

Let us penetrate again into times that await neither an explanation nor a transformation of the world from the philosopher, but the construction of shelters against the inclemency of time. *Nicolás Gómez Dávila*

TEXTS BY JACQUES CAMATTE (I)

INSTAURATION OF THE RISK OF EXTINCTION



In first perusal, the exceptional significance granted to the pathological effects of the coronavirus infection appears to be a perfect way to mask the essential phenomenon in action: the devastation of nature and the challenge to the process of organic life on earth. We are talking about the disappearance of thousands of species and the curbing of this process, which has been going on for nearly four billion years, leading

to an immense extinction. We must remember that the earth is an exceptional celestial body and nothing like it has been found over a region spanning thousands of light-years. But how can the species occult [*escamoter*] this event, if not because of its madness, its being shut-in [*enfermement*] in a becoming, a wandering, and its being incapable of imagining anything else, particularly a way out. The species is only concerned with itself and it is unaware that what it is experiencing is due to the dynamics of its separation from nature and its infra and inter species enmity.¹

The truth of this masking dynamic is obvious, but this assertion does not imply an underestimation of the phenomenon we are undergoing. This is what we want to insist on and we do not want to separate the two phenomena but on the contrary to integrate what concerns the species in the emerging totality of living phenomenon.

The most important feature of this pandemic is its extreme contagiousness, which is not only due to the nature of the virus itself but is exacerbated firstly by global over-



A complete bibliography of Camatte's works and their translations is available at:
www.ilcovile.it/V3_camatte_all_per_Articoli.html

¹ See the article *Enmity and Extinction* which elaborates on what we discuss here.



population and secondly by the destruction of nature which has diminished the number of possible host species. It is experienced as a terrible threat.

At various moments in their life processes, men and women find themselves, consciously or unconsciously, in the presence of the threat, which in some cases can manifest itself as a very determined threat. And this operates as much at the individual level as at the level of a more or less important group, at the level of an ethnic group, a social stratum, as well as at the level of a nation and, finally, at the level of the species. The species finds itself housed in its world, in nature or even in the cosmos, as in a matrix dominated by the threat of the risk of extinction², [a matrix – *T.N.*] determined and structured by such threat – in relation to destructive natural phenomena – over thousands of years. It is not only this contagion that has reinstated the risk, a risk

2 The film trilogy, *The Matrix*, illustrates nicely how the infernal mechanism of *replay* [*rejouement*] is established. For example, Neo realizes that there have been other chosen ones and other attempts at destruction, and, in the end, it is strongly suggested that the threat persists: the possibility of a new attack on Zion by the machines is not eliminated.

incurred more than one hundred thousand years ago³, but also the measures that are being taken to halt it.

Thus, the sixth extinction envisaged several years ago by R. Leakey⁴ has now become, both for the species and the whole of the living world, a genuine risk that reinforces the unconscious threat of extinction that haunts *Homo sapiens*, especially for what concerns the species itself, while the other [the threat to the living world – *T.N.*] is more often than not hidden according to the aforementioned masking dynamics.

What does the contagion, which is the basis of this pandemic, and the protective measures it gives rise to, reveal? We can speak of an apocalypse in this regard, if only to signal its replaying [*rejouement*],

- 3 Cf: “It seems that our species went through a drastic selection phase, a bottleneck reducing the population to some 60,000 individuals, between 100,000 and 50,000 years ago.” Pascal Picq, *A Bushy* [*Buissonnante*] *Evolution* in the journal *Pour la Science*, October 2002, No. 300. ¶ *When the Sea Saved Humanity* (during the ice age which lasted from -195000 years to -120000) article by Curtis Marean in *Pour la Science*, No. 306, October 2010. ¶ Currently there is talk of a risk of extinction that occurred around 13,000 years ago when a meteorite fell in Greenland which caused the disappearance of the megafauna and a dramatic reduction of the human population, to which various myths testify. From *The Origin of Myths and Civilization*, Casimir Péraud, Médiapart 1.5.2020 ¶ Closer to us in time and more locally a marine transgression affecting the Middle East, the region of Sumer, would be the origin of the myth of the flood. ¶ We should learn the lessons of these catastrophes related to meteorites or asteroids and use the space industry not for the conquest of space – a dynamic of enmity/hostility – but to destroy these cosmic objects before they reach the earth. In addition, we should reflect on the negative impact of the frequent crossing of the magnetosphere, which protects the earth from dangerous radiation and allows life on our planet.
- 4 Andreas Loepfe took up this thesis in a very interesting article published in No. 17 of the review (*Dis*)*continuité*, Cf. François Bochet.

since this word precisely indicates the revelation of possible destruction but also the means to escape it.

[The contagion reveals the following phenomena (bulleted list added – *T.N.*)]

- 1) The failure to escape from nature, since the species has not managed to escape the threat and reach safety, despite a series of separations to protect itself.
- 2) The end of the total negation of the original community, as a result of its fragmentation over the millennia, along with the final phase in the process of separation, and the deployment of hyper-individualism manifesting itself as a compensation for the evanescence of the individual. Nowadays, racketeering and gregariousness are the aberrant residues of community.
- 3) The end of the covering over [*recouvrement*], and the exposure of dereliction [*dereliction*], as well as the manifestation of numen, of the sacred, of that which generates fascination and dread, and of the revelation of vulnerability.⁵

Since the instauration of the risk of extinction – we are no longer simply faced with the threat but with the risk itself – presents itself as the summation of the two preceding phenomena mentioned above, we cannot, as we stressed, treat them separately and we note, first of all, that to say that it is a risk implies that extinction is not bound to occur. However, in the thousands of years that separate us from

the event [the initial separation of the species from nature – *T.N.*] data that were unforeseen may now enable us to pass from the idea of risk to the claim of certainty. Perhaps the most important and unforeseen data is the madness of the species, which makes it incapable of considering any development other than the one it has adopted (shutting-in). Hence the need to listen carefully to both the past and the present in order to be truly present to what is happening, as this will allow adequate behaviour to be actualised.

