The Biopolitical Turn of the Post-Covid World. Leftist and Neoliberal Insights of Puzzling Biopolitics

Oana Şerban[*] ⬤

* University of Bucharest, Faculty of Philosophy, e-mail: oana.serban@filosofie.unibuc.ro

Abstract: As the 21st century became shaped by the matters of public health, the Covid-19 pandemic revealed that it is a trap to believe that we have to choose between the medicalisation of politics and the politicisation of medicine. My thesis is that models of good governance in the post-pandemic world must be shaped by leftist principles, values and practices, in order to ensure not the reopening, but the reconstruction of public life, which needs more than ever overcoming social inequalities and political polarisations, whereas liberal principles should be implemented in order to fix standards of economic performance and efficiency after applying mechanism of recovery. Governments as well as electoral spheres are reticent to biopolitical incursions, historically associated with panoptic systems. I claim that it is time to plead for positivising biopolitics as political humanism. My research will expose twelve themes for disseminating biopolitics as political humanism, focused on sensitive key-domains such as labour, social cohesion, security, infodemia, domestic life and good governance.

Keywords: biopolitics, biosecurity, biohumanism, good governance, panoptic systems

1. Immunising communities: A biopolitical framework inspired by Robert Esposito

The pandemic raised by the spread of Covid-19 has rapidly developed what politically is known as a state of exception: human rights have been narrowed or even suspended for a determined period of time and the management of the sanitary crises has been doubled by the management of population. Such coordinates depict what Foucault, Agamben and Esposito claim as a biopolitical scenario: governments face the exclusive responsibility of securing biological life *(zoe),* revealing the non-biological life *(bios),* reduced to economy, politics, culture, as a secondary priority. It is well known that biopolitics is one of the worst nightmares of political philosophy: it activates only in cases of natural emergencies, such as pandemics, or contractual break-ups that lead to political general conflicts or wars. At a first glimpse, the biopolitical power draws on the rationality invested by governments in shaping and controlling populations by procedures of constraint and coercion that tend progressively to barrow, counterweights of civil freedom. Traditionally, biopolitics becomes the 'politics of life' (Siisiäinen, 2018, p. 18), that

tracks a particular *raison d'État* that quantifies freedoms and liberties as variables influenced by states of exception (Agamben, 2005) that 'do not foreclose all possibilities of historical specificity' (Walsh, 2014, p. 9). Nevertheless, biopolitics is an equation of power that frames sovereignty and biopolitics as two mutually productive forces: the more a situation is exceptional, the more the administration of life by disciplinary practices is needed. At the threshold of modernity, biopolitics has been grasped as a form of governance that articulates sovereignty by maximising mechanisms of control and surveillance; thus 'the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of a sovereign power' (Agamben, 1998, p. 6). According to Agamben, albeit such states of exception reflect a suspension of normality and consequently impose certain power practices, societies rather assume that as long as a juridical content is rational, they can abandon themselves to it. Therefore, in a biopolitical frame, individuals do not expect to be banned by the law; they are abandoned to the law (Agamben, 1998, p. 31). This phenomenon happens because of two major causes: on the one hand, each legal content is determined by the *jus divinum* and therefore, we tend to respect the law because we acknowledge our respect towards a messianic form of rationality, that is subsequent to any juridical imperative; on the other hand, because we abandon ourselves to the law by the law, or, to be more specific, 'abandonment respects the law, it cannot do otherwise' (Nancy, 1983, 149). But how far can we address nowadays such abandonment? In the traditional paradigm of biopolitics, it was conceived as a proof of trust and obedience in front of a superior ontological authority that inspires power; nonetheless, today, in a secular world, such aspects are hardly conceived as parts of a reliable, valid argument. After the 21st century, political philosophy turned biopolitics towards a form of biopower that has nothing to do with a divine rationality of state. The dark decades of this historical time have been shaped by a radical biopolitics that advanced not the politicising of life, but the politicising of death. Political bodies have been nationalised, and historical subjects have been regarded as exceptions, meaning as *conditio inhumana*, lacking the dignity and the right to live as long as they were declared undesirable subjects within a state border. We do not know if God lived at Auschwitz (see Agamben, 2002), but it is clear that biopolitics feed the mentalities behind panoptic systems that renounced to subtlety and shift to dominant, dictatorial control mechanisms, specific to death camps. Therefore, biopolitics operates in a double sense: from the oppressor to the oppressed and vice versa, meaning that it measures the biopower that annihilates life and the resistance of the victims against invalidating their *bios* and retracting their *zoe.* The dominant exegetic part of biopolitics is mainly concentrated on the negative project of biopower: authors such Foucault and Agamben insist on the destruction phenomenon behind the architectonic of disciplinary and punitive societies. Nevertheless, authors such as Esposito bring to the spotlight a more balanced, equilibrated perspective, according to which disadvantaged communities have strengthened their capacity to survive and overcome obstacles dictated by a discretionary biopower and that a biopolitical project is equally represented by the attempt to face, resist and recover from such dictatorial regimes. This latter acceptance of biopolitics should rather be reinforced nowadays when the Covid-19 pandemic activated a biopolitical undertaking of good governance and resilience. The main aim of the current analysis is to prescribe

