

# LACANIAN REVIEW ONLINE

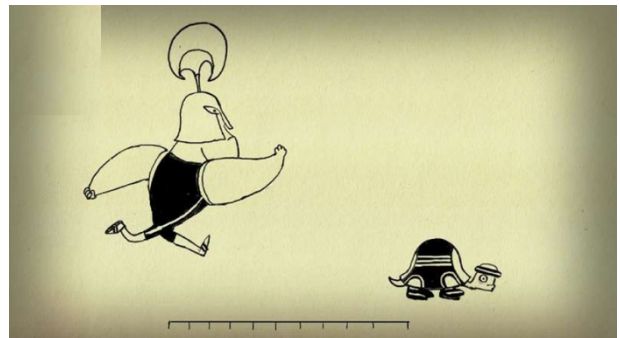
COVID-19 2020

#19 to #24

## To Each His Own Pandemic

By *François Ansermet* (Switzerland)

We knew that epidemics existed. They may have been confined to our memories. We knew about the plague, cholera, tuberculosis, typhus, measles, polio, AIDS, Ebola, and SARS as well, due to another coronavirus, SARS-CoV, which became epidemic in 2003 and mainly affected Asia. But COVID-19 arises as a pandemic that plunges us into the unknown and breaks into each and every one of us.



COVID-19 breathes on the entire world. The same phenomenon for everyone, but to which everyone reacts differently, starting from their own singularity. Each with their own point of attachment which crystallizes in a unique and unpredictable way.

To each his own epidemic – this is what the clinic shows us. Sometimes with paradoxical reactions, such as that of this adolescent suffering from a very restrictive phobia of touching, which obliges him to open any and all doors with his elbow; he found himself greatly relieved by the measures taken against the pandemic: “The whole world has become like me!” We see the reversal. Now the abnormal has become normal, the new norm is well and truly this new form of life, as Canguilhem said. And a little girl confides with a certain humour: “If you want to disinfect your hands with the disinfectant, you must first disinfect the bottle of disinfectant ... But the risk is that the bottle of disinfectant to disinfect the disinfectant has not been disinfected ...”, and so on ad infinitum, in a kind of Zenonian paradox applied to COVID-19.

The pandemic is progressing and seems to generate other epidemics which multiply: an epidemic of fear, mistrust, an epidemic of denial, an epidemic of loneliness, etc. The list can become endless, going

all the way to the risk of an epidemic of impotence with the presence of death imposing itself throughout the world.

Along with the pandemic comes the confinement that can kill it. To each his epidemic and, if I may say, to each his confinement. Everyone experiences it differently. One young patient remarked: “Time can weigh heavily, as if it had stopped; we wait.” The epidemic insists on the present, a strange present. It freezes time, suspends it, while accelerating it towards an uncertain future. Confinement is, thus, as much temporal as spatial: temporal confinement in a static present of anxious waiting.

The number of deaths and the related statistics continue to accelerate, even as regulatory measures become increasingly restrictive. This pandemic’s acceleration implies a slowing down of everything that makes up society, in everything around us: a generalized deceleration, a “de-acceleration,” as a teenage girl puts it, wondering whether this virus is an opportunity for everyone to take responsibility for the climate. We have been pitched into the worst, into the double whammy of a social emergency plus a health crisis, both of which seem to be destroying the world.

How can something new arise out of this crisis? Can democracy hold onto its rights? What about borders, social ties, family ties, the position of children now that they are considered as health hazards to their seniors? What will become of the world, of the economy? What will happen to love, especially for those who declared their love for each other just before confinement? What about oneself, one’s ties to loved ones from whom we are separated, what about the additional deaths that may occur before the curve of the pandemic begins to level off? We are now up against the concerns common to all epidemics. As Rudolph Virchow said in the 19th century: “An epidemic is a social phenomenon that has some medical aspects.”

Beyond the sanitary and the social, the political and the economic, psychoanalysis has a position in the face of the emergence of a real exacerbated by this pandemic and its consequences. It’s up to us to face this unbearable impossible, it’s up to us to find a way to deal with it. Everyone has their responsibility to respond to and to grasp this phenomenon, from their place, from their field. Undoubtedly this involves inventing something. But one knows not what.

