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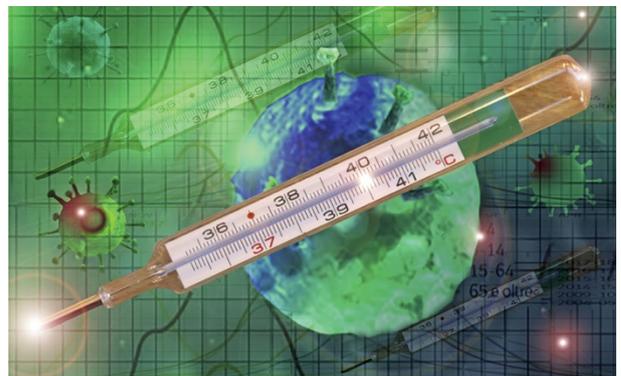
#43 to #48

Measures

By *Angel Angelov* (Bulgaria)

The current global COVID-19 crisis situation reveals a key aspect of our contemporary civilization – the role of numbers. It is not a new discovery. In the argument for PIPOL 9 it was already named as *the civilisation of the cipher*[\[1\]](#). One of the aspects which is now different are the indicators which are being currently monitored.

Following the best practices of the WHO for naming a disease, the number 19 indicates a new version of the coronavirus disease[\[2\]](#). It stands for the year, which is recommended to be used “to differentiate between similar events that happened in different years”[\[3\]](#). We could say that is a sort of an updated version, if we can refer to the operating systems terminology.



Different types of scientists are studying the effects of this new version. Characteristically this happens through the use of numerical values. The number of infected people. The number of the confirmed deaths. The number of the cured ones. This list is not exhaustive. We could also mention the distance from the others which is being measured in meters, the temperature of the people, etc.

In Bulgaria, we also count each city where an infected person with COVID-19 is being diagnosed. The number grows higher each day. It looks like the virus, the threat, grows larger day by day. It also comes closer – it is in our city or within a few kilometers distance.

It seems that all these numbers are growing. In Bulgaria there is a National Crisis-Management Staff which is led by a general dressed in a military uniform. Twice a day he holds a press briefing which is

broadcasted live on all national TV channels and emphasizes the numbers corresponding to the mentioned above indicators.

From an analytical point of view the following question could be posed: what is this that is being so thoroughly measured? On one hand, the answer is not very simple because different types of scientists are involved in studying the virus and I certainly lack competence in their areas. On the other hand, it has been suggested that the current pandemic embodies the modality of the return of the real of the 21st century^[4]. Many analysts from around the world have already explored various aspects of the relation of the virus and the real in different articles published at the LRO. So could we say that there is an attempt to measure the real?

The real is a complex concept but what we know about it is that it is in fact unmeasurable. Then what is the meaning of all these numbers which are being exposed each day? It might be a message from the authorities meant to calm down the population. A certain version of the master's discourse that the situation is under control. The numbers represent certain facts and in a crisis situation it is reassuring to have reliable information. Probably an attempt to put some limit to the real? But it cannot completely calm people because these facts are changing every minute. New facts represented in numbers are produced all the time and are soon distributed by the media. There is not a pause or a break in this numerical information overflow. We could probably say that the constant production, spread and receiving of these numbers represent different forms of jouissance. Actually, this does not tell us much because jouissance is an essential part of life for each person. It is more of a general direction how these repeated actions could be viewed and further explored.

Many people report anxiety listening to the news or reading the latest data on the web sites. The virus and the anxiety go hand in hand throughout the world. This leads to the question: what is the place of the psychoanalyst in this context? Clearly there are many ways in which this subject could be explored. I would suggest that one aspect is the place we give to anxiety. The psychological point of view would treat it as a measurable and quantifiable phenomenon. On the contrary, the psychoanalytical approach would suggest that it is beyond the numbers. The anxiety is also unique and subjective, not only global as the current crisis might suggest.