a biopolitical positive project that could depict solutions for raising durable resilient societies governed in the name of life without sacrificing bios, namely culture, religion, society or economics. Such endeavour reflects a great opportunity to address biopolitics as a new humanism, that we have expected after Camus's and Heidegger's claims (inspired by different reasons[1]) that humanism is no longer possible in our contemporary history. This would be biopolitical humanism that targets resilience as a product of cultural mentalities invested in immunising civilisations against the abnormal life caused by pandemics. First, we should briefly overview the advantages of a biopolitical critique of this pandemic.

A biopolitical governance will help individuals to secure life and maximise its quality. This biopolitical background reshapes, of course, the major priority of governance models. We are used to governing by administering regenerable resources – forms of capital, highly criticised by leftist approaches and rather preferred by liberal convictions. Nonetheless, we have never been challenged by now to govern life as an unregenerable resource, for which a biopower is needed to conserve the life and safety of populations and to aim at developing nations in due course.

The correct question is not 'how compromised is the sanitary and economic normality of the state?', but 'how far are we from understanding that any crisis is an opportunity?' *Krisis* is not possible without *krinein:* the crisis imposes a judgment, a choice, thus, an opportunity. We have the possibility to choose biopolitics as a solution to the project of good governance to combat the effects of the health crisis on the well-being of society and to increase resilience, orienting it towards progress. A biopolitical judgment frames the management of the Covid-19 pandemic out of the classical, divisionary perspective that aims to separate the right and the left; it rather pleads to bring them together, jointly, around a core objective that inspires securing life and developing culture by advancing first, leftist measures to combat inequalities and disparities raised by the pandemic and only afterwards right-wing practices to stimulate recovery and growth.

At the Western level, the spirit of the European pan-community has rather been considered a matter of axiological consensus. States have arbitrated differently, through a rational calculation, the gradual closure of borders and the maximisation of social isolation protocols to total quarantine ("lockdown"). Citizens looked at maximising surveillance and control of the population under the sign of a test of autonomy and freedom, which reactivated the biopolitical appetite for interrogating what should and could, in these conditions, reflect good governance?

Gradually, the political and civil spheres were crossed by common moral dilemmas that suggest that the only way to reconcile them is a biopolitical platform. Is it normal to

---

[1] According to Heidegger, the age of technical rationality lead to violence and oppression, therefore, our human reason that trusted wholeheartedly technique has failed and humanism has more than ever disappointed us. Thus, philosophy will move frontwards but only following the anti-humanist path, whereas Camus considers humanism still possible as long as the metaphysics of sufferance framed by the 21st century can be integrated into a political project that will defy and defeat colonialism, war and oppression. In the end, we must imagine Sisif being happy, and this is exactly the task that this new humanism should fulfil by all its means (see Heidegger, 2013 and Camus, 1942, 1951).

give political priority to securing public health at the expense of privacy? How far can we sacrifice individual freedoms in the name of the principle of prudence? Why does the state of emergency become the source of normative contents that perpetuate the militarisation of society in order to protect the population? Is civil cooperation possible to develop biosecurity through collective health discipline, as long as the authorities are considered with scepticism and even distrust by citizens?