Without falling into hubris or denying the gravity of the situation, how can we turn this crisis into an opportunity? To follow the etymology of the word crisis which in Chinese is made of two characters, one meaning ‘danger’, the other ‘opportunity’, how shall we give life its place in our relationships, in our society? Life as the set of the forces which resist death, as Bichat said in his time. Some initiatives are already going in this direction – surprising, astonishing, ingenious, moving. It is up to us to take up this challenge to the living, especially since it seems that these days we are being drawn more and more towards death.

*Translated by Janet Haney*

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[1] First published as “À chacun sa pandémie”, *Lacan Quotidien*, No. 876, 25 March 2020.

# Salva Veritate?

By *Claudia Iddan* (Israel)

The subject in psychoanalysis is split, this is a basic assumption of the theory.

This split forms a perspective different from the one, which gives the “ego” absolute superiority as a representation of man by being able to sharply erasing the idea of sweeping identification of chair-role with a person. Here the question arises how can a man occupy two “chairs”, so to speak, between which there exists a clear opposition of interests, and claim that “there is nothing”? I am referring to a case of a person who is simultaneously holding a senior government position on the one hand and is being accused of criminal acts on the other.



Naturally, this man would do anything he possibly can, probably regardless of cost, to claim he is occupying neither chair, and that it is all part of personal persecution. If one turns to mathematical logic, in a sense such position perpetuates Leibnitz’s principal concerning the “identical to itself” in order to preserve Truth: *Salva veritate*. Therefore, a position which attempts to erase the aforementioned conflict of interests, every moment and under all conditions, with no split, trying to present itself in alleged status of one alone with himself. It may be assumed that this sole individual, who is always “identical to himself”, seemingly matches the principle which explains the creation of the series of natural numbers. In this series, each of these is created with the addition of the 1, each time anew, but this is the arithmetic dimension. Logic, however, needed a further, revolutionary step vis-à-vis the question where has the primary one opening the series appeared from? In order to explain its emergence, it had to go precisely through the idea of “not identical to itself”, which in fact does not preserve the principle of *salva veritate*. This has enabled reaching the concept of zero, representing a concept which includes no object. In other words, one which represents an empty group, and then counting it as one. Frege’s theory. In this case, however, it is not about the conceptualization of non-existence but rather of omitting that which does exist, of erasing under the claim that this is a lie, a false charge.

This kind of conduct turns that which exists, the real, into a lie. Yet, one is not obliged to turn to mathematical logic, to such seeming sophistication, a thought-exercise, in order to expose this. It would suffice to follow the discourse of that man and to observe the degree of heinousness and abjection which speech can reach through defaming all the surrounding others for the sake of presenting the speaker himself as The compass of society, as “king”. This way, the courts, the attorneys, the police, the media, anyone who expresses a different opinion, becomes the enemy. In the past, such line of thought has already led to the assassination of a Prime Minister, who was compared with the ultimate enemy: Arafat or Hitler.

Israeli society is on the brink of the abyss, where freedom of speech is nearing its total obliteration, nearing pure racism toward, for example, part of the population whose skin color is different, or close to considering another nation inferior, second rate, who is not entitled to equal rights. As regarding rights, it has recently been decided, probably a solo decision of the “king”, to use digital means to

detect and locate Corona patients. These are the very means used by the general security service in order to locate terrorists. This constitutes an invasion of civilians' privacy, and a major violation of a basic democratic principle. Since the Knesset, Israel's Parliament, and its committees, who are supposed to oversee such decisions, are currently neutralized, such tyrannical decisions of the "king" are not being curbed..

The atmosphere is difficult, complex, especially after a third round of elections, which seems to have left the citizens at the same point, possibly facing yet another round. In addition, the Coronavirus, which reigns almost everywhere in the world, putting whole populations into quarantine, with panic naturally spreading. How in fact, don't certain ideologies act as a virus of sorts? Like a virus against which there is no vaccine, and which can lead to murder.

Ideologies are worldviews, Freud has already shown us their organised character. They have no room for the subject, for split, for acceptance of the other. It is also interesting what use ideologies make of natural phenomena, science or states of emergency.

