a ao desejo de uma hospitalidade interreligiosa cujo modelo seria o da hospitalidade linguística exemplificado pela tradução de uma língua. Este passo é importante. Repare-se: a este respeito o ponto de chegada de Ricœur consiste não só na afirmação do carácter radicalmente situado e não impositivo da fé e da interpretação da religião mediada pelos textos fundadores da mesma como

50. Ricœur, “Phénoménologie de la religion” in *Lectures 3*, *op. cit.*, 263-271.

também num corolário prático, o do diálogo tolerante entre diferentes pertenças religiosas. O modelo da tradução é aqui pertinente porque, tal como não há língua única e universal, apenas diversas línguas e respetivas traduções entre elas, sendo o ato de tradução sempre um gesto de hospitalidade de uma língua (a de acolhimento) em relação à outra (a que está a ser traduzida), também uma religião é um ponto de vista particular e situado, sendo que a compreensão do ponto de vista alheio só se faz por analogia: respeitando a crença do outro, reconstituindo-a “em imaginação e simpatia” como se espera que ele o faça com aquela religião que eventualmente apareça como sendo a nossa, no caso do diálogo interreligioso. Ou seja, o horizonte de uma Transcendência que apenas aparece na esperança transforma-se, assim, também no horizonte de um entendimento imanente à prática intersubjetiva e estritamente humana, entre comunidades de crentes. Isto é, dir-se-ia, um traço do religioso na filosofia prática de Ricœur.

E com esta observação fazemos a transição para a última secção deste artigo. Como já se viu, não existe, na filosofia de Ricœur, qualquer desejo de objetificar a Transcendência, tentar prová-la ou impô-la. Mas os traços do religioso na sua filosofia prática, alimentados pelas lições sapienciais e lógica própria da hermenêutica bíblica, não deixam de animar uma parte da sua filosofia prática, de uma maneira que me parece importante sublinhar.

5. Traços do religioso na filosofia prática de Ricœur

É possível encontrar na filosofia prática de Ricœur várias instâncias daquilo a que estou aqui a propor chamar os ‘traços do religioso’ e que no fundo podem ser simplesmente definidos como influências éticas ou supra-éticas que, podendo ser vistas como sendo de origem religiosa, i.e., vindas das ‘margens da filosofia’ e, nomeadamente, da fé mediada pela hermenêutica bíblica levada a cabo por Ricœur, têm influência na sua filosofia prática. Estas ressonâncias de um domínio (o religioso e da interpretação bíblica) no outro (o da filosofia sem absoluto) podem, aliás, ser lidas como tendo consequências perfeitamente passíveis de ser aceites em contexto estritamente secular, ou mesmo pós-metafísico, no sentido em que são meros optativos de ação, cujo carácter é talvez apenas exemplar/edificante e que, por isso, independentemente da sua origem, têm perfeitamente cabimento numa filosofia prática à margem do próprio contexto religioso. Mas isso não nos impede de reconhecer a sua origem.

Um estudo mais aturado destas ocorrências faria, sem dúvida, uma lista mais exaustiva do que aquela que proponho aqui. No que resta deste

artigo, concentrar-me-ei apenas em três: 1) os limites da autonomia do sujeito; 2) a lógica da dádiva fundada na superabundância da graça; e 3) o perdão. No que diz respeito ao primeiro destes pontos, importa perceber a recepção ricœuriana da filosofia prática de Kant. E, a este respeito, é preciso assinalar algumas reservas que Ricœur lhe aponta.

Com efeito, se é verdade que a primeira *Crítica* de Kant tem a importância que já assinalámos no quadro teórico da filosofia de Ricœur, também o é que, no que diz respeito à ênfase deontológica no dever e na autonomia da razão prática que, dando-se a si mesma a sua própria lei, exclui como patológico o que é do domínio da inclinação, Ricœur reconhece problemas, visando apontar-lhe alternativas. Ser-me-á impossível reconstituir aqui todo esse quadro teórico, sobretudo tal como aparece no oitavo estudo de *Soi-même comme un autre*, mas creio ser importante mencionar, para os objetivos deste artigo, a forma como é contextualizada e circunscrita a noção de autonomia.

Diga-se, para começar, que Ricœur não concebe, à maneira da filosofia política liberal, a autonomia como o requisito mais fundamental da agência moral, nem a pensa de forma desenraizada e absoluta. Pelo contrário, para Ricœur a relação entre a autonomia e a heteronomia tem de ser repensada uma vez que, no quadro da sua antropologia filosófica, não existe subjetividade sem as redes de interação subjetiva que a enquadram e enformam: não há si-mesmo sem o outro e sem as relações fundamentais que se entrecruzam entre ambos. E, de forma mais importante para o que nos ocupa aqui, entre a autonomia moral e uma heteronomia de origem religiosa, também é preciso, pensa Ricœur, problematizar a oposição.

É esse o objetivo do artigo “Une obéissance aimante”, publicado em *Penser la bible*, o livro de hermenêutica bíblica escrito a meias com André LaCoque. Nesse texto, Ricœur sustenta que a experiência religiosa de uma “obediência amante”, configurada pela conjugação de dois mandamentos hebraicos diferentes, aquele que prescreve o amor a Deus, e o que interdita trazer a morte a outrem, não se opõe necessariamente à experiência da autonomia e, pelo contrário, pode até ser condição de possibilidade de uma melhor compreensão da mesma. No fundo, argumenta Ricœur, ambos os mandamentos são mandamentos de amor: um pelo Altíssimo, o outro pelo próximo. No entanto, não é escondido o paradoxo: como é possível algo como o amor ser comandado? A resposta de Ricœur consiste em descrever o uso do imperativo como sendo ‘poético’ e tendo o carácter de um ‘hino’, i.e., beneficiando da ‘potência de metaforização’ das

expressões do amor⁵¹; o que, por sua vez, pode ser colocado em relação com as exigências da justiça e com os imperativos que delas emanam.

Assim, a função do amor seria a de ajudar o sentido da justiça a propagar-se ao nível de um verdadeiro reconhecimento intersubjetivo⁵². Significa isto que o formalismo universalista kantiano teria de passar, na verdade, pela ética comunicativa para que o universal ‘incoativo’, que na verdade mais não é que um universal alegado (argumentado) pudesse ser intersubjetivamente e interculturalmente reconhecido como válido⁵³. Assim o papel do amor seria o de reduzir a distância entre um universalismo sem restrições e um contextualismo no qual prevalecem as diferenças culturais⁵⁴, pressionando a justiça a alargar o círculo do reconhecimento mútuo⁵⁵.

Por sua vez, argumenta Ricœur, esse efeito do amor sobre a justiça ajuda a discernir algo que, em Kant, é menos claro, a saber, a prevalência da insubstituibilidade das pessoas sobre o respeito pela lei. É que o amor não age apenas em extensão mas em intensidade⁵⁶. Ricœur argumenta que não parece existir razão moral absoluta para que a diferença entre as pessoas seja, enquanto tal, objeto de obrigação: e daí a necessidade de a complementar com o amor. Para Ricœur o amor contribui até, através da sua função imaginativa e da sua atenção singularizante, para alargar o horizonte daqueles que são objeto de cuidado e de preocupação, ultrapassando a distinção entre o próximo e o distante, o ‘tu’ da relação dialogal e o ‘outro’ mais afastado⁵⁷. Assim, paradoxalmente, a intensidade diferenciadora e individualizante do amor seria também um contributo para a universalização da ligação a outrem.

E com esta descrição chega-se ao núcleo daquilo que Ricœur pretende argumentar. Para o crente, esta influência do amor divino, consubstanciada no Evangelho de João, remete para uma precedência e uma antecendência em relação à própria autonomia do sujeito; e Ricœur fala a este respeito de uma “passividade fundadora”⁵⁸, aquela que, para o crente, tem origem na palavra de Deus. De alguma forma, o amor obriga, e aquilo a que ele obriga, é a uma ‘obediência amante’. E, para Ricœur, isto no fundo

51. Ricœur, “Une obéissance aimante” in *Penser la Bible*, *op. cit.*, 180.

52. *Ibid.*, 181.

53. *Ibid.*, 183.

54. *Ibid.*, 184.

55. *Ibid.*, 186.

56. *Ibid.*, 187.

57. *Ibid.*, 188.

58. *Ibid.*, 190.

corrige a autonomia no sentido de uma heteronomia que não é alienante, mas condição de possibilidade da ligação entre a autonomia e a responsabilidade. Com efeito, Ricœur argumenta que “o apelo a uma obediência amante gera a autonomia entendida como apelo à responsabilidade”⁵⁹, na medida em que a passividade fundadora é complementada pela atividade de se assumir a responsabilidade por outrem⁶⁰. O que, de alguma forma, aprofunda, embora alterando-lhe o sentido, a própria ligação kantiana entre a autonomia e a lei: só há lei para os seres livres e não há liberdade sem a submissão a uma obrigação⁶¹.

Aquilo que Ricœur critica, no modelo kantiano, é a autossuficiência da autonomia. Invocando mais uma vez o mal radical, e a dialética entre capacidade e incapacidade, Ricœur argumenta que é preciso entender a ligação da autonomia à heteronomia, da autonomia às condições de possibilidade de instauração (ou restauração) de um sujeito moral capaz⁶². É aqui que entra a “ajuda supra-ética de um amor que obriga”⁶³. Noutras obras, e sobretudo em *Soi-même comme un autre*, também se trata de pensar os limites da autonomia individual, sobretudo tendo em conta as condições intersubjetivas de possibilidade da subjetividade, numa postura que pode ser comparada às teses comunitaristas que fazem depender a identidade do indivíduo das ligações substantivas que mantém com outrem, e com as condições histórico-culturais que precedem e enraízam o sujeito. Por outro lado, a ‘alógica’ supra-ética do amor na sua ligação com a justiça é também objeto de análise noutras obras, como *Amour et justice* e *Parcours de la reconnaissance*⁶⁴, tendo também ela implicações práticas a partir da questão da superabundância da graça, que será agora analisada de forma sucinta.

Um dos traços do religioso que mais vezes surgem na filosofia prática de Ricœur é o da superabundância, tal como aparece na epístola de São Paulo aos Romanos: “A lei interveio para aumentar a falta, mas, onde aumentou o pecado, superabundou a graça” (Rm 5, 20). A graça, traduzida na caridade, é gratuita, desapegada, e surge por vezes em contradição com qualquer tipo de autointeresse, como aparece no mandamento do amor. A graça é, portanto, excessiva. E é nela que se funda a noção de “dádiva” e

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid., 191.

62. Ibid., 193.

63. Ibid., 194

64. Ricœur, *Parcours de la reconnaissance. Trois études* (Paris: Stock, 2004).

mesmo a “economia da dádiva” que, para Ricœur, está para lá da própria ética, da justiça, e da reciprocidade, uma vez que implica a atitude de dar sem esperar nada em troca.

Ora, é a própria noção de superabundância da graça que funda a ‘desproporção’ entre amor e justiça⁶⁵ e a busca de mediações entre eles sendo que essas mediações serão sempre, segundo Ricœur, “frágeis e provisórias”⁶⁶. Uma dessas mediações propostas por Ricœur é a reinterpretação da regra de ouro no sentido do mandamento do amor, o qual a abre à generosidade, ainda que isso convide aos comportamentos paradoxais e extremos, como o ‘dar a outra face’ ou o próprio perdão. Ricœur invoca os exemplos de S. Francisco, Gandhi, Martin Luther King⁶⁷ como paradigma desses ‘gestos excessivos’. Sendo supra-moral, o amor pode entrar na esfera prática e ética precisamente através da interação e alargamento da justiça, defende Ricœur em *Amour et justice*⁶⁸. Entre a lógica da equivalência e da reciprocidade, própria da justiça, e a lógica da superabundância, Ricœur sustenta que é preciso um equilíbrio e o exercício (tal como em *Soi-même comme un autre*) de um ‘juízo moral em situação’ que, em vez de uma regra universal, decida caso a caso.

Em *Parcours de la reconnaissance*, última obra publicada por Ricœur (sem contar, é claro, com as obras publicadas postumamente) esta apologia da superabundância que vai para lá da estrita lógica da reciprocidade encontra uma aplicação prática importante. No contexto da discussão da ética intersubjetiva do reconhecimento, Ricœur formula uma distinção entre reciprocidade e mutualidade. Para Ricœur a reciprocidade implica sempre um carácter algo impessoal e sistemático; tal como a lei kantiana, a reciprocidade que é exigida nas relações de reconhecimento que seguem o modelo hegeliano também é ‘cega’. Nesse sentido, a reciprocidade está mais perto da relação instrumental da troca, na qual ‘dou para que dê’, o que a coloca na proximidade do campo semântico da justiça. Ora, ao arrepio desta lógica, Ricœur avança com uma descrição do reconhecimento que o reconfigura de acordo com a categoria do ‘sem preço’, i.e., daquilo que é ‘gratuito’ e deve ser entendido como uma dádiva, tal como a graça.

Assim, para Ricœur, o reconhecimento pressupõe uma certa assimetria. A mutualidade das relações de reconhecimento faz com que a atitude ética a desenvolver seja a de conceder reconhecimento (dá-lo) na

65. Ricœur, *Amour et justice*, *op. cit.*, 17.

66. *Ibid.*, 15.

67. *Ibid.*, 38.

68. *Ibid.*, 41.

expectativa de que o nosso parceiro de interação possa fazer o mesmo (e, caso o faça, ficar-lhe ‘reconhecido’, i.e., agradecido por isso) mas sem que haja propriamente uma exigência de que esse reconhecimento seja dado de volta – atitude que está precisamente em causa na figura hegeliana da luta pelo reconhecimento, e que marca todos os esforços pós-hegelianos contemporâneos de a atualizar, como os de Axel Honneth. No reconhecimento mútuo, o outro é colocado acima do si-mesmo, reconhecido e ‘convidado’ a reconhecer-me de volta, mas sem que essa injunção assuma o carácter de uma obrigação. Por conseguinte, o estatuto do reconhecimento em Ricœur é o de uma ‘utopia ética’⁶⁹ e o seu efeito é exemplar, edificante. E também aqui a lógica é a da graça e da superabundância, para lá da mera reciprocidade da justiça.

Finalmente, o último traço do religioso na filosofia prática de Ricœur que relevaremos aqui é o perdão. Tal como em muitos outros casos, este é um tema que foi aparecendo múltiplas vezes na obra ricœuriana mas que só foi alvo de atenção mais específica de forma tardia, nomeadamente no epílogo a *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*. Importa também mencionar que, em grande medida, foi a apologia do perdão feita neste epílogo que levou Badiou à acusação de cripto-cristianismo. E reitera-se, portanto, o que estou aqui a afirmar: tratar o perdão como um ‘traço do religioso’ poderia parecer dar alguma razão à acusação de Badiou; contudo, reiterar a origem desta noção de perdão e os efeitos que tem na filosofia prática ricœuriana não belisca em nada, por todos os motivos já vistos, a possibilidade da sua aplicação imanente.

Posto isto, veja-se então de que forma aparece o perdão em *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*. Tal como o título indica, esta obra incide sobretudo nas relações entre a fenomenologia da memória e a epistemologia da operação historiográfica, com a possibilidade de esquecimento em pano de fundo. E é portanto com um estatuto curioso, de quase-anexo, que surge o epílogo intitulado “o perdão difícil”. Não terá porventura sido por acaso que Ricœur decidiu colocar qualificar esta possibilidade do perdão como sendo ‘difícil’, algo que também afirma, por exemplo, sobre o gesto ético da hospitalidade, e que é muitas vezes oposto, enquanto meio-termo, à qualificação derridiana que, em relação aos mesmos fenómenos, os considera ‘impossíveis’ – o estilo ricœuriano, sabemos-lo, é frequentemente mais o da mediação qualificada do que o da hipérbole; aquilo que é ‘difícil’ é também, muitas vezes, colocado por Ricœur na proximidade

69. Gonçalo Marcelo, “Paul Ricœur and the Utopia of Mutual Recognition,” *Études Ricœuriennes / Ricœur Studies* vol. 2, n.º 1 (2011): 110-133, DOI: 10.5195/errs.2011.69.

semântica do ‘trabalho’ (como o trabalho de memória, ou a operação freudiana do *Durcharbeiten*). Contudo, neste caso, o perdão está mais próximo da possibilidade de leveza, do desligamento, da remoção de um fardo.

Já foi invocada neste artigo a investigação sobre o mal e a culpa que Ricœur encetou desde a década de 1960. Importa também mencionar como, nos seus estudos sobre a semântica da ação e, sobretudo, em *Soi-même comme un autre*, é dada grande ênfase à imputação de que os agentes são objeto: o agente é ligado aos seus atos, ou às suas capacidades, e isso é parte inerente da sua identidade. Pois bem, aquilo que está em causa no perdão é a possibilidade, ainda que com reservas, de desassociação entre um agente e o seu ato; não de tal maneira que esse ato seja necessariamente esquecido, nem sequer que esse perdão seja, enquanto tal, objeto de institucionalização reiterada mas, ainda assim, de forma a que possam ser libertadas as possibilidades de futuro.

Tal como nos outros traços do religioso que aqui analisamos, também o perdão é colocado na proximidade ético-poética do amor e da superabundância da dádiva, e em oposição à lógica da reciprocidade. Também a lógica do perdão é comparada à do hino. Com a diferença que, neste caso, o perdão é considerado uma capacidade de base do homem capaz, vindo portanto juntar-se às outras capacidades da antropologia fundamental anteriormente desenvolvida em *Soi-même comme un autre*. Ricœur afirma, de forma um tanto metafórica, que a ‘altura’ do perdão responde à ‘profundidade’ da falta/culpa [*faute*]. Para Ricœur, o perdão é sempre ‘excepcional’, i.e., não pode ser transformado em regra e só pode agir sobre as instituições de forma indireta, através de uma “alquimia secreta”⁷⁰, na proximidade do gesto excessivo, e que pode inspirar. Por exemplo, Willy Brandt a ajoelhar-se em Varsóvia. Ricœur reconhece (o que torna a acusação de Badiou ainda mais descabida) que o perdão tem uma “aura religiosa”⁷¹.

Portanto, não havendo “política do perdão”, até porque “os povos não perdoam”, a questão fulcral torna-se, então, a da possibilidade de desligar a ação do seu agente⁷². E é aqui que vale a pena citar uma passagem que contém o essencial da proposta de Ricœur:

Sob o signo do perdão, o culpado seria considerado capaz de outra coisa, para lá dos seus delitos e das suas faltas. Seria restituído à sua capacidade

70. Ricœur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, op. cit., 618.

71. Ibid., 633.

72. Ibid., 637.

de agir, e a ação restituída à de continuar. (...) Por fim, é dessa capacidade restaurada que se apoderaria a promessa que projeta a ação em direção ao futuro. A fórmula dessa palavra libertadora, abandonada à nudez da sua enunciação, seria: tu vales mais do que os teus atos⁷³.

No fundo, encontramos aqui uma variação da tese já acima discutida a propósito da filosofia moral kantiana ou das pretensões da justiça, face à lógica desorientadora do amor: o valor da pessoa pode, em determinadas circunstâncias, ser colocado acima do valor da regra ou da lei, mesmo quando, por princípio, a aplicação da lei e a exigência de reciprocidade determinariam outro desfecho para o caso. Não é possível erigir a exceção em regra. Mas a possibilidade da exceção está lá para nos mostrar que existem mais possibilidades do que as da aplicação cega da lei ou da regra.

É impossível ignorar a ressonância deste traço religioso. Mas, mais uma vez, independentemente da sua origem, é possível aplicá-lo a uma lógica e um contexto completamente desligados dessa origem – e Ricœur fá-lo, ao argumentar que o perdão é uma capacidade especificamente humana. No seu conjunto, os três traços invocados nesta secção são outros tantos exemplos da fecundidade da filiação religiosa de Ricœur e da forma como, sem misturar os discursos, esses motivos de origem religiosa influenciam a sua filosofia prática, sempre com interpretações e justificações que, citando a conclusão de *A Simbólica do Mal*, “dão que pensar”.

6. Conclusão

Neste artigo analisou-se a forma como a questão da Transcendência e de Deus aparecem na filosofia de Paul Ricœur, tendo em conta os pressupostos da sua hermenêutica, bem como as principais consequências da inspiração da hermenêutica bíblica na sua filosofia prática. Nada do que foi dito aqui pretende ser universalizável: é apenas uma reconstrução do caminho específico de Paul Ricœur, uma refutação de quem acusava a sua filosofia de cripto-cristianismo, e uma sugestão da fecundidade dos temas religiosos na sua filosofia prática, argumentando que isso não belisca a autonomia dos discursos ou a apropriação desses temas num registo imanente.