To do politics starting from life means to put *humanism* at the heart of political action. Not just any humanism, but a biopolitical humanism. This is not an ideological fad, despite the fact that today we live in an age crossed by the continuous dynamics of ideologies. Some ideologies updated, such as nationalism, others performed as 'autoimmune', such as liberalism, which is becoming more and more pronounced illiberalism. The principle of this humanism is that political power must be biopolitical. But it must be put at the service of the community, not at the basis of constructing a certain immunity in the face of social solidarity. These two words that are quite abused along public speeches framing the management of the pandemic, *community* and *immunity,* are bridged by a common radical, the Latin *munus.* For this argument, I engage the biopolitical theory of Robert Esposito.[2] Translated both as 'obligations' and as *habits* naturally developed by a community, *munus* is suppressed, in times of Covid-19, by social distancing. In the attempt to raise *immunisation* in the face of disease, communities distance their members more and more, alienating them from traditional obligations and habits, from their natural quality of being social beings. What makes us authentic, sociability, makes us sick (Harari, 2020). But let us keep in mind for now that *munus* is shared by community and immunity, in order to track the multiple implications of such consubstantiality in biopolitical terms.

How can we ensure that 'immunity' does not destroy our 'community'? This is a biopolitical issue. 'Munus' must be rewritten today so that we can preserve all our obligations to the community and our habits together, becoming immune to the disease. But can current politics make this image a reality? Can politics choose first and foremost life and only after power? In times of pandemics, power must come to us from life. The fact that everyone's life depends on power is the greatest disease we suffer from. Therefore, biopolitics, which none of us knows how to do yet, must be the new obligation and habit of the political class. Politicians must simultaneously operate the priorities of biological life *(zoe)* and the superstructures of non-organic life *(bios).* Thus, the biopolitical challenge for a post-pandemic world is to draw principles of good governance that pursue equally and responsibly the guarantee, by the state, of all the necessary

---

[2]   Esposito embraces the traditional position of biopolitics defined as 'a science by the conduct of states and human collectivities, determined by laws, the natural environment, and ontological givens that support life and determine man's activities', a statement that lacks, however, 'a categorical generalness' (Esposito, 2008, p. 21). In his perspective, physics and power conceive sovereignty in different regimes that turn us back to the Kantian question surrounding the rationality of governance, that progressively goes, along the 19th century, towards the Foucauldian challenge of understanding the power's hold over life (Esposito, 2008, 32). Esposito rather prefers the Foucauldian acceptance that life is no longer 'a scientific concept', but 'an epistemological indicator' (Esposito, 2008, 40) of classifying and discerning scientific discourses that do not exclude those oriented towards the analysis of power. Thus, modernity grasps the age of bio-history that transforms human life throughout bio-power. In these terms, preserving life becomes a priority, coined as *conservation vitae.*

resources for the preservation of organic life, integrity and body health. Only in this manner will be possible the biopolitical tone of development of all non-organic fields such as politics, society, economy and culture, starting from their potential to preserve and improve the quality of life.

2. Who is afraid of biopolitics?

In its own way, biopolitics is a civilisational barometer. It shows us how life has been valued and protected in various historical contexts noted as states of emergency, such as pandemics, wars, civil conflicts, in the context in which the security of life is both a legal and disciplinary issue. The pandemic forces us to rethink the social contract, a process in which the main challenge is that of *population management.* In this regard, a clarification is needed: in the career of the term, the positive meanings of biopolitics, as a government strategy for managing the population in order to preserve safety and the phenomenon of life, corresponded to negative meanings, such as *biopower* or *bioterror.* It usually depicted political situations in which a category of individuals was considered undesirable to a totalitarian society and this led to their exclusion, marginalisation or closure in devices of supervision, control and discipline.[3] In migration issues, such as the management of refugee groups, biopolitics has often indicated abusive, repressive governing bodies. But these negative meanings are not the subject of this discussion. Through its scale, the pandemic has activated biopolitical discourse. We may have prejudices against this term, but they come only from ignorance or from an impermissible error of extending the concept to a project of power with an iron fist. It is not necessary to do so.