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## Social Distancing and Lacan's 'Discreet Brotherhood'

By *Glenn Strubbe* (Belgium)

A crisis rarely has had so many different aspects, and covers so many different domains on such a large scale as the corona crisis that keeps us all in our own places if it does not force us to stand in the line of fire. We are at war, we didn't need Emmanuel Macron to realize it, but he made it official. A feeling was symbolically confirmed. The effects of this new war range from absolute horror to the emergence of previously unknown inventions and desires in all areas of our lives. Marie-Hélène Brousse also states the latter in her beautiful text *Finding the vital power of desire* in the very impasse of a situation. [UU](#)



The intangibility, the unimaginability and unpredictability of this war compels us to conclude that *The Corona crisis* does not exist, just as Lacan stated that *The woman (La femme)* does not exist, there is no signifier for it in the symbolic. There can therefore only be crises, every *speaking being* has his own crisis.

Even if this crisis is elusive and inexpressible, or for that very reason indeed, there is a lot to be said about it, at the risk of not illuminating a downside of the same thing. Let me focus on the social aspect of it. Here too, we see a very paradoxical or contradictory situation emerging that swings between havoc and invention, with nothing but our own desire as our compass.

This crisis is not unrelated to what we call globalization today, which brought with it an extremely high degree of mobility across the planet. The times of *chacun chez soi*, each in his own house lay

behind us since already a while now. Lacan was talking about universalization here, and he had his own view of it, which he shared with few at the time, even if it seems an undeniable fact today. He linked universalisation to science and technology, which would, among other things, evolve mobility with a rotational movement inherent in capitalism. This would – oh paradox! – lead to an ever-increasing segregation of enjoying bodies. Unification leads to fragmentation. Bringing the enjoying bodies too close together would lead to more brotherhood, one hoped. By, among other things, removing boundaries in combination with the decline of the symbolic Father that arranged social interaction, the social distance between us has become infinitely small. But this brotherhood would not be the peaceful brotherhood that was dreamed of – it would be a particularly cruel brotherhood, with unseen hard-core segregation at its core, including extreme forms of racism and misogyny. Not only would the distance between people become infinitely short, it would also prove to be infinitely large, Lacan claimed. And so it happened. It brought us to the point of the corona crisis today.

Psychoanalysts, too, would not escape the dance of segregation. In response to all this, Lacan founded a School, which is not a group with all the ensuing group effects, but a collection of loners who to some extent stand alone and are connected only in their absolute solitude. *Des épars désassortis*, [2] disparate, unconformable loose speakbeings. On the basis of these it is not possible to form a group, but a community in which not love or hate, but cooperation, is central, of course without completely eradicating the love and hate phenomena – spare us from that! This led to the invention of the cartel as a working tool. Lacan spoke of a ‘discreet brotherhood’ [3] here.

Isn’t that what today’s social distancing also seems to lead to, among other things? Despite, in addition to, and – yes – in part, also *thanks to* the ravages that result from the social distancing and will result from it much more in the future? Marie-Hélène Brousse concludes: “In short, it’s about resourcing desire in so far as it implicates loss as its operational mode, but not all-loss, since it brings with it invention and thereby unprecedented knowledge.” [4] This loss seems to be, among other things, a loss of too great a proximity, a proximity that catapults speaking beings infinitely far apart, because they all enjoy in different ways that cannot be reconciled. The proximity of the discreet brotherhood as a specific interpretation of social distancing seems to me more appropriate than ever in these corona times, in which we are clearly connected in loneliness, and perhaps this is also what this crisis invites us to. If we want to hear it.

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[1] Brousse, M.-H. (2020). *Finding in the very impasse of a situation the vital force of desire*, <http://www.thelacanianreviews.com/finding-in-the-very-impasse-of-a-situation-the-vital-force-of-desire/>

[2] Lacan J., Préface à l’édition anglaise du *Séminaire xi, Autres écrits*, Paris, Seuil, 2001, 573.

[3] Lacan(J., L’agressivité en psychanalyse, *Écrits*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1966, 124.