Pelo exemplo de Ricœur pode talvez depreender-se que a hermenêutica enquanto filosofia da finitude abre ao mesmo tempo para uma filosofia da imaginação que não pode deixar de ter consequências para

73. Ibid., 642.

a própria forma como a questão de Deus ou da Transcendência são pensadas. As teses principais do artigo foram talvez suficientemente reiteradas ao longo do mesmo, fazendo provavelmente com que a sua repetição nesta conclusão fosse ociosa. Mas isso não significa que estas breves linhas não possam servir para outro propósito, o de sugerir algumas pistas diferentes, em relação com esta via ricœuriana.

Aquilo que não foi desenvolvido no artigo, mas que não deixa de ser característico do momento contemporâneo, é o que pode significar, para a própria fé, o facto de se viver em sociedades seculares nas quais essa adesão, e o seu fundamento, são reconhecidos precisamente enquanto possibilidade, e não enquanto fonte de certeza. Um exemplo de investigação exemplar neste domínio são os trabalhos de Charles Taylor, e nomeadamente *A Secular Age*⁷⁴ e, no fundo, um estudo sobre o estatuto da crença religiosa e das possibilidades de interpretação da mesma poderia perfeitamente ser feito tendo em conta o quadro ricœuriano e as análises de Taylor.

Igualmente interessante é a forma como uma filosofia da imaginação e uma ética de inspiração ricœuriana podem, seguindo pressupostos muito próximos dos de Ricœur, abordar toda esta questão de outro ângulo. É o exemplo do trabalho de Richard Kearney que, com a sua tentativa de pensar uma alternativa quer ao teísmo, quer ao ateísmo, explora a possibilidade do “anateísmo”⁷⁵ enquanto espaço para se crer, ou não se crer, para se revalorizar o que pode ser considerado sagrado de forma não dogmática ou mesmo para se “voltar a Deus depois de Deus”. E que, para além disso, explora possibilidades muito próximas daquelas que aqui foram discutidas sob o signo dos ‘traços do religioso’, e também de inspiração ricœuriana, para desenvolver propostas concretas de uma ética da hospitalidade inspirada pela imaginação narrativa, com o seu Guestbook Project⁷⁶, onde se tenta passar “da hostilidade à hospitalidade” através da partilha intersubjetiva de histórias. Também aqui, tudo são possibilidades, que podem ser interpretadas em registo simplesmente imanente, mas que não deixam de poder ser inspiradoras para a ação. Porque a imaginação e a ação andam a par, de formas que nem sempre são óbvias, mas que só ganham em ser exploradas.

74. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

75. Richard Kearney, *Anatheism. Returning to God After God* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

76. Veja-se <https://guestbookproject.org/>

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Aportes de la filosofía jurídica al concepto persona

Contributions of the Philosophy of Law to the Concept of Person

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Abstract

The present study has the purpose of analyzing a concept widely approached by most scholars of the philosophy of law throughout the ages, we are referring without doubt to the term person. That is why we will review the most important and relevant ideas from ancient times to current thinking. The philosophical concept of person has a notorious role in the understanding of the human being and in modern debates both in politics, law and, of course, in ethics. The aforementioned problem has been studied from very different perspectives, however, many coincide in adopting a metaphysical attitude. Therefore, the ontological and legal implications of the concept of person will be analyzed, starting with greek philosophy, classical law and christianity.

Keywords: bioethics, human, law, person, philosophy of law.

1. Introducción

De todos es sabido que la palabra bioética es un neologismo de los términos «bíos» y «ethiké». Donde, Bios significa *vida* desde el punto de vista humano y no con relación a la vida orgánica.¹ De ahí, la importancia de definir el concepto persona para percibir la función y alcance de la bioética.

Desde una arista etimológica el término *persona*, del latín *persôna*, tiene el mismo significado que en griego πρόσωπον, que alude al concepto de *máscara*. Con dicha expresión se esbozaba a la cavidad que cubría la cara (rostro) cuando intervenían los actores en una obra teatral. Como bien explica Ferrater Mora, “*Persona* es «el personaje» de la obra teatral son *dramatis personae*. A veces se hace derivar persona del verbo *persono* (infinitivo, personare), «sonar a través de algo» – de un orificio o conca-

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1. José Mainetti, *Enciclopedia de Bioderecho y Bioética* (Granada: Comares-Catedra de derecho y genoma humano, 2011).

vidad –, «hacer resonar la voz», como hacia retumbar el actor a través de la máscara «personado», *personatus*². De tal forma, que el actor en la obra griega clásica se ocultaba bajo la máscara convirtiéndose en un *ser* «enmascarado», en un «*personatus*», una persona o personaje teatral.

En efecto, es discutible si los griegos clásicos utilizaban el término *πρόσωπον* para referirse a la persona humana, pues existen muchos desacuerdos con base a ello y, la doctrina es discrepante en la temática. Sin embargo, la corriente mayoritaria establece una gran diferencia entre el pensamiento griego y el cristiano en el estudio que nos ocupa.

A pesar de ello, no podemos soslayar que algunos pensadores griegos como Sócrates sostenían la idea que el hombre es integrante de una «parte del cosmos», al aludir a un segmento del hombre llamada *personalidad*³. Es precisamente por ello, que resulta necesario realizar un breve recorrido por la historia con el único fin de obtener una mejor comprensión del concepto que nos irrumpe en el presente estudio, pues la evolución con sus diferentes connotaciones resulta incuestionable.

2. Concepción histórica-filosófica

En el ámbito histórico tanto el origen como la evolución del concepto de *persona* aparece en su esencia primitiva en el contexto de la cultura filosófica griega, si bien no logró consagrarse en su máxima *natura* hasta la llegada del cristianismo⁴, sí obtuvieron avances significativos.

En el lato pensamiento helénico no se concebía la idea de un hombre como persona desde un punto de vista meramente ontológico, sino más bien, se proyectaba la imagen de un ser individual como objeto – *res* (voz latina) – y por lo tanto, un «*prosôpon*» que podía hacer alusión a un sinfín de substancias. En esencia, tan variado resultaba ser el concepto que

2. José Ferrater, *Diccionario de filosofía* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1994).

3. *Ibid.* En relación con la personalidad el Diccionario filosófico de Mark Moisevich Rosental y Pavel Fedorovich lo define como el “ser humano con sus cualidades socialmente condicionadas e individualmente expresadas: intelectuales, emocionales y valitivas” (Barcelona: Ediciones Brontes, 2013), 301. Asimismo, para más información véase: Elio Sgreccia, “Persona humana y personalismo» *Cuadernos de bioética*”, *Cuadernos de Bioética*, no.1 (2013): 115-123. Christopher Gill, *Personality in Greek epic, tragedy, and philosophy: the self in dialogue* (Oxford: Carendon Pres – Oxford University, 1996).

4. Sócrates es considerado el precursor griego del término «persona» al considerarlo miembro del Estado (polis), y poseer cierta personalidad.

atisbaba desde un hombre a una silla, sin hacer ninguna distinción en la capacidad de raciocino⁵.

Corriendo el tiempo, a lo largo el pensamiento cristiano, la noción de persona tuvo un notable desarrollo conceptual, con un concluyente atisbo de influencia teológica impregnada de estrictos conceptos antropológicos. Es precisamente, en el año 325, en el Concilio de Nicea⁶, donde se debatieron los criterios de diversos teólogos referente a la noción de persona, fundamentalmente, la unión entre *persona* y *naturaleza*. Desde aquel momento, existen posturas discordantes en relación con la naturaleza de Cristo, por un lado, algunos atribuían a Cristo una *sola* naturaleza, mientras que otros, postulaban un binomio de naturalezas (humana y divina)⁷. El enfrentamiento estaba en la palestra y la beligerancia doctrinaria acababa de comenzar. Así, las aportaciones del cristianismo emergían al mismo par que la división interna, que, a título propio, atisbaban un derecho de exclusividad de cátedra.

2.1. Aportaciones del cristianismo

El dilatado desarrollo conceptual adquiere la mayor cúspide con las contribuciones del pensamiento cristiano. En palabras de Martínez Morán, el cristianismo realiza dos importantes aportaciones al término persona. La *primera*, nos ayuda a delimitar la noción «persona» al referirse únicamente a los seres humanos, excluyendo de este concepto a todo aquello que no tenga capacidad racional. Con el nuevo enfoque, muy alejado del pensamiento griego, cobra sentido la expresión de Boecio, al decir: «*persona est naturae rationalis individua substantia*»⁸, creando la

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5. Antonio Fernández-Galiano, *Derecho Natural: Introducción filosófica al Derecho* (Madrid: Ceura, 1986), 403-404.
 6. Véase: Norman Tanner, "Greek Metaphysics and the Language of the Early Church Councils: Nicea I (325) to Nicea II (787)", *Gregorianum* (2009): 52-57. Archibald Robertson, "The Council of Nicea", *Theology*, no.10 (1925): 308-319.
 7. Fue San Agustín, uno de los primeros autores que abordó profundamente el término *persona* en el pensamiento cristiano. Concretamente en su obra *De Trinitate*, hace alusión a la persona divina como negación a la "sustantia", inspirándose en la filosofía griega de Platón, Porfirio, Plotino y Aristóteles. Curiosamente, San Agustín se nutre de pensadores griegos que nada tenían que ver con el cristianismo, y así, contamina el pensamiento cristiano primitivo con ideologías paganas. José Ferrater, *Diccionario de filosofía* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1994).
 8. Capítulo III., Sobre la persona y las dos naturalezas, (Boecio 1979, 557). *Persona est naturae rationalis individua substantia*. "Boecio establece, en forma decidida y consciente, su punto de partida en el marco de una ontología de la esencia. La sustancia

identidad de «persona»⁹. El *ser* de la persona es un propio ((suyo – *suus* (adj. poses)), y por ello, la característica principal de la persona es la propiedad –*sui iuris*¹⁰.

Continúa Boecio, que existen dos tipos de *substancias*, las universales y las particulares. Las universales, no tendrían lugar en la persona al predicarse de cada una en particular «hombre», «piedra», propios de la especie y género. El hombre se muestra de manera particular y no a través de otros, siempre se realiza de manera individual y singular. En esencia, la persona se da solamente en una sustancia –natural – y de manera particular (no universal), por ello, se consagra la definición: «*persona est naturae rationalis individua substantia*»¹¹.

La siguiente contribución – segunda – que realiza el cristianismo al concepto persona, reanudando a Martínez Morán, es la dignidad (decmus). Justamente, el término «dignidad» tiene su raíz y origen en el sánscrito (*dec*), que alude a aquello que es conforme, adecuado o conveniente. No obstante, con el paso del tiempo, la lengua latina incrementa el sufijo (*mus*), y con ello, concibe la voz *decmus*¹², que derivó en *dignus* (digno)¹³ y, finaliza en el

divina carece de materia y de movimiento, dirá Boecio: por eso es algo uno y es lo que es, no habiendo lugar para accidente o movimiento alguno; será verdaderamente uno aquello en lo cual no se da ningún número, nada fuera de lo que él es. Él postula de manera explícita que persona debe ser definida dentro de la «naturaleza esencial» siendo que para él persona no es otra cosa que la individualidad de una naturaleza racional. Significa que lo individual en cuanto tal es el factor propiamente constitutivo de la persona (Greshake 2001, p.133). Dicho de otra manera, para Boecio, la esencia de la persona se constituye ya en la sustancia racional individual como tal, y no es el acto de ser específico y propio. De esa manera, los accidentes y el aspecto relacional propio y diferente de persona a persona quedan fuera de su definición”. Alfredo Culleton, “Tres aportes al concepto de persona: Boecio (substancia), Ricardo de San Víctor (Existencia) y Escoto (Incomunicabilidad)”, *Revista Española de Filosofía Medieval*, no. 17 (2010): 61-62.

9. Narciso Martínez, “Persona, dignidad humana en investigaciones médicas”, en *biotecnología, derecho y dignidad humana*, Coord. Narciso Martínez Morán (Granada: Comares, 2003), 7-8.
10. Ferrater, *Diccionario de filosofía*, 2761.
11. Culleton, *Tres aportes al concepto de persona: Boecio (substancia), Ricardo de San Víctor (Existencia) y Escoto (Incomunicabilidad)*, 61.
12. José Contreras, “The Hidden Details of Human Dignity”, *Vox Juris*, no. 37 (2019): 69.
13. Elisabeth Fenton, “Growing old with dignity: a concept analysis.” *Nursing Older People*, no.4 (2002): 19-21. Elaine Mains, “Concept clarification in professional practice—dignity”, *Journal of advanced nursing*, no.5 (1994): 947-953. Vanessa Griffin-Heslin, “An analysis of the concept dignity”, *Accident and emergency nursing*, no. 4 (2005): 251-257. Siv Söderberg, “Struggling for dignity: The meaning of women’s experiences of living with fibromyalgia”, *Qualitative health research*, no.5 (1999): 575-587. Jane

castellano como dignidad¹⁴. Los individuos humanos –*todos*– son personas, la proposición otorga al ser humano grandeza, honor y respeto entre los suyos. Con una atenta mirada en la doctrina, San Anselmo, en su obra¹⁵ – *Monologion*, § 78 – diferencia entre «persona», y «substancia», declarando: “Se habla sólo de persona con respecto a una naturaleza racional individual, y de la substancia con respecto a los individuos, la mayor parte de los cuales subsisten en la pluralidad”. Por otro lado, Santo Tomás, ahondó profundamente en la noción de persona en muchas de sus obras, en una de ellas, *1 sent. 29 1C, Cont. Gent., III, 110 y 112*, y especialmente en, *S. theol., I, q. XXIX*, expone, que la individualidad de la persona se encuentra en la substancia, y esta, se individualiza por sí misma, siguiendo muy de cerca la tesis de Boecio¹⁶. Considera, continuando con San Anselmo, que los accidentes están excluidos de la individualización de la substancia¹⁷, de ahí, las substancias individuales deben de recibir un nombre particular, como: hipóstasis, o también, sustancia primaria.

Por lo citado, todos los individuos son capaces de controlar sus actos, y operar de manera autónoma – *substancias racionales* – se le llama «persona»¹⁸. A la cita tenemos que añadir la esencia espiritual en la persona (*persona significat id quod est perfectissimum in tota natura, scilicet, subsistens in rationali natura*), elemento fundamental de la personalidad, y, por tanto, la finalidad cardinal de la naturaleza¹⁹. En efecto, la

Haddock, “Towards further clarification of the concept ‘dignity’”, *Journal of advanced nursing*, no. 5 (1996): 924-931.

14. Iñigo De Miguel, “Consideraciones sobre el concepto de dignidad humana”, *Anuario de filosofía del derecho*, no.21 (2004): 205.
15. Anselme. *Monologion*, Tomo I (París: 1986). M. Corbin. L’oeuvre de S. Anselme de Cantorbéry. Benoit Mathot, “Las metamorfosis de la apología en el pensamiento teológico de Paul Tillich”. *Cuadernos de Teología*, 6 (2014):8-32. Vignaux, Paul, “Nécessité des raisons dans le Monologion”, *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 64 (1980): 3-25. Viola, Colonna, *Foi et vérité chez saint Anselme*. En R. Foreville (Ed.), *Les mutations socio-culturelles autour des XIe-XIIe siècles* (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1984): 583-593.
16. Diego García, “Persona y comunidad. De Boecio a Tomás de Aquino”, *Cuadernos Salmantinos de Filosofía*, no 11 (1984): 64-106. Mirko Skarica, y Peri Hermeneias, «Algunas divergencias entre los comentarios de Boecio y Tomás de Aquino», *Philosophica*, no. 2 (2015):143. José García, “La consignificatio verbal: Ammonio, Bioecio y Tomás de Aquino”. *Revista Española de Filosofía Medieval*, no. 19 (2012): 87-100. Jean-Pierre Torrell, “Iniciación a Tomas de Aquino”, *Pensamientos*, no.64 (2008): 181.
17. Boecio decía: “alia substantiae sunt, aliae accidentes, et videmus personas in accidentibus non posse constitui”.
18. Ferrater, *Diccionario de filosofía*, 2761.
19. Catalina Bermúdez, “Naturaleza, Gracia y Gloria”, *Pensamiento y Cultura*, no.4 (2000): 251.

jerarquía radica en la concepción de un ser supremo creador del universo y del hombre, pensamiento que conceptualiza en la ida de «espiritualidad» al tener conocimiento de su existencia y la necesidad de contribuir al culto por palabras y acciones. Agrega Occam, en su obra *Summa totius logicae* 66, que la persona es *una substancia* intelectual completa y eso hace que no dependa de otros *suppositum*, donde es un género del que el *supuesto* es la especie, y no una mera identificación con el *supuesto*, con ello se llega a ser un “supuesto intelectual cuya naturaleza individual es completa”²⁰. En consecuencia, con el mero conocimiento o ideario de un Ser Superior – *Deus* – acompañado de la posibilidad de debatir la existencia y cuestionar sus atributos en el fuero interno (*conciencia*) o en grupos, es sin duda, la principal diferencia existente entre los seres.

Por tanto, la ideología y las aportaciones de Ricardo De San Víctor, resultaron relevantes y de profusa influencia en el pensamiento cristiano de occidente, al incorporar la diferencia entre *sistere* y *ex-sistere*. La persona se caracteriza en su *sistere*²¹, su naturaleza, aunque no tenga ninguna incidencia en su *independencia* al recibir de Dios su naturaleza o creación (*ex-sistere*). A partir de ahí, se rompe la accedida dicotomía entre persona y substancia. Y, en consecuencia, persona es la propiedad que convive con uno, es su fuero interno, mientras que la sustancia es la propiedad compartida de su uso común, como bien se expresa:

Sub nomine personae, similiter subiten lligitur quaedam proprietates quae non convenit nisi unius soli... Proprietates individualis, singularis, incommunicabilis²².

Sin duda, es el génesis del otorgamiento de la *existencia* por encima de la *substancia*, enfrentado los (*duos*) conceptos, donde *substancia* es lo común y *persona* lo incommunicable²³. Trascendentalmente, San Agustín, Santo Tomás

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20. Ferrater, *Diccionario de filosofía*, 2761.
 21. José Conill, “La persona como realidad moral en perspectiva zubiriana”, *Actes del XVI Congrés Valencià de Filosofia* (2006): 229-242. Roberto Caballero, “La persona de acuerdo con Duns Escoto: Una lectura desde la perspectiva neuroética”, *Ludus Vitalis*, no. 26 (2018):183-206. Alfredo Culleton, “O conceito de pessoa em Ricardo de São Vitor”, *Revista Internacional de Filosofia*, no.2 (2011): 11-26. Celestino Carrodegua, “El concepto de persona a la luz del Vaticano II. Una reflexión desde el Derecho”, *Estudios Eclesiásticos. Revista de investigación e información teológica y canónica*, no.82 (2007): 825-841. Fernando Ortiz, “Brevisíma “Historia de la filosofía” desde la modernidad hasta el siglo XX”, *Revista Digital AION. Arborecencias del pensamiento* (2018):48.
 22. De Trinitate IV, cap. Vi, 43.
 23. Culleton, *Tres aportes al concepto de persona: Boecio (substancia), Ricardo de San Víctor (Existencia) y Escoto (Incommunicabilidad)*, 60.

y Buenaventura²⁴, se adentran copiosamente en el análisis-reflexión, de manera detenida, en la noción «persona» con una profusa búsqueda analítica del término. Siempre, con una mirada atenta al origen ontológico.

2.2. *La Luz de la dignidad*

Indiscutiblemente, el sustantivo que otorga mayor albor conceptual al término persona es *dignitas*. El Vocablo *dec-nus*, en palabras de Cicerón, no es otra cosa que el objeto unificador de los ciudadanos serenos, que todo buen ciudadano de vida ordenada propugna al buscar la paz:

Qui est igitur propositum his rei publicae gubernatoribus quod intueri et quo cursum suum derigere debeant? Id quod est praestantissimum maximeque optabile omnibus sanis et bonis et beatis, cum dignitate otium²⁵.

En efecto, resulta crucial concebir a la persona como un ser individual dotado de racionalidad, pues dicha cualidad-capacidad es más identificativa del ser humano a diferencia de otros seres naturales. Por tanto, se abandona el tan arraigado concepto romano de *sui iuris vs aliene iuris* por un nuevo pensamiento, donde «todos» los hombres, incluyendo mujeres, niños, esclavos, serán iguales, pues la dignidad no concibe niveles ni jerarquías. Los obsoletos *status (civitatis-libertatis)* son enterrados, dando lugar al ideario donde todos son personas todos son iguales²⁶. Sin embargo, no podemos obviar que el concepto no adquiere una dimensión consumada hasta el siglo pasado.