Studies of the origin of the disease reveal that it has had a rather long and confusing ‘incubation.’ Indeed, it was preceded by the severe acute respiratory syndrome SARS in China (2002-2003), which affected 29 countries. The covid-19 virus, also referred to as SARS-cov2, could derive from the one that caused SARS. On the other hand, there may be an association with Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome first identified in 1967. There is also occasional mention of the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, transmitted by camels, which since 2012 has affected a few countries around Saudi Arabia. This suggests that the current disease has a deep and widespread basis, especially as coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause a variety of illnesses, ranging from the common cold to severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). It is becoming the virus par excellence.

Living conditions being what they are and similar in all major urban centres, covid-19 might possibly emerge from a pre-existing ‘related’ virus in each of these centres. In this case, we would be witnessing some form of endogenous production. I am prompted to think this because of the speed of the spread and because it reveals

⁵ We have already highlighted this in connection with the attacks of September 11, 2001 in New York, in *Glosses on the Margins of Reality VIII*. We also insisted on the importance of shock creating a *hypnoid* state which makes individuals particularly manipulatable as is verified again with covid-19. This was re-explored in the analysis of Naomi Klein’s book, *Shock Doctrine*, in *Inversion and Unveiling*, 2012.

the state of degeneration⁶ in which the species finds itself. This does not imply – if this hypothesis proves to be correct – that isolation should be abandoned, but that it would require a simultaneous and even greater focus on the root causes of the disease beyond the virus parasite itself. This comes to be the support of all evil. We often hear people say, “I’m not well, I must have caught a virus.” But ambiguity is always at work with the *speciosed* species. Thus, someone who devotes themselves passionately to a given activity is described as having some kind of virus, or illness. The malignancy of this being is also found in the domain of artificiality with various computer viruses. Curiously enough, Stephen Hawking, physicist and cosmologist, apparently wanted computer viruses to be considered as living things, thus revealing an ambiguity in formation, joining another [ambiguity] which, according to the representation in place, refers to the natural world [to the viruses found in nature, as opposed to the computer ones – *T.N.*], considering the [natural] viruses as



both living and non-living depending on the medium in which they are found. But, with the virus, being the support of demonization, its essential role within the process of life is completely occulted [*es-camoté*]. In order to make this clear, we have to go back to the origins of this process – to the era of what may be called ‘the primordial soup’ – where a vital continuum reigned. Here there was no separation, and continuity was immediate. When cells appeared, their individual membranes created separations that disrupted continuity. Viruses were the living, discrete elements that made it possible to re-establish continuity, allowing transfers from some living beings to others, thereby guaranteeing that the whole process of life could continue, for what evolves is not only isolated species but the whole living world – and this evolution must maintain coherence. Geneticists have highlighted the presence of a large number of viruses integrated into our genome, indicating their contribution to its construction. In other words, if there is continuity, they can operate without being parasites. On the other hand, if this continuity is challenged, they can become parasites. And here again, to be able to affirm this, one must take into

⁶ This degeneration manifests itself in particular through the increase in auto-immune diseases due to the disturbance of the immune system; the multiplication of cancers; depression (cf. *Fatigue of self—Depression and Society* by Alain Erhenberg, Ed. Odile Jacob), self-hatred (cf. *Glosses X*), the increase in mental illnesses; obesity which is becoming generalized, as well as various illnesses linked to poor diet, or to drug use; the decline in male fertility; the possible disappearance of the Y chromosome, etc. ¶ This explains why some people claim that no one died because of the coronavirus, but *with* it. This statement is often made after autopsies have been performed. However, there remains the problem of the presence of the virus. How are we to understand this? These people do not give an effective answer and I have the impression that they minimize the phenomenon, if only because they tend to deny the presence of a pandemic. Others report a global conspiracy, which again explains nothing.

account the totality, because a host of relations are operative, including both the revealing one and others that may escape us. *Homo sapiens'* way of life has brought about various other discontinuities, the most important of which is that with the rest of nature, hence the multiplication of viral diseases. Making viruses the carriers of evil (diseases) is to further endorse separation and enmity, especially as the viruses are associated with species that are designated as their vectors, as in the case of covid-19: bats and pangolins. The latter, however, as a result of human action, are on the verge of extinction! But this harbours an ambiguity: making other living beings responsible for our illnesses implies thinking that we are passive, even inessential! The virtuoso species of manipulation projects itself into others and considers itself to be manipulated by the virus. However, many argue that SARS-Cov 2, the covid-19 virus, was created in a laboratory, as Luc Montagnier claims. The same affirmation was made about the as yet unknown AIDS virus.

The symptoms of covid-19 are diverse, and some have only recently manifested themselves. For example, heart problems or excessive inflammatory reactions such as cytokine storms signalling immune system dysfunction, behavioural disorders related to brain damage, systemic endothelial inflammation⁷ and even more recently the

7 The virus does not attack the immune system through the lungs but through the ACE2 surface receptors (receptors for angiotensin converting enzyme, a substance that plays a role in maintaining blood volume and blood pressure) present in the endothelium (internal membrane of blood vessels) which thereby loses its protective function. So, all organs can be affected. ¶ Previously it had been pointed out: "However, the more time passes, the clearer it is that the epidemic is not unfolding in the same way in China and in Europe, for reasons re-

formation of clots that cannot be removed, in some cases requiring amputations.