[4] Brousse, M.-H., *Op. cit.*

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# Love in a Time of Isolation

By *Alan Rowan* (Germany)

In the face of the coronavirus pandemic to isolate has become a social act, an act of care, if also one tinged with anxiety, and of course, one that is enforced in those countries whose citizens exist in so-called “lockdown”. Commentators have naturally speculated on the effects of such isolation; on individuals, on families and on lovers/couples. For example, and taking the case of the couple, one can wonder will love deepen, be re-found where it has waned, or will we see in time a leap in divorce/separation rates? Regardless of the outcome it seems clear that this question of who,



how and what it is one loves (e.g. in one's partner) will for many come more sharply into focus, and then, beyond the couple, the question also of what place love occupies, or could occupy, more generally in life. Indeed, it is strange but true, that in this time of a global tragedy, one in which many have, and many will, continue to die, and where extreme economic hardships will follow, love, as the sea of goods and consumptive satisfactions fade, takes on, once again, a new-found significance.

In this context I would like to begin with two quotations, the first from Hannah Arendt, the second from the closing verse of Auden's magnificent poem “September 1, 1939”:

*This mere existence, that is, all that is mysteriously given to us at birth and which includes the shape of our bodies and the talents of our minds, can be adequately dealt with only by the unpredictable hazards of friendship and sympathy, or by the great and incalculable grace of love, which says with Augustine “ Volo ut sis” (I want you to be), without being able to give any particular reason for such supreme and unsurpassable affirmation. (Arendt 2009:301)*

*Defenceless under the night  
Our world in stupor lies;  
Yet, dotted everywhere  
Ironic points of light  
Flash out wherever the Just  
Exchange their messages:  
May I, composed like them  
Of Eros and of dust  
Beleaguered by the same  
Negation and despair,  
Show an affirming flame. (Auden: 1940)*



Both of these pieces, in quite different contexts, point to love as a mysterious form of affirmation, something that arises as a demand *not* based on need, and one can add, as essentially tied to speaking, meaning there is no love outside speech, or to put it differently, love is its expression.

Lacan in his seminar *Transference* (1960-61) gives us a quite beautiful description of what he terms “the miracle of love” via the following metaphor or myth which describes *a reaching towards* the object, presenting us with an image whereby this reaching of the lover towards the beloved is reciprocated, the beloved revealed – as lover:

*The hand that extends towards the fruit, the rose, or the log that suddenly bursts into flames – its gesture of reaching, drawing close, or stirring up is closely related to the ripening of the fruit, the beauty of the flower, and the blazing of the log. If, in the movement of reaching, drawing, or stirring, the hand goes far enough towards the object that another hand comes out of the fruit, flower, or log and extends towards your hand – and at that moment your hand freezes in the closed plenitude of the fruit, in the open plenitude of the flower, or in the explosion of a log which bursts into flames – then what is produced is love. (p. 52)*

Here one can say love is not a thing but a movement, a process or merging between two subjects, almost indecent, a being-with the other that exists as a known existential and vital force, and yet, for all that, remains outside knowledge, graspable only via the endless images of love we create (e.g. in literature, poetry, art etc.). Love is thus originary, ungrounded in this sense, a creative act, (one might say), that simultaneously creates the possibility of its own loss, a presence thus haunted by its possible absence, one form of which arises in the deep and despairing agony of unrequited love.

If the above attempts to describe the core what one might call a “pure” love (love as mutual) it is true that love also has its variations. For example, there is love of family, of friends, of the other to whom one extends an extra-ordinary act of care, and then, of course, love has its degraded forms. In the latter case, one can point to the sort of love that seeks to possess the other, objectifying “them” via forms of demand that insist they confine their being to the images the would-be “possessor” insists on, meaning those that serve his or her self-satisfaction. Here, accepting that narcissism is always there in love (one loves oneself in-love), one encounters here only that, the other must be useful/serve one’s ideals, and in so far as this is a longing for a fixed or permanent possession – it longs for an illusion. Invariably in this form of love, one is never far from the “master/slave” dialectic, from the deployment of power, the “if-then” of the act that displays its unfreedom in the rejection of the essential autonomy and difference of the other. Of course, such relationships exist, and even last, bolstered by the routines of life, consuming pleasures (shared or not), the small separations that make “it work” – which today, in our “time of isolation”, are increasingly unavailable. One should also mention here a form of love that exists when no one is fully there, where there exists a sort of accommodation to the other, whereby “we drift along” sums up a relationship and its capacity to ignore the emptiness, or starkness of the gap, between the two – something that isolation promises to make all too obvious.