^[1] Vanderveken, Yves, The unconscious and the brain: nothing in common, Argument for the PIPOL 9, 5th European Congress of Psychoanalysis PIPOL 9 <http://www.amp-nls.org/page/gb/49/nls-messenger/0/2018-2019/3458>

^[2] Why is the disease being called coronavirus disease 2019, COVID-19, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html>

^[3] World Health Organization Best Practices for the Naming of New Human Infectious Diseases May 2015, p.3 https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/163636/WHO_HSE_FOS_15.1_eng.pdf;jsessionid=0CF9745E94951BE56ECFD62F8C183F59?sequence=1

^[4] Gilat, Yaron, A Viral Disorder of the Real, <http://www.thelacanianreviews.com/a-viral-disorder-of-the-real/>

Cut

By *Loretta Biondi (Italy)*

That *the lawless real* is what every subject is working both in and out of – in this speeded-up time which is sweeping away rhythms and scansion – is the figure which concerns everyone, today more than ever.

Every instant which passes, and which changes with a rapidity perhaps never lived through in Italy in previous decades, makes “something new of it”. It is giving and it will give to the analysts of the Freudian field a new perspective. In every School, in our SLP, in the School One, a cut will be given, a different punctuation: at the clinical, political and epistemic levels a new perspective will be given.

For each of our seven Schools, for the activities in the Freudian field, there will be a calendar update, not alone, not without effects. It will have the effect of the cut.

In this very perturbed time, desire, the breath of desire, is fighting its own harsh battle.

The time of waiting: desire is working now with precarious solutions, with presences which are lacking, with its own particular lack, taking on its own singular material with a not-all silence.

While I am writing these lines for the editorial, a mad man is passing below my house: he is coming back from shopping, the only outing allowed under the surveillance of the Forces of order, who ask us not to do it daily, and who check that we are doing it in the supermarket nearest to own home. He shouts repeatedly into the megaphone he carries “The poor have no roof, the poor are homeless! Assassins! thieves!

In this moment the unspeakable real carries with it its burden for everyone.

The lawless real will be the subtitle to [Rete Lacan, the online a-periodical of the SLPcf](#), already up to its fourth issue.

In it are texts in Italian translation, starting with one by *Éric Laurent*, which are gradually appearing in the journals and blogs of the Freudian Field: epistemic compasses which can orientate cuts, contributions for *Rete Lacan*, each one original, each one under consideration by the work of the School, which today, more than ever, needs to wake up from the dream – and waking up is not easy – resonating in every subject!



Rimini – 26/03/2020

Translated by Pauline O'Callaghan

The Elephants in the Room

By *Alan Rowan* (Germany)

The coronavirus pandemic requires, indeed insists that we act in new ways, ranging from social distancing to self-isolation, in essence, and as far as possible, to restrict and confine our “acts” to the private world of our homes. We are all coming to terms with these profound restrictions on our freedom and in this context I am reminded of a saying by Sartre “freedom is what you do with what’s being done to you”, and then also, of Freud’s and Lacan’s formulations concerning what essentially is an “act” – as undertaken by a subject.



This possibility, that we can be “free to act”, is for Lacan due to the difference between what determines us, makes us the type of subject we are, via “signifiers” that represent us as a subject for another signifier (e.g. I am ... social/a loner, kind/harsh, an artist/entrepreneur etc.) and our proper name (a pure naming function). In other words, a name designates (as with Kripke’s “rigid designator”), but excludes properties or qualities, meaning that whatever identifications/list of attributes “inhabit” a particular subject there is always beyond that an “I” or “me”, which Lacan enabled us to see is present precisely as an irreducible “lack of being”, resourcing one can say, desire. In a sense, this goes back to Freud, who showed that the core of our being, at the level of unconscious desire, can never be mastered, or annulled, but only directed, and here Lacan emphasised, this occurs through meaning/language. This point is a deep one, in that even our “fundamental fantasy” is made up of meaning, a scene, constantly unfolding under changing circumstances, that structures and organises our singular way of being in the world. Despite its importance, in the later Lacan this “meaning making” is given a different emphasis, in fact downplayed, and famously so in the statement “Everyone is mad, that is, delusional” (1979/2013) which pushes psychoanalysis beyond the Symbolic (the world of semblants) and towards the Real of the *sinthome*, in other words, to recognising the “enjoying substance” that, beyond the fantasy, is the irreducible of each subject. Here one can add, if lack now pertains to the Symbolic, this irreducible “excess” is of-the-body, a mode of jouissance – of which there can be a “knowing how to deal with” (i.e. what analysis aims at), in the sense of a handling of it, one that, one can say, enables (rather than disables) the subject.