This great diversity of symptoms is linked to the fact that the disease exposes previous dysfunctions within the species as well as its obsolescence. It also reveals the dysfunctions in the biosphere caused by humans. It is more than a disease because as a mechanism of revelations it imposes itself as an apocalypse. But, let us repeat, the cause of the disease is not the virus but the state of the species.

Following the upheaval linked to May 1968, I focused my reflections and investigations, on the one hand, toward maintaining an "emancipatory" perspective through the affirmation of an invariance within the species of a current which carries a project for the re-emergence of the human community and, on the other hand, toward making evident the degeneration of the species linked to the development of capital and the autonomization of its form.⁸ Ten years later, I noted: "We have reached a stage of exhaustion of humanity and nature, which opens up the era of disasters." (*Précisions après le temps passé*, Invariance Series III, No.5-6, p.35)

A posteriori, we can see that the beginning of this era is contemporaneous with the end of the proletarian movement in the 1980s. This was itself an immense catas-

lated to the social context, the evolution of the virus and perhaps to the different genetics in each population. To take just one example, a classic manifestation of asymptomatic infection in Europe such as loss of smell has hardly been described in China." See Médiapart April 06, 2020, Samuel Alizon: *Isolation will not make the Epidemic Disappear*.

8 Regarding *Invariance* see the home page of the site, as well as the Glossary. For degeneration, see *The Wandering of Humanity* (1973), *Against Domestication* (1973), *This world we must leave* (1974) and, *It is here that fear is, and here that we must leap!* (1975).

trophe and we experienced it in contemporaneity to the acceleration of the destruction of nature, especially forests. Indeed, the disappearance of the proletariat had an effect comparable to the extreme reduction of the forests: the loss of any regulation of the economic system and the indefinite increase of production, comparable to the loss of the phenomenon of compensation, that allowed regulation of the climate.⁹ This is why during these years I studied how the becoming of the society-community in place had the impact of an ever-deeper degeneration of the species. Essential here were the techniques of manipulation that are designed to persuade and seduce - such as communication, information, advertising, together with the corresponding media - which all had a significant impact on the immune system, [an impact] that could even lead to depression; furthermore, depression is treated with drugs. This has also operated in the dynamics of assimilation and integration, without forgetting its constant opera-

9 The forest is essential, and vegetation in general, because thanks to photosynthesis it produces oxygen. It provides habitat and food for many species. It protects soils and allows their development thanks to the roots growing in symbiosis with fungi and bacteria. It allows the extraction of the mineral salts necessary for the formation of fruits and vegetables. The disappearance of trees from cultivated fields linked to monoculture is the cause of the tastelessness of fruit and vegetables, even in the case of organic farming. Agroforestry and permaculture can address all these shortcomings before the distant prospect of the demise of any kind of agriculture. Trees also exert a soothing, calming effect, capable of restoring us to continuity (cf. sylvotherapy). ¶ The primordial importance of the forest has begun to impose itself. In November 2019 the journal *Science And Life* published the article: *Trees — They Can Save Us*. Yes, but for that you must plant billions.

tionality over the centuries within education and teaching.¹⁰

Thus, we can answer the question: what causes the great danger of this disease? It is that it arrives at the end of a course, as the conclusion of a vast process of weakening of the species, linked in particular to a disorder of its immune system, the importance of which is considerable since it en-

10 I have addressed these themes in various articles. I cite only a few of them here because they are numerous. ¶ In *Glosses on the Margins of Reality I*, 1983: "(...) The only way to become immune (to the effects of television) is to adapt to the medium, and that is what happens. Humanity robotizes itself in order to adapt. Immunisation is taking place before our very eyes, it is robotisation with the possible exception of China..." - Marshall McLuhan, *Heads empty like funnels*, in the magazine *Réalités*. ¶ In *Glosses II*: "The whole becoming [*devenir*] of capital to autonomized representation is a presupposition for the world of advertising. An essential step has been the generalized introduction of credit." ¶ "An article in the magazine *Parents* explained how, in the USA, parents had created a league to help each other in order to be able to say no to their children — renouncing the previous anti-authoritarian practice. In the same article, a psychologist's remark about the practice of this league was indicated. He pointed out the danger of increased violence which the league entailed and noted how the real problem was not being addressed: the destruction of the emotional bonds themselves. To illustrate his point, he added: "Do you know of a country where the slogan 'Have you thought about hugging your child this morning?' can be found on the back window of a car?" ¶ In *Glosses III*, 1986: "Thus, since advertising phenomena can be interpreted in terms of immunity and since relationships between individuals can be interpreted in the same terms (cf. the question of tolerance explained above), it is understandable that advertising can play a regulatory role in the same way as the immune system. More precisely, we must say that the current community has engendered an integrative-regulatory system which is comparable in many respects to the immune system operating in the organism of higher vertebrates". ¶ *Emergence and Dissolution*, 1989: "Dissolution reaches the cellular level, with the disorganization of the cell causing the separation of elements that were united more than a billion years ago

sure an unconscious process of knowledge, complementary to the conscious one.