We live, as I have said on other occasions, in an age in which citizens feel *governed by fear.* It is the fear of disease, which sometimes arouses distrust in the authorities responsible for managing the epidemiological risk, to the point that the idea of a sanitary dictatorship dangerously seduces not corona-sceptics, but *bona fide* citizens, who respect all prudential rules. But who no longer resist the anxieties caused by the unpredictable extension of restrictions. Fighting the government by fear is a biopolitical project. Authors such as Lorenzini argue that biopolitics is back since the pandemic activated new 'genres of quarantine' (Lorenzini, 2020), leading to control, discipline and even surveillance, all conceived as Covid-19 responses. If Foucault used to address the nationalisation of the biological, nowadays, in times of pandemics, we face its internationalisation. Lorenzini closely observes that each biopolitical regime advances 'a blackmail': usually, individuals must be for or against a regime of governance, but biopolitics forces us to conceive each political measure as the best option – in a utilitarianist perspective – within a crisis, thus reflecting a reasonable compromise. Therefore,

---

[3] In my opinion, one of the greatest authors on biopolitics is Hannah Arendt with her *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1973), yet, unrecognised as such by exegetes. It is not the place nor the strike of this article to follow such endeavour here; however, we must say that Arendt's opinion that Jewish communities had to immunise themselves in front of two circulating, well-spread prejudgments, the myth of eternal anti-Semitism and the myth of the scapegoat, reflect a biopolitical undertaking of the genealogy of totalitarianism.

biopolitics expects from us not acceptance or refusal, nor conformity or anarchism, but a justificatory thought. Traditionally, the Foucauldian argument on biopolitics states that biopower is not exclusively explicit: it can act implicitly, in subtle manners, multiplying its effects and diversifying in order to perform global obedience from populations reflected as masses at risk. Therefore, if we look to the 'dark' side of biopolitics, resistance is not the key for a proper and ingenious philosophical analysis of such phenomena, but the power of biopolitics to mirror our resilience, conformity and reasonability, thus becoming an expression of what Foucault would call 'the critical ontology of ourselves' (Foucault, 1984, 47). Lorenzini defines biopolitics as 'a politics of differential vulnerability': social inequalities occasioned by this pandemic should be solutioned by an efficient governance method. Therefore, biopolitics is the correct political framework not only in times of pandemic but especially in depicting a post-pandemic world.

At the same time, resilience is a biopolitical expression, before being a psychological, affective, social one. The global response to the coronary crisis is to secure humanity both biologically and morally. Authors such as Giorgio Agamben, Michel Foucault, Robert Esposito, Yuval Harari point out that the policy of a pandemic tends to develop authoritarian implications on the part of democracies. On the other hand, the state of emergency in which the golden principle is 'follow the rules to recover', challenges us to understand how citizens follow the rules imposed in a state of emergency and why deviating from them means not recognising the rationality of these rules. Who pays for disobedience, for making others sick, for freedom? This remains an open question that highlights the fact that each of us is responsible for the other's biological life, not only for his/her own and that convinces us, once more, that biopolitical discourses are adequate for depicting a post-pandemic world.

Last but not least, the medical drama, as we have all seen in Italian hospitals, reengaged the biopolitical protocol. At a first glimpse, this is a bioethical problem: doctors forced to choose, in conditions of insufficient material resources in the fight against the pandemic, the life of which patient will rather be saved: that of a young man who, mathematically, has more chances of cure, or that belonging to an old man who has comorbidities and thus, less chances of going through the disease? Such a choice leads to medical bioethics under the sign of biopolitics.