In *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930) Freud in fact pointed to a range of “acts”, ways in which a subject might seek to alleviate the unavoidable suffering that comes with life, seeking thereby some measure of satisfaction. For example, through sublimatory activities involving art or science, or less successfully via the Illusions of religion, or by directly affecting the body (e.g. with intoxicating substances). A key point here is that if we are invariably subjected to and exist within a field of overdetermined causes (i.e. our unconscious, our history, a particular symbolic world etc.) these may push, but do not necessitate, that the subject act in a particular way – rather some form of subjective choice or assent is involved. Most significantly, even when we feel inwardly compelled to act in a particular way, we can at times refuse to.

In *The Psychoanalytic Act* Lacan writes: “We posit the psychoanalytic act as consisting in the fact of supporting transference” a path that leads to “the dis-being of the subject supposed to know” (January

17th, 1968). This implies a separation from knowledge, the illusion of mastery, a beyond of the advent of the subject at the locus of the Other, whereby one encounters instead “lack/object *a*” as the essential kernel of one’s being. (Or, from the perspective of the late Lacan, to encounter the Real of the sinthome unstuffed with the signifiers of the Other). From this and other comments Lacan makes on the “act” within this seminar, we can conclude, that one essential characteristic of a “true act” is that it entails a form of “saying no” to the signifiers of the Other that “inhabit” one. In the last session of this seminar Lacan makes a relevant comment on “free speech” showing how we cannot here assume that this form of saying implies an act for: “In the land of liberty, one can say everything, because this has no consequences” (June 19th, 1968). A year later, during his *Impromptu at Vincennes*, Lacan also pointed to the inherent paradox of revolutionary aspirations saying: “What you, as revolutionaries, aspire to is a Master. You will have one” (p. 127). What we can say here, is that where there is self-righteousness, vindication and certainty one is not in the field of the “act”, but rather caught-up in one’s identifications – and the act entails, on the contrary, a break with one’s symbolic coordinates.

Returning now to the tragedy of our global pandemic and to the notion, expressed by many, that something fundamental must change as a result (e.g. in how we take care of ourselves/humanity as a whole and our planet) we can perhaps see that one important aspect of any change is going to concern whether or not such change amounts to an “act” in the sense outlined above. If we are to be faithful to the “act” it seems we must, individually and collectively, find a way to distance our “way of living” from a dominant capitalist and neo-liberal ideology and the addictive consumerism that goes with it, *not* by way of seeking to transcend it (e.g. by imagining some form of “kinder capitalism”) but by an insistence on refusing it, alongside a sustained encounter with the “unknown”, as in, we do not know but must find a way to make our “lack” – the encounter with the impossible real – count. To put this in different terms, we might ask, what would a world be like where the real would have a priority similar to that of the symbolic, where the symbolic world of sense and value is challenged to confront an ethics based on the drive, modes of enjoyment that essentially matter? No doubt, this can, in some sense, sound utopian, even as to seek to act in this way is profoundly anti-utopian, insisting as it does on the inherent limits to sense and meaning, their semblant quality fully emphasised.

What seems almost certain is that on recovering from this pandemic there will be a period of struggle, competing narratives will emerge, some of which will seek to restore the symbolic coordinates as before, while other will not. Perhaps our challenge then, as psychoanalysts, is to find a way to contribute to this coming struggle. For example, we already know, that one elephant in the room is climate change, something that will bring more slow and gradual change, but the effects of which, promise to dwarf the pain and suffering caused by our current pandemic crisis.