From all the articles in *The Human Body's Defences*, it ultimately emerges that the immune network does not only serve to defend the organism but is a system of integration, of positioning of the organism in the vital continuum, which moreover functions in symbiosis with the billions of organisms (mainly bacteria) present in the body of every man and woman.¹¹

It is understandable that multiple breaches of this system can result in great difficulty in being present to oneself and to the world, which is a component of *speciosis*,¹² especially since the break from the rest of nature has engendered the solitude of the species and [since] the destruction of the latter [the rest of nature] results in the impossibility of being acknowledged. For a

in the formation of eukaryotic cells. ¶ *Homo sapiens* thus becomes a useless and dangerous species for the entire life process, hence the tendency for it to be eliminated through the activity of bacteria with their auxiliaries — viruses, prions, etc.” This idea has also been expressed in other texts and can be more precisely worded as follows: everything happens as if all living beings tended to eliminate *Homo sapiens*. ¶ In *Community and Becoming*, 1994: “However, as we have indicated, by positing itself as immediate reality (as it happens with virtuality), autonomized mediation abolishes representation. In doing so, the process of knowledge based on the latter [i.e. representation] becomes evanescent; hence the retraction [*escamotage*] of the species itself, as well as the retraction of the earth (above-ground culture), of women (in vitro fertilization with the prospect of producing test-tube babies), of the brain (artificial intelligence), of the spectacle without real actors, etc. This elimination of the species separated from any concrete reality leads to its degeneration which is best expressed in its loss of innate nature which, in turn, signals the loss of bases, roots, fundaments.”

11 Cf. *Glosses III*, 1986.

12 See ‘The Structure of *Speciosis*’ in: *The Current End Point of Wandering*.

long while the species was able to alleviate this solitude through the supernatural, by having recourse to all sorts of divinities and, especially with monotheism, to the help of God. The weakness of the latter, its evanescence, puts the species back in dereliction [*dereliction*].

Thus the essential causes of the pandemic are the aforementioned *speciosis* — the most extreme manifestations of which is the loss of sensitivity, of affectivity, that causes and results in the loss of continuity and the regression of empathy — and overpopulation.¹³

The loss of sensitivity concerns the relationship to the other in general and the resonance [*retentissement*] of the other on oneself. This deficiency enhances hyper-individualism, which is expressive of the break of continuity that affects the dimension of the power of life and leads to the disappearance of listening.

The spread of the disease and the measures aimed at curbing or eradicating it — which call into question our whole way of life — reveal everything that negatively affects the species and highlights, in particular, the toxicity of separating in order to save itself.

The first thing that is revealed, and in a way that could be said to be explosive, is enmity, which presents itself not only as a behaviour and an affectation but also as a

13 A century ago during the Spanish flu which killed between 50 and 100 million people, there were 1.8 billion people, now we are 7.7 billion, which is to say 6 billion more; a quadrupling in this short period of time. Since then we understand the rationale behind the calls for isolation. ¶ From the moment we undertake the inversion, it will take a few thousand years for the number of human beings to reach between 250 and 500 million — which was probably the population before the great separation from nature caused by the practice of agriculture and breeding — allowing all forms of life to thrive.

schema of knowledge.¹⁴ From the beginning it has been proclaimed: we are at war. In this appeal emerges the nostalgia for times of war when, supposedly, the individual can give of their best and life acquires a meaning because it is possible to access oneself. Moreover, the state of war allows the dominants to justify various measures of repression and to curb possibilities for the dominated to manifest themselves. Indeed, the imposition of isolation, if prolonged, leads to a form of asphyxiation. In this regard, I would like to pass on the profound observation made to me by Cristina Callegaro about the disturbances caused by covid-19:

All these people who are suffocating, who cannot breathe, who lack oxygen, it is like a radical, absolute fear. It seems like a relived birth, a heavily traumatic birth which in turn sums up the terror of the annihilation of the species.

It also indicates the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of initiating the inversion that can present itself and be lived like a birth.

Doesn't the covid-19 contagion and the isolation that follows reflect an unconscious rejection of the other, especially among populations who are forced to experience close proximity – for example in transportation, on crowded streets, or even in cramped apartments? Normally we are not limited to our body but, even so, we are surrounded by a bubble similar to a limited amniotic cavity, therefore by an amnion [or membrane – *T.N.*]. The repeated crossing of this membrane makes living very difficult and uncomfortable; it

is as if the individual is losing their idiosyncrasy, their bearings, and even the very trace of themselves. Where do we find ourselves? And we can think that the holes in the “amnion” are doors through which a virus can enter.

This remark about the importance of the amniotic cavity and amnion was suggested to me by reading the works of Varenka and Olivier Marc, especially *Children's First Drawings* (Éditions Nathan). Indeed from what they revealed, I came to the conclusion that the amniotic cavity and amnion were reconstituted by the enveloping presence of the mother who, by the same token, allowed the child to build its own bubble, thanks to the umbilical cord which is constituted for the continuity of mother and child. One can safely say that this is an important moment in the structuring of *haptogestation*.¹⁵ All this must be put in relation to the loss of community, which makes individuals extremely fragile, and I would add that probably the bubble, and therefore the amnion, are the remnants of the communitarian dimension at the individual level.

Let us return to the manifestation of enmity. The proclamation of the present *Sacred Union* [in France, the Sacred Union refers to the political truce between left and right made in order to support patriotic efforts in WWI – *T.N.*] is, as before, equivalent to the implementation of a form of repression, often supplemented by self-repression, which targets those who disagree. It tends to abolish differences, plunging the population into a state of undifferentiation – which is a form of cancer.¹⁶

¹⁴ I will not elaborate here, having already written on this in *Glosses IX*, where I quote James Hilman's book: *A Terrible Love of War*. For more detail see: *Enmity and Extinction*.