El cristianismo primitivo abanderó la «novum» idolología al predicar las palabras del Apóstol Pedro, “Con certeza percibo que Dios no es parcial” (Nueva Concordancia Strong Exhaustiva). Por tanto, desde el punto de vista filosófico, y a mayor abundamiento a fin de tener una completa noción de la *persona*, es necesario incorporar características éticas y *psicológicas*²⁷, pues la célebre frase de Boecio, “*rationalis naturae ...*”, resulta exigua y presenta algunas limitaciones. Por ende, las nuevas incorpora-

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24. Manuel Lázaro, “Filosofía e Espiritualidad en el Itenerarium mentis in Deum de San Buenaventura”, *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 64, no.1 (2008): 105-136.
 25. Tomás Nótari, “La teoría del Estado de Cicerón en su “Oratio pro Sestio”, *Revista Estudios Históricos y Jurídicos*, no. 32 (2010). Véase: Joseph Azize, “Human dignity and euthanasia law”, *U. Notre Dame Austl. L. Rev*, no.9 (2007): 47.
 26. Martínez, *Persona, dignidad humana en investigaciones médicas*, 7-8.
 27. Cfr. Antonio Fernández-Galiano, *Introducción filosófica al Derecho* (Madrid, Universitas, 1995), 404.405.

ciones acrecientan la complejidad de la noción persona, pues obliga a no soslayar los novedosos factores en mente. Precisamente, añade Benito de Castro, que “así, dentro de la perspectiva ético-filosófica la personalidad se residencia en la autoconciencia, el autodominio, la subjetividad moral y la responsabilidad. Y si la contemplamos desde el punto de vista sociológico – añade – «se hace coincidir con el conjunto de papeles o funciones que desempeña cada individuo dentro de la comunidad »”²⁸.

En esencia, es innegable la bizarra dificultad de acotar un término tan amplio como “persona”, máxime, por las numerosas anfibologías existentes alrededor de ella. Sin embargo, no podemos rehuir, que todas – y cada una de ellas – intentan expresar la misma idea y aludir a idénticas situaciones, aunque contemplen diferentes significados. De ahí, la valía de operar el término preciso. Llegados a este punto se desprende que numerosos autores optan por utilizar el *know-how* como *individuo*, *hombre*, *naturaleza humana* etc., y en algunas ocasiones se manejan indistintamente. Debido a lo cual, se crea una apariencia de igualdad, queriendo decir lo mismo empero, con otras palabras. A este respecto, y con un mayor ahondamiento en la dignidad humana conceptual, y con el deseo de alejar sinónimos a otros seres, Iñigo de Miguel, considera que la dignidad del hombre se basa en tres hechos, a saber, la capacidad para emitir juicios morales, la libertad para decidir sus actuaciones, y finalmente su intelectualidad²⁹. A tal efecto, queda demostrada la inexistencia de la dignidad fuera de la naturaleza humana. Indudablemente, es difícil definir la dignidad debido, en un primer plano, a la polisemia del término³⁰ y la confusión que a veces se introduce en su uso indiscriminadamente. Y, todo ello, debemos de añadir, sin necesidad siquiera asumir los postulados de Ruth Macklin³¹.

De manera perecida, sostiene Marta Albert que el estado de cosas descriptivo por excelencia de la persona sería su ser digno “(«ser D de P»)”. Y, es aquí donde reside la contribución a la biojurídica al surgir el

28. Benito De Castro, *Lecciones de Teoría del Derecho y Derecho Natural* (Madrid: Univesitas, 1999), 272.

29. Cfr. Iñigo De Miguel, I, “Consideraciones sobre el concepto de dignidad humana”, *Anuario de filosofía del derecho*, no 21 (2004): 199.

30. Véase: Iñigo De Miguel, I, “¿Modificar o no modificar el genoma de nuestra descendencia? Algunos comentarios a raíz de la Declaración del Comité de Bioética de España sobre la edición genómica en humanos”, *Revista de Bioética y Derecho*, no. 47 (2019): 55-75.

31. Ruth Macklin, “Dignity is a useless concept”, *British Medical Journal*, no. 327 (2003): 1419-1420.

interrogante si el estado cosas puede fundamentar otros estados de cosas, a saber, si es indispensible jurídicamente la vida humana³².

En definitiva, es larga la historia filosófica que ha sacudido el concepto de persona, donde los logros conseguidos han ido a la par que los errores cometidos, de ahí, la enorme empresa de analizar completamente todos los avances histórico-filosóficos de la noción de persona. En virtud de ello, nos centraremos en los hitos más significativos en el desarrollo conceptual de persona.

3. Especie humana y singularidad

El *primer* engranaje para el adecuado concepto de persona es la individualidad dentro de la especie humana. Como muy acertadamente afirma Martínez Morán, “la «persona» es «un» «individuo» de la «especie humana»”.³³ Esta definición tan significativa nos hace ver que *es persona* todo aquel que pertenece a la especie humana³⁴, sin mayores disquisiciones. Esta clasificación no obedece sencillamente a criterios estrictamente lingüísticos, sino más bien, a la concepción de las características identificativas de la persona con respecto de otras especies. Al igual, es un «individuo» diferente a los individuos de su misma especie, a saber, sexo, altura, color, habilidades ... Por todo ello, no podemos caer en el error o imprecisión de razonar que una «persona» es un individuo, pues cada persona es diferente, ni tan siquiera los gemelos son iguales³⁵.

Oportunamente, Moreno Villa, afirma: “Sostener que el hombre es una persona es transitar más allá de su diferencia categorial, y afirmar que su singularidad es única, insustituible y no intercambiable; precisamente esto es la unicidad de la persona. Esto es, decir que el hombre que es un individuo es caer en la indistinción y en lo puramente numérico; en cambio de la persona se predica precisamente su distinción en la genérica indistinción de la *naturaleza humana*... pues cada persona es única e insustituible. De aquí que podamos afirmar que una persona no es simple-

32. Marta Albert, “Vida humana, persona y derecho. Fundamentos para una fenomenología biojurídica”, *Pensar el tiempo presente: homenaje al profesor Jesús Ballesteros Llompart* (Barcelona: Tirant lo Blanch, 2018), 1445.

33. Martínez, *Persona, dignidad humana en investigaciones médicas*, 10.

34. Cfr. Myriam Hoyos, “De nuevo sobre el concepto de persona en persona y Derecho”, *Estudio en homenaje al profesor Javier Hervada*, no.41 (1999): 10.

35. Juan Manuel Alba, “Análisis del término reproducción asistida”, *Revista de Derecho y Genoma Humano. Genética, Biotecnología y Medicina Avanzada*, no.46 (2017): 45-57.

mente un individuo, contra lo que algunos piensen”³⁶. Si continuamos su discurso matizaremos que la individualidad también existe en otras especies como los animales y vegetales, y ello, no es una distinción única e inclusiva del ser humano y propia de ellos, aunque lo citado no es óbice para concluir su asociación individual.

En esencia, de sostener la anterior afirmación nos llevaría a otra aparente paridad entre *persona* y *naturaleza humana*, y es que todas las personas pertenecen a la naturaleza humana (en su conjunto). Con dicha premisa no podemos errar al sellar precipitadamente que una simple identificación con la naturaleza es suficiente para recibir tal categoría, pues cada persona reconoce que es *mucho más que una naturaleza*³⁷. Pues, no es solo – uno más – es inigualable e irrepetible entre todos. Básicamente, los grandes genios de la humanidad reciben tal categoría por sus características extraordinarias, únicas en el mundo y en la historia, y es la singularidad de sus virtudes artísticas³⁸, intelectuales, deportivas o de cualquier otra índole, indispensablemente, al adquirir en términos explicativos el paralelismo mencionado.

4. Sujeto-sustancial y racional-trascendente

Resulta indisociable el «sujeto» de la «persona» al converger conjuntamente y entenderse como «ser individual» de las realidades clásicas basadas en la teoría del objeto – entidad metafísica – a diferencia del punto de vista gnoseológico (sujeto para un objeto basado en el fenómeno del conocimiento)³⁹. En palabras de Martínez Morán, la persona “es un «sujeto» y un «yo» sustancial... Cada humano posee «una unidad e identidad propias por referencia a su sustancialidad individual, que es subsistente, estable, permanente, unificante irreductible a la suma o yuxtaposición de todas sus propiedades”⁴⁰. No se puede afirmar categóricamente que la persona sea sujeto pues no es sustancia que se posea o se adquiera, más bien, hace referencia al propio «yo personal». Todo ello, en tanto en cuanto, se habla de un sujeto con raciocinio, pensante, consciente, y con autonomía. Así,

36. Mariano Moreno, «Perona», en *Diccionario de Pensamiento Contemporáneo* (Madrid: Editorial San Pablo), 898.

37. Roberto Andorno, *Bioética y dignidad de la persona* (Madrid: Tecnos, 2012), 63.

38. Margarita, Mauri, “Neovirtud: las insuficiencias de la recuperación de un concepto”, *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofía* 76, no.1 (2020): 55.

39. Ferrater, *Diccionario de filosofía*, 745.

40. Martínez, *Persona, dignidad humana en investigaciones médicas*, 12.

la persona no es un cúmulo de circunstancias que lo identifican como tal, más bien, es persona por lo que es y no por lo que posea⁴¹.

Y, finalmente, “la persona es «yo relacional y trascendente», es decir, cognoscente y consciente de cuanto le rodea, porque no existe un sujeto aislado. Cabe afirmar, por tanto, que la persona humana es «un yo», consciente considerado el núcleo medular de su autoconciencia en cuanto que constituye una unidad persona, denominado por Kant como la «unidad de la apercepción pura»⁴². La persona, de toda la creación, es el único capaz de interrelacionarse, comunicarse, y prorrumpir de sí mismo para crear lazos de amistad con otras personas. De esta manera, abandona completamente una aparente soledad⁴³ – inexistente – para integrarse y formar parte de la sociedad, de otras personas (colectividad).

5. Ser espiritual

Adentrados en este nivel es imprescindible matizar que la persona no es solamente un ser físico propio de la naturaleza, sino que también es un individuo espiritual⁴⁴. La persona es única, no sencillamente por sus características fisionómicas, gustos y actividades que realiza, sino también por la intimidad de su ser, al convertirse en un individuo único singular y exclusivo, su «ser espíritu»⁴⁵. Indiscutiblemente, la persona es el único «ser» autoconsciente que analiza su propia existencia, busca explicaciones, formular preguntas e inquiriere respuestas. Y, sobre todo, hallar sentido, y respuestas a las grandes cuestiones de la vida, muy lejos de lo que pueden optar otros seres⁴⁶. Sin el menor tapujo Mounier, la describe como: «(...) un ser espiritual constituido como tal por una forma de subsistencia y de independencia en su ser; mantiene esta subsistencia con su adhesión a una jerarquía de valores libremente adoptados, asimilados

41. Andorno, *Bioética y dignidad de la persona*, 65.

42. Martínez, *Persona, dignidad humana en investigaciones médicas*, 12.

43. Moreno, *Diccionario de Pensamiento Contemporáneo*, 12.

44. David Carr, *Spirituality, Philosophy and Education* (London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2003), 188-190. Robert Blomquist, “Law and Spirituality: Some First Thoughts on an Emerging Relation”, *UMKC L. Rev* 71, (2019): 583. Reg Urbanowski, “Spirituality, daily practice, and the occupational performance model”, *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy* 61, no. 2 (1994): 88-94. Julian Stern, “Every person matters: enabling spirituality education for nurses”, *Journal of clinical nursing* 15, no. 7 (2006): 897-904. Njoki Wane, *Spirituality: A philosophy and a research tool* (Leiden: Brill Sense, 211), 67-82.

45. Cfr. Claude Bruaire, *L’être et l’esprit* (Paris:PUF, 1983).

46. Martínez, *Persona, dignidad humana en investigaciones médicas*, 15.

y vividos en un compromiso responsable y en una constante conversión; unifica así toda su actividad en la libertad y desarrolla por añadidura, a impulsos de actos creadores, la singularidad de su vocación»⁴⁷. La exclusividad e individualidad es incuestionable, y muestra de ellos, es la lectura del presente trabajo.

5.1 Una visión desde la antropología filosófica de Max Scheler: el espíritu

Sostiene Scheler que el concepto persona está íntimamente arraigado al de espíritu, pues literalmente llega a decir es el «centro del espíritu»⁴⁸, en el cual, se desarrolla la actividad con una clara manifestación al exterior y tiene una proyección en el mundo, eso sí, mediante la forma de existencia de espíritu⁴⁹.

Evidentemente, como apunta Marta Albert⁵⁰, el espíritu entendido por Scheler difiere mucho del que habitualmente se utiliza. En efecto, «si bien incluye el concepto de “razón” aparte del “pensamiento conceptual” comprende determinado tipo de “intuición”, la intuición de fenómenos originarios o esencias, además de cierta clase de actos emocionales el maravillarse, la dicha y la desesperación». Por ello, desde la perspectiva espiritual el hombre tiene la capacidad de transformar su «medio» en *mundo*. El medio es el ambiente (hábitat) con lo que cuenta la persona en la cosmovisión persona⁵¹. En definitiva, toda acción personal es, una acción espiritual. Pues, la acción espiritual se caracteriza por la realización de bienes y valores, por consiguiente, la persona tiene una incidencia directa en los valores morales y no tanto en la ética material. A raíz de ello, la persona es entendida de manera contundente como buena o mala, no en sí mismo como un valor, sino como la depositaria de este para su proyección en el mundo⁵².

5.2 Perspectiva europea

No han sido pocos los pronunciamientos de los Tribunales con relación al concepto de persona. Precisamente, uno de los de mayor repercusión y

47. Emmanuel Mounier, *Manifiesto al servicio del personalismo* (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1992): 625.

48. Max Scheler, *Gesammelte Werke, Bouvier Verlag* (Bonn: Manfred S. Frings, 2000).

49. Para más información, véase: Diamantino Martins, “Frente a Max Scheler: Dialéctica e Existência”, *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 4, no. 1 (1948): 53-64.

50. Marta Albert, M, “Vida humana, persona y derecho. Fundamentos para una fenomenología biojurídica”, en *Pensar el tiempo presente: homenaje al profesor Jesús Ballesteros Llompart* (Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch, 2018), 1445.

51. *Ibid.*, 1445.

52. *Ibid.*, 1448.

aporte doctrinario resultó ser la resolución del Tribunal Europeo de Derecho Humanos en el caso de la Sra. Vo⁵³. Dicho Tribunal reconoce que tanto el embrión como el feto pertenece a la especie humana, y, por ende, requiere de protección jurídica, pero no lo encuadra en el concepto de “persona”. Continúa el Tribunal europeo “que no es posible, en el actual estado de cosas, responder en abstracto a la pregunta de cuando un niño no nacido es una persona en el sentido del artículo 2 del Convenio de Roma”⁵⁴. Sin embargo, la comunidad científica entiende que el feto es un ser vivo, con un código genético propio, por ello, que debamos considerarlo persona.

Sin mayores equívocos, Europa ha liderado la defensa de los Derechos Humanos y así lo demuestran los logros del Consejo de Europa, al igual, que la jurisprudencia del TEDH. De la misma manera, el Convenio Europeo de Derecho Humanos y la jurisprudencia procedente del Tribunal de Estrasburgo que sirven de referente a nivel mundial⁵⁵. Asimismo, el Tratado de Lisboa estipula que “la Unión se fundamenta en los valores de respeto de la dignidad Humana” (art.1), y, por ende, esos derechos son “inviolables e inalienables”. Por tal motivo, la dignidad y los derechos humanos son valores que preceden a cualquier jurisdicción (...) y la imposibilidad de ser modificados es la auténtica garantía. Así, al utilizar el Tratado el término dignidad humana en singular sostiene que es propio del hombre en cuenta tal⁵⁶.

En definitiva, tanto es el aporte europeo al concepto y protección de persona que algunos afirman que el «eurocentrismo es antropocentrismo»⁵⁷.

6. Conclusiones

Por todo lo reseñado aún queda latente la posibilidad o imposibilidad de definir o al menos acercarnos a una precisión, lo más exacta

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53. Para más información, véase: Marta Albert, “¿Hacia un bioderecho universal? Bioderecho en acción y funcionalización del valor de la vida humana”, *Cuadernos de Bioética* 2 (2013); 226-227.
 54. Vo v. France, App. N° 53924/00, Sentencia de TEDH (Grand Chamber) de 08/07/2004, Reports of Judgements and Decisions 2004-VI.
 55. Convenio para la protección de los Derechos Humanos y de las Libertades Fundamentales, de 4 de noviembre de 1950. Posteriormente, se ha completado a través de diversos protocolos. Joaquin Esteve, *El Tribunal de Justicia de Luxemburgo como garante de los derechos fundamentales*. (Madrid: Dykinson, 2013), 13.
 56. Carmen Lázaro, “El concepto de persona como elemento clave de la identidad europea: el caso de la maternidad subrogada”, *Cuadernos Europeos de Deusto*, no.2 (2019); 193-194.
 57. Francesco D’Agostino, “Raíces y futuro de la identidad europea”, *Personas y Derecho* 49 (2003); 33-41.

posible, del concepto *persona humana*, pues la realidad nos muestra la enorme dificultad de delimitar un término tan rico y a la misma vez, con tantas ambigüedades. La persona no es una *res* más, o simplemente un concepto de *alguien*, ni tan siquiera una substancia individual y singular. Indudablemente, la independencia de la persona es, por ende, aquella cosa más que puede obtener *per se* en sus estado esencial, único, irrepetible, inigualable, de la cual deriva su dignidad⁵⁸. Y, es precisamente el sustento de la auténtica relaciona de igualdad en la sociedad, sin ningún tipo de limitaciones o restricciones. En efecto, es evidente que la noción de persona nos explica que una persona es, precisamente, el resultado una idea unitaria de ser persona. Un pensamiento que tiene la capacidad de comprender, con elementos, pero de manera individual ninguno de ellos tiene el sentido independiente del conjunto grupal.

Por lo analizado, se aprecia un término que algunos dan por acotado en su precesión lingüística (Mounier), al pensar que – persona – no es definible, y todas sus explicaciones son y serán imprecisas, hasta cierto punto indeterminadas, y por supuesto, aproximadas.

En la actualidad, en el campo del bioderecho, y especialmente la bioética, el concepto de persona adquiere una especial importancia⁵⁹ pese a no estar completamente conceptualizado su término. Con el objetivo de no quedarnos estancando en la busca de la definición exacta, se procedió a su clasificación, como son: el respeto y su inviolabilidad (dignidad).

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58. Culleton, *Tres aportes al concepto de persona: Boecio (substancia), Ricardo de San Víctor (Existencia) y Escoto (Incomunicabilidad)*, 70.
59. Evandro Agazzi, *Introuzione, en Bioética e persona* (Milán: Angeli, 1993): 8. Francesco D’Agostino, *La bioética, le biotecnologie e il problema dell’identità della persona, en Bioetica nella prospettiva della filosofia del diritto* (Torino: Giappichelli, 1996). José Luis Del Barco, “Bioética y dignidad humana”, *Consideraciones filosófico-teológicas sobre un tema actual* (1992): 9-12. Eduardo Forment, *Principios básicos de bioética* (Madrid: Ediciones Palabra, 1990). Gonzalo Miranda, “Fundamentos éticos de la bioética personalista”, *Cuadernos de bioética* (1994): 49. Vittorio Possenti, “La bioética allaricercadei principi: la persona”, *Humana iura de derechos humanos* 3 (1993): 143. María Vila-Coro, *Introducción a la biojurídica* (Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1995), 21. Robert Spaemann, “No existe el derecho a la vida”, *Persona y Bioética* 3, no 1 (1998).

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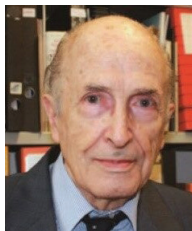
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In Memoriam



In Memoriam

ROQUE DE AGUIAR PEREIRA CABRAL, SJ (1927-2021)



1. Vida

O Prof. Doutor Padre Roque de Aguiar Pereira Cabral, SJ, nasceu no dia 5 de Março de 1927, na cidade do Lobito, Angola, filho do senhor Engenheiro Gonçalo de Vasconcelos Pereira Cabral, na altura Director do Caminho de Ferro de Benguela, e de Dona Maria Carlota de Melo Ferreira de Aguiar. Como os seus irmãos, terminado o ensino primário, veio estudar para o Instituto Nun'Álvares, em Santo Tirso, também conhecido pelo nome de Colégio das Caldinhas, da Companhia de Jesus, Ordem em que, ao longo da história, e, concretamente no século XX, professaram vários membros da família Cabral, nomeadamente um tio paterno, o Padre João Cabral, e vários primos.