To put all in a nutshell, we see how all these problems indicate a very simple phenomenon: either we will seek to understand bio-politically this pandemic, looking for solutions to combat it, or we will turn a global disease into a pretext for internal power games, with incredible and unfortunate costs for everyone's life. Running away from the term – *biopolitics* – just because it reminds us of the most difficult political regimes from our humanity, is not a solution. The return of biopolitics to our situation, in order to understand how humanity has reacted, over the years, to similar pandemic contexts, what mistakes have cost lives and what misunderstandings have affected rights and freedoms, is a gesture of responsibility these days.

3. Biopolitical governance is not a simple exercise of population management: De-politicising biopolitics

A biopolitical platform for governance is not a left or right project. This is an absolutely necessary construction of a political humanism starting from the revision of the following 12 principles and measures, puzzling Leftist and Neoliberal Insights. My research will expose twelve themes for disseminating biopolitics as political humanism, as it follows:

3.1. The new model of social cohesion is based on the principle of solidarity in solitude.

Social distancing and (self) isolation test our civility and social responsibility. The boundaries of empathy, trust and mutual cooperation in the absence of direct interaction are equally reshaped. Living exclusively at home involves a certain routine, in the ergonomics of which work, loneliness or cohabitation find, as the case may be, new forms of manifestation. Solidarity in solitude is a challenge both at the level of individual life and at the level of states, which, although they react as 'closed societies', seek to maintain a sense of the European pan-community through an open morality. Compassion without cooperation cannot be a space for the administration of life through solidarity. According to de Mata (2020), in the attempt to align health and other perspectives, such as relaunching the economy and reopening public sectors of cultural, social and educational activity, the principle of solidarity in solitude must precede the priority of tracking recovery and resilience. The biggest threat for any community becomes, from a certain point, 'the isolation fatigue' (de Mata, 2020, p. 20), that lead not only to a vulnerable sense of mutual commitment and unity, but also to the fragmentation of unitarian projects, such as the European Union. Nevertheless, it is not like solidarity has never been a core value for our communities by now – it reflects the central belief at the heart of the European union; what has radically changed in understanding its social role in increasing bonding and cooperation is represented by the effects of this pandemic that 'brought solidarity and appreciation to the front lines that, although have always been there working for the population, were previously 'invisible' to the public eye' (Cuschieri, 2020, p. 6). This pandemic has the power to develop a more emphatic sense of solidarity, by engaging compassion: 'once we understand ourselves as interconnected, we can collectively construct a disaster imaginary of solidarity. In this way, pandemics can be ethically innovative disasters' (Pascoe & Stripling, 2020, p. 443). Therefore, whoever expects resilient society to overlap to solidary communities has fallen into a trap: solidarity should be the primary value determining not a pandemic world, but a post-pandemic one.

3.2. Social inequality is a topic for public debates devoted to the improvement of life standards and quality in remote work paradigms for protecting citizens and increasing safety.

The home quarantine protocol takes up the main concerns of the leftist political agenda on social inequalities and class privileges, on the basis of which comfort, security and quality of life are assessed. Carrying out professional activities at home is far from the romantic rhetoric of quarantine. The distinction between working time and free time is doubled by that between living space and space for professional activity. The (non) material costs involved in these new contexts make their mark on the quality and privacy, in most cases exceeding the financial strength of individuals. In different occasions, the physical distancing protocol must be maintained between family members belonging to different risk groups and cohabiting in a space where it is impossible to minimise the interaction. In addition, in the name of securing the lives of citizens through isolation at home, the state has often failed to ensure their physical and moral integrity. Statistics show that crime in the public space is declining, but cases of domestic violence and abuse are dramatically increasing. There is also a cynicism of the isolation protocol: there are many individuals who do not have a home. For these vulnerable categories of citizens, protecting life means taking life from the beginning, with the support of the state. This is why leftist measures are prior to right-wing practices in governing this pandemic and constructing a post-Covid world. The public spheres has been crossed by different and intriguing opinions, such as Jane Fonda's statement, that the coronavirus has been 'God's gift to the Left': elections from this pandemic revealed that the political spectre has been radically inclined in favour of left-wing parties that chose to solve social disparities before accelerating economic growth in terms of a post-pandemic world scenario. Therefore, