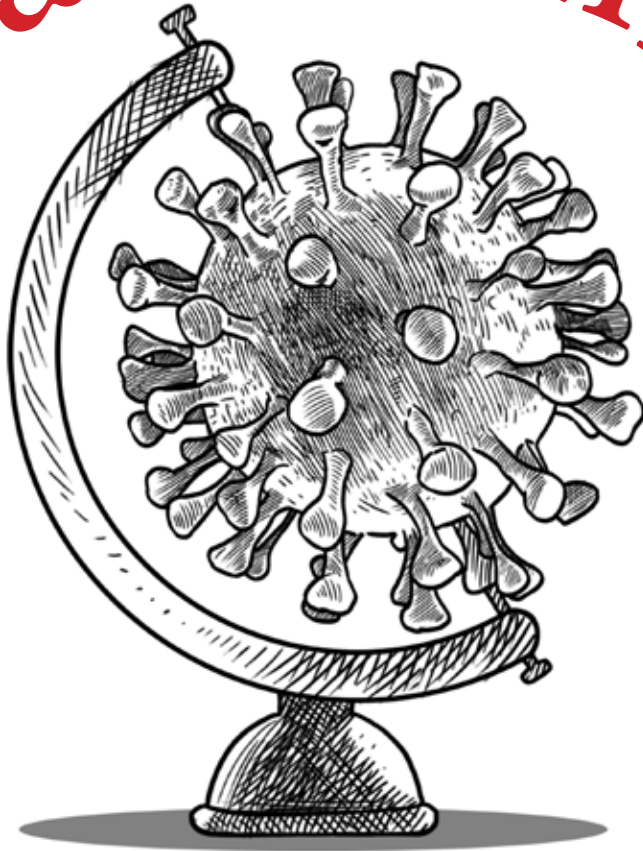


Pandemic



By Juan Manuel de Faramiñán Gilbert

There are moments in history, turning points that we could interpret as junctures that change the meaning of life. This pandemic, generated by the Covid-19 virus (Corona Virus), which has spread throughout the planet, will surely generate radical change in our future habits. It would be a serious mistake not to become aware of the need to evaluate our future behaviour by extracting a teaching from this painful experience.

The dystopia seems to have been incarnated into our daily reality and in the film "Contagion", by Steven Soderbergh, released in 2011, starring Matt Damon, which relates, through fiction, the same reality that we are living today. It's strange that this film is based on a story published in 1981 by Dean Koontz. "The Eyes of Darkness" tells the story of an extremely deadly virus that emerges in a laboratory as a "powerful biological weapon" in the city of

Wuhan, which is called "Wuhan-400". It is curious that the Corona Virus has also emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan, capital of Hubei Province, and has spread its contagion, in many cases lethally, across the planet.

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I would like to say firstly that we are realising that the borders between States, for which so much blood has been spilled in defence of sterile nationalism, are now being violated by an invisible agent such as this virus. This has shown us that those borders do not exist and that the pandemic spreads without geographical, cultural or social considerations. We are all vulnerable without exception. At those same borders we have discriminated against human beings who, fleeing poverty, hunger and wars, have not been allowed to enter the fortress of Europe, as we consider ourselves superior to everyone else. This virus has shown us that we should have been more humane. Now it is us who are being persecuted by an invisible force that is confining and killing us.

Secondly, with the same arrogance with which we act when we look the other way in the face of the pain of others, we have not had the least bit of consideration for the deteriorating planet on which we live. We have polluted it, we have submerged it in plastic and rubbish, we have depleted its natural assets, we have burned the forests and we have laughed at climate change. This virus has shown us once again that the laws of nature are not to be played around with, and that every bad action has an equal and opposite bad reaction. For a virus that was probably born in some laboratory or through the recklessness of some human being, as a result of seeking food from living beings that we ourselves have contaminated, is spreading

across all continents, wreaking havoc on the most vulnerable human beings.

Thirdly, this pandemic is teaching us that everyone, without exception, should take the individual and collective responsibility that reminds us that the good of the other, is also our own good, and that what we have always possessed can vanish with the blink of an eye. This confinement to which we have all submitted to avoid the contagion, is opening our eyes to understand the importance of fraternal embrace. This isolation is therapeutic for us to learn to know ourselves in solitude and introspection. Also to value our environment, our family, our friends, our loved ones.

What conclusions can we draw from the distress of this pandemic?

Firstly, when the pandemic is over we will no longer be the same; our behaviour will have changed and that if it does not, we will have made another unforgivable mistake. The pain has to be a vehicle of consciousness, to realize that "we are all one", and that the pain of the other is also our pain. I cannot imagine what the world will be like after this pandemic, but I wish it to be better; that we have all learned not to stand for the borders that are really just geographical fiction, which we have seen fading away with an invisible enemy.



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Secondly, we will need to learn to care for and respect the planet we live on. By thinking that we are just lying on the planet's crust, revolving around the Sun, in our everyday life, during which our existence evolves, we are losing the notion

that we are living on a celestial body that revolves according to the laws of the universe. This forgetfulness has been very harmful because it has made us not only despise the health of Planet Earth, but excessively ambitious of dominating natural resources, we are also looking avidly at the other planets of the solar system and the asteroids. There seems to be no limit to our greed. We must realize that all this nonsense is paid for, that all these mistakes have a price that unfortunately today, we are paying with human lives.

How long will we need, to learn that **"the laws of the universe are not to be played around with"**?

Thirdly, locked up in our homes, which is what we must do to avoid the spread of a virus having an incredible speed of contagion, such as Covid-19, we have noticed many things that we have lost, including human contact. There is nothing more didactic than losing something, in order to value its lacking, and to realize that we have lived without realizing what we had. In the face of this pandemic we are obliged to communicate by virtual means and our embraces are also virtual, and so we once again miss the carnal embrace. When all this is over we should develop more fraternal ties and broaden our concepts of otherness, since no one is in complete seclusion, for we all need everyone in a

collective world, the global village. The materialistic and consumerist society that we have developed has forgotten individuals, and we relate to each other in economic terms. And so it has gone and goes: the virus too does not respect anyone and does not discriminate on the basis of social status, cultural or economic condition; everyone falls, without commiseration, under its yoke. In the future

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we are going to have to "develop a consciousness of co-responsibility" that allows us to work side by side; otherwise other even more lethal viruses are likely to return. The pain that this pandemic has produced should make us react.

These days, the work *The Plague* by Albert Camus, published in 1947, has once again been cited in numerous interventions and is becoming a redeeming metaphor that reminds us that an epidemic makes us reflect on ourselves, on our moral values and, especially, on time. Camus tells us: "Only one thing had changed for them: this time which, during the months of their exile, they would have liked to push forward so that it would go faster, and which they were still determined to speed up, even when they were already in sight of the town; then, as soon as the train began to brake, before stopping, they wanted on the contrary to slow time down and hold it in suspension."

In conclusion, this confinement in our homes, necessary and appropriate, is offering us another dimension and understanding of that which we call "time". Minute by minute we will be able to understand in our introspection the value of our hours and the importance of travelling together with other human beings, in the suggestive and interesting experience of this "journey of life" that we are on, with the rest of humanity, because as the wise men from the East remind us: "You, the Westerners, have the clocks; we, on the other hand, have the time." ★★★

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