¹⁵ See in particular: *L'image du corps*, pp. 83-86.

¹⁶ I have already indicated that cancer is a disease linked to the development of capital. In fact, the

This allows the State to regain some importance by making itself the manager of the therapy or even the therapist, which is logical because the fundamental therapy of our society is one which aims to heal men and women of their naturalness by repressing them. The measures ensuring isolation, being conducive to police violence, are part of this dynamic, as has been seen in the current revolts in the *banlieues*, caused by isolation, poverty and non-recognition.

The same is true of other measures, such as social distancing, which reveals the underlying enmity: because to keep one's distance means protecting oneself. It also makes it possible to avoid the crisis of presence, the presence of the other who is potentially dangerous, especially if he or she is unknown.

Social distancing involves carrying out life processes at a distance: teleworking, remote learning, video games, cybersex, and no more touching. We must perform all the vital functions in separation, without any contact: let us live happily by living separated.

Thus, covid-19 appears as an affectively transmissible disease that requires the wearing of a mask, implying that masking oneself creates or leads to an adequate distancing. Thus the more the species degenerates, the more difficult it is for it to carry out its life process without risks, the last of which — and the summation of all the others — being the risk of extinction.

Covid-19 and measures to prevent it also expose parental repression and exacerbate

cancer cell is an undifferentiated cell and the movement of capital produces the indifferenciation of men and women, making the dynamics of recognition increasingly impossible. Moreover, it renders them superfluous. Hyper-individualism — an attempt to be identifiable — appears as a reaction to this becoming.

it. Since the beginning of isolation, there has been an increase in cases of child abuse as well as abuse of women.

The phenomenon is repeated in labour relations, where employers do not provide the necessary protection measures or take advantage of the situation to increase exploitation, and this has led to strikes. In addition, some bosses initially denied the epidemic to avoid interrupting production.

Since economic activity cannot be interrupted, there must be a separation between those who are confined and those who must, as it were, serve those who are self-isolating. I mean, of course, carers, but also workers in other enterprises, such as the Post Office, for example, who are often not properly protected and safeguarded because of economic requirements or lack of resources, which are also caused by economic factors such as budgetary restrictions (the case of hospitals and hospital staff is exemplary).

Social inequalities are openly manifested. For example, the rich have been able to go to the countryside and those who have a house with a small garden or those who live in fairly large apartments enjoy much better living conditions than those in cramped housing, which are places that are also conducive to greater conflict.

Covid-19 and the measures aimed at eradicating it reveal and amplify the substitution phenomenon already mentioned: the replacement of naturalness by artificiality, the invasion of the use of the technique (the internalization of it no longer being sufficient) in all the operations of life which, in an exacerbated way, needs a manual of instructions to be carried out. It constitutes an answer to a very old double question: how can we live in discontinuity, how can we re-establish continuity? **Ques-**

tions and answers are part of what can be called: a treatise on how-to-live for all generations. Right now, the problem of maintaining continuity despite isolation is solved by virtuality and artificiality.

Substitution is the triumph of the economy, an approach characterized by the predominance of objects over beings. The former, thanks to information technology, are increasingly connected to each other and will soon no longer need people to operate them. Ultimately, men and women will appear as parasites who, because of their affectivity, will seriously disrupt the ongoing processes. But on the other hand, the economy ensures progress in everything and so it must also include Homo sapiens in its zoological dimension, hence the dynamics of augmented Man. Moreover, we must take into account the phenomenon of objectalisation, the tendency for human beings to behave more and more like objects.¹⁷

The substitution [of things for beings] creates a dynamic of extinction due to the replacement of the living with the non-living, like robots: beings that act as if they are alive. It is the triumph of the 'as if', of simulation, of the replacement of mother nature by mother computer-Internet.

The epidemic serves to mask the destruction of nature – to effectuate a detournement – but it also reveals all human horrors, that is to say, it not only unveils them but makes them emerge. In this regard, it should be noted that the veil is a kind of mask which, originally in Islamic areas, was used to protect women. In re-

cent years, the mask has also been used to protect against the consequences of environmental destruction: to protect against pollution.¹⁸ Pollution can be perceived as a highly contagious disease the origins of which go back a long way, beginning with the construction of cities, delimited by enclosures¹⁹ erected to provide face-to-face protection from other people. However, one can also consider that to mask oneself is to shut oneself up in oneself. It also means exposing an ambiguity: I am not dangerous, but I wear a mask because I am ambiguous, I may contain the possibility of transmitting a danger. In this case, to lift the mask would be to occult [*escamoter*] ambiguity. With the growth of the pandemic, and the likelihood of others emerging, one wonders whether the mask will become part of our required clothing. Although I am here exploring the dynamics of the moment and what they might lead to, it does not automatically follow that I am convinced of the usefulness of the mask or the testing.

Masking: we have used this word many times to signal the fact of dissimulating a certain reality rather than occulting [*escamoter*] or scotomizing it, which instead express that one is occulting rather than dissimulating. When we mask, we take into account a reality, but we hide it, which constitutes, moreover, the content of the covering over [*recouvrement*]. In the present situation, wearing a mask immediately

¹⁷ This happens during psychoses where the unrecognised individual uses the object in order to be recognised. See: Harold Searles, *The Non-Human Environment*, 1960, and *Inversion and Unveiling*, 2012.

¹⁸ We are still in a situation where enmity/hostility is operant, as was also the case with the gas masks developed in 1916, during a real war.

