

COVID-19 and the Resurrection

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04/20/2020, Sofia

In memory of our dear friend and colleague prof. Alexandru Boboc

More than one million people are affected by COVID-19 up to date, but apart from health and life perspective, it has had a major challenging impact for social sciences, undermining both social and political models. An unexpected event changed the established forms of policymaking and revealed the inability of European leaders to offer new political discourse and practices, to generate and transfer new knowledge. The socio-economic decision for the future of the nation has transferred from the hands of the state into the hands of private technical information regimes and their representatives, challenging the pre-set nature and overall functioning of the state. The new policy prioritizes technological / technical knowledge and information, revealing the dysfunctionality of current policies, whose decisions ranged from building collective immunity, risking the lives of thousands of people within a day to following the advice of pandemic medical authorities. The second solution demonstrates how effective crisis management can gain approval for power, even from the opposition. Citizenship, universal human rights, solidarity policies have been replaced by strict control and surveillance policies. Social exclusion has become a priority, and society faces the need to find its new identity between a crumbling economic structure and altering political practices.

A new health related, technologically based policy was introduced to the forefront, which brought back the classic opposition of enemies and friends to the maxim "justice is rooted in war or conquest" (Plato, Republic, 338) demonstrating the remarkable contrast between victims and hegemon.

European governments that are engaged in identity politics have paved the way for a massive pandemic, delaying effective action to combat the new coronavirus. This respectively demonstrates how authoritarian governments, that work through technical means, respond to crises much more effectively than governments engaging in identity policies (with the rise of the radical right in Europe, this policy has gained momentum and far-right parties have become partners of power, directly or through the attraction of other major parties). It should not be underestimated

that politics based on technological development are starting to replace identity politics while also closing social and territorial boundaries. This new isolationist dynamic has revealed a new policy of total isolation (adopted by the US), alien to all things human (refusing to help Italy in the early days of the crisis), using even the health crisis as a tool against enemies, delegitimizing them as a global hegemon. For the time being, China deployed its aid to Europe, following its own policy of a hegemon. China has successfully managed to position itself as a compassionate state, working for the benefit of society around the world. With the advent of the virus and its rapid response to its own territory, China has relied on two tools - finance and diplomacy. Experience gained and measures taken to combat the virus have been shared through digital technology and diplomatic channels in almost all countries. Financial and technical assistance was spread to all countries fighting the epidemic, as a donation through one of the most important global trade networks - Alibaba.

If during the Cold War, the US and USSR worked as allies in the fight against smallpox, today the emphasis in US-China relations is condemned, consequently impacting world politics with new political techniques in crisis management. Commonly frightening tools, such as name and data mapping (now widely used in connection with Covid-19 disease), social isolation and inability to communicate with others, have become sought-after and desired mechanisms to prevent the spread of the epidemic. While the attention of US and Europe is focused on dealing with the crisis, China is facilitated in following its own policies and constructing a new model, in its own standby mode. Winning the Asian value of collectivism over individualism- a factor which emerged due to the "miracle of East Asia" during the second half of the last century.

Obviously, as a result of current trends, we can consider the first stage of globalization to be completed. A second phase is beginning, which will not resemble what people are generally used to and may not be as free and liberal but eventually might start to feel unpleasant and even become dangerous. In such time of dynamic change, we must sadly acknowledge that joint efforts cannot be started so quickly, and unfortunately, we will have to teach ourselves how to be patient, while our pain and hopelessness grow daily. This will undoubtedly result in serious social and political turmoil that will most probably aggravate the situation.