Terminado o sétimo ano, correspondente ao actual 12º, Roque Cabral resolveu fazer-se jesuíta. A 18 de Outubro de 1944 entrou no noviciado da Companhia, na altura em Santa Marinha da Costa, Guimarães. De 1946 a 1948 fez o juniorado, período em que estudou Humanidades Clássicas e Modernas, e, de 1948 a 1951, estudou Filosofia, em Braga. Fez a Teologia em San Cugat del Vallés, na Catalunha, de 1951 a 1955, tendo sido ordenado sacerdote em 1954. Depois do regresso a Portugal, foi destinado ao Colégio São João de Brito, em Lisboa, em cujo desenvolvimento teve papel importante o seu tio Padre João Cabral, onde ensinou

Religião e Moral¹. Em 1962, foi colocado em Braga, na Faculdade de Filosofia, onde iniciou a docência ensinando fundamentalmente duas Unidades Curriculares: “Ética Geral” e “Ética Especial”, que leccionou até à sua jubilação, em 2000.

Depois de várias estadas na Alemanha e em Itália, doutorou-se em Teologia na Universidade Gregoriana, em Roma, em 1966, com a tese *Natureza e método da Teologia segundo Cristóvão Gil*. Em 1972 tornou-se Professor Catedrático de Ética na Faculdade de Filosofia de Braga, nesta data já integrada na Universidade Católica Portuguesa. Para além desta disciplina, regeu vários anos “Teologia Filosófica”, dando assim largas ao seu gosto pela Teologia, que dizia ser uma paixão da juventude. No Pólo do Porto da Universidade Católica Portuguesa, regeu “Filosofia do Direito”. Leccionou cursos da sua especialidade nos Mestrados e doutoramentos, tendo orientado teses nestes dois ciclos de estudo. Para além da docência, foi muito solicitado para participar em júris de mestrado, de doutoramento e de provas de agregação.

Ocupou o cargo de Director da Faculdade em exercício, nos anos de 1975 e 1976. Fora da Faculdade teve dois cargos que merecem ser referidos. Por indicação superior da Companhia, foi nomeado Director e Colaborador da Enciclopédia *Verbo*, e, depois, das Enciclopédias *Polis* e da *Logos*. Escreveu centenas de entradas para estas Enciclopédias; para dar uma ideia, basta referir que só para a *Logos* escreveu 191. O trabalho nas enciclopédias teve duas consequências. A primeira tem a ver com o estilo de escrita: o Prof. Roque Cabral apurou uma escrita rigorosa e sintética que o acompanhou em todos os outros textos que publicou. A segunda consequência: o trabalho nas enciclopédias consumiu-lhe o tempo que poderia ter consagrado a outro tipo de textos, mais desenvolvidos, e em que não fosse obrigado a uma tão grande dispersão de temas. Essa dispersão não foi, a maior parte das vezes, uma opção pessoal, mas o resultado de ter de escrever não só as entradas que lhe eram distribuídos, mas as que outros colaboradores recusavam ou não entregavam a tempo. Para se fazer uma ideia do que teria sido a obra do Prof. Roque Cabral, se não tivesse sido nomeado para a coordenação das Enciclopédias, veja-se,

1. São desta época os trabalhos que culminaram nos livros *Apontamentos de religião: para o 6º ano dos liceus* (como manuscrito). Lisboa: Secretariado Nacional do Ensino Religioso Médio, 1959, *Apontamentos de religião: para o 7º ano dos liceus*. Lisboa: Livraria Morais Editora, 1959 e *Cristo e a sua Igreja. Curso de Religião para o 6º ano dos Liceus*. Lisboa: Secretariado Nacional do Ensino Religioso Médio, 1962.

por exemplo, o artigo “A relevância antropológica das fontes da moralidade”², de 1965.

O segundo cargo de grande importância que assumiu foi o de Director do curso de Direito no pólo do Porto da Universidade Católica. Tendo sido nomeado para a comissão instaladora deste Pólo, pelo Conselho Superior da Universidade em 1978, assumiu a direcção do Curso de Direito em 1984, cargo em que se manteve até 1997. O curso de Direito do Centro Regional de Porto da UCP muito deve à acção do Prof. Roque Cabral.

Nos dias 30 e 31 de Maio de 2000, ano da sua jubilação, o Prof. Padre Roque Cabral foi homenageado com um colóquio organizado pela Faculdade de Filosofia da UCP, em que apresentaram comunicações os professores de Ética das Universidades públicas portuguesas, e três jesuítas estrangeiros seus amigos: Augusto Hortal SJ, professor da Universidade de Comillas, Madrid, e Paul Valadier SJ e Pierre-Jean Labarrière SJ, professores do Instituto Católico de Paris. As actas foram publicadas em livro com o título *Temas fundamentais de ética*³. Depois da jubilação, o Professor continuou a escrever e a publicar, a dar cursos em mestrados e doutoramentos e a orientar teses, mantendo uma curiosidade intelectual insaciável até ao fim da vida. Faleceu no dia 25 de Junho e está sepultado no Cemitério de Monte d’Arcos em Braga.

O Professor Padre Roque Cabral, SJ, foi membro da Sociedade Científica da Universidade Católica Portuguesa; sendo um dos pioneiros da Bioética em Portugal pertenceu ao grupo fundador do “Centro de Estudos de Bioética”. No dia 10 de Junho de 1990, foi condecorado com o grau de Comendador da Ordem da Instrução Pública pelo Presidente da República, Dr. Mário Soares. Em 2016, recebeu o “Prémio Fé e Liberdade”, do Instituto de Estudos Políticos da Universidade Católica Portuguesa.

2. Pensamento

A exposição que se segue é uma síntese do pensamento moral do autor e, de um modo particular, da sua arquitectura no que tem de fundamental.

2. *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*. 21(1965): 369-379.

3. José Henrique Silveira de Brito (Coord.), *Temas fundamentais de ética*. Actas do Colóquio de Homenagem ao Prof. P. Roque Cabral, S.J. (Braga: Publicações da Faculdade de Filosofia, 2001). Neste *In Memoriam* retomamos, com alterações, grande parte do texto “Vida e Pensamento do Professor Roque Cabral” que apresentámos no colóquio de homenagem ao Prof. Roque Cabral, realizado no ano da sua jubilação, 2000.

Numa entrada redigida em 1972, para a *Enciclopédia Verbo*, o Prof. Roque Cabral distingue três sentidos no termo “Moral”. Numa primeira acepção, no masculino, o Moral, ou a Realidade moral, “é o agir livre do homem, confrontado com a norma que o rege”, é a decisão livre e os actos que dela resultam “perante o bem e o mal próprios do homem enquanto tal, enquanto racional e livre”⁴. Deriva daqui que só o homem é moral, é afectado pela moralidade; as coisas, em si mesmas, não são morais, mas amorais.

Num segundo sentido, a Moral, no feminino e com artigo definido, significa o “conjunto de normas de conduta, quer em geral, quer aquelas que são reconhecidas por determinado grupo humano [...] ou propostas por determinado autor, corrente ou religião”⁵. Numa terceira acepção, “a Filosofia Moral ou Ética” é a disciplina filosófica que “elucida e justifica racionalmente a realidade moral sob os seus diversos aspectos”⁶.

Atendendo a estas três acepções, é evidente que o autor parte “da convicção de que a Ética é a disciplina antropológica por excelência. Basta, para o confirmar, recordar a afirmação preambular a toda a filosofia moral, segundo a qual só é moral o acto “humano”; e, mais ainda, a posição tomista, que perfilhamos, de que todo o acto humano é moral. É, pois, no domínio moral que o homem se define mais radicalmente. Por isso mesmo, dentro dos limites da razão, será na Ética que se encontrará a mais funda resposta à pergunta sobre o homem”⁷.

Feitas estas distinções, duas questões se podem formular: o autor distingue moral e ética? E que características tem este saber filosófico referido na última acepção do termo Moral?

Se dermos alguma atenção ao modo como, no texto referido, é exposta a última acepção, é evidente a distinção entre Ética e Moral, embora essa distinção não seja habitual nos escritos, tal como não era nas aulas do Prof. Roque Cabral.

Quanto ao tipo de saber que a Ética é. Para o autor, a Ética é uma ciência, não uma arte, do dever ser, do a-fazer, e não apenas do ser; trata

4. “Moral”. In: *Enciclopédia Verbo*, vol. 13, col. 1323.

5. “Moral”. In: *Enciclopédia Verbo*, vol. 13, col. 1324.

6. Ibid.

7. “A relevância antropológica das fontes da moralidade”. *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*. 21(1965): 369. Cf. sobre esta problemática “Acto humano”. In: *Enciclopédia Verbo*, vol. 1, cols. 334-336, “Indiferentes (actos)”. *Enciclopédia Verbo*, vol. 10, col. 1274-1276 e *Enciclopédia Logos*, vol. 2, cols. 1398-1400 [repete o texto da *Enciclopédia Verbo*] e “Amoral, Amoralidade e Amoralismo”. In: *Enciclopédia Verbo*, vol. 2, 1-2 e *Enciclopédia Logos*, vol. 1, cols. 229-230.

do agir, da praxis, enuncia as normas do agir e não se limita a constatar a existência dessas normas.

Para além do mais, como a dimensão moral é central no ser humano e irreduzível a qualquer outra, é a ciência que a estuda subordina todas as outras disciplinas que tratam do humano.

Resumindo: a Moral estuda dois grupos de questões: um à volta da pergunta “que é o moral?”, pergunta fundamental tratada em especial depois de Kant; o outro grupo anda à volta da pergunta “quais são as realidades morais? que realidades, e em que condições, são boas ou más?”, historicamente mais antiga que a primeira⁸. É à volta destas duas questões que desenvolveremos a nossa exposição do pensamento de Roque Cabral.

Como é comum, o autor parte do facto de os humanos julgarem que existem regras ou normas de conduta que devem ser respeitadas e segundo as quais os actos e as pessoas são bons ou maus⁹. As normas ou regras podem ser diferentes, até antagónicas, as explicações e justificações podem variar e mesmo serem contraditórias, mas em todas as sociedades, culturas e tempos os homens dispuseram de critérios de julgamento dos actos e das pessoas em termos de os poderem qualificar de moralmente bons ou maus. Para além desta moralidade formal, considera o autor, pode também falar-se da moralidade material dos actos considerados em si mesmos a qual também consiste “na relação material entre o acto e a norma objectiva” independentemente da intenção da sua prática, mas atendendo apenas à sua conformidade ou não conformidade com a lei moral¹⁰. À primeira, à moralidade formal, tem-se acesso pela consciência que atinge o acto enquanto relacionado com a norma moral objectiva¹¹ e a diversidade da moralidade das actuações humanas depende do que o autor chama, seguindo os escolásticos, as fontes da moralidade¹². Esses factores, diz o autor, “são todos aqueles que influem na relação acto/norma, em que dissemos constituir a Moralidade”¹³ e que são três: “intenção ou *fin*, acção ou *objecto* e as *circunstâncias*”¹⁴ que, em abstracto, facilmente se vê

8. “Moral”. In: *Enciclopédia Verbo*, vol. 13, col. 1324 e 1324-1325.

9. Cf. “Moral”. In: *Enciclopédia Polis*, vol. 4, col. 401.

10. Ibid.

11. Cf. Ibid.

12. Sobre este tema cf. “A relevância antropológica das fontes da moralidade”, 369-379.

13. “Moralidade”. In: *Enciclopédia Verbo*, vol. 13, col. 1326.

14. “Moralidade”. In: *Enciclopédia Verbo*, vol. 13, col. 1327. Considerando as circunstâncias como fonte da moralidade, o autor opõe-se às Éticas de Situação [cf. “Éticas da situação”. *Logos*, vol. 4, 1992, cols. 1182-1185] que excluem qualquer norma universal.

que marcam a moralidade da acção. Roque Cabral chama a atenção para o facto de ser muito mais difícil ver a qualidade moral no acto concreto devido à complexidade do agir que, por sua vez, reflecte a complexidade do ser humano.

Para o autor, os actos têm uma moralidade intrínseca, a qual pode ter dois sentidos muito diferentes. Com palavras suas: “podemos distinguir duas moralidades intrínsecas: uma que poderíamos chamar [...] estrutural e outra que designarei circunstancial [...]. No primeiro caso, a moralidade depende ou é dada pela própria estrutura do acto. [...]; muito mais frequente é o segundo tipo de moralidade “intrínseca”, bem diferente da anterior: nele, a moralidade depende da licitude ou ilicitude de que, nas circunstâncias consideradas, o acto se reveste para o agente em questão”¹⁵.

Para o Prof. Roque Cabral, a moral é, pois, um facto de que é preciso saber o valor e o significado.

Dissemos que a dimensão moral era irreduzível a outra qualquer dimensão humana. Que características tem essa dimensão?

O autor aponta como características daquela dimensão a liberdade da acção, o seu carácter pessoal, a normatividade irrecusável da moral e a superioridade do valor moral.

A liberdade da acção e o seu carácter pessoal são duas características inseparáveis. A liberdade é condição *sine qua non* da moralidade e, porque assim é, no agir o homem manifesta-se naquilo em que é mais ele mesmo. Ser humano e ser moral são sinónimos, posição que o autor justifica ao discutir a possibilidade dos actos humanos indiferentes.

Roque Cabral apresenta três argumentos em defesa da não existência de actos humanos indiferentes. O primeiro tem por base a intenção que preside a todo o agir: todas as acções deliberadas são feitas com uma

Diz ele: as Ética de situação “privilegiam de modo e grau diverso, o valor normativo da situação, isto é, do conjunto de circunstâncias externas e internas (sobretudo as relações interpessoais) em que o sujeito moral se encontra no momento de agir” (1182) e considera inadmissível “toda a forma de Ética da Situação que exclua qualquer norma moral universal, ou que admita que ela possa ser contraditada e invalidada pela exigência ou norma da situação” porque “baseia-se, entre outros, no falso suposto de que o indivíduo humano é absolutamente único, esquecendo que, devido à sua materialidade e criaturalidade, ele não pode ser tal. Por outras palavras, esquece que a situação-norma é sempre “humana” e que, nessa medida, inclui algo de comum a todos os homens (1183). Neste texto a que nos estamos a comentar, faz referência à posição de Ranher, à sua ética existencial, que considera que a inefabilidade do indivíduo implica uma pessoalidade da sua norma moral que não nega a universalidade da norma moral mas que concretiza essa norma para o indivíduo (cf. 1183-1184).

15. “A lei natural na Encíclica *Veritatis Splendor*”. *Brotéria*. 139(1994): 497.

intenção e as intenções ou são boas ou más. O segundo argumento parte da análise dos actos em si; diz o autor que abstractamente, atendendo ao acto em si mesmo, há actos amorais e não propriamente indiferentes, isto é que estão fora do campo moral¹⁶. No terceiro argumento, e na linha de Paul Ricoeur, o autor considera que podem existir actos humanos praticamente indiferentes devido à falta de densidade humana que possuem, pelo que estão quase no grau zero da moralidade¹⁷.

O autor trata desenvolvidamente da questão da liberdade em “Liberdade e ética: autonomia e heteronomia?”¹⁸. Começa por dizer que, à primeira vista, quando se olha o par “Ética e liberdade”, o primeiro sentimento que se tem é o de que ele é incompatível, tal como o par “autonomia e heteronomia”¹⁹, porque a ética diz o que devemos fazer e o que não devemos fazer, porque ela implica leis, prescrições, porque a moral exige obediência, a qual parece ser alienante. Em síntese: parece que a ligação estabelecida por uma copulativa – “Liberdade e ética” – , seria mais rigorosa se expressa pela disjuntiva “liberdade ou ética”²⁰.

Este paradoxo da associação de liberdade e ética está presente nas aporias que se manifestam na análise da autonomia pois que a vivência da ética exige a subordinação a algo que nos é imposto de fora, e isto é exactamente o contrário daquilo que encontramos na análise do conceito de autonomia²¹.

16. Cf. “Indiferentes (actos)”. *Enciclopédia Verbo*, vol. 10, col. 1275.

17. Cf. “Indiferentes (actos)”. *Enciclopédia Verbo*, vol. 10, col. 1275. Este tema é apresentado com muita clareza nos apontamentos das aulas que o autor costuma fornecer aos alunos. Não é possível dar uma indicação precisa desses textos porque quase todos os anos são apresentadas novas redacções.

18. In: AA. VV., *Ética e liberdade* (Coimbra: Centro Universitário Manuel da Nóbrega, 1988), 53-63. Num texto de 1966 Roque Cabral faz algumas observações ao termo “autonomia”. A palavra autonomia historicamente surge com o qualificativo de uma atitude laicista anticristã, pretendendo “expressar a ilegitimidade da fé para o homem que se quer adulto” (182), o que levou vários autores a ter reservas quanto ao seu uso, uma vez que mal entendida a palavra autonomia “sugere uma independência que pode com facilidade ser compreendida e vivida como não tendo qualquer limite” (182). Apesar disso, considera que não se justifica que se não use o termo e não se sublinhe o que ele pretende significar pela sua importância na existência moral [“Lei ou legislador natural”. In: *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*. 52(1996): 179-184]. Sobre a autonomia e heteronomia cf. ainda “Autonomia”. *Enciclopédia Verbo*. Vol.3, 1965, cols. 66-68; “Autonomia”. *Enciclopédia Logos*. Vol.1, 1989, Cols. 532 – 533; “Heteronomia”. *Enciclopédia Logos*. Vol.2, 1990, Cols. 1119.

19. Cf. “Liberdade e ética: autonomia e heteronomia?”, 53.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*, 56.

Aprofundando a sua análise, Roque Cabral afirma que a heteronomia que parece dominar na moral não pode ser pensada como total porque uma lei vinda totalmente de fora não regula nenhum ser. Para demonstrar isto, dá o exemplo do construtor de uma máquina; os princípios e regras que presidem ao funcionamento de uma máquina são da autoria do seu construtor. Mas, uma vez que este tem que recorrer a materiais e a certas figuras que têm as suas próprias leis e sem os quais a máquina não funcionaria, “na «lei» que o construtor impõe à máquina nem tudo vem dele, nem tudo é «hétero»; há algo de «auto», algo que vem dos materiais da própria máquina”²², pelo que a heteronomia não é pura, plena; implica sempre algo de autonomia.

Como se vê, as aporias que uma primeira análise da autonomia suscitava, de facto não existem porque um aprofundamento da análise leva a esta conclusão: “nem é possível a autonomia pura e total nem a total e perfeita heteronomia. Chegámos a que onde há “nomia”, lei, tem de haver hetero e auto-nomia. Chegámos a que só há portanto autonomias heterónomas e heteronomias autónomas”²³. A análise do autor conduz-nos ao oposto daquilo que parecia saltar à vista: a oposição entre ética e liberdade, entre autonomia e heteronomia. Isto acontece porque só seres pessoais podem, em sentido próprio, ser súbditos de uma lei pois só um ser pessoal pode ter conhecimento de uma lei e decidir obedecer-lhe, porque a interiorizou assumindo-a como obrigação²⁴.

Para tentar ultrapassar as aporias de uma autonomia heterónoma e de uma heteronomia autónoma, o autor, numa primeira aproximação, chama a atenção para a presença do elemento “nomia”, lei, em ambos os termos, autonomia e heteronomia e, depois, analisa a experiência moral para se descobrir a articulação entre os dois conceitos.

O Prof. Roque Cabral chama a atenção para o facto curioso de o próprio termo que o homem utiliza para se designar como independente ter, na sua formação etimológica, o termo “nomos”, isto é, uma referência à lei e isto explica-se “talvez porque essa é a expressão mais correcta do que em si vivem e experimentam os homens”²⁵.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., 57.

24. Cf. Ibid.

25. Ibid., 58.

Sublinha, de seguida, que se analisarmos a experiência moral, verificamos que nela está presente o dever, os deveres²⁶, e, embora este ponto de partida seja discutível, há que reconhecer que ele faz parte da experiência, o que permite ao autor continuar afirmando: “quem julga ter deveres já por esse mesmo facto se revela como não plenamente independente, senhor de si, autónomo” e, por outro lado, “só um ser (considerado) livre – e, nessa medida, autónomo – pode ser sujeito de obrigações. Não há dever – com a conseqüente heteronomia – sem... autonomia”²⁷. Sendo esta a experiência dos seres humanos, compreende-se que tenham incluído a “nomia” na palavra que expressa a liberdade – autonomia – porque só há liberdade se houver obrigação.

O autor distingue dois sentidos no termo dever: (1) o sentido formal, mais fundamental e que exprime a necessidade moral e (2) o sentido material, também designado “objectivo”, que exprime a necessidade do bem enquanto obrigatório; é a este segundo sentido que nos referimos quando falamos em “deveres” (religiosos, morais, jurídicos, etc.), cujas determinações concretas dependem das diversas mundividências, situações, leis existentes, etc. Nos dois sentidos, dever está intimamente relacionado com a lei e a moral.