Finally, it is worthwhile to consider the wider dimensions of love, meaning love as it manifests more generally in the social bond, in forms of relatedness to the other that acknowledges our lack of self-sufficiency, the unique way, one might say, that each of us must find that “plugs us into” the social bond. Arguably, the tragedy of the pandemic that we are struggling with, shows us quite clearly that this “plugging in” has a dimension that is without borders, highlighting our shared humanness. It leads to a question, the answer to which remains far from clear. Namely, could this stark and global-wide experience of vulnerability and loss become a platform for a new kind of identification with the other? We cannot be naïve and think of love as “the solution” but maybe one might consider “respect” to be quite close to love, at least as Arendt defines it, as follows:

... a regard for the person from the distance which the space of the world puts between us, and this regard is independent of qualities which we may admire or of achievements which we may highly esteem” (p. 243)

It returns us to the “I want you to be” of Arendt’s earlier quote and to the fact that, there is a sense in which, it is not isolation that separates us, but rather, it has something to do with our capacity to speak well of love...

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Trans. B. Fink. Polity Press.

Image@Aly Song / Reuters

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## The Times of the Virus

By Marie-Hélène Brousse (France)

Maintaining sessions by the various means that modernity makes available to us, in this period of chaos for the social bond, brings sonorous and signifying material to this epidemic.<sup>[1]</sup> An analysis and talking about a dream associates “avoiding spaces” [*vider les lieux*] with the “covi(d),” the name given in this dream to the coronavirus. A colleague talks about her town, which looked beautiful when first emptied of the tourists who usually invade it, but which later became “ghostly.” Another colleague notes that her city, which is said to “never sleep,” has fallen into a deep sleep where rats, previously



confined to the subway tunnels, now roam freely on the platforms. Confinement is changing the shape of things. It is reminiscent of the animal and vegetable resurrection at Chernobyl. Men and women die, swept away by the virus, but life continues on its Darwinian way.

In short, the virus made its devastating entry not only into discourses, disrupting the modalities of the social bond, but also into the unconscious and the domain of the equivocal. We can characterize it in space by its extent [*étendue*] which repels all limits, “é-ten-due” [*é-time-due*] where the sonorous equivocal resonates with the dimension of *time* which characterizes it as well, given the speed of the virus’s spread.



## *How to Approach This Dimension of Time with Psychoanalysis?*

I reread the text Lacan wrote in 1945, “Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty.”<sup>[ii]</sup> It seemed to me that, in these times of confinement, the dilemma of the three prisoners could shed some light.

However, I have always approached this article with some hesitation. In fact, my symptom, “to go, to leave” was a little too tightly closed, and the term “prisoner” produced an enduring clouding of judgment in me. Jacques-Alain Miller devoted several surgically precise courses to it, but then I noticed my difficulty in allowing myself to be taught by the logical articulations of this text, which confronted me with the imperious character of my *I don’t want to know anything about it*. No doubt it took the force of the real, in direct connection with the discourse, to bring me to read it when alone and confined, that is to say, as a prisoner.

Nevertheless, there is a paradox here: the three prisoners in the text want to get out. They think it is possible to leave. The virus has reversed this. The virus is the one who can go anywhere, and if we want ourselves and others to live, it is imperative not to go out.

So let’s imagine logical time on the basis of this premise: *I don’t want to leave*. The prison warden, as Lacan wrote, advised the three prisoners that: “For reasons I need not make known to you now, gentlemen, I must free one of you. In order to decide which, I will entrust the outcome to a test that you will, I hope, agree to undergo.”<sup>[iii]</sup> But, like Bartleby, the famous character invented by Melville, they would then answer him all together: “*I prefer not to*.” End of experiment.