Nevertheless, this blow to the political and economic integrity and solidarity of Europe is a consequence of its transformation into a "non-virtuous city" if we use the comparison of the great

Arab philosopher al-Farabi. The people of the "virtuous city" want to be respected and valued, not only by their fellow citizens, but also by the world at large, and it is the governing city's responsibility to not only seek prosperity or pleasure for itself, but rather seek for values such as valor, honor and glory. When this desire generates opposing results and the public treasury is squandered for unjustified expenses, then the "virtuous city" degenerates to a city of tyranny and declares a status of a so called "conquered city." A city, as al-Farabi calls "predatory", is surrounded from one side, by foreign powers and interests and from the other by its own inhabitants who slowly start to become subordinate to their own interests and desires, becoming rude and aggressive, thirsty for luxury, blind consumers of food and alcohol, wallowing in debauchery. From his point of view, such state of a city slowly start to resemble the "city of the ignorant"¹ (which is described as the worst possible construct of a city, since its inhabitants are inept to believe, appreciate or comprehend the true essence of happiness). They are only able to identify good within the so-called "supposed goods", such as a sound body, wealth and pleasure, selfishness, prestige and high social status. The opposite of such alleged goods is identified by them with misery. Freedom in such sense generates a wide range of opportunities to pursue profit and achieve one's desires, which in turn leads to undesirable separation and chaos.

In a city like this, the most respected are those who are free to pursue their private ends and interests. The governing body of such city is recognized as the legitimate governor of the state, capable of providing what is necessary to the people. Regardless of the widening gap between him and his subordinates, this ruler will forever remain their preferred choice. His clothing embodies a flower bud, on which everyone whose wish is satisfied has left his own imprint. The nation is drawn to such kind of ruler and will undoubtedly continue to support and contribute to his glory. It is important to acknowledge that the citizens used to possess knowledge of happiness, of God,

¹ Al-Farabi divides the "non-virtuous city" (al-Madinah al-Fadilah) into four subspecies - the ignorant, the wayward, the depraved, and the renegade. They are subdivided into: the city of necessity (people are searching for the things they need in order to survive — food, water, shelter), the city of ignominy (its inhabitants are engaged in the accumulation of wealth from all sources), the city of baseness (its inhabitants seek pleasure, but everyone seek it based on their own wishes and desires), the city of honor (the Platonic timocracy, the closest to the perfect city), the city of conquest (the city of tyranny) and the democratic city (the one in which people believe that everyone should be allowed to satisfy their desires without restricted).

of active intelligence, and of all those morals recognized as attributes of the "virtuous city." By becoming residents of the so called 'predatory city, they have lost such values continuing to blindly serve as residents of the "city of alienation," subject to a new radical ideology that escapes from following old norms and traditions or the ability to "reproduce" - does not allow the possibility of worship or the conduct of other social practices under the pretext of COVID-19.

The passionate week, before the Resurrection, gives to those who are blindfolded by the "non-virtuous city" to retain their power of knowledge, during a period of personal revelation. Christians are privileged, as there is no other religion in which one voluntarily sacrifices himself to atone for everyone's sins and to be resurrected and blessed to live forever. And with him may we, redeemed with his blood, live in the kingdom of eternal peace, righteousness and undying joy. And if we have this information, then why do we allow our sadness and suffering, our fears and our excessively high expectations to block our senses for the vital shared truth. The Resurrection is a small personal miracle of communion with God, the ability to hear the voice that whispers within us that we are attached to, that loves, nurtures and protects our souls. And this personal miracle makes us rediscover that there is more to it than preparing Easter breads and painting eggs, from daily rituals by habit, from well-trodden paths and reconciliation, it is time to ask ourselves **not Quo vadis, Domine, a Quo ego vado.** To ask ourselves how we will better ourselves for good this Easter, not waiting until the next one, when we will be reminded again that we must be spiritually elevated, be compassionate and forgiving and return to the "virtuous city" of knowledge. Because it is not about blind faith, but about the opportunity to think logically and to think honestly, waiting for someone to knock on our door in order to give and support and truly take care and responsibility for each other. We lack the closeness of something intimately known, someone we trust with our innermost desires and requests, that drives connection which does not depend on administrative system, which cannot be falsified or manipulated, but is something that can only be understood on a personal level. The time has come to reconsider, to ask for forgiveness, here and now, in this life, because death has no power over us, the Risen One has surrendered by going to the Cross.

Christ has risen!