Na experiência moral, o homem confronta-se com deveres. Mas, considera o autor, “os deveres levam-me ao dever fundamental de cumprir os deveres; esse dever situa-se ao nível do que eu mesmo sou: um ser “devido”. Deparamo-nos assim com a teonomia: o homem é “devido” porque é “querido-e-criado”, no duplo sentido de ambos estes termos [criado no sentido de feito e no sentido de servidor, e querido no sentido de “que Deus quis” e amado]. O amor que me quis porque me amou e que, criando-me, fez de mim um “criado” ao mesmo tempo que me “deu” a mim mesmo – autonomia – deu-me a minha lei – heteronomia. Ser homem é dever-de-ser-homem, é missão, tarefa, deve-se ser segundo a lei que sendo minha é de Outro, porque eu venho-e-sou-desse-Outro”²⁸.

Fazendo uma reflexão sobre o compromisso, o autor mostra que a sua assumpção cria uma obrigação a qual tem subjacente “algo de que dependo: esse algo é a obrigação ou dever de cumprir o que prometo”²⁹. O

26. Como se verá mais adiante, isto não significa que Roque Cabral seja defensor de uma ética deontológica. Na linha de São Tomás, defende uma ética do bem (Cf. “Liberdade e ética: autonomia e heteronomia?”, 59).

27. “Liberdade e ética: autonomia e heteronomia?”, 59.

28. “Liberdade e ética: autonomia heteronomia?”, 60.

29. *Ibid.*

dever de cumprir o prometido é um dever e “esse dever fundamental está em mim, é “dito” pela minha consciência, mas não sou eu a sua origem; ao obedecer-lhe, não obedeco a algo que eu tenha decidido...”³⁰. O que o ser humano faz ao obrigar-se é “introduzir, por assim dizer, na esfera do moralmente obrigatório determinada actuação” de que não é o criador, origem ou fundamento³¹. A obrigação aparece como um transcendental que actualizo nas situações concretas. Numa palavra: “capaz de obrigações, eu devo reconhecer-me como “obrigável” ou devido”³². Mas devido ou obrigável a quem? A Deus, como já atrás foi insinuado. Com palavras do Prof. Roque Cabral “os deveres levaram-me ao dever; o qual me revelou o meu próprio ser: ser que é “devido” a outro, porque tudo o que é o é por esse outro”³³ o qual é Deus, criador, transcendente – raiz da heteronomia – e imanente, raiz da autonomia que o eu tem, isto é, na expressão de Santo Agostinho, filósofo e teólogo tão estudado e do agrado ao Prof. Roque Cabral, Deus “*intimior intimo meo*”³⁴.

A afirmação da teonomia, uma “heteronomia fundante” como também lhe chama³⁵, isto é, a consideração de que Deus é o fundamento da ética, não é negadora da autonomia. É apenas a consequência da assunção da noção de criação como conceito fundamental para a compreensão do que é o humano. “A autonomia, diz o autor num texto de 1996, condição de *aduldez* moral, resulta do carácter racional do ser humano. O sujeito humano é para si mesmo lei porque é racional e, como tal participante da Razão divina”³⁶.

Do que se acaba de dizer não se pode concluir que a fé é indispensável para a vida moral, porque Roque Cabral considera que o ser racional tem capacidade para conhecer os valores éticos “sem ter de buscar na fé a sua primeira justificação”³⁷, posição que permite o diálogo numa sociedade pluralista como a nossa, em que muitas vezes a discussão moral tem que ficar pelos argumentos de razão³⁸. A afirmação da teonomia não é, pois,

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Cf. Ibid., 62.

35. Ibid., 57.

36. “Lei ou legislador natural”, 182.

37. Ibid., 183. O autor considera que semelhante posição se encontra, embora de modo imperfeito, nos estoícos: na lei eterna e a participação nela pela criatura racional.

38. Cf. Ibid.

incompatível com a afirmação simultânea da autonomia cuja importância se deve reconhecer como abertura de espaço para o diálogo no mundo contemporâneo, pois que reconhecer a autonomia é afirmar a importância da racionalidade, o que não significa ter uma confiança cega e total nas possibilidades da razão humana, e é negar a incompatibilidade entre “a autonomia da moral e a referência teológica”³⁹. O autor, à luz da doutrina da criação, afirma que a teonomia é origem e fundamento da autonomia, uma vez que Deus é “simultaneamente transcendente e imanente” ao ser humano e “fonte de todo o seu agir”⁴⁰.

Acima foi dito que para o autor agir bem não é cumprir o dever, pelo que não estamos na esteira de Kant. Para o Prof. Roque Cabral agir bem é agir tendo em conta as circunstâncias, em ordem a atingir um fim que é bom. Ou dizendo de outra maneira: agir moralmente bem é realizar o bem e evitar o mal. Estamos, portanto, perante uma ética teleológica. Mas qual é o bem a fazer?

Reconhecendo que há sobre esta questão uma diversidade de opiniões que chegam à contradição, afirma que há, pelo menos implicitamente, “uma *concordância de fundo*: a de que para proceder bem, deve o homem proceder como homem, proceder *de um modo autenticamente humano*”⁴¹. O que acabamos de dizer aponta, considera o autor, para dois elementos importantíssimos: (1) o bem e o mal do agir não resulta exclusivamente de ser um agir livre ou não e (2) o agir bem ou mal não resulta da decisão de qualquer autoridade; resulta “intrinsecamente, da própria “natureza das coisas”; por outras palavras, ele [o acordo subjacente à aparente diversidade de opiniões] exprime a convicção da existência da *lei moral natural*”⁴².

E tocamos aqui uma problemática, a da Lei Natural, várias vezes tratada pelo autor. No seu entender este tema é polémico quer pela expressão, “Lei Natural”⁴³, quer pela realidade que se designa com estes termos. Começemos por reflectir sobre o termo “lei”.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid., 184. A mesma ideia encontramos no texto “Obrigação” in: *Enciclopédia Verbo*, 1973, vol. 14, col. 434-435

41. “Moral”. In: *Enciclopédia Polis*, vol. 4, col. 404.

42. Ibid., sobre o tema da “Lei Natural” cf. os seguintes textos do autor: “Lei natural” [*Enciclopédia Logos*. vol. 3, 1991, cols. 284-289], “Lei” [*Enciclopédia Logos*. vol. 3, 1991, cols. 280-283], “A lei natural na Encíclica *Veritatis Splendor*” [*Brotéria*, 139 (1994), 489-498] e “Lei ou legislador natural” [179-184].

43. Os inconvenientes desta expressão são também tratados no artigo “A lei natural da Encíclica *Veritatis Splendor*”. In: *Brotéria*. 139(1994): 489-498.

Analisando a multiplicidade de sentidos do termo lei e em síntese, o autor distingue entre as leis que designa por tipo *A*, que são as formuladas pelos cientistas, as tipo *B – 1*, que são as leis dos artefactos constituídos pelos homens e são criadas por quem é autor da natureza ou artefactos, e as leis tipo *B – 2 – a*, que têm como autor o Criador e diferem das leis *B – 1*, porque obrigam e não determinam deterministicamente. Como é evidente a normatividade destas leis tipo *B – 2 – a* é de uma natureza distinta da normatividade da lei científica ou dos artefactos.

Passemos à discussão da noção de natureza humana hoje muito contestada porque, por um lado, se considera não existir e, por outro, se existisse, não poderia ser normativa por não se poder impor à liberdade do homem. O autor afirma que a natureza humana como realidade genérica, não como realidade separada à maneira de ideia platónica, “é uma abstracção que apenas existe na mente humana” e “exprime o que há de comum entre todos os humanos”⁴⁴. Na realidade, “o que existe são nas naturezas individuais, concretizações da natureza humana genérica”⁴⁵. Contudo, apesar de existirem apenas seres humanos individuais, pode falar-se em termos de natureza humana porque “todos têm ou realizam, de maneira individual, o mesmo constitutivo essencial, a mesma natureza humana”⁴⁶ a qual tem de corresponder a algo de real, pois só assim há razão fundamental para falar de igualdade entre todos os homens.

Isto não significa que a natureza humana seja uma realidade determinada. O ser humano, porque livre, cria, dentro de certos limites, a sua própria natureza, o que lhe é próprio, e isso, que lhe é próprio, “apresenta-se à liberdade como algo a respeitar”⁴⁷. Se não se pode falar em natureza humana, ou dando-lhe qualquer outro nome, quando nos referimos a algo próprio do ser humano, não se pode “com coerência afirmar a fundamental igualdade entre os homens, afirmar a universalidade dos direitos humanos [...], para condenar a exploração do homem pelo homem, mesmo que sancionada pela lei, para admitir que existem leis injustas, etc.”⁴⁸.

Depois de explicitar o que se entende por natureza humana e por Lei Natural, é mais fácil acompanhar o que o Prof. Roque Cabral afirma sobre

44. “Lei natural”. *Enciclopédia Logos*, vol. 3, 1991, 285.

45. *Ibid.*

46. *Ibid.*

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*

a normatividade da Lei Natural. Há que distinguir, pensa o autor, entre Lei Natural e Leis da Natureza cuja necessidade determinística também se impõe ao ser humano, mas de modo diferente. “Porque é um ser “devido”, deve o homem viver em fidelidade ao que é, tem obrigação de viver como ser pessoal racional, psicossomático, social, etc. Ora é precisamente isso que se afirma ao dizer que a natureza humana é normativa”⁴⁹, sem que isso implique cair na falácia naturalista, uma das objecções actuais contra a noção de Lei Natural.

Em sentido genérico a natureza dá “orientações normativas universais, como universal é também a natureza assim entendida”⁵⁰. Quando se fala em Lei Natural é a este conjunto de directrizes gerais que nos referimos. Não é, contudo, esse conjunto que funda a norma singular do agir moral, “única válida para cada homem em cada situação”⁵¹. Para o Prof. Roque Cabral a norma singular fundamenta-se “antes na natureza individual concreta do indivíduo em questão, em toda a sua concretude individual e situacional (e, portanto, culturalmente marcada)”⁵² e, por isso, só impropriamente se pode falar em termos de Lei ao referirmo-nos a essa norma individual, mas antes será preferível falar em termos de “«ditame da razão recta»”, como fizeram os escolásticos, “norma objectiva próxima da vida moral”⁵³. É o ditame da consciência recta com carácter pessoal⁵⁴. É por isso que em 1996 o autor publica um texto significativamente intitulado “Lei ou legislador”, em que aponta os limites da formulação da norma básica moral em termos de Lei natural, afirmando que haveria vantagens em “falar de *legislador (natural)*”⁵⁵ porque “sendo próprio da lei ser universal e, conseqüentemente, geral e abstracta, não chega para nortear o agir, que é sempre concreto e singular”⁵⁶.

A questão que se pode pôr agora é a do modo de atingir o conhecimento dessa Lei. O autor considera que esse conhecimento não é inato,

49. Ibid., 285-286. O autor, neste mesmo artigo diz que as Leis da natureza são “necessitantes” e não “normativas” (col. 287)

50. “Lei natural”. *Enciclopédia Logos*, vol. 3, 1991, 286.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

54. “Mais do que uma fórmula ou ditame, a Lei Natural é uma realidade viva: o homem racional” (“Lei natural”. *Enciclopédia Logos*, vol. 3, 1991, 284). Isto é, o próprio homem é a Lei natural.

55. “Lei ou legislador natural”, 179.

56. Ibid., 180.

mas adquirido por transmissão dos outros, por estudo e reflexão pessoal, por “«conaturalidade»”, pela actividade pré-consciente da razão. Daqui decorre a justificação para a mudança, a historicidade da Lei Natural.

Como se vê na síntese apresentada, o pensamento do Prof. Roque Cabral parte da vida moral e tenta construir um todo sistemático coerente que permita compreender e ajudar a viver moralmente. Esse esforço é evidente nos seus textos, como era evidente nas suas aulas. E mesmo nos temas mais difíceis em que não encontrava uma explicação cabal para o problema, apresentava a teoria mais fecunda em termos explicativos, não se esquecendo de ir apontando as debilidades da sua teoria, mas acrescentando logo que preferia aquele ponto de vista porque, não explicando tudo, é o que explicava mais e mais questões resolvia, articulando-se melhor com o todo da vida moral. Um excelente exemplo do que acabamos de dizer foi a lição sobre “O Mal” pronunciada na série de lições públicas que decorreu nos anos 90, na Faculdade, e infelizmente nunca publicada. À medida que expôs a sua posição – o mal é uma privação – ia indicando os bloqueios a que a posição levava, mas terminou dizendo: “vejo com clareza as dificuldades a que leva a minha posição, mas ainda considero que é a teoria que mais explica e mais problemas resolve”.

Embora o Prof. Padre Roque Cabral tivesse um pensamento sistemático, quem o conheceu e com ele privou sabe que ele não ficava no sistema. A vida moral é concreta, a vida das pessoas é concreta, e o sistema é abstracto. O que lhe interessava era o ser humano, esse é concreto, singular, que estava ali à sua frente e isso foi sempre o fundamental para ele.⁵⁷

3. Bibliografia

Para além das centenas de entradas da *Enciclopédia Verbo*, e das Enciclopédias *Polis* e *Logos*, os escritos do Prof. Padre Roque Cabral distribuem-se fundamentalmente por quatro áreas: Ética, sem dúvida a que reúne mais títulos; Filosofia Geral, na qual é de salientar dois textos sobre Filosofia no Ensino Secundário; Teologia, em que, para além de três livros de texto para o ensino de Religião no liceu, se incluem três entradas notáveis da *Enciclopédia Verbo*: “Igreja”, “Ressurreição” e “Graça” e alguns textos sobre a História de Teologia em Portugal. No quarto apartado, o

57. Neste *In Memoriam* retomamos, com alterações, grande parte do texto que apresentámos no colóquio de homenagem ao Prof. Roque Cabral, realizado no ano da sua jubilação (2000).

de temas de cultura, encontramos textos como “Liberdade Religiosa e Concordata” e “1998: Ano Internacional dos Direitos Humanos”. A ordenação da bibliografia que a da data da publicação dos escritos:

a) Livros

- A natureza da Teologia segundo Cristóvão Gil. Excerpta ex dissertatione ad Lauream in Facultate Theologiae Pontificiae Universitatis Gregoriana, Bracarae, 1969.*
- Apontamentos de religião: para o 6º ano dos liceus (como manuscrito).* Lisboa: Secretariado Nacional do Ensino Religioso Médio, 1959, 248 pp.
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b) Artigos e Capítulos de Livros

- “Camus, Sartre”. *Magnificat*. 3-4, 1953, pp. 30-31.
- “A relevância antropológica das fontes da moralidade”. *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*. 21(1965), pp. 369-379.
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- “Entre Hegel e o marxismo, Marx. A propósito da obra de Michel Henry”. *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*. 33(1977), pp. 76-79.
- “Réponse du Portugal à l’enquête du Secrétariat sur «science et incroyance»”. *Ateísmo e Diálogo*. 14(1979), pp. 125-126.

58. Nestes três últimos livros, *Temas de Ética*, *Escritos de Ocasão* e *A Propósito do que Hoje Vivemos. Reflexões sobre a Realidade do Nosso Tempo*, para além de alguns inéditos, estão reunidos vários dos textos do apartado seguinte desta bibliografia.

- “Cristóvão Gil substituto de Suárez em Coimbra”. *Cuadernos Salmantinos de Filosofía*. 7(1980), pp. 315-320.
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- “Filosofia no Colégio das Artes de Coimbra (séc. XVI). Subsídios para a sua história”. *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*. 38(1982), pp. 903-908.
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Recensões
Book Reviews



[Recensão | *Book Review*]

Esquirol, Josep Maria. *A Resistência Íntima. Ensaio de uma Filosofia da Proximidade*. Trad. Jorge Melícias. Lisboa: Edições 70, 2020. 156 pp., ISBN: 978-972-442-333-3.

Josep Maria Esquirol é professor de Filosofia na Universidade de Barcelona, onde dirige um grupo de investigação, de nome *Aporia*, cuja abordagem procura interpenetrar a psiquiatria com a filosofia. Publicada em 2015 pela editora espanhola *Acantilado*, a obra *La resistencia íntima: ensayo de una filosofía de la proximidad* valeu-lhe dois prémios: o *Prémio Ciutat de Barcelona*, logo em 2015, e o *Prémio Nacional de Ensayo*, no ano seguinte, em 2016. A tradução portuguesa da obra, que as Edições 70 publicaram em maio de 2020, é da responsabilidade de Jorge Melícias.

A Resistência Íntima estrutura-se em dez capítulos repartidos por três momentos sucessivos: «O Prato na Mesa»; «Cultivar o Jardim»; e «O Suor Subatômico da Água». Fica, desde logo, claro que o filosofar de Esquirol é poético, no sentido de se exprimir através da força de imagens e metáforas que as coisas concretas desta vida nos levam a experimentar. Além de ser uma abordagem mais existencial que categorial, Esquirol também concebe a filosofia como um caminho de cura da alma, isto é, de crescimento pessoal (talvez como um fruto da sua veia de psiquiatra).

Houve, pois, um tempo em que a filosofia não concebia ideias abstratas nem sistemas teóricos que pouco teriam que ver com a vida concreta de cada dia. Havia, então, uma Verdade irreduzível à razão gélida dos números e dos factos objetivos. Assim como o médico curava o corpo, o filósofo ajudava a cuidar da alma. E é dessa forma que Esquirol concebe a sua «filosofia da proximidade» como uma cura para as nossas vidas.¹

Trata-se de um ensaio sobre a condição humana. No fundo, Esquirol procura identificar os modos de vida que mais realizam a pessoa que somos na contingência deste mundo finito e limitado. A sua tese é simples: não é preciso superar a fragilidade da nossa condição para nos realizarmos enquanto pessoas. Muito pelo contrário: a fragilidade é condição de possibilidade da comunhão com os outros, pois possibilita uma identidade

1. Cf. Josep Maria Esquirol, *A Resistência Íntima. Ensaio de uma Filosofia da Proximidade*, (Lisboa: Edições 70, 2020), 69.

que «implica a alteridade», isto é, «um si-mesmo enquanto outro».² Nesta conceção do eu atravessado pelo outro, Esquirol refere-se naturalmente a Ricœur.

Para habitar esta fragilidade que nos permite ser mais com os outros, é preciso *resistir* contra as forças niilistas que vêm desconstruir o sentido da nossa existência. Esquirol refere-se a forças desagregadoras que nos condenam a um «exterior superficial» e a um «interior volúvel». Contra estas forças opõe-se a experiência da *proximidade*, da *quotidianidade*, do *cuidado de si*.

Reconhecemos que resistência íntima é o nome de uma experiência, própria da comarca da proximidade; comarca que não é visita de um dia, mas estância habitual. Mas hoje não é fácil estar nela. A proximidade não se mede em metros nem em centímetros. O seu oposto não é a distância, mas a ubíqua monocromia do mundo tecnificado.³

O que hoje nos ameaça é o niilismo, isto é, a experiência do absurdo da existência. No fundo, trata-se do perigo de nos sentirmos como Sísifo neste mundo, como se nos relacionássemos apenas com o nada, com o vazio, simbolizados nas imagens do poço e do abismo.

Para Esquirol emergem, no mundo de hoje, duas modalidades deste niilismo. Por um lado, o primado da *atualidade* não deixa lugar ao tempo, ao processo, ao amadurecimento, impondo como princípio que só tem valor o que está plenamente acabado, e esse acabamento só merece ser atingido se o for instantaneamente, imediatamente: tudo o resto cai no abismo do tédio e do absurdo da existência. Por outro lado, o *dogmatismo* do cientismo moderno absolutiza a racionalidade técnico-científica como único meio para compreender o mundo que habitamos e a vida que levamos.

