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#31 to #36

The Body, Foreign

By *Fabián Naparstek* (Argentina)

In 1944 Sartre wrote his famous play “No Exit”[1], where it was shown that “Hell is other people”. The Second World War had not yet come to an end and Paris had not yet been liberated. Sartre posed the problem of confinement and the others. The play depicted a single scene countering any possibility of thinking of a different place. In fact, Lacan argued with Sartre[2] – proposing the exact opposite – since for him there is no way out for the subject without



the Other. Indeed, the great challenge – after the Great War – was that of a new society where differences could coexist, each one inventing their own world. In fact, in the midst of an era where the illusion of maximum liberties prevailed, Lacan also announced the return of xenophobia and racism. The greater the “universalization of science”[3] – what was later called globalization – the greater was the rejection of different groups. That world of differences in which many believed and defended until recently – and which we will of course continue to defend – increasingly becomes a single scene. That virtual world that seemed to open up a thousand and one possibilities to meet anyone, by any medium – Tinder, Instagram, etc. – begins to close. All “behind closed doors”. It does not matter if they are democratic paradises or authoritarian hells. Locked up with our closest ones to escape that stranger the other has become. However, the virus can also enter into that intimate confinement. Those intimates, with whom we habitually and paradoxically share less than with strangers, also become distant. A large part of the networks are today taken up with thinking and laughing about how to pass the time without our closest ones becoming hell. The virus of the unknown penetrates from all sides.

Each one of us could be incubating the unknown without knowing it. One begins to distrust what is happening to you. The heightened awareness of what is happening to you means that ultimately you become a foreigner to yourself. Finally, one attempts to isolate the body. It is the encounter between bodies that is put in question. Paraphrasing that political saying to emphasize what it is about: it is the body, stupid!!!! It is the body that has become a foreigner!!!

Science has led us to believe that we could dominate our bodies more and more, live longer with younger bodies. The virus does not differentiate social classes, races, gender identities, etc. It attacks – in its most lethal form – especially those who have the mark of the real of time in their bodies.

But as Lacan also pointed out and J.-A. Miller has emphasized: The body is that other stranger to oneself. “LOM has a body and no more than One”[4]. In effect, we will see what consequences follow from this event of the body in the social – where the pandemic reminds us at every moment that we have one. We will see, and not without the Other, if we can untangle ourselves from this irruption of the real body. If we can find a way out, beyond a vaccine, that does not lead us to new modes of segregation (“The Chinese virus”, Trump dixit). A way that does not imply segregation towards others and towards the most real and extimate that the *parlêtre* has: the body.

Translated by Roger Litten

[1] Sartre, J.-P., *No Exit and Three Other Plays*. NY: Vintage International, 1976.

[2] Lacan, J., “Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty”, *Écrits*, transl. B. Fink, New York, Norton & Co., 2006, pp. 161-175.

[3] Lacan, J., “Proposition of 9 October 1967 on the Psychoanalyst of the School”, Available on-line.

[4] Lacan, J., Joyce, The Symptom, transl. by A. Price, in *The Lacanian Review*, Issue 5, July 2018, pp. 13-18.

Reflections on the Super-ego in Quarantine

By *Silvia Ons* (Argentina)

It is common to establish a comparison between the Freudian super-ego, which opposes a renunciation upon *jouissance*, and the contemporary one – so wisely anticipated by Lacan – that orders enjoyment. We can, however, intertwine them, given that the obligation to enjoy as a kind of contemporary commandment that invades our world, and that is so well adjusted to the capitalist economy of consumption, also imposes the renunciation of those singular *jouissances* not governed by this imperative. The present situation of quarantine illustrates this question very well, given that those subjects who have found in their lives singular *jouissances* not governed by consumption, are those that live the situation better.



Removed from the “we must go on holiday”, “we must go shopping”, “we must have new experiences”, “we must travel”, “we must improve our finances”, “I must meet more and more people on Tinder”, etc., they are indifferent to those limitations experienced by the general current. I refer of

course to certain social classes and not to the poor who, crowded together and without resources, find it impossible to live the quarantine well.

I would like to remember a quote from Lacan, in *Television*, that is very illustrative with respect to the capitalist super-ego: “surplus-value is the cause of desire of which an economy constitutes its principle, that of the extensive and consequently insatiable production of the lack-of-enjoyment. On the one hand, it is accumulated in order to increase the means of this production by way of capital. On the other, it extends the consumption without which this production would be vain, precisely through its ineptitude to procure a jouissance with which it might be held back.”

It is interesting to reflect on these affirmations. Capitalism generates an infernal greed, and what might detain it or at least hold it back would be the encounter with a jouissance that would not be provided by the object of consumption, that for Lacan is inept to satisfy it.