Of course, logic does not sit well with Bartleby. So let’s opt to follow Lacan and, with him, the sophism, the signifier by which he names what he calls “the perfect solution.” In the paragraph thus titled, two expressions appear in italics – “*a certain time*” and “*a few steps*”: appearance of time and bodily displacement. Lacan then distinguishes “the test in real life” of this experiment from his practice “under the innocent conditions of fiction.” The text is crossed by considerations on the Era, which I write here with a capital letter. Lacan’s ethical and political reflection, relating to this period of the Second World War, in fact serves as the guiding thread for his text from its beginning to its end. Thus he writes:

Not that I would go so far as to recommend putting it to the test in real life – even though our era’s antinomic progress has, it seems, for some time now, been putting such conditions within the reach of an ever greater number. [...] I am not one of those recent philosophers for whom confinement within four walls merely helps us attain the ultimate in human freedom. But when carried out under the innocent conditions of fiction, the experiment will not disappoint those who have not lost all taste for surprise.<sup>[iv]</sup>

The last lines of the text mention, as a limit to any “human” assimilation – “precisely insofar as it posits itself as assimilative of a barbarism” – the essential determination of the ‘I’...<sup>[v]</sup> In keeping with Freud, Lacan rejects the artificial antinomy between civilization and barbarism supported by certain philosophical currents and poses their identity. It is therefore thanks to this fiction of logical time that Lacan draws out the determination of the “I” by the act. It is a logic of reasoning as an act.

I will not elaborate on the sense of wonder that finally gripped me as I read this text, intermingling as it does the threads of a politics of the time with those of psychoanalysis, except to signal that, ever since Freud, psychoanalysis opposes the *collectivity*, composed of a definite number of individuals, to the *generality*, a class containing an indefinite number of individuals.<sup>[vi]</sup> The dilemma proposed by

logical time therefore concerns a definite number of individuals, as is always the case in the theory of the analytical clinic as opposed to statistical thought.

We come to the “three *evidential moments*”<sup>[vii]</sup> that this fiction, a true thought experiment, allows Lacan to distinguish: the *instant of the glance*, the *time for comprehending* and the *moment of concluding*. He points out at the outset that they can operate independently of one another or even overlap each other, which a chronological approach would not allow.

### ***What About the Virus?***

It is therefore not a chronological succession that smoothes time like a *continuum*. The emphasis is placed on what Lacan calls a “tonal discontinuity” or a “real succession”, each moment being able to take or not take place, to be absorbed or not absorbed in the following one.

Let’s say that faced with the virus, as the newspapers have reported, there was almost no instant of the glance, even in China, where it all started. The reasons for this absence are many and varied. It can nevertheless be posited that, faced with the real, the strangeness of the different framings made by psychic reality is such that it abolishes, in many subjects, the instant of the glance. We don’t see anything coming. We are engulfed by the wave before we can see it. There was not even what Lacan called the impersonal “subjectivization [...] which takes form here in the ‘one knows that...’”<sup>[viii]</sup> Let us say it in everyday language: there was not even a formulation like “What is this thing?” The instant of perception is absent.

Next comes the time for comprehending and reveals what crystallizes – Lacan’s expression – in various hypotheses. The time for comprehending makes it possible to reinterpret the instant of the glance that was lacking, an after-effect, in anamorphosis. It refers to the skull which Lacan analyzes from Holbein’s painting, *The Ambassadors*,<sup>[ix]</sup> which appears only as a skull with a certain adjustment of the gaze. The death drive makes its entry outside the sidération that prevented the instant of the glance. Then the true unknown of the problem can appear: in that it touches the subject itself, in that it concerns the subject and in that it divides the subject. The objectivity of the time for comprehending allows the subjects defined “*by their reciprocity*” to appear. In the absence of the instant of the glance, which Lacan designates as “*apodosis*”<sup>[x]</sup> – a grammatical term designating a main proposition that is missing – the length of the time for comprehending, in putting forward hypotheses, turns out to be very long indeed in the epidemic we are going through.

This is evidenced by the difficulty of taking instructions seriously, a difficulty which is still active today in democracies. This also explains why the containment decision was taken so late. The time for comprehending, in fact, requires a reconfiguration of the extremely narrow frameworks of psychic reality. These allow, in normal time, the speaking bodies to manage their daily life by the routine of automatisms acquired from the discourses that constitute them. Once this routine is cancelled or split, it is the symptom of each of us that takes over. Since it is not dialectisable, it skews the time for comprehending.