A «resistência humana» refere-se, portanto, à procura de uma forma de vida autêntica que se afigure como uma alternativa ao estilo de vida, hoje em expansão, próprio do mundo tecnocrata e digital. «O resistente resiste ao domínio e à vitória do egoísmo, à indiferença, ao império da atualidade (...) e ao absurdo».⁴

Compreendemos, então, como Esquirol se afasta das metafísicas do passado, incapazes de tocar o coração de quem vive o presente do nosso mundo. É nesse contexto que ele se refere a uma «metafísica pós-niilista».⁵

2. Ibid., 142.

3. Ibid., 85.

4. Ibid., 20.

5. Ibid., 46.

Contudo, a sua «resposta ao niilismo» é «bastante diferente da nietzschiana». Isto porque não são só as abstrações e as idealizações que paralisam a espontaneidade da vida que somos. O niilismo faz-se hoje de outras forças desagregadoras, tais como o consumismo, a ambição desmesurada, a competição, quiçá o sucesso heroico de quem conquista o mundo mesmo quando se isola até ao desespero. É por isso que Esquirol nos diz que não devemos cair num eterno retorno nietzschiano: devemos, antes, «retornar a casa»; devemos *resistir* com a fortaleza dos fracos, recusando a vontade de poder como único princípio operante em nosso agir. Por isso, a filosofia da proximidade nada tem que ver com a autonomia vivida pelo super-homem nietzschiano.⁶

Essa resistência será como a fortaleza das pessoas vulneráveis que se realizam mesmo sem grandes feitos heroicos, sem controlar o mundo e sem prever o futuro. Assim, em muito nos pode ajudar esta filosofia da proximidade, sobretudo perante a crise pandémica, social e económica que, hoje, atravessamos. *Resistir* significa aqui experimentar a proximidade como um movimento que nos permite ser mais no ajuntamento ao outro. De facto, a «figura da junção» é central na metafísica e na antropologia esquirolianas, na medida em que podemos compreender, a partir da vulnerabilidade humana, que não existimos nem somos independente e separadamente uns dos outros. É nesse sentido que Esquirol se refere à *cosmicidade*, não como puro conceito concebido num horizonte meramente teórico, abstrato ou categorial, mas sempre como uma experiência, neste caso, de «*harmonia, equilíbrio, justiça e ordem*», contrária a tudo o que é absurdo, «*caótico, desordenado, desajustado*». Esquirol chama a esta «cosmicidade humana» *ajuntamento*.⁷

Por isso, convém *cuidar e amparar* em vez de dominar, porque só assim nos podemos aproximar da alteridade, acolhê-la e ser por ela acolhidos. Trata-se de um crescimento, não propriamente em *interioridade* – o que poderia significar fechamento em si –, mas mais precisamente em *intimidade* com o mundo e com os outros. Ao cuidarmos do outro num acolhimento recíproco, resistimos à tentação de o reduzir a um objeto totalmente compreendido pela racionalidade técnico-científica. Abrimos, pois, espaço ao mistério que é o outro, o mundo, a vida. De facto, só coisificamos as pessoas e as relações quando centramos o nosso modo de existência na posse, ou não contássemos nós para nada precisamente quando nos reduzimos a um simples número «contado pelas estatísticas».⁸

6. Cf. *Ibid.*, 28.

7. Cf. *Ibid.*, 76.

8. *Ibid.*, 99.

Amparar, cuidar, em vez de *dominar*, é caminho que não se faz sozinho. Se é com os outros que as coisas do dia-a-dia ganham sabor, se só com eles temos a experiência de sermos amados e assim escaparmos ao absurdo da existência, então não é verdade que a nossa liberdade termina assim que começa a dos outros. Realmente, a minha liberdade alarga-se juntamente com a dos outros, na medida em que o tédio, a falta de sentido, o absurdo da existência, só se vencem com gestos que nos aproximam uns aos outros.

A este respeito, Esquirol apresenta-se como leitor, não só de Heidegger, mas também de Marx. Apesar de não se afastar muito do filósofo do Ser⁹, Esquirol defende um materialismo marxiano que nos permite valorizar a experiência da quotidianidade. De facto, «a diferença em relação a Heidegger [diz-nos Esquirol] consiste em entender a quotidianidade não como queda, mas como resposta inerte ao abismo».¹⁰ Creio que hoje, depois de termos sido confinados em nossas casas e, muitas vezes, no universo digital, compreendemos melhor o que Esquirol afirmou em 2015:

Daí que seja imperioso um novo materialismo: o das mãos que pegam e tocam; o dos odores que sentimos e o das cores – fora dos ecrãs – que vemos. Quase equivalente ao esquema marxista: sem as mãos, as figuras da imaginação tornam-se tão abstratas que perdem o seu significado. O materialismo do qual andamos falhos não é o teórico – (...) contraditório nos seus termos –, mas o mais concreto, e por isso, o mais verdadeiro de todos. Se não o recuperarmos, então sim, a era digital será, mais que tudo, a era da evasão, o ópio renovado para o povo.¹¹

Esta filosofia da proximidade pode ajudar-nos, não só a compreender quem somos, mas a superar – Esquirol diria *resistir* – as crises, quais desafios, que nos esperam. Não me refiro apenas à hodierna crise sanitária que atravessamos, mas também aos problemas ecológicos e migratórios que já se fazem sentir.

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9. Cf. *Ibid.*, 58.

10. *Ibid.*, 57.

11. *Ibid.*, 61.

[Recensão | *Book Review*]

Bernstein, Sara, e Tyron Goldschmidt, eds. *Non-Being: New Essays on the Metaphysics of Non-Existence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. 332 + xiv pp., ISBN: 978-019-884-622-2.

Todos nós acreditamos que estamos rodeados por coisas que existem, tais como: cadeiras, canetas, casas e pessoas. Todavia, há quem defenda que também estamos rodeados por coisas que não existem, tais como: buracos,¹ *possibilia* e propriedades negativas. Os defensores desta posição apontam para o facto de todos nós estarmos tão bem acostumados e preparados para conviver com os não-existentes. Este argumento é sugestivo, pois, de facto, todos nós reconhecemos que as nossas cabeças estão povoadas por estados de coisas possíveis, entes fictícios, criaturas mágicas, falsas memórias e ideias de coisas que parecem só existir nas nossas mentes. Além disso, os seres humanos parecem estar especialmente adaptados para lidar com a não existência, na medida em que facilmente conseguimos construir cenários hipotéticos que vão desde coisas tão pequenas como, “E se eu tivesse virado à esquerda?”, até coisas maiores, como o universo do “Senhor dos Anéis”. Não só a nossa mente, mas também a nossa linguagem, está estruturada para denotar e conjugar entes não existentes, assim como para descrever acções ou estados de coisas que não ocorreram – “devias de ter travado o carro naquele instante!”. Por tudo isto, a não existência, ao mesmo tempo que parece ser ubíqua nas nossas vidas, também parece ser um tema profícuo com muito ainda para explorar.

Foi com o objectivo de pensar este tema que os editores decidiram organizar o livro que aqui apresentamos, composto por dezassete textos originais que visam abordar algumas das questões mais difíceis sobre o não-ser e a não-existência, que vão desde as perguntas mais gerais – “Porquê o ser em vez do nada?” ou “O que é o nada?” – até às questões mais

1. Existem várias concepções diferentes de “buracos” (*holes*) na filosofia analítica. Nesta obra eles são tratados como não-existentes, segundo a influente concepção de David Lewis e Stephanie Lewis, no seu célebre artigo de 1970. Cf. David Lewis e Stephanie Lewis, «Holes», *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 48, n. 2 (1970): 206–12, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00048407012341181>.

específicas – “O que são buracos?” ou “Qual o significado de propriedades negativas?”. Os ensaios nesta obra pertencem maioritariamente à tradição analítica, contudo, outros há que estão dentro das tradições continental, oriental e judaica. Apesar de ser um livro de metafísica, ele também aloja contributos que vão desde a filosofia da linguagem à filosofia da religião.

Esta colectânea é organizada por Sara Bernstein e Tyron Goldshmidt. Este último é um filósofo bem conhecido pelos seus trabalhos acerca da *existência* na metafísica analítica, tendo sido o organizador do influente livro na metafísica analítica: “The Puzzle of Existence: Why is there Something rather than Nothing?”.²

Os organizadores decidiram dividir os textos por seis secções: “Fundamental Questions of Non-being”; “Sparse Ontologies (including the idea that nothing exists)”; “Influence of Negative Entities”; “Non-being and Modality”; “Language and Thought” e “The Intersection of Non-being with broadly Normative Topics”.

O livro abre com o texto de Sara Bernstein, “Ontological Pluralism about Non-Being”, que argumenta existirem diferentes modos de não-ser, tendo por base o debate contemporâneo analítico sobre os modos de ser. A autora defende o pluralismo ontológico sobre o não-ser, isto é, a visão de que existem múltiplos tipos de não-ser, mostrando que esta posição pode ser benéfica para os problemas metafísicos sobre o tempo e sobre os objectos fictícios.

O texto seguinte escrito por Graham Priest, “Nothingness and the Ground of Reality: Heidegger and Nishida”, argumenta que o *nada* é fundamental para a realidade. O autor baseia-se no pensamento de Heidegger e de Kitaro Nishida, para afirmar que o *todo* (a totalidade de todos os objectos) e o *nada* (a ausência de todos os objectos) podem ser definidos como uma certa soma mereológica.

O capítulo seguinte, “Thales’ Riddle of the Night”, de Roy Sorensen pretende responder a um velho enigma de Tales de Mileto sobre a procedência, a saber: o que é a coisa mais antiga, o dia ou a noite? Baseando-se nas ideias antigas sobre a “estabilidade” da noite e do dia – assim como nos escritos de Lewis Carroll – o autor argumenta que a noite é mais velha do que o dia e mais velha do que a própria Terra.

Por último, nesta secção, temos o artigo de Fatema Amijee, “Something from Nothing: Why some Negative Existentials are Fundamental”, que defende que alguns factos existenciais negativos são fundamentais. A autora assume que a totalidade de factos existentes pode não ser suficiente para explicar a totalidade de tudo aquilo que existe, podendo, assim, ser

2. Cf. Tyron Goldschmidt, ed., *The Puzzle of Existence: Why is there Something rather than Nothing?* (Nova Iorque: Routledge, 2013).

necessário recorrer a factos que não existem para podermos explicar o Todo. Desse modo, a autora acredita que esse factos negativos que possibilitariam a explicação do todo teriam de ser fundamentais, pelo que a argumentação contra a existência de factos negativos cairia por terra por não conseguir rejeitar a existência de todos os factos negativos (os fundamentais), mas, por só conseguir rejeitar alguns.

A segunda secção começa com o texto de Filippo Casati e Naoya Fujikawa, “Against Gabriel: On the Nonexistence of the World”, que pretende ser uma resposta há posição de Markus Gabriel de que o mundo não existe. Os autores apresentam, de forma ordenada e sistematizada, os argumentos de Gabriel, procurando mostrar, a cada etapa, a inconsistência dos mesmos e, assim, rejeitar a ideia niilista de Gabriel.

O capítulo seguinte, “How can Buddhists Prove that Non-existent Things do not Exist?”, de Koji Tanaka explora uma certa corrente budista na qual é negada a existência de todos os factos, aludindo à influência que esta corrente tem tido sobre o budismo. O autor mostra as principais peculiaridades desta doutrina, assim como as objecções que se lhe podem levantar, ao mesmo tempo que pretende com o seu texto mostrar como os budistas se podem defender da influência desta corrente.

O terceiro texto desta secção é da autoria de Bryan Frances, “How Ordinary Objects Fit into Reality”, e defende uma nova visão de como os objectos comuns são conjuntos que podem ser reduzidos a uma pluralidade de pluralidades. Neste enquadramento, o predicado “ x é uma árvore” não poderia denotar a realidade com o mesmo rigor que, por exemplo, o predicado “ x é um fotão”. Ou seja, por um lado, efectivamente o predicado “ x é uma árvore” denota que aquele algo é uma árvore e é um existente, tal como pode ser denotado no caso do fotão. A diferença entre os dois casos é que o primeiro predicado refere-se a um conjunto que pode ser resumido a um termo, pois, uma árvore é uma entidade mereologicamente composta por muitas outras partes existentes que a ajudam a formar-se, como, por exemplo, as folhas, os ramos, as raízes, as moléculas, etc.. Estas partes são, como define o autor, uma “pluralidade de pluralidades”, enquanto o fotão, por sua vez, é uma partícula fundamental e, como tal, o seu predicado não denota uma “pluralidade de pluralidades”, mas denota um existente, verdadeiramente, singular. Deste modo o autor considera que os objectos ordinários da realidade não são objectos singulares, mas pluralidades compostas.

Esta segunda secção termina com o texto, “The Cosmic Void”, de Eddy Keming Chen. O autor apresenta um tema pouco consensual, a saber, a ideia de que a realidade última do Universo é um vazio sem qualquer base material ou ideal, simplesmente um mero *vazio*. O autor constrói a sua ideia a partir de alguns temas ontológicos acerca do “problema da flecha do tempo” e a

patir de certas interpretações da mecânica quântica, para propor a existência de um nível ontológico fundamental que seria um “vazio cósmico”.

A terceira secção que conta com dois textos começa com o artigo de Roberto Casati e Achille Varzi, “Ballot Ontology”, que defende que os “buracos” são objectos imateriais “influentes”. Os autores propõem a sua tese a partir da análise da controversa eleição presidencial americana de 2000, que foi decidida, segundo os autores, por critérios que permitem identificar e visualizar a influência dos “buracos”.

Esta secção termina com o texto de Aaron Segal, “Something out of Nothing: What Zeno could have taught Parmenides”, que argumenta que é possível que algo venha à existência por meio de algo que não é real. Para defender esta hipótese, o autor estabelece uma distinção entre dois tipos de causalidade, uma causalidade activa e uma causalidade por omissão. Segal defende a existência da causalidade por omissão recorrendo a vários textos e temas ligados às tradições místicas judaicas.

A quarta secção, também só com dois textos, abre com o ensaio de Tyron Goldschmidt e Sam Lebens, “*Ex Nihilo Nihil Fit: An Argument for Anti-Nihilism*”. Os autores examinam que muitas metafísicas modais excluem a possibilidade do *nada*. Ambos concluem que as imagens mais proeminentes da ontologia da possibilidade implicam sempre a existência de algo e que esta concepção pode ser uma oportunidade para responder à pergunta do porquê do *ser* em vez do *nada*.

A secção fecha com o capítulo de Craig Warmke, “Ostrich Actualism”, que explora o debate sobre a existência de objectos meramente possíveis, estabelecendo uma distinção entre actualismo e possibilismo, ao mesmo tempo que procura assim reconciliar o actualismo com a realidade das possibilidades e dos não-existentes. O autor segue de perto o trabalho tardio de Derek Parfit, para propor um modelo que designa por “actualismo de avestruz”, que tem a vantagem de permitir uma quantificação existencial das possibilidades dentro de um enquadramento actualista.

A quinta secção também é composta por dois textos. Ela abre com o ensaio de Lorraine Juliano-Keller e John Keller “Saying Nothing and Thinking Nothing”, que trata a possibilidade dos predicados sem sentido possuírem conteúdo significativo. Os autores defendem a existência daquilo que Gareth Evans designou por “ilusões de pensamento”³ no seu influente livro “*The Varieties of Reference*”. Eles irão defender este conceito face às várias objecções que foram elencadas por Herman Cappelen no seu conhecido artigo “Nonsense and Illusions of Thought”,⁴ terminando com

3. Cf. Gareth Evans, *The Varieties of Reference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 72.

4. Cf. Herman Cappelen, «Nonsense and Illusions of Thought», *Philosophical Perspectives* 27, n. 1 (2013): 22–50, <https://doi.org/10.1111/phpe.12031>.

uma reiterada defesa da possibilidade de que o conteúdo significativo de certos predicados ser uma mera ilusão do pensamento.

Esta secção termina com o artigo “Why it Matters What Might have Been”, de Arif Ahmed, que versa sobre o significado e a importância dos contrafactuais para a metafísica analítica. Seguindo de perto a ortodoxia quineana, o autor explora o porquê de pensarmos e de nos preocuparmos com o que poderia ter ocorrido, mas que não ocorreu, mesmo quando defendemos posições que negam a realidade dos “não-existentes”.

A sexta e última secção do livro contém três ensaios. Abre com o capítulo de Jacob Ross, “Explanatory Relevance and the Doing/Allowing Distinction”, que pretende clarificar a distinção moral entre acções e omissões. O autor vai apresentar várias objecções contra as formas contrafactuais e causais, que tradicionalmente são apresentadas para se distinguir a acção da omissão, propondo novas fórmulas, entre as quais uma renovada visão explicativa que procura captar de forma consistente os nossos juízos morais sobre os estados de coisas em que as acções e as omissões estão presentes.

O ensaio seguinte, “Responsibility and the Metaphysics of Omissions”, de Carolina Sartorio, continua o tema do texto anterior, desta vez explorando a possibilidade de existir uma ligação entre a ética e a metafísica dos não-existentes. A autora vai centrar-se no tema da responsabilidade moral dos agentes nos casos de omissão, para mostrar como a metafísica da não-existência pode ser importante para a filosofia moral.

O último texto desta secção e do livro é da autoria de Daniel Rubio, “Death’s Shadow Lightened”, que defende o famoso argumento de Epicuro de que a morte não nos pode prejudicar, porque já não existimos depois de morrer. Centrando-se nas teses “deprivacionistas” do dano da morte, Rubio argumenta que a morte não é “prejudicial” nas formas como tradicionalmente a pensamos.

Sem dúvida alguma, os temas da não-existência e do não-ser são de interesse, não só para a metafísica, como para muitas outras áreas, estando presentes numa miríade de debates filosóficos. Dada a importância deste tema, este livro reveste-se de especial relevância, por reunir uma grande diversidade de contribuições e uma grande amplitude de visões sobre os temas tratados.

Todavia, esta diversidade, que é sempre um factor de enriquecimento do livro, também pode dar origem a algumas críticas, como por exemplo nos capítulos 3, 7 e 9 por parecerem estar demasiado deslocados do tema deste livro.

Outra coisa que surge pouco explorada nesta obra é uma explicação para os quatro problemas que frequentemente são apontados à metafísica da não-existência. O primeiro desses problemas é a ideia de que sempre

que procuramos definir ou explicar o *nada*, acabamos, inadvertidamente, a transformar o *nada* em alguma coisa, coisa que contradiz o *nada*.

O segundo problema é que o conceito da não-existência é um conceito que resulta da cópula de um operador negativo com o conceito de existência. Esta cópula remete sempre para um referencial externo, referencial esse que estabelece a distinção entre os entes que existem daqueles que não existem. Para os realistas e também para alguns anti-realistas esse referencial costuma ser a realidade. Por isso, facilmente concordamos que as criaturas mágicas não existem, ao mesmo tempo que reconhecemos que elas existem. Ou seja, estes entes têm um grau de existência e é esse grau de existência que permite que elas sejam consideradas como “não-existentes”. Isto é, partimos de um referencial existencial extra-mental, a realidade externa, para dizer que os unicórnios ou as personagens do “Senhor dos Anéis” não existem nesse domínio, ao mesmo tempo que dizemos que existem enquanto “não-existentes”, nas nossas mentes, e o mesmo problema aplica-se aos contrafactuais e a todos os *possibilia*. Por isso, existe uma certa falta de parsimónia ao perguntarmo-nos pela existência dos “não-existentes”, pois a questão é conhecer o seu “grau” ou “lugar” de existência, se nas nossas mentes, se na realidade externa, mas, no fundo, isso não é uma questão polar mas uma questão de *topos*.

O terceiro problema é o de que nem sempre existe adequação e correspondência entre a nossa linguagem/lógica e a realidade. O operador de negação lógico (\sim) é formalmente um operador unário, isto é, um operador que só precisa de um operando. Por isso, não se segue que pela colocação do operador de negação sobre um termo ou predicado eu esteja precisamente a denotar uma dupla faceta da realidade, isto é, p e $\sim p$ não correspondem necessariamente a duas faces da mesma moeda. Na lógica e nos sistemas formais, podemos denotar com o operador uma dupla faceta, mas, no real não. Por isso, “à noite fico em casa” e “quando não é noite vou à praia”, podem ser representados com o operador, mas não-noite representa um estado de coisas com uma identidade diferente do que meramente a negação da noite, a identidade do dia não advém da negação da noite, essa operação de transformação funciona no sistema formal da lógica e na nossa linguagem, mas não na realidade.

O quarto problema é o de querer utilizar os “não-existentes” para explicar os “existentes”. Efectivamente, se o meu pai se tem casado com a sua antiga namorada, não teria conhecido a minha mãe e eu não teria nascido. Por um lado, este é um enunciado (contrafactual) que faz sentido e, à primeira vista, pode ajudar a explicar o facto de eu ter nascido. Mas, não se segue que tudo o que faz sentido seja explicativo do real e dos

estados de coisas actuais. O problema é querermos utilizar estados de coisas possíveis, que não aconteceram, para explicar os que actualmente ocorreram. Ninguém explica que a chave vencedora de uma lotaria se deve ao facto de as outras não terem saído. Os *possibilia* só são possibilidades porque estão fundados em determinações que separam os possíveis dos impossíveis, como as probabilidades na matemática que distinguem na fórmula o conjunto de membros possíveis dos impossíveis. O que determina os possíveis e a sua chance de ocorrer, tal como na lotaria, é a forma e as regras do concurso, donde se obtém a chave vencedora que será constituída pela combinação de cinco números e duas estrelas, entre um intervalo de números jogáveis. Ora, a chave vencedora não é explicada pelas chaves não sorteadas, mas sim pelas regras do concurso que determinam *a priori* o conjunto dos resultados possíveis. O que explica os estados de coisas possíveis são as determinações da natureza, que são prévias aos próprios estados. O problema é querer atribuir um carácter explicativo ou um papel epistémico a algo que em verdade apesar de poder ter ocorrido não concorreu verdadeiramente para a actualidade de algo.