¹⁹ F. Renggli pointed out that the city is the construction of a womb and is compared to a mother and, interestingly, that the word *enceinte* both refers to a protective system and describes the state of a woman expecting a child ['big with child' – TN].

protects you, but also prevents you from contaminating the other person if he or she is not wearing one, in case you are carrying the virus without knowing it. But, unconsciously, other functions may be present and have an effect on the person who wears the mask; for example, what is it covering? In fact, one can also mask oneself in order not to be recognized, again indicating the dynamics of enmity. From a general point of view, this whole practice is related to the uncertainty of the species; the uncertainty of what it is and its place in the living phenomenon, but is also related to the dissatisfaction of being what it is. It points to all the anxiety and immense perplexity generated by the reality/appearance relationship, which harbours a fundamental ambiguity²⁰. This ambiguity is linked to the

²⁰ Not wishing, within the framework of this article, to deal in depth with the question of the mask, I add here a quote — in which the statements are remarkable — which allows us to get an idea of its magnitude: ¶ “Universal object of all archaic or modern societies, the mask holds an astonishing place in the course of civilization and its use goes back to the highest antiquity where, already made to be worn, it is often designed in light materials and its initiatory value remains obscure and paradoxical. A facial simulacrum, it conceals, hides, and camouflages. Belonging to the realm of appearance, the mask allows Man, endowed with an original duality, to access the metamorphosis of his being, to reveal his unconscious. Its characteristics, at first exclusively ritual, preserve throughout its history the principle of transgression which is at the base of all forms of disguise. Endowed with supernatural power, it allows temporary escape from daily life by giving free rein to the most repressed instincts and by bringing out the aspects of Man that social life normally obscures; it sometimes even reveals a few unknown facets. ¶ [...] Thanks to the mask, communication is established in a freer and more familiar way. Man gives himself the illusion of breaking down barriers and social distances.” Céline Moretti-Maqua, *The Mask and History*. ¶ The desire to metamorphose derives from dissatisfaction, from the perception of being unfinished. It is replaced today by the desire to be increased. All the techniques allowing this aim

separation from the rest of nature: are we natural or are we outside nature? This is a question that has been asked for centuries. One way of occulting [*une forme d'escamotage*] this question consists in positing that humans are constantly in the process of separating themselves, or on the verge of doing so. Ambiguity has the dimension of duality, ambivalence, and equivocation (the existence of two paths forces one to ask: which one should I take?). However, it is often unconscious and is only made apparent by a transgression [*transgression*] through the manifestation of these three phenomena. This is the case with Mother Nature or Stepmother Nature and the loving mother or the repressive one.

The harmfulness of ambiguity stems from the fact that it generates insecurity and indecision that can turn into inchoation, disarray, and the establishment of a blockage that one can only escape from with the deployment of extreme measures of great violence, and thus the recourse to enmity. Overall, ambiguity gives rise to a

at first to mask the natural being, then to eliminate it. On the other hand, isn't it transgressing to increase oneself? Wasn't the phenomenon also present among people living naked and using masks, and isn't it also the case with the practice of body painting and tattooing? We can go further and ask ourselves the question of the function, probably versatile, of the penis gourd. Finally, again concerning the male sex, what perhaps could be the unconscious basis for the use of condoms. ¶ On the other hand, with the generalised use of masks, will the “illusion of breaking down barriers and social distances” really impose itself? ¶ What is the deeper meaning of the death mask? The individual is nothing more than an appearance, he/she no longer is a being, but retains something related to life, activating the desire and nostalgia that he/she still lives? ¶ Finally, it would be appropriate to examine the relationship that there may be between mask and disguise, but this cannot be dealt with in the context of this text.

crisis of presence, which is why it is generally repressed.

The measures taken against covid-19 provide us with an important example of ambiguity: were they advocated-for with a view to the health of individuals or were they aimed at saving the economy? Let us not forget that the residue of naturalness is the cause of the ambiguity. The requirements at the outset are as follows: people must be well cared-for so that they can work and thus keep the economy going, which in turn allows them to meet their needs. However, the longer the pandemic persists and with it the measures to contain it, the more the ambiguity dissolves, as we have already mentioned when talking about substitution. Moreover, reducing naturalness allows us to get out of ambiguity, and artificialization becomes the means to eliminate it.

We have also already pointed out that social inequalities are clearly apparent and even growing, and that therefore any ambiguity about the non-existence of social barriers and about equality between human beings is disappearing.

It is with the implementation of isolation that the removal of any ambiguity is most acutely revealed.²¹ Thus Sylvia Duvrger, following the work of Natacha Chetcuti-Osorovitz, declared: “We are not in prison but locked up.”²² But this is

²¹ In *Positionnement I* discussed the possibility of making an unambiguous claim without being in the dynamic of enmity. ¶ With respect to isolation, many have pointed out that it is an extreme measure which could have been facilitated in a less oppressive way. In fact, especially in France, it is due to a desperate desire to manage the situation combined with a failure to effectively implement other measures such as the (much disputed) screening carried out in South Korea or Germany.

²² I found this in the *Mediapart* forum. It concerns women, but also applies to men.

the normal experience of people living in cities, especially the big cities, the megacities. It is as if they are undergoing a sentence of which they do not know the cause. It also reveals the carrying out of repression under the banner of “it’s for your own good,” with the triumph of artificialisation being achieved through such things as working from home, or remote-learning, as already mentioned in regard to social distancing, which can even be justified in the name of reducing pollution. It is causing a great disorganization of economic and social life but, more importantly, we are witnessing the repression of the impulses and affectivity of men and women along with the occultation [*escamotage*] of the enormous suffering that this induces, particularly for the elderly in retirement homes, who are already perilously isolated from their relatives, [a condition - *T.N.*] which can hasten their death. Isolation means a locking up that can lead to asphyxiation and death as with covid-19.

The inhibition or even negation of affective life leads to the obsolescence of man, as theorized by G. Anders, about whom we have often spoken, and to the disappearance of the animal species *Homo sapiens*, as asserted by André Leroi-Gourhan in 1965:

We must therefore conceive a completely transposed *homo sapiens* as it seems that we are witnessing the last free relations between humans and the natural world. Freed from its tools, its gestures, its muscles, the planning of its acts, its memory, freed from its imagination by the perfection of the broadcast media, freed from the animal and vegetable world, from the wind, the cold, the microbes, the unknown of the mountains and the seas, the *Homo sapiens* of zoology is probably close to the end of

its career (Leroi-Gourhan, *Le Geste et la Parole*, p. 266).²³

The other no less dangerous aspect is the increased surveillance achieved, with constant and more efficient control, thanks to those advances in information technology that – along with the development of digital identity and the use of 5G in the near future – make possible a traceability difficult to escape from. [Another means to achieve the above mentioned increased surveillance is - *T.N.*] the use of drones and other new resources to fight against those who rise against this infernal order, preventing any possibility of clashes by creating a phenomenon of distancing that reveals its full dimension of enmity and the asymmetry in confrontation: those in the service of the order will be able to protect themselves and the demonstrators will be rendered incapable of attacking them. In short, the realization of a despotism linked to a momentary reaffirmation of the State, which will manifest itself in an increasingly underhanded way via the economy, which will set up a repressive organisation, as indeed is every social organisation, sought after for millennia. The war against the virus is failing to mask the latent civil war.

Control and surveillance, which go hand in hand, are increasing as the human population grows.

With the dynamic of self-protection it is always enmity that prevails, as usually happens in human relations, but as long as a certain naturalness remains, ambiguity persists. So, it would have to go all the way to eliminate it and this would lead to the extinction of the species.

²³ Transposed, i.e. realized in artificial organs; one could also say transferred. See *Glosses I*.

This pandemic erupted in the midst of an economic crisis which is, so to speak, perpetual, as it was brought about by the establishment of the autonomous form of capital, as nothing stands in the way of its incremental dynamic. The pandemic has only strengthened it. Hence the comparisons being made with historical crises such as that of 1929 and even with the wars that often took place to resolve an economic crisis. Since we say that the epidemic is a war or that we are at war because of the epidemic, we could then ask ourselves the



Images by Alzek Misheff

question of the epidemic of wars, given their high frequency.²⁴ On the other hand, the measures taken against covid-19 accentuate the crisis and clearly show that men and women are still needed, which will lead to further attempts to eliminate them, to make them obsolete.

However, the pandemic has given rise, in a large number of people, to a great

²⁴ [*T.N.* - The translation of this sentence has been suggested to us by the author and supplants that of the original French: “*On pourrait se poser également la question des épidémies de guerre du fait même que l’épidémie se vit comme correspondant à celle-ci.*”]

manifestation of empathy and solidarity, which in some cases have led to the death of carers, telling us that some kind of naturalness is still present in the species, even if it is insufficient to eliminate the ambiguity in its totality. This is why the species will emerge from this episode weakened and receptive to other pandemics, excessively artificialized and hyper-controlled, which will increase its risk of extinction.

With isolation, there has been a decrease in air pollution, in CO₂ levels, and an increase in the appearances of animals that were previously hardly visible but, sadly, the use of pesticides and insecticides continues unabated. Perhaps it will take another crisis of the kind we are experiencing to achieve their eradication.

It also emerges that the consequences of the pandemic and the measures it has induced actively signify to Homo sapiens what must be done to regenerate nature²⁵: the species will have to limit the size of its population and impose isolation on itself in order to leave more space for other living beings.

When isolation ends individuals will try to find their place again in the social body, but they will find it difficult to recover their previous one. This is similar to what occurred when the species experienced the break from the rest of nature.

This also means that we are living the instauration [*la mise en place*] of a great discontinuity.

To highlight this, we can envisage the whole phenomenon in another way, in complementarity with the above. If we take into account what we wrote about the uprising of life during the movement of

May-June 1968, following the ‘hippie’ movement, and if we bear in mind that what is fundamental in the case of the pandemic is not the virus but the state of degeneration in which – after thousands of years out of nature, of conflicts with nature and its destruction, which is also the destruction of the naturalness of everyone, of each (a phenomenon that has accelerated over the last two centuries and has, so to say, become autonomous [*autonomisé*] since the 1980s of the last century) – the species finds itself, we can conclude that it is as if the body of the species can no longer bear what is inflicted upon it. The species can no longer ensure war, it is falling ever further into depression, it can no longer withstand artificialisation.

It is as if men, women, and even children have gone ‘on strike’ to refuse the dictates of the infernal mechanism that oppresses them. This strike has taken everyone aback, including the dominants who, to a lesser degree, suffer from the same situation and, like everyone, are afraid of death (a residue of naturalness common to all). It is an immense, passive, refusal. But it is from there that another dynamic of life can be initiated.²⁶

Consequently, at the beginning the dominants could do nothing, but as soon as the initial shock had been cushioned, they devoted themselves to manipulation and are now trying to stop the pandemic through isolation and other so-called protective measures – all highly suspect – because what is essential for them is to walk along the path of virtuality that follows the dynamics of the economy (the domination of capital having been replaced by that of its autonomized form) since it is this way that

²⁵ We cannot forget that the health of the planet goes hand in hand with the health of the species; they cannot be separated.