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Image credit: Pixabay
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Knitting the thread of life together with the one of language

By *Philippe Cousty* (France)

In this space and time, the onset of the pandemic didn't thunder in a peaceful sky, just as psychiatrists used to explain for a subject, who never shown any sign of pathology, the sudden onset of a *bouffée délirante*. We knew this could happen, but we ignored it. At present, it besieges the body. It changes the air we breathe into a worrisome substance that may be infectious. Yet there is no scientific evidence on airborne transmission. In the past, miasmas were believed as the main culprit. All year round we breathe polluted air without thinking about it. Here, it's different because this lethal enemy was given a name. Its presence is invisible, but using our cells as hosts, this virus is becoming our partner far too real.



At the beginning of all this, the Real was transmitted via the signifier coronavirus, the latter then became covid19. Linguistically, it went through a mutation to change into what it is now; a disturbing S1 impacting our lives without one single opportunity to grab onto a S2. To distinguish it from others, it goes under the name of Covid19. All we know is its name and its type. Scientists themselves did admit that we know, at first sight, nothing about this virus.

And then we had to deal with self-isolation, social distancing, hygiene guidelines; all regulations unable to bring meaning, unable to fix our unbalanced subjectivity for the disruption of our lives. We all became addicted to watching the news. The content of the news is itself dependent of the virus' strong-will acting like an unpredictable Other that can strike you whenever it wants and can limit your freedom of movement. Of course, before all this took place, we did witness a slight exodus of people moving to their country or seaside holiday homes, and some final indulgence when both bars and restaurants shut down. All, cocking a snoot at death itself.

Like the people living on those islands threatened by tsunamis, we seem to be ourselves waiting for that wave... But here the wave is invisible, yet visible through the daily numbers of cases reported by the French director of the national health agency... through the number of infected people, of inpatients, of deaths, and for the last few days, of recoveries. We are now certain this forceful wave can take you away and turn all it comes in contact with into waste- including, the body. Here, this marine metaphor barely covers our being as object.

We are lacking the words to express what we experience. Similarly, what spreads over all the news is a surge of opinions. And as long as opposite views are present, opinions are faulty to give a vague definition, to create disagreements, even if the ones that do intervene are accountable. Gaining more knowledge means that what is said today will be questioned tomorrow. And so, all the information we gathered from China must be reconsidered because they didn't report the severity of this phenomenon and lied about the epidemic's tipping point...

Broadly speaking, we are living at the time of the inexistence of the Other, at the time of the *parlêtre*'s disorientation, and of the body. The shelter for our being has now turned into a balloon the virus can burst. A fragile place the Thing can easily invade. The structure, or rather the architecture that held together with the edifice of our lives, in other words, all the semblance that formed a discourse have been scrubbed off, leaving only a thin layer of humus. As Lacan said in *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*,^[1] his seminar where the theory of four discourses explains the social bond, later defined in *Encore* as what "is only established by being anchored in a certain way that language is imprinted, is situated, is situated on what the place is teeming with; namely, the speaking being."^[2]

When the body enjoys, language acts as a barrier. It builds seawalls and chicanes. It forms holes and voids to let jouissance pour out causing as little damage as possible. It depicts a journey as an attempt for the small train of signifiers to move along the railways of the drive. Primal contamination. The impact of language onto the body creates a trauma that bounced back as an echo because the body speaks. Onto this swarm S1- the signifying chains will find their place, within their reasoning and within this traumatic echo, to protect it, to cover it, and to make language and meaning bearable. Yet, the fantasies framing jouissance will collapse, their foundations are too fragile and as the virus do, jouissance will change the function of the linguistic cells to its benefit. Wild interpretation, persecution, or bodily phenomenon, all seeking answers in the Real, like antibodies in the absence of meaning.

The presence of the signifier Coronavirus and its infection intrude people's lives leaving a hole. Some are destabilised, disconnected, or damaged by language. For the last 30 years, he worked in the same company with his colleagues and his manager. A friendly atmosphere that carried on. But then, 6 months ago, another manager took over. He was demanding. He reorganised the way people worked and broke that friendship. Nevertheless, "it was bearable, we were united, we worked in an open space, we talked to each other, we made time for coffee". He did get in touch with the staff delegate for an appointment with the HR's chief officer but when the pandemic broke out, working from home isolated him. Throughout his emails, his manager asks him to produce specific jobs that he could no longer perform. It contaminates his family life, he says, it is intrusive. He seeks advice from the doctor who told him to take some time off. He is unable to sleep. The small chain that kept his life together broke. He finds himself alone and starts experiencing persecution. Years ago, he wanted to be the manager but quickly gave up, feeling he was caught between a rock and a hard place, and about to break down.

She came to see me at the time she felt she had possibly reached "the end of the road". Since the age of 10, she had mapped out her life. She would be a successful student, she would own a house, and live with someone but without children. She succeeded in all the above but is feeling helpless since it's time for her to invent something new. She has no idea how to. The first time, when she was 10, the ideas came to her naturally. It was a response to her father's death that never was symbolised. Inventing something new is a struggle because she is unable to speak. Let's be clear here, when she feels involved and obliged to reply because of her role, she faces the void between signifiers. The phallic foundation is unable to hold, so she is unable to speak. She continues her sessions by phone and speaks to me about the things that customers must do when they come to her shop. "At times, I realise how harsh I am. And some other times I tell myself 'who do you think you are to force people to do these things? They are old enough and you should leave them alone'. Telling them to do what's best is absurd. As soon as I get the feeling I'm being controlled or someone wants me to fit, I only want one thing from life; run away and cut all ties." I tell her she does in fact direct herself towards others when words can't. She realises how she always managed that way. When the atmosphere in work is tense and colleagues are rude, she does not intervene. We both agree that it's an easy thing to do. This session allows her to recognise her symptoms as a way of dealing with the Real, because her symbolic staple is quite weak. When she is pushed towards an Ideal, she encounters an abyss, the proof of a lack that

could disorganise her relationship with meaning. Without playing on words, sessions on the phone are precious threads.

The uncertainty of the pandemic and its consequences depict, for each of us, a new landscape. Others are silent. Self-isolating becomes the norm in this suspended life...but life keeps going and jouissance must find its way. So, we must invent a way to respond to all of this, since we know now, how fragile, and more than ever how temporary life is. The RSI knot is changing. Hence, we must attempt to re-knit it without causing damage for the subject. Each session is a session and a subjective emergency. Psychoanalysts, in a way, are becoming emergency practitioners. Freud, himself, defined psychoanalysts as surgeons because the body also suffers. We strive to knit the thread of flesh together with the one of language for the subject now aware of having a body, that thing so easy to ignore, and to invent the language that can give support to it, insofar as not overflowing jouissance too much and not fraying the thread of life.

Reading Lacan's concept of *lalangue*, at this moment in time, is particularly important, because *lalangue* is "[...] in the sense of a series fiddling about, a fiddling, a scratching, in a word of a fury – the animation of the jouissance of the body." [3]

Translated by Delphine Velut

[1] Lacan J., (1969-1970). The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII: *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*. In J.-A. Miller (Ed.) N.Y.: Norton, 2006.

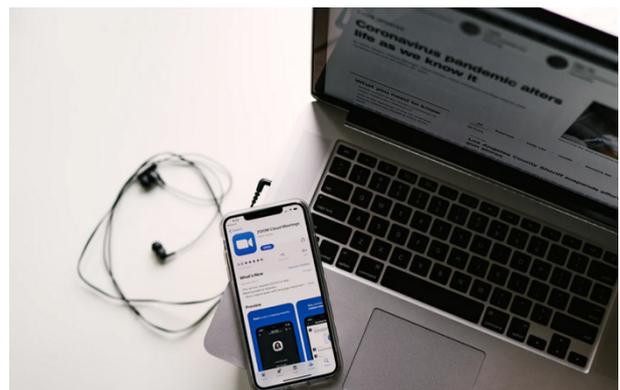
[2] Lacan J., (1972-1973). The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX: *Encore- On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge*. In J.-A. Miller (Ed.) N.Y.: Norton, 1998. p. 133.

[3] Lacan J., *Les Non Dupes Errent*. Lesson of 11th of June 1974. Unpublished.

The Coronavirus and the Impossible to Bear

By *Gerardo Réquíz* (Venezuela/Spain)

An analyst recently told me that the most unbearable thing about confinement for him is that it comes from an imposed ban. A true workaholic, accustomed to permanent action, he confesses: "this plague was invented for me". If only this man knew how much truth his words contain! For others, on the contrary, confinement is an opportunity to alleviate their suffering, as can be expected in psychoses of any kind that take refuge between walls to contain the



overflowing real. In other cases, loneliness takes its toll on those who distract their drives in the routine of daily work. A long list could be made about the effects of the appearance of a virus that makes everyone a threat to everyone.

This confinement of bodies, which is proposed as a preventive measure and makes us wait, is also seen as an occasion to reflect, to share among those who live in or out the same space, to read the postponed book, for new or invented occupations, but in any case, under the mandate of an Other who, for our sake, subjects us to forced seclusion.

For a large number of people confinement runs parallel to an unbearable that advances in crescendo with the passage of time in which uncertainty reigns. This generalized uncertainty is the manifestation of the hole in knowledge that the current crisis brings to light. It reveals the abyss that for speaking beings are the limits of knowledge. Limits that psychoanalysis does not confuse with the unknown that awaits to be conquered by the progress of science.

Regarding the last global pandemic, the Spanish flu of 1918, without living witnesses to testify of its subjective effects we have only what was reported in the media at that time. Mankind has long since become unaccustomed to what was “normal” in recent centuries: if five children were born into a family two or three could die prematurely, if the dreaded plague or famine came the masses would succumb as something natural. There was no notion of normality as we know it today thanks to the discourse of science. The unbearable of other times is far from what is unbearable for the subject of hypermodernity. What was once part of everyday life is now presented as a disruptive event. And its impact on the psyche takes us by surprise sometimes with traumatic effects.

We are living in a time of unprecedented changes, yet at the same time, we do not want the breakdown of the balance that, for example, the welfare State promotes as an ideal in the developed world. But the event exists, it is an inevitable part of life. When an event puts us on the edge of what is bearable, a physical or mental outburst, or both, can occur. The body suffers and expresses itself, anguish takes over, despair blocks thought, symptomatic arrangements can slip. The relief that is sought in the medical knowledge displayed on TV and social networks at all times does not reduce the power of the real that is experienced as unbearable and usually associated with an impossible that the subject experiences as impotence.

From the beginning, with Freud, psychoanalytical practice deals with the event. The event is associated with the real that always surprises. It is the hidden cause of fear, uncertainty, anguish, effects on the body and even despair that triggers a real like COVID-19. The cause may be common to all, but the relationship with it is totally unique. For this reason, it is approached in its singularity by analytical praxis. On the other hand, the Lacanian orientation is already in the task of processing the impact of the coronavirus in its political, epistemic and clinical dimension, as evidenced daily by the texts that appear in the virtual media of the Freudian Field.

A new challenge arises for analysts in view of the present and future effects of this pandemic in all areas of the social bond and for the implementation of the analytical device. The online modality, which has been used in the market of psychotherapies for some time, is already being applied in psychoanalysis. However, one question is unavoidable: how to incorporate this modality, which leaves out the body in the session? Indeed, in the virtual world the great absentee is the body. It seems a contradiction to say this when the body appears in a thousand ways on the screen and creates the illusion that showing and talking about the body substitutes for its presence. In any case, the use of audiovisual media imposes a limit on analytical practice that must be accounted for. For the moment, there is no other way out than to use it so that psychoanalysis does not stop. By taking advantage of

this modality “some will be able to continue the work on interpretation on the side of the object and maintain the thread of the analytical experience [...] These limits call for the invention so that something palpitates, that a desire can be sustained, that an enunciation emerges”.^[1]

^[1] Pascal Aurélie-Flore, “De l’importance de la scansion” LQ-87 <https://www.lacanquotidien.fr/blog/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/LQ-877.pdf>

Choices and Elections During a Pandemic ^[1]

By *Sebastian Godlewski* (Poland)

«Everyone carries it in them, the plague, because no one, no, no one in the world is free from it.»

These words from the novel “The Plague” by Albert Camus have sounded very universal for 70 years. The message of the book goes beyond the associations with the World War II, which ended at that time. It refers to the attitude of the individual when something unbearable, unpredictable, unimaginable occurs. Today we feel a touch of the real more clearly. Each one individually, but also as communities, nations, humanity. The heroes of Camus’s novel are trying to free themselves from this plague. Attitudes are diverse, each individual is associated with some subjective choice. These choices may have the value of, for example, heroism, cowardice, calculations, but also, as the author emphasizes, changes, and ethical re-evaluations.



In the years 1348–1352, Giovanni Boccaccio watched one of the most severe epidemics that hit Europe. In his work, “Decameron”, one can grasp four attitudes towards the «plague being released»: piety, reflection, escape, carnival. I will follow his trail, looking at the situation in Poland at the beginning of April, when what is worse is soon to come, and the worst – the appearance of the next of the «horsemen of the apocalypse» – is still being considered (and may it not change its place). I will try to refer to the atmosphere felt in conversations with patients, social discussions, the media, in terms of the proposals of the medieval writer.

Piety

Poland is considered a Catholic country. For many Poles such identification is convenient, it remains a shallow guarantor of well-being, but also contributes to segregative behaviour. The position of the Catholic Church is gradually devalued; if it still has influence, this is less and less moral and more

political. Resorting to prayer and divine punishment in a pandemic is rather laughable. Hence, scientism occupies the space of faith, especially in times of the plague. The words “vaccine” and “effective medicine” are constantly in the headlines. Every hope for quick drug development is captured, and disappointment is covered by a message of another promising method. Reaching for Freud [2], this attitude can be described in terms of the «original ego» passive and trusting towards an external force capable of providing the illusion of security.

Reflection

Such faith in scientism adapted to the proposal of the capitalist discourse anesthetizes reflexivity. But basically, where would this come from if for years the humanities, and especially philosophy, have disappeared from universities, lost to the paradigms of countability and utility? If fewer and fewer people are looking, also in our consulting rooms, for a new sense of life. The effects of this process can be seen today. The promise of health and recovery is what is most valuable, instead of searching for meaning, working out want-to-be. Even if one falls into the trap of biopolitics in this way.

Escape

More and more restrictive isolation rules are being introduced in Poland. Currently, you can leave the house only individually and only for purposes of work or provisions. Sports activities, entering parks and even forests are prohibited. Violations of such bans are sporadic, but it is not difficult to predict that further escalation of restrictions will increase frustration and escape from isolation. A more serious problem are other types of escape that Polish government offers its citizens. It is an escape from knowledge about the scale of a pandemic and an escape from the state’s responsibility for the health system. Knowledge ignorance causes low deaths from COVID-19. In my country, a negligible number of tests is carried out (almost 2000 per million inhabitants, while in the Czech Republic it is closer to 7000). There are numerous cases of delays and refusals. In addition, lethal cases of the disease with symptoms of Corona virus but not confirmed by tests are not included in the statistics. This is possible thanks to a simple trick using ICD-10, in which the code U07.2 (corresponding to such a situation) is not treated the same as U07.1 (death of the patient who underwent the test). The authorities’ avoidance of responsibility led to the fact that the supply to hospitals of protective clothing, tests, food, was dealt with by non-governmental institutions and donors.

Carnival

The incredible carnival is funded by the ruling party in Poland. Law and Justice focuses political discourse on the presidential election scheduled for May 10. Numerous proposals to amend the electoral law (including constitutional ones) only warm up public opinion. Politics are attempted to be detached from the existential threat of a pandemic. Long live the carnival – choices and elections at the time of death.

Will this change? Is political calculation the only possible ethics? Who will turn out to be Antigone? In all this, one can notice the sublime atmosphere of solidarity between people, respect for people from the «front line». In this way, in the name of love, each one forgets about his lurking anguish.

[1] In Polish the words “choices” and “elections” sound the same.

[2] Interview with prof. Z.Mikolejko, 2020

[3] S. Freud, “Civilization and Its Discontents”, 1930.

Image: *A Tale from the Decameron* (1916) by John William Waterhouse.