Psychoanalysis in Time of Coronavirus

By *Antonio Di Ciaccia* (Italy)

Conversation with Antonio Di Ciaccia [li](#)

Bollorino: Let's start from psychoanalysis as a clinical and institutional practice: cancelled sessions, Skype therapies, missed conferences: how does psychoanalysis change in times of contagion?

Di Ciaccia: The real of the coronavirus enters our existence with great pomp, tearing our security to pieces. We need to face this reality. In these circumstances, Freud's sentence that governing is impossible is profoundly true. But, as we see day after day, among the impossible professions there is



also to cure. And there is also a version of this which has to do with analysis. It is a structural impossibility, but today we do not see its appearance due to the current situation. We know that in such circumstances, which emerge contingently, something of the order of necessity is imposed so that when we arrive later at its end, we will have known from now that it will no longer be as before.

What about psychoanalysis? I think it only affects the bureaucracy of the various Societies and Schools. Amidst this urgency it is necessary to receive notifications of their functioning and their institutional organization through the social networks currently available.

But things are to be questioned on an ethical level, with regards to what Lacan calls the discourse of the analyst. In a situation like this, the division between psychotherapy and psychoanalysis is clear.

The art of psychotherapy is that of knowing how to grasp the speech of the sufferer, of knowing how to respond with a word able to untangle it, and attempt to symbolize trauma. The tool is speech: the word that asks, demands, and the word that can answer. This dimension is present in psychoanalysis too, but an analysis aims beyond it: towards the logic of what causes the *jouissance* (as Freud called it) inherent in the symptom that makes you suffer. For this operation, the psychoanalyst, in addition to knowing how to respond, finds himself embodying the real presence of that object that allows the analysand's unconscious to tell its reasons – reasons which are the basis for the repetition of the symptom.

In the current situation, it will be up to each analyst -one by one- to know, not so much how to comply with standards, but with those ethical principles that allow the analysis proper to continue. And he will be able to assess this only on a case-by-case basis.

Bollorino: Let's move on to the experience: what do patients bring to the session?

Di Ciaccia: They bring what worries them. And what worries them is, as always, carried by the frame of their own fundamental fantasy. Even the emergency we are experiencing today. I find that a crucial problem concerns the analyst, who -in a tragic moment like this- finds himself having to grasp what worries the analysand, and grasp it beyond his own fantasy [the analyst's], in order not to take 'whistles for flasks', an expression by means of which Lacan's critique of countertransference can be summed up. Put simply, is the "psy", first of all, capable of facing his own anguish? Since, to paraphrase a well-known sentence, man's anguish is the anguish of the Other.

Bollorino: It seems like a science fiction film, but the reality is that we are not prepared for the infection, what do you think?

Di Ciaccia: We are never prepared for trauma. Trauma is what falls on us and we are not prepared at all. Of course, the situation was unthinkable, although it had been predicted several times by some scientists.

Bollorino: What positives could this experience that we must go through leave us?

Di Ciaccia: This experience can make us remember that death is an important moment in life. I dare to hope that something will change at the national, European and world level also from a political point of view. But actually I don't believe it. Unless you come to understand that our planet is infected precisely by us men, and that we need to change of register.

Bollorino: The plague of 1300 gave us the *Decameron*... what could this war on the coronavirus give us?

Di Ciaccia: There will probably be works of art and of thought born out of this conjuncture. I too strive to do my best, even if it is a work in which I am only an instrument, as a translator. These days I'm correcting for *Einaudi* the drafts of Lacan's *Seminar XIX*, entitled "... or Worse."^[ii] A wonderful text, although damned difficult and to be studied in detail. Lacan speaks there of the structural non-relation between man and woman. This accounts for the fact that, to put it in Lacan's terms from the previous seminar: "A man and a woman can hear each other [*s'entendre*]. I don't say no. They can, as such, hear each other shout;"^[iii] however this does not prevent them from making love, from loving each other even, on condition -forgive me this other quote- of what Lacan says in a text addressed to the Catholics: "Have I at least succeeded in conveying to you the topological chains that situate at the heart of each of us the gaping place from which the nothing questions us about our sex and our

existence? This is the place where we have to love the neighbor as ourselves, because in him this place is the same.”[\[iv\]](#)

Bollorino: How do you, as a person and as an analyst, live this climate?

Di Ciaccia: I translate Lacan, whose voice I still remember. As for my function as an analyst, I can tell you that those who have turned to me know that, although from a distance, they find me present. But I must tell you that, more than about themselves, they are often worried about me. I don't believe it's just because I am in the coronavirus' favourite age group, but because what characterizes transference is that, when the Other could fail or fall, the subject clings to it even more. Will the subject let go? He will do so when the analytic operation comes to an end, which reduces the analyst to a pure residue. Eventually leaving a shade of love, or hate, but (if there was an analysis) never of indifference.

[\[i\]](#) Antonio Di Ciaccia (Rome) interviewed by Francesco Bollorino for **Psychiatry Online Italia**. Published 28th March 2020. [Available here](#).

[\[ii\]](#) Lacan, J., “... Or Worse” The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XIX, Ed. J.-A. Miller, transl. A.R. Price, Polity, 2018.

[\[iii\]](#) Lacan, J., Seminar XVIII, “D’un discours qui ne serait pas du semblant”, Lesson of 9th June 1971, Ed. Seuil, 2006, p. 145.

[\[iv\]](#) The Triumph of Religion Preceded by Discourse to Catholics, transl. B. Fink, Polity, 2015, p. 47.

What the virus reveals about the market and biopolitics

By *Fabián Fajnwaks* (France)

What does the ultra-rapid extension of this pandemic reveal to us about the current state of the biopolitical management of bodies? And what does the treatment by governments of the current health crisis highlight about the articulation between the management of the State and the supposed free course of the markets?



Listening to President Emmanuel Macron on Monday, March 16, saying that the State was going to inject several millions of euros through a subsidized freeze on companies, in anticipation of the plan for the eventual relaunch of the economy, one could ask what has happened. Suddenly everything has changed. As one journalist emphasized: “the Welfare State is not a problem but rather a model to defend, financing is no longer a question of ‘costs and benefits’, and the millions that could not be found for Health suddenly appeared”[\[1\]](#).

Recall what happened in 2008 with the “sub-prime” crises: The US government and the European Central Bank had to inject millions of dollars and euros into the market to avoid the debacle of various banks, as had happened to Lehman Brothers. Paul Krugman, winner of the Nobel Prize for Economics wrote with a certain irony in the New York Times: “The state is a problem, but sometimes it can be a solution...”. This was the Keynesian moment that the Western economies were experiencing, which the journalist we quoted evokes in the form of one of the rules of neoliberalism: “In times of crisis

there are no neoliberals.” Ideology seems to be suspended. The state saves the markets when they fail, in order to allow them to continue to function again afterwards.

The same Government that sought to reduce spending on Health (as in Education) is today singing the glories of the French health system, of its doctors, nurses and scientific researchers, when yesterday it left them exposed to the savage competition of social Darwinism and the law of the survival of the fittest. Moments of crisis like the present one make evident to what degree the markets (of the Health and food, difficult to regulate by the State, except for an intervention by direct decree as in this moment) have need of the State, which functions as life insurance for the market, demonstrating the limits of the system.

In fact, in recent days it has constantly been pointed out how much in countries like the USA and England, which have neglected to the maximum the question of the health of their citizens, the paucity of treatment for the coronavirus will lead to thousands of deaths. Among the poor, of course. One article explained how the America of the rich and famous, clients of the LifeSpan Clinic, have easy access to testing, and the basketball players of the Brooklyn Nets were all tested, even though none had any symptoms of the disease, while millions of Americans without means will not be able to pay for the test. We are all equal under the virus, yes, but not in the same way if you have the financial means ...

One of the fundamental principles of neoliberalism is that the subject is responsible for himself: the absence of the State in the management of the health crisis is already beginning to be felt in Anglo-Saxon countries. Mariam Martínez puts it this way in the El País of 22nd March: «The maximum exponents of Western populism are trying to show that their countries belong to a different culture, clinging to the mistaken belief that they will do better this way: one with Brexit and its amazing strategy to control the virus outside of Eurasian influences; the other breaking the transatlantic bond on which the West was built after the Second World War and trying to isolate his country from any contact with a plagued Europe and the “Chinese virus”«. For how long will this treatment of the crisis continue to become the only model of the (non) intervention of the State in the event of a major health crisis, once there is nothing left to save at the level of Health because a good part of the sector has already been privatized?

The limits of confinement

In his College de France course entitled “Abnormal”, Foucault took the city under quarantine during the plague as the model for the positive exercise of power, which he will generalize with the term “Biopolitics”. He opposed the positive inclusion of the population during quarantine to the exclusion imposed by the city during the Middle Ages on leprosy patients, who had to wander outside the limits of conglomerations. Foucault saw in quarantine the “marvellous moment” in which power is fully exercised: the city divided according to a grid of neighbourhoods and streets, with inspectors who passed daily at precise times when each inhabitant of a house had to look out to the window to establish whether there were any sick subjects on the property. This model will give rise to the norm as a positive “technology” of power, which entails making citizens live and not letting them die. A few centuries later, confinement appears as a form of treatment of the virus, but with certain limits that have appeared this week.

Nine hundred million people, at the time of writing, are confined to their homes. Confinement, although it is a measure that allows regulating the sanitary treatment of those who will have the virus, that is, in the end almost the entire population, is not enough to limit the spread of the virus. Dr. Didier Raoult, immunologist at the University Hospital of Marseille, has been warning about the limits of

confinement for several weeks now and has pointed out that it is not enough to isolate yourself, it is necessary to separate the people who carry the virus from those who are not in order to limit exponential contagion. For this, it is necessary to test as many of the population as possible and separate even members of the same family.

This is precisely the treatment that Germany has carried out, with the initially surprising results that have given rise to what is called the “German paradox”. With 16,662 cases of coronavirus registered on March 21, which places Germany in the fourth place in the world after China, Italy and Spain, only 46 deaths, which lags far behind the countries with the fewest deaths, such as South Korea. South (8,652 cases, 94 deaths) or Great Britain (4,014 cases, 177 deaths). The fatality rate for Coronavirus, which is obtained by dividing the number of deaths by the number of registered cases, would at the moment be 0.3% in Germany against 3.6% in France, 4% in China, or 8.5 in Italy. The cause of this low rate would be the fact that Germany carried out tests from the beginning in a generalized way, which allowed the separation of individuals affected by the virus, and capable of transmitting it, from those who are not. Which introduces, we could say, a certain order and a certain logic in this real of the epidemic that is not without some laws, which are none other than the laws of contagion, allowing for the treatment of this real while we wait for a vaccine that will not appear for a while...

Translated by Roger Litten

Published by ZADIG-ESPAÑA on March 23rd. [Available here](#).

[1] Romanic Godin. Mediapart. “Emmanuel Macron: saint-Paul de l’Etat providence”. [Available here](#).

Sitting Ducks or Praying Mantises?

By *Theodor Valamoutopoulos* (Greece)

“Here, the point of desire and the anxiety-point coincide” in the visual field, according to Lacan [1]. How does this apply to a world suddenly emptied of the semblables, where places once crowded with the object gaze, are stripped of it?

I live and work in the centre of the second largest city in Greece. Someone coming to my practice, surrounded by all-day popular cafes, normally can’t escape the feeling that he is looked at. Actually, many of the people frequenting these popular and crowded cafes come to be seen, to seek out the object gaze, to manipulate their image, to exhibit an ideal in accordance with, dictated by and even prescribed by the Other.



This Other who now prescribes abstention from the field of the gaze in various ways. *WE STAY HOME* ads and stars' interviews from their apartment, parts of a campaign judged necessary for public health, demand the disappearance of the subject from streets and parks. All public spaces and, recently, all shops except those selling food are closed. People have voluntarily, after an understandable lag, embraced the measures. This delay was due to the resistance of jouissance. The gloomy directives were initially accepted with "superabundant vitality," an excessive enjoyment of Greeks basking in the weekend sun in numbers contrary to any sanitary suggestions. As the real of the pandemic was deciphered in the symbolic of statistical epidemiology, the number of cases has risen as the number of people on the streets diminished.

A minimum of commotion is necessary for most, and appearances, however limited, have a necessary supplement. Masks and gloves have vanished from pharmacies while their numbers proliferate on the streets, in supermarkets. All internists and epidemiologists have repeatedly explained that, with the exclusion of health care professionals, their use is unwarranted. Unless someone is sick. But, interestingly, people cling to them. In a morning news TV show, both hosts were wearing gloves in the studio, although a professor of pneumonology dismissed any need for that. Despite her calming reassurances, the couple were reluctant to take them off. The Other of the scientific discourse did not seem potent against the malevolent COVID19, the "Chinese virus". The hole of the Real is readily filled with an Other of unrestricted destructiveness.

Police patrols now actively urge people to stay at home where they are *not to be seen, looked at*. And people voluntarily stay in, minimizing exposure, avoiding the Neighbour. However, the "nullification" of the gaze leaves desire in the visual field *not without an object*. This time the object is "summoned up by anxiety." People stay home to avoid this constant gaze that seems ever present as the invisible gaze.

In every possible encounter, people are targeted by this gaze and the wager is inescapable. Is one a sitting duck, prey for the infiltrating agent, or a praying mantis, bringing havoc to those closest?

[1] Jacques Lacan, *Seminar Book X, Anxiety*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, transl. A.R. Price, Polity, Cambridge, 2014, p. 242.

[2] Jacques Lacan, *Seminar Book VII, The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, transl. Dennis Porter, Routledge, Avingdon, 1992, p. 293.

[3] Jacques Lacan, *Anxiety*, *op. cit.*, p. 242.

Keeping Desire Alive

By *Ana Cecilia González* (Argentina)

"Hopefully we can keep that desire alive". So concludes a text published by Judith Butler a few days ago,[\[1\]](#) in the midst of what the North American philosopher rightly calls "a new pandemic time and space".

It is not strange that Butler appeals to the subjective authority of desire in order to oppose the "immoral and



criminal self-aggrandising” that she explicitly lays at the door of Donald Trump. On a second reading, this accusation applies to an apparent majority of her co-citizens, in the same way in which a non-superficial reading of Butler indicates her Hegelian roots and her transference towards psychoanalysis.

Confronted by the Lacanian *vel*,^[2] which we can paraphrase as “economy or life”, it is not only Trump who has opted, at least in a first moment, for the former. Different governments have followed him in this gesture, mobilising in each case the master signifiers they thought adequate according to their cultural tradition (Trump invoked the “miracle” that saves the strongest, Boris Johnson the very Darwinian herd immunity, Bolsonaro referred to the “little flu” and bathed himself in the masses in the middle of the quarantine, the Chilean health minister hopes that the virus will become a “good person”, and the de facto president of Bolivia called for prayer and repentance).

Given this situation, Butler’s text can perhaps be understood as a treatise concerning the antinomy between desire and jouissance. It precisely describes the jouissance of “radical inequality” and the quintessence of the mechanism of segregation, perfectly exemplified by the private administration of health in North America (as portrayed in Sicko, Michael Moore’s documentary). And it puts forward as an antidote the “socialist” tradition of Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, even as it rehearses a Kantian rectification: instead of considering medical cover as a human right, “why not understand it as a *social obligation*, one that derives from living with each other in society?” Radical equality, as opposed to the jouissance of inequality.

In effect, it would be desirable if the suspension brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic were to force a rethinking of the parameters of life in common. Butler doesn’t deceive herself about this, and neither can we, warned as we are about the paradoxes of jouissance.

The crux of the sentence resides perhaps not so much in desire, which is frequently impotent before the voracity of jouissance, but in the “aliveness” that is to be preserved. This is what the efforts of the philosopher of the performativity of gender have been pointing to for a long time: “why do we keep opposing ourselves to the treatment of all *lives* as if they had the same *value*?” This question does not achieve, however, subjective rectification, reintroducing as it does through the back door what it throws out through the front, that is, the notion of “value”. The signifier is slippery, from value to price there is a single step. A possible intervention would consist, then, in the introduction of a cut between the S_1 , life, and the S_2 , value. Uncoupled from the chain, life is an S_1 as senseless as any other. Just as much as the virus that, as Butler says, *does not discriminate*. Or like life itself, this senseless accident.

Whilst I watch my small son playing in the limbo-like enclosure of this Great Confinement, I ask myself what notion must be mobilised, and about what analytic practice teaches us with respect to this. Do we have the conceptual resources to deal with this conjuncture? Or will we have to invent them? How do we intervene without ingenuousness, without reintroducing either accounting or the demands of the superego? There is nothing very different here from what we do every day – even in these exceptional days – when we listen to those who continue to sustain themselves through the link of transference, via the available technical media.

In the absence of answers, the only thing I extract from this experience is a *lapsus calami*. I wrote “*insensanto*” (“*insensato*” in Spanish is “senseless”, “*santo*” is “saint”). I saw this before correcting it, but only later could I read it. To make a semblant of the senseless or “nonsensical object”,^[3] and the saint according to Gracián,^[4] is what Lacan proposed to us as the function of the analyst. This is the desire that we must sustain and make exist, even in this extraordinary situation, in an uncertain temporal horizon. This is the challenge that summons us today, and here I am, writing for the *Zadig* network, keeping alive this desire.

Originally published in ZADIG-ESPANA on March 24th 2020. [Available here](#).

[1] Butler, J. "Capitalism has its Limits". <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4603-capitalism-has-its-limits>

[2] "Your money or your life! If I choose the money, I lose both. If I choose life, I have life without the money, namely, a life deprived of something. I think I have made myself clear." Lacan, J. *Seminar XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. London, Norton, 1981, p. 212.

[3] Lacan, J. "The Third". *The Lacanian Review, Issue 7*. New Lacanian School, 2019, p. 87.

[4] Lacan, J. "Television". *Television. A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*. London, Norton, 1990, pp. 15-6.