²⁶ I deal with this theme in *The necessary separation and the immense refusal*, 1979.

they think they will save themselves and humanity. However, this requires an ever-increasing control and surveillance of men and women who, by themselves, given their remaining naturalness, are unable to “liberate” themselves. They must be repressed in order to be saved. Furthermore, in order to oversee men and women, their health must be controlled and even artificially created for them, with vaccines, for example.

From there we can assume that the pandemic becomes a psychic entity, just as the plague was for Antonin Artaud: “a kind of psychic entity, not carried by a virus”²⁷. I cannot deny the existence of the virus, but I will say that it reveals the existence of a psychic entity unconsciously manifesting itself – an internal evil within the species from which it tries, just as unconsciously, to free itself. This evil includes the dissatisfaction born of a feeling of incompleteness, self-hatred determined by this sense of incompleteness, dependency, ambiguity (because at the same time it manifests great megalomania), and loneliness – all determined by the break from the rest of nature that generates an unconscious feeling of guilt.

This entity probably also originates in the decoupling of gesture and speech, and from the fact that the former is increasingly provided by machines and that the latter, as a kind of compensation, has become autonomous but does not succeed in eliminating the suffering caused by obsolescence, thereby reinforcing the evil we are talking about.

This generalized depression can be the prelude to a return of the repressed, aroused by a discontinuity that creates a

blockage and favours a return to the past. It is upon such that we can found the inversion (see *Inversion and Unveiling*). This inversion would make possible the abolition of extinction, especially if, at the same time, we abandon the dynamic of enmity that might arise between the partisans of artificiality and those of naturalness.

It is only if we live fully the risk of extinction, really feel it, that we become wholly aware of it without feeling guilt for the horrors we have committed during our wandering, and we can put an end to it, carry out an uprising of life, and initiate the salutary inversion for us and for nature, indeed, for all living beings – including viruses – and thereby continue our journey in the cosmos.

JACQUES CAMATTE
30th April 2020

Translated by Friends of *Il Covile*,
Revised December 30, 2020.



²⁷ In *The Theatre and Its Double*, commented on in *Glosses III*.



TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Traditionally, Camatte's writings have always been copyright free, so many translations of his texts are also copyright free and offered to the world for a process of successive correction and reworking by others, in order to make them more and more faithful to the original French text. This is the process that has already happened, and continues, in the Italian translations to be found at *Il Covile*. This particular translation is offered in the same spirit of collaboration and assistance.

SHUTTING-IN. Camatte's word is *enfermement*, which can be translated as confinement, imprisonment, locking-up, or shutting-in. Camatte decided on 'shutting-in' as the most appropriate terms to use in English.

COVERINGS-OVER. From the *Glossaire*: "*Recouvrement*: Conscious activity which, unconsciously, aims to mask the whole traumatic experience, to cause it to fall into total oblivion."

DERELICTION. In the Glossary entry for this word on the *Revue Invariance* website, the following can be found: "A concept of theological origin: the state of the abandoned creature of god. It expresses total dependence and the loss of all support, of all reference points. The concepts of *Hilflosigkeit* (S. Freud), *Geworfenheit* (M. Heidegger), *Loneliness* (H. Arendt) and *Crisis of Presence* (E. de Martino) can result in dereliction."

REPLAY. Camatte's word is *rejouement*. From the *Glossaire*: "Concept widely used by Arthur Janov, deriving from Freud's notion of 'repetition compulsion', indicating that we tend, unconsciously, to re-perform what we have experienced following trauma, or to re-perform what our parents have experienced."

ESCAMOTER. This word can be translated as 'retracting', 'evading', 'conjuring-away'. For the most part we have used the word 'occultation'.

The *Glossaire* defines '*escamotage*' as: "Dynamics that makes important facts disappear while often giving the impression of taking them into account."

SPECIOSIS-ONTOSIS. At the very minimum the concept of 'speciosis-ontosis', developed by Jacques Camatte in his writings since the late 90s, could be linked to phylogenesis and ontogenesis. This minimum would have to be added to by the fact that these new concepts have arisen because, for Camatte, the notion of 'psychosis' is insufficient to describe the madness of a species that, over millennia, has transitioned from living in continuity with the rest of the living world to living in a discontinuity conditioned by the manifold traumas that this discontinuity brings about but which remain at the level of unconscious emotions. *Speciosis-Ontosis*, then, operates on the human being at the level of its species-being (phylogenesis) and at the level of its individually-lived life (ontogenesis), and these, as Camatte suggests are united (hence the hyphen) by being lived and experienced as simultaneously diachronous and synchronous. See *Revue Invariance, Current End Point of Wandering*, 14.2.2 – *Structure of Speciosis*.

INVERSION. This word is described in the following manner in the *Revue Invariance* Glossary: "Inversion refers to the establishment of a future contrary to that effected up to this day which comprises of: separation from nature, repression, refusal, abstraction, riots (uprisings, revolutions) but also wars and peace. Inversion can take place by accessing the *Gemeinwesen* dimension within us in the here and now and amidst the community of those who converge and participate. It is therefore not a question of returning to an earlier phase, to an ancestral behaviour, but accessing something germinating in us, in this case: the deep naturalness which has always been repressed, (more or less occulted) as well as continuity with all living beings and with the cosmos."