### ***Then Comes the Moment to Conclude***

To conclude the time for comprehending involves the passage to an assertive logic. Lacan uses colloquial formulations – “*so that there will not be* (a lagging behind that engenders error)” or “*for fear that* (the lagging behind might engender error)”<sup>[xi]</sup> – to indicate what, of the time for comprehending, permits us, with the affect of anxiety that accompanies this passage, to make an assertion. This assertion allows the passage from the collective to the singular, to the *I*, resulting from

this assertion. So that *I* [*Je*] put on gloves, *I* [*je*] put a distance of one meter between myself [*moi*] and the other, etc.

It is therefore the assertive concluding moment which brings the *I* into play as an effect of its act and no longer as a simple uninhabited obedience. Its condition is an act of which it is the result.

But therein lies a paradox. Because the advent of this *I* is – depending on the moment of concluding proper to the Lacan of that time – quickly *desubjectified*.<sup>[xii]</sup> A speech act brought out a speaking being where the subject was. But it is from this *I* that a de-subjectivation occurs, a condition for which a reciprocity does not arise from monitoring the herd or from identification with the One of the tyrant. In the case of the virus, let's add that it is a condition of the solidarity of the *ones-all-alone* [*uns-tout-seuls*].

By way of conclusion, I return to the occurrences of a few words collected from analysands, by telephone, since the beginning of the confinement assumed as an act. Covi(d) or Covi(de) [Co-empty], the empty city that has become “ghostly”, silence and absence are so many equivoques of the life and death of speaking bodies, in whom, with every drive being the death drive, it comes in opposition to what life has of the real, the life of the virus for example. I also hear a theme that is occupying me right now, that of emptiness. The epidemic shows that emptiness is also a mode of enjoyment. “Hush!” [“*Chut!*”], as an Analyst of the School recently said.

*Translated by Dominique Rudaz and revised by Janet Haney*

[i] First published as “Les temps du virus”, *Lacan Quotidien*, No. 876, 25 March 2020.

[ii] Lacan, J., “Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty”, in *Écrits, The First Complete Edition in English*, transl. B. Fink, Norton, London/New York, 2006, pp. 161-175.

[iii] *Ibid.*, pp. 161.

[iv] *Ibid.*, pp. 162-163.

[v] *Ibid.*, pp. 174.

[vi] *Cf. ibid.*

[vii] *Ibid.*, pp. 167.

[viii] *Ibid.*, pp. 167.

[ix] *Cf.* Lacan, J., *Seminar Book XI, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. J.-A. Miller, transl. A. Sheridan, Norton, London/New York, 1998, pp. 86 & *seq.*

[x] Lacan J., “Logical Time...”, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

[xi] *Ibid.*, pp. 169-170.

[xii] *Ibid.*, p. 172.

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## The City That Never Sleeps...

By *Maria Cristina Aguirre* (USA)

New York City has fallen into a deep slumber. Broadway is asleep, the lights are out, and the show is not going on. Likewise, the museums, the houses of worship are closed; all sports events, all social gatherings are cancelled. Schools are closed, children and college students are sent home, people are working from home. Restaurants, bars and gyms are closed.

Only a few are still going out of their houses, those with essential health-related jobs. Buses and subways are almost empty. Supermarkets are being overwhelmed by the demand.

The paradox is that you know we are in crisis when New Yorkers begin to be kind to one another, perfect strangers.

New York is not alone in this. It has been said before, it sounds like a war situation. But what is unique is that this time around, it affects the whole human race independent of ethnicity, culture, language, nationality, gender or sex orientation, rich and poor alike.

What happens when we go into a deep slumber? Do we dream? Do we have nightmares? Do we wake up? It seems that in this nightmare we are touching the real, but we are not waking up.

New signifiers are entering into circulation. The new Master signifier is **social distancing**. Avoid physical contact, no touching, keep a safe distance, no gatherings more than 10 people. What consequences does this have for our social bonding? In the era of the virtual is it still necessary to meet in person, and if so, why? Will the virtual, online connection be enough?



What teachings can we extract from the work done in the Papers in preparation for the now postponed WAP Congress? The dream, now more than ever, is important, as interpretable and as interpreter. That it is always going to point out to that hole in the real, covering it with the semblants in order to make life more tolerable. Thus, if we can make a wish, let's hope that from this nightmare, we will wake up to keep on dreaming, in a humane way and maybe, just maybe, we will invent a new way to make a social bond.

*Image@Eduardo Munoz/Reuters*

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