Sabendo que nenhum livro esgota o tema, sem dúvida que os editores e contribuidores presentearam-nos com uma obra que merece ser lida e que certamente nos dá muito que pensar e reflectir.

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[Recensão | *Book Review*]

Baschet, Jérôme. *Corpos e Almas: Uma História da Pessoa na Idade Média*. Tradução de Erica Ziegler. São Leopoldo: Unisinos, 2019. 360 pp., ISBN: 978-857-431-825-7.

A concepção de pessoa humana comumente associada ao Medievo Ocidental é a de: um ser “dividido entre, de um lado, uma alma que almeja o céu e anela reunir-se a Deus, e, de outro, um corpo desprezível, culpável de todas as tentações, e que conduz a alma pura à lama do pecado”. Mas o historiador francês Jérôme Baschet sustenta que essa associação é, no mínimo, parcial. Entre o dualismo da experiência descrita por São Paulo, que sentia no seu corpo uma vontade própria oposta à da sua alma, e a dinâmica anti-dualista de Santo Tomás, que via no corpo uma condição necessária para o aperfeiçoamento da alma em direção ao divino, Baschet sustenta que o período histórico denominado Idade Média é muito rico e complexo nas intuições da relação corpo/alma como formadora da pessoa humana.

Jérôme Baschet (1960) é um conhecedor de grande marca da civilização medieval e do proveito do estudo desta para as reflexões sobre o mundo contemporâneo (sendo a Idade Média, afinal, uma dimensão histórica constitutiva dos nossos dias). A habilidade de justapor a iconografia com as perspectivas conceituais da filosofia e teologia aparece já na sua tese de doutorado intitulada *Les justices de l'au-delà. Les représentations de l'enfer en France et en Italie (XIIe - XVe siècles)*, defendida em 1989 sob a orientação de Jacques Le Goff. Porém, enquanto Le Goff é um historiador bastante familiar ao leitor de língua portuguesa, a extensa obra de Baschet ainda carece de divulgação entre nós. Ela abrange livros como *Le sein du père. Abraham et la paternité dans l'Occident médiéval* (2000) e *La Chrétienté médiévale. Représentations et pratiques sociales* (2005), entre outros títulos como autor, coautor e editor, além de numerosos artigos. Em português, o livro *A civilização feudal: do ano mil à colonização da América* foi publicado em 2006 pela Editora Globo.

Desde 1990, Baschet é professor da École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) de Paris e, desde 1997, também leciona na Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas, de San Cristóbal de Las Casas. No México, interessou-se pelas reivindicações políticas e organização social do Movimento Zapatista, inspirando-se a escrever obras como *La rébellion zapatiste. Insurrection indienne et résistance planétaire* (2005) e *Adieux au capitalisme*.

Autonomie, société du bien vivre et multiplicité des mondes (2014).

Vencedor do prêmio Gobert 2017 da Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, de Paris, o livro *Corps et âmes. Une histoire de la personne au Moyen Âge* foi originalmente publicado na França em 2016. Recebeu versão em português, com belíssima tradução de Erica Ziegler, sob o título *Corpos e almas: uma história da pessoa na Idade Média*, lançado em 2019 pela Editora Unisinos e à venda no site: <https://www.edunisinos.com.br>.

Corpos e almas vem somar-se, com bastante originalidade, ao repertório das recentes publicações no campo da filosofia da pessoa, em que o debate tem avançado, nos últimos anos, para além do reducionismo dos dualismos em geral. Mas, enquanto obras como as de Robert Spaemann, *Pessoas: ensaios sobre a diferença entre algo e alguém*, e Robert P. George e Patrick Lee, *Body-self dualism in contemporary ethics and politics*, concentram-se na dimensão conceitual e analítica do conceito filosófico, esta obra de Baschet desenvolve uma hermenêutica genealógica da história cultural do Medievo Ocidental em que desponta o substrato social da concepção antropológica.

Por meio de uma cativante pesquisa iconográfica, Baschet desenha, em *Corpos e almas*, um quadro evolutivo das concepções de pessoa durante o Medievo. Mostra, ainda, a prevalência da valoração positiva da relação corpo/alma como semelhante a uma harmonia musical ou amizade profunda. A interpretação detalhada e perspicaz das imagens produzidas no período extrai dessas manifestações artísticas uma eficácia comunicativa toda própria dos recursos visuais, permitindo a compreensão de significados que escapariam à forma textual de exposição. E nos faz concluir que conhecer essa tradição é proveitoso, ou talvez mesmo essencial, para refletir sobre as problemáticas atuais concernentes à pessoa humana.

Na introdução, Baschet propõe-se a defender três teses. A primeira é a de que, na Idade Média ocidental, as concepções de ser humano evoluíram para a afirmação da união harmoniosa entre o corpo e a alma, constitutiva da pessoa humana como unidade psicossomática. A relação corpo/alma era vista, nesse período, cada vez mais como uma união positiva formada por uma “dinâmica antidualista”. Com essa constatação, Baschet desmente a noção corrente de que entre os estudiosos medievais prevaleciam concepções dualistas, ou seja, de oposição entre corpo e alma.

A segunda tese aponta que as concepções dominantes de pessoa humana na época medieval caracterizam-se como “duais mas não dualistas”. O Autor baseia-se, aqui, no esclarecimento de que a noção de dualidade não se confunde com o dualismo nem o implica necessariamente, como se verá a seguir. É possível mesmo que uma concepção ternária (corpo, mente e alma) seja mais dualista do que uma concepção dual.

A terceira tese atenta para a expressão social da concepção de ser humano, e estabelece que a dinâmica antidualista entre corpo e alma liga-se

intimamente ao domínio social da Igreja, pois esta funda sua legitimidade no princípio espiritual que a anima, ao mesmo tempo em que administra seus bens materiais e incide sobre as questões seculares.

Baschet afirma que a sua proposta é tratar da pessoa humana na sua integralidade, ou seja, sem separar o enfoque do corpo daquele da alma. Visa a salientar, assim, as diversas formas concebidas de interação entre alma e corpo no ocidente medieval. Não nega que os pensadores cristãos admitissem a existência de conflitos entre os dois entes constitutivos da pessoa humana, como o descrito por São Paulo em Gálatas 5,16-24. Mas afirma que a antropologia medieval construiu-se em oposição ao dualismo paulino, com as descrições que comparavam a relação entre a alma e o corpo com uma amizade profunda ou uma harmonia musical. O Autor reconhece, ainda, que as concepções medievais não são simples nem homogêneas, e propõe-se a mostrar a sua diversidade e tendência evolutiva.

Ainda na parte introdutória, Baschet indica que o conhecimento da tradição medieval faz-se mais nítido pela abertura comparativa às concepções de pessoa no Ocidente e nas sociedades não ocidentais. Enquanto a especificidade ocidental é admitida por alguns pesquisadores, outros a negam com vistas a escapar do etnocentrismo. Mas essas avaliações somente podem ser verificadas mediante um procedimento comparativo que afaste as diferenças estereotipadas e as imagens caricaturais das tradições estudadas. Assim, será possível determinar se existem peculiaridades dignas de nota das concepções ocidentais de pessoa e, caso existam, no que consistem.

Dentre os trabalhos comparativos recentes, Baschet destaca o do antropólogo Philippe Descola, para quem o Ocidente medieval se classifica, ao lado da China imperial e das civilizações mesoamericanas, como uma sociedade de ontologia analógica (correspondência por analogia entre as diversas singularidades e o mundo que elas compõem). Porém, no século XVII, a Europa viveu uma reviravolta que a transformou numa sociedade de ontologia naturalista (oposição da unicidade da natureza à diversidade das manifestações subjetivas), sendo um desafio para o historiador encontrar, no período medieval, subsídios que expliquem essa transição singular verificada no Ocidente.

Quanto ao conceito de pessoa utilizado na obra, Baschet menciona alguns aportes como o de Marcel Mauss, para quem a noção de “eu” como sujeito centrado na liberdade de consciência é uma elaboração histórica e recente, própria do mundo ocidental, ao passo que nas sociedades tradicionais prevalece o conceito de “personagem”, baseado nos papéis social e ritual. O Autor indica, ainda, a concepção relacional de pessoa, que não exclui totalmente a singularização dos indivíduos nem se reduz às relações interpessoais que uma pessoa estabelece durante a sua vida, mas permite visualizar um caminho para o reconhecimento dos vínculos constitutivos do ser humano.

A primeira parte do livro inicia-se com o Capítulo 1. Aqui são apresentadas as noções de dualidade e ternariedade; dualismo e dinâmica antidualista; materialidade e incorporeidade; e dualidade relacional da concepção cristã de pessoa. A constituição do ser humano é definida pela relação entre corpo e alma e implica a diferenciação do humano em face do animal e do anjo. As concepções medievais retratam como instável e ambivalente a situação do ser humano entre os domínios inferior (animal) e superior (angélico), acrescentando-lhe a inquietação de ser criatura perfeita de Deus mas corrompida pelo pecado original. A definição mais abrangente do ser humano passa, porém, pela identificação do que produz, e de como é produzida, a união entre corpo e alma.

A dualidade na concepção da pessoa humana aparece antes do cristianismo, já na Grécia antiga, quando os contornos próprios de *soma* e *psyché* vão sendo definidos até a elaboração dualista de Platão, que, esboçando uma descrição ternária, divide a alma em racional, irascível e apetitiva. Por sua vez, Aristóteles afasta o dualismo e considera a relação corpo/alma como uma forma especial da articulação matéria/forma, com o que influenciará a teologia escolástica do século XIII. O Autor faz uma descrição das antropologias ternárias: São Paulo afirma que a pessoa humana compõe-se, na sua integridade, de corpo, alma e espírito, sendo a alma o princípio animador do corpo e o espírito a parte que faz contato com Deus; Santo Agostinho, entre outros autores, concebe a alma subdividida entre o *spiritus* (*pneuma*), que vivifica o corpo e apreende as imagens sensíveis, e a *mens* (*noûs*), que acessa diretamente as imagens inteligíveis. A concepção dual veio a prevalecer a partir da segunda metade do século XII, e é reforçada pela afirmação da completa incorporeidade da alma. De Santo Agostinho a São Boaventura, acentua-se o contraste entre a alma incorpórea, racional e imortal, e o corpo material e perecível.

Baschet propõe, então, a distinção entre “dualidade” como a concepção de duas entidades que compõem a pessoa, e “dualismo”, que supõe uma incompatibilidade total entre o carnal e o espiritual e uma desvalorização completa do primeiro. Sustenta, o Autor, que a doutrina cristã afastou-se sempre do verdadeiro dualismo, ainda que houvesse influências neoplatônicas que eram, porém, atenuadas por conceitos mais favoráveis ao corpo. A dinâmica antidualista se fortalece nos séculos XII e XIII juntamente com a mudança nas concepções de pecado: ao esquema dualista que ligava a virtude à alma e o pecado ao corpo, sobreveio a identificação de pecados carnis (como a luxúria e a glotonaria) e pecados espirituais (como o orgulho). Hugo de São Vítor enfatiza a união positiva de corpo e alma, comparando-a com uma harmonia musical ou uma amizade profunda. Representativa dessa harmonia é uma iluminura constante da obra *De laudibus sancte crucis* (reproduzida no livro de Baschet após a página

200). Em Santo Tomás de Aquino, encontra-se, enfim, a ponta extrema da dinâmica antidualista: para ele, o corpo é necessário não apenas à plenitude da pessoa humana, mas também à perfeição da própria alma.

Após uma primorosa sequência de descrições e interpretações das imagens medievais representativas da dinâmica antidualista, chega-se ao Capítulo 2, com a extensão da polaridade do físico e do espiritual à ordem social e à ordem do mundo. Baschet explora, aqui, as homologias entre as concepções de pessoa humana e as de organização social, e busca demonstrar a hipótese de que a dinâmica antidualista sustenta e acompanha a Igreja na sua encarnação dos valores espirituais e espiritualização das realidades materiais. A representação social da articulação hierárquica e dinâmica entre a alma e o corpo na constituição da pessoa humana adquire forma na distinção entre clérigos e leigos. Os primeiros constituíam os “homines spirituales”, com sua posição dominante pelo caráter espiritual, enquanto os segundos compunham os “saeculares homines”.

A separação entre esses “dois gêneros de cristãos” foi afirmada na reforma gregoriana do século XI. Mas essa dualidade social, à semelhança da dinâmica entre o corpo e a alma no ser humano, implica uma unidade orgânica. Baschet aponta a articulação entre o espiritual e o carnal nas duas naturezas conjugadas por Cristo na encarnação, uma divina e outra humana, na mesma pessoa. A lógica da espiritualização concretizava-se nos sacramentos como o batismo e o matrimônio, na arquitetura eclesial como moldura da ação sacramental e da (re)produção do corpo social, e no uso crescente de imagens para conferir forma material ao espiritual. Verificava-se, em contrapartida, uma revalorização do mundo criado, na imitação da natureza por meio da arte como reconhecimento da beleza provida por Deus à Sua criação.

No Capítulo 3, o tema é a distinção entre masculino e feminino como integrantes das concepções de pessoa. Cuida-se agora de relacionar as duas dualidades constituintes do ser humano: a do masculino e feminino e a do corpóreo e espiritual. A relação entre o homem e a mulher é caracterizada pelos teólogos medievais com duas versões: uma hierárquica e outra igualitária. De acordo com a versão hierárquica, o homem exerce comando espiritual sobre a mulher à semelhança do domínio da alma sobre o corpo. Na representação antropológica do *De laudibus sancte crucis*, já mencionado acima, a alma é representada por uma figura masculina, enquanto o corpo tem a forma de uma figura feminina. Mas Baschet esclarece que essa hierarquização não implica vinculação do feminino ao mal, como seria típico de uma visão dualista. A versão igualitária da relação entre homem e mulher estabelece entre os dois sexos uma unidade substancial. No que concerne à alma, esta é considerada alheia à distinção sexual, e homens e mulheres são iguais na sua relação de imagens de Deus. Baschet indica que se trata

de uma igualdade não baseada na diferença entre os sexos, mas na parte espiritual assexuada que lhes é comum. Já o corpo participa dessa unidade substancial sob a exegese da criação de Eva a partir de Adão, o que não exclui uma certa ordem hierárquica.

O Capítulo 4 inaugura a segunda parte do livro. Baschet dedica-se aqui à apresentação das variantes representativas da alma humana na iconografia medieval. Tenta, ele, afastar o pressuposto afirmado por alguns autores de que a alma seria sempre representada de modo estável e unificado, como uma estatueta de criança nua. Aponta, porém, que mesmo essas características (nudez, infância e pequeno porte) correspondem à concepção paradoxal da morte como nascimento. Outra característica paradoxal das imagens medievais é a representação somatomórfica da alma, a alma na forma de um corpo, ou seja, a alma representada graficamente sob a espécie do seu “contrário” ou do seu “outro”. Este capítulo é abundante de descrições e interpretações iconográficas. A diversidade das representações figurativas da alma humana é exposta em obras como a “Elevação da alma de Santo Ambrósio” (cerca de 840), “Morte de um pecador” (séc. XII) e “Apedrejamento e elevação da alma de Santo Estêvão” (cerca de 1180). Nesta última, observa-se a alma recém-saída do seu corpo pela boca, com sua parte inferior quase de perfil, ainda tocando o corpo, e sua parte superior mostrada de frente, segurada pelos anjos. O artista transmite a ideia de movimento e transformação da alma, de uma materialidade densa e pesada para uma espiritualidade sublime e gloriosa. Em contraste, na “Morte de Judas” (1492), a alma aparece sendo retirada das entranhas por um demônio.

Mas o verdadeiro sentido da existência humana e do mundo terreno, na cosmovisão medieval, encontra-se no além. As transformações na representação dos lugares do além são o objeto do Capítulo 5. Esse além é estritamente binário. Na perspectiva escatológica, situada no fim dos tempos, o destino no além diz respeito à pessoa humana na sua integridade da alma com o corpo, devido à crença na ressurreição da carne. Na perspectiva do destino imediato das almas após a morte do corpo físico, a evolução iconográfica refletiu a evolução doutrinária das reflexões e definições. Baschet destaca o surgimento de lugares destinados à alma após a morte, como o purgatório, cujo aparecimento como local intermediário entre o paraíso e o inferno é datado por Jacques Le Goff no século XII. A hipótese proposta por Baschet neste Capítulo 5 é a de que as transformações na projeção espacial dos destinos que esperavam as almas logo após a morte do corpo físico sinalizaram um verdadeiro “surgimento de uma geografia do além”.

No Capítulo 6, a binariedade do além suscita especulações quanto à tensão entre os dois “juízos”: a avaliação da alma no momento da morte corpórea e o Juízo Final com a volta do Cristo no fim dos tempos e a ressurreição dos corpos. A noção de uma incompatibilidade entre esses dois

juízos foi a mais frequente entre historiadores como Ariès, Vovelle e Gourevitch. A discussão centrou-se nas hipóteses de substituição do Juízo Final pelo destino imediato da alma nas preocupações medievais, ou na coexistência de ambos durante toda a Idade Média, ou, ainda, na vinculação da “grande escatologia” à cultura erudita e da “pequena escatologia” à cultura popular. Baschet procede à análise das concepções teológicas e das representações iconográficas para testar essas hipóteses, considerando duas dualidades distintas: aquela do individual e do coletivo, e aquela do presente e do futuro. O estudo das concepções dos dois “juízos” baseia-se na derivação de quatro possibilidades: a) o julgamento individual da alma; b) o julgamento coletivo das almas; c) a amplitude cósmica do Juízo Final; d) a não exclusão, por essa amplitude, dos efeitos individuais do Juízo Final.

Entremeadas nas páginas do capítulo 6 estão as lindíssimas *planches* ou estampas, coloridas e em papel *couché*, das imagens selecionadas por Baschet como ilustrações do seu estudo e como fontes das interpretações que são brindadas ao leitor no decorrer da obra.

A terceira parte do livro começa no Capítulo 7. O desafio, agora, é a abordagem comparativa. Enfrenta-se o problema do desprezo, resultante do combate ao eurocentrismo, pelas particularidades das concepções ocidentais de pessoa. Baschet louva as tentativas de rejeitar o eurocentrismo, mas aponta que elas conduziram ao viés inverso de negar as especificidades da história ocidental e a importância da expansão europeia. Na avaliação de Wallerstein, o “eurocentrismo antieurocêntrico”, ao negar as particularidades da civilização ocidental, tornou as demais semelhantes a ela. Baschet subdivide este ponto da pesquisa em dois momentos comparativos: a busca de invariáveis e a percepção da gama de variações. No primeiro momento, são estudadas as configurações da dualidade corpo e alma em diferentes povos – como os *maenge* da Nova Bretanha, com sua representação dual do corpo, ou os *melpa* da Nova Guiné, que identificam duas almas – para chegar-se a uma definição geral dos componentes anímicos da pessoa como aqueles que se associam aos componentes somáticos mas que destes se distinguem, com maior frequência, por terem uma origem e um destino diversos. No segundo momento, com base nessa definição alcançada, procede-se a uma análise comparativa das múltiplas configurações da dualidade corpo e alma, com especial foco nos tipos de relações existentes entre essas duas entidades e sua concorrência para a formação do conceito de pessoa em cada cultura. Tendo em vista a existência de simetrias entre elas, que auxiliam no cotejo dos seus principais aspectos divergentes, são retratados os exemplos das culturas mesoamericana e chinesa. Ambas assemelham-se à Europa pré-moderna pela sua ontologia analógica, segundo a mencionada tipologia de Descola.

Mas, já no período moderno, as concepções ocidentais de pessoa humana moldam-se a partir do pensamento naturalista. Faz-se necessário,

então, no Capítulo 8, identificar o “momento de ruptura” com o analogismo medieval, sem o que o estudo da civilização ocidental permaneceria incompleto. René Descartes é o protagonista da inversão. Sem prejuízo de investigações mais profundas, a obra de Descartes mostra-se central para a emergência das concepções modernas. Em primeiro lugar, Descartes opera uma separação absoluta entre a alma, como “coisa pensante”, e o corpo, como “coisa extensa”: estas passam a ser realidades completamente distintas entre si, em contraste com a essencialidade medieval da interação entre o espiritual e o corpóreo para a definição da pessoa humana. Além disso, a negação de qualquer dimensão extensa para a alma diverge da sua localização corporal proposta desde o século XII.

A ruptura principal aparece quando Descartes explica a vida, não como originada da alma, mas como resultado dos mecanismos próprios do corpo. Ao ser afastado da dimensão extensa, o espiritual deixa também de ser considerado o princípio animador do corpo. A ruptura, neste ponto, promove um distanciamento inclusive com relação às concepções não ocidentais. A tentativa cartesiana de fundamentar uma ciência físico-geométrica do mundo implica na definição de uma exterioridade absoluta entre o ente conhecedor e o ente conhecido. A natureza é identificada puramente com a matéria, já não com referência a uma ordem divina. Seguem-se os aprofundamentos trazidos por Locke, para quem a pessoa restringe-se a uma consciência dissociada do mundo das substâncias, até o desenvolvimento das noções de indivíduo e sujeito. Baschet alerta, porém, que a compreensão da singularidade ocidental moderna não prescinde do horizonte cronológico da Idade Média, no qual a modernidade, embora descontinuamente, obtém elementos para as suas formulações.

Nas considerações finais, Baschet avalia que as concepções de pessoa no período medieval foram marcadas pela dinâmica antidualista da articulação positiva entre o espiritual e o corpóreo como formadora da unidade psicossomática da pessoa humana. Nos séculos XII e XIII, prevaleceu o modelo menos dualista da história, condizente com o esquema social no qual a Igreja institucionalizava o espiritual por meio dos recursos materiais. Mas a dinâmica antidualista é abandonada com Descartes, surgindo então uma nova concepção dualista da pessoa. Um dos aspectos decisivos da ruptura moderna é fixado na eliminação do paradoxo da interioridade (pelo qual esta se relaciona com as realidades mais distantes do meio não humano ou das entidades sobrenaturais), sendo esse paradoxo substituído por “uma pura interioridade que se constitui nela mesma”, rompendo com a racionalidade constituinte de todas as concepções anteriores de pessoa.

O verdadeiro fim da Idade Média é então datado, na cronologia das rupturas da modernidade, entre os anos 1620-1640 (“a transição para o

naturalismo e a afirmação decisiva do caráter autofundado e arrelacional da pessoa”) e os anos 1750-1780 (“a afirmação de um novo regime de historicidade, marcado pela completa dissociação de campo de experiência e horizonte de espera”). Quanto a este último momento, Baschet faz referência ao trabalho de dois historiadores: (1) Reinhart Koselleck, para quem o mundo moderno inaugurou uma nova temporalidade na qual as promessas de liberdade, progresso e melhoramento humano produzem mudanças aceleradas rumo a um futuro desconhecido de realização utópica; e (2) François Hartog, para quem, no nosso “presente presentista”, ou somos apanhados no movimento global e nos fluxos acelerados ou somos condenados a viver num presente estagnado sem acesso a planos e projetos de futuro.

Mas Baschet avança e propõe que a pesquisa histórica e antropológica deve voltar seus olhos também ao momento presente, no qual ela se desenvolve. Assim é que o Autor sugere a elaboração de uma nova concepção de pessoa: “que se possa caracterizar como monista (naquilo em que ela se desfaz da dualidade do anímico e do somático), verdadeiramente relacional e articulada com uma opção pós-naturalista”.

Com isso, indica a superação da tripla dissociação moderna; dissociação essa que consistente: (1) no dualismo que separa a pessoa do seu próprio corpo; (2) na divisão entre o ser humano e a natureza; (3) no isolamento do indivíduo como sendo autorreferencial e arrelacional. O desafio é avançar na afirmação da relacionalidade constitutiva da pessoa, assumindo, no mesmo movimento, o sentido do coletivo e a valorização do indivíduo. Na sua concepção relacional de pessoa, “todo *eu* é tecido de *nós*”. Não há oposição entre o individual e o coletivo, pois um é condição da existência do outro.

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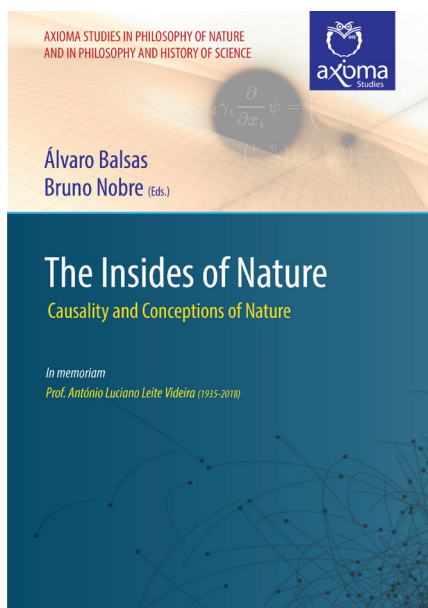
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The Insides of Nature

Causality and Conceptions of Nature

Álvaro Balsas
Bruno Nobre (Eds.)



Philosophy of nature is the branch of philosophy which, out of the dialogue with the various sciences, reflects on our knowledge of nature (in its various meanings). Although its research object is that of the particular sciences, Philosophy of nature takes a philosophical/metaphysical perspective, having as a goal to arrive at a comprehensive, interdisciplinary, and harmonic understanding of the different images of Nature – although, not always consistent – associated with the corresponding particular sciences. A comprehensive understanding of nature is fundamental for the self-understanding of the human being. And it is also crucial for the understanding of the relationship of human beings among themselves and with nature. Thus, a better understanding of these relationships will allow: an improved self-balance and personal fulfillment; the construction of more in-

clusive societies; an increased adoption of human and ecological styles of life; and a more sustainable interaction with our planet. The problem of causality within natural phenomena is, nowadays, one of the most significant challenges for the interdisciplinary dialogue between scientists, philosophers and theologians. Since the beginning of the 17th century, the approach to the study of causality has been mainly reductionist (bottom-up), placing it at the level of the elementary objects, constitutive of higher-level systems. Contemporary science, however, has disclosed some limitations to that traditional reductionist paradigm, drawing the attention of both philosophers and scientists to the problem of causality at higher levels of complexity, namely, at the level of chemistry, microbiology, epigenetics, evolutionary biology, physiology, neurosciences/cognitive sciences, psychology, social sciences, and computer and information sciences. This new paradigm of causality – called top-down causality – concerns not only each individual science but also the relationship between the various scientific branches. Top-down causality is complex, multifaceted, and related to the emergence of contextual complexity throughout the cosmic evolutionary process. It is also highly relevant for the study of the mind, ethics, and religious phenomena.

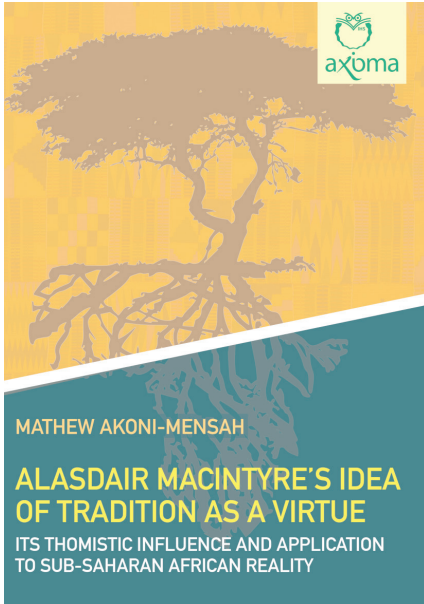
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Alasdair MacIntyre's Idea of Tradition as a Virtue

Its Thomistic Influence and Application to Sub-Saharan African Reality

Mathew Akoni-Mensah



The present study aims to argue for the relevance of MacIntyre's reconception of tradition under the influence of Aristotle's emphasis on the human virtues and the metaphysics of Thomas Aquinas in which these virtues gain a theistic dimension. In the light of the Aristotelian-Thomistic perspective, we can best appreciate his position on the development of what he called the Enlightenment Project. In his critique of modernity, he attributes the degradation of moral discourse in the Western world, namely, the basis of its conception of rationality and failure to reach the ends that it proposes for itself. In response to this crisis, he believes that "[...] It is from the standpoint of a Thomistic Aristotelianism [...] that the problems of philosophy, and more particularly of moral philosophy, can best be articulated." The Enlightenment project has failed us and subsequently fragmented

our moral discourse due to its rejection of the mode of rationality that previously guided moral inquiry based on tradition. The notion and understanding of the virtues has been deformed and deprived of teleology, the kind that Thomism has emphasized by raising the Aristotelian concept of *telos* to the level of Christian theism. For MacIntyre, the thought of Thomas Aquinas ultimately holds the key to our moral discourse, providing – as we shall see – the necessary resources for the resolution of tensions and conflicts between rival and opposing traditions. In this regard, Aquinas' mode of thought reflects most especially the inner dynamic of the rationality of tradition with the capability of repairing the partiality of singular traditions and placing them into a more comprehensive worldview. In increasingly multicultural societies, disagreement and conflicts within traditions and between traditions are inevitable and must not be totally suppressed. Indeed, they can be understood in a positive way, emphasizing the need to appreciate the dynamic and transformable character of – historical – traditions. Members of these traditions effectively embrace them as part of their life and their existence; in fact, their identity and life meaning are only discovered through the knowledge of their own tradition.

O Impulso Metafísico na Experiência Estética

Itinerário da Fenomenologia “Afectiva” de Mikel Dufrenne

Carlos Bizarro Morais



Começando quase sempre por identificar os problemas no seu referencial empírico, Dufrenne rapidamente parte para a inquirição do seu fundamento e de seguida para a averiguação do fundo deste fundamento, criando no leitor a expectativa de uma “ultimidade” que transcende todas as coordenadas espaciais e temporais. Temos a reminiscência de, desde então, se ter gerado em nós uma interrogação que não mais nos abandonou: conterà, para Dufrenne, a problemática estética, e sobretudo a experiência estética, uma significação e uma resolução metafísica e transcendente? O prolongado contacto com as grandes obras do autor, sobretudo PEE, LNAP, LIAP, *Le Poét.*, veio paulatinamente em reforço desta suspeita: a de que, longe de se resolver na dimensão empírica, a questão do sentido da esteticidade em Dufrenne parece requer uma verdadeira âncora ontológica e mesmo

metafísica. Continuava, porém, a reserva da sua suspensão, ou pelo menos ausência de explicitação em moldes que permitissem transformar a suspeita numa certeza. Tomámos então a decisão de construir o projecto desta investigação apontando para o objectivo primordial: traçar um itinerário do pensamento estético de Dufrenne segundo a tendência para a metafísica, que nos parecia estar cada vez mais presente no autor. É detectável no texto de Dufrenne uma indecisão quanto à possibilidade de uma ontologia da experiência estética, parecendo, num primeiro momento, que a justificação antropológica seria suficiente e preferível. Porém, no nosso entender, e discordando da opinião de outros intérpretes, pensamos que o que prevalece, efectivamente, é o apelo do sentido do vivido a uma instância metafísica que o acolha e lhe dê as condições para explicitar a sua potência de significação. Ora Dufrenne abre a hipótese de colocar o artista e a sua obra na dependência do ser, desfazendo as dúvidas acerca da fundamentação ontológico-metafísica da sua estética. Dir-se-á que, apesar de tudo, é parco e exageradamente controlado na explicitação deste momento do seu percurso. Mas é suficiente para impor uma determinada missão à arte e ao artista e para desencadear um processo de estetização ontológica geral.

Repensar a Imprensa no Ecosistema Digital

Manuel Antunes da Cunha (Ed.)



Os discursos sobre a crise do jornalismo não datam de ontem, nem irromperam na era digital. Não deixa de ser significativo que a crítica acima reproduzida tenha sido formulada há mais de 130 anos pelo jornalista e romancista Emile Zola, que viria a assinar “J'accuse” (*L'Aurore*, 13 de janeiro de 1898), um dos mais célebres textos da história do periodismo. Nos finais do séc. XIX e inícios do séc. XX, a imprensa escrita francesa vai de vento em popa, contabilizando cerca de 600 diários, dos quais nove dezenas sediados em Paris. Já há algumas décadas que o jornalismo se tornara um negócio lucrativo. Artigos de opinião e debates de cariz político cedem progressivamente lugar a conteúdos suscetíveis de atraírem um maior número de leitores, incluindo os menos escolarizados, potenciando um aumento de receitas publicitárias. Por seu turno, nos Estados Unidos, o periodismo de informação impusera-se como

paradigma dominante a partir dos anos 1880-1910, através da dissociação entre os factos e a interpretação dos mesmos. De um lado, uma ética da objetividade, consolidada por meio de géneros como a entrevista e a reportagem. Do outro, a busca do lucro por intermédio de virulentas controvérsias, alimentadas por “um fluxo vertiginoso de informação superabundante”, segundo a expressão de Zola. Entre muitas outras mudanças, o último século foi marcado por dois conflitos mundiais, a segmentação do globo em campos ideológicos e reconfigurações identitárias, o recurso à propaganda e à desinformação em doses massivas, a transformação dos media (jornal, radio, cinema, televisão, internet) em indústrias culturais intrinsecamente vinculadas à cultura de massas ou ainda a afirmação de uma “mitologia da felicidade individual”, num mundo cada vez mais desinstitucionalizado e des-socionalizado. Desde então, a produção académica tem vindo a debruçar-se – a partir de abordagens conceituais diferenciadas – sobre a influência dos discursos mediáticos na “construção social da realidade” ou na consolidação dos “imaginários”, no âmbito das esferas pública e privada, mas também sobre os contextos socioculturais em que esses mesmos discursos emergem e os eventuais efeitos suscitados junto de audiências e/ou públicos mais ou menos (in)conscientes e (in)ativos.

Educação em Tempos Incertos

José Manuel Martins Lopes; *et al.* (Eds.)



Num mundo onde tudo parece cada vez mais efêmero, onde as incertezas invadem os quotidianos, os riscos se multiplicam e onde tudo parece igual, urge valorizar o único, o autêntico, o identitário, aquilo que nos define enquanto Pessoa. Num mundo de separações, diferenças e desigualdades, importa pugnar por um caminho e compromissos comuns, onde a diferença seja respeitada e até valorizada. A História, a nossa história, que deveria ser um ponto de apoio para encontrarmos caminhos seguros, é tantas vezes ignorada, esquecida, e até, consciente ou inconscientemente, desprezada; tende até a ser construída não a pensar na verdade, mas na ideologia que se defende. Ora, a História não pode ser manietada e muitos menos distorcida. Conscientes da necessidade de olhar para o passado e sua subjetividade, pela interpretação a que está sujeito, devemos procurar a objetividade

dos factos, dos acontecimentos, e as nossas raízes. A construção da nossa identidade não se faz apenas no hoje, mas implica a comunhão de um olhar que volta, com o hoje, e a construção de um amanhã, que não desconsidere a herança transmitida. Se no passado as sociedades se construían na destruição ou reconversão do património recebido dos ancestrais, pelos caminhos da História aprenderam a valorizar esse património como símbolo da sua evolução. E depois, aprenderam a conservá-lo quando se aperceberam que, em nome de um suposto progresso, estavam a destruir os seus marcos identitários. Não nos referimos apenas a um património material, mas igualmente a um património intangível, que deveria ser inalienável.

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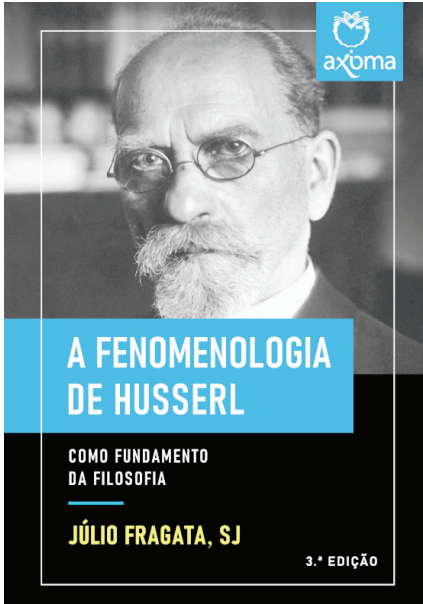
A ordenação deste número da *Revista Portuguesa de Humanidades* obedece, predominantemente, a um critério cronológico. A História é a mestra da vida. E a experiência actualiza-a num segmento temporal, unificador do passado e do futuro. Trata-se de um exemplo operativo do motus animi continuus, expressão atribuída a Cícero para definir a essência da eloquência, mas que não se encontra, textualmente, nos seus escritos. Thomas Mann explica-a, na primeira página de *A morte em Veneza*, como “o ímpeto do mecanismo produtor” inerente ao personagem, o escritor Gustav Aschenbach (tradução de Isabel Castro Silva, Relógio D’Água Editores, 2004). Dir-se-ia uma corrente incessante de palavras, pela qual o espírito humano vai tecendo, no decurso da História, a sua experiência de vida, pessoal e comunitária. Este fascículo da Revista constitui, em si mesmo, uma narrativa. Com efeito, o princípio e o fim

demarcam a persistência da retórica, arte da palavra oral, depois codificada na gramática que tanto serve a Literatura como a Linguística. A escrita elabora, pela criação imaginativa e pelo uso da comunicação, um sistema de signos muito complexo que a experiência histórica não cessa de aperfeiçoar. Creio que o leitor se surpreenderá, ao persistir na compreensão do conjunto ordenado dos textos, com a descoberta de que se encontra, realmente, a ler um Livro, com personagens, cenas e figuras que desenham um enredo e actualizam um discurso novo. Poderá, eventualmente, interessar-se mais por este ou aquele período (Idade Média ou o Século XIX, por exemplo), sentar-se à sombra da faia, em algum lugar aprazível, que o fará sonhar na sugestão de uma palavra, no eco, na argúcia de um debate, com o Rei Édipo e Dona Leonor de Lencastre ou Simónides de Ceos e Francisco de Holanda... E como não lembrar o bom Homero a contracenar com a Marquesa de Alorna acompanhada pelo autor de *Brás Bexiga* e *Barra Funda*? Ocorre-me que talvez o amigo Cícero teime em sair-nos ao caminho, para nos prevenir em não embarcar na impressão que mais compraza e menos estimule a profundidade: nunc enim tantum quisque laudat quantum se posse sperat imitari (agora, cada um louva apenas aquilo que espera poder imitar), Orator, 7. 24. Já no tempo do Grande Orador, como em nossos dias, impunha-se a mesma regra: ouve e lê com atenção, com o vagar que o assunto merece e o teu ânimo requer.

A Fenomenologia de Husserl

Como Fundamento da Filosofia

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Júlio Fragata, SJ



Husserl foi sempre um apaixonado pela exactidão. O seu ideal será portanto dar consistência científica à Filosofia e nela a todas as ciências, e para isso começar por estabelecer-lhe os fundamentos. Fora já este o ideal de Descartes: na ânsia de «não admitir nenhuma coisa como verdadeira sem a conhecer evidentemente como tal», intentara construir uma Filosofia libertada de todas as divergências, e portanto insofismável, para o que se exigia o estabelecimento crítico dum fundamento inconcusso encontrado no ego cogito, cuja existência se manifesta clara e distintamente, mesmo através da dúvida mais radical. Tanto pelas suas exigências racionais como, conseqüentemente, pela ânsia de estabelecer também um fundamento absolutamente primordial, Husserl apresenta-se como um novo Descartes: «Aquilo que não for absolutamente justificado não terá valor». Chega mesmo a afirmar que a sua doutrina filosófica

«quase poderia chamar-se um neocartesianismo» e que, se «ela se viu obrigada a rejeitar quase todo o conhecido conteúdo filosófico do cartesianismo», foi precisamente «devido a um desenvolvimento radical de temas cartesianos». O fim e o impulso husserliano encontram-se portanto intimamente determinados por Descartes, cuja ânsia de rigor, manifestada nas *Meditationes*, vibrava a uníssono com os anelos de Husserl. Este reconhecer-se-á sempre profundamente ligado àquele: interrogado, um dia, por que filósofos se sentia mais influenciado, respondeu, nomeando Descartes em primeiro lugar. Este, porém, fracassara, na sua ânsia de fundamentação. Husserl, na prossecução do mesmo ideal, procurará reforçar as exigências críticas corrigindo e aperfeiçoando o que for necessário, para que o sucesso fique plenamente garantido. Assim impulsionado, Husserl vai tentar este empreendimento e viverá, segundo escrevia em 1919, «com plena consciência e decisão, cientificamente dedicado à Filosofia», persuadido de que está fazendo uma obra não só de carácter especulativo, mas eminentemente prática, pois para ele, continua na mesma carta, «a verdade e a ciência não são o valor mais alto. Pelo contrário: 'o intelecto é servo da vontade'»; servirá, por isso, a vida prática, através duma elaboração radicalmente especulativa aonde o levaram as ânsias de absoluto rigor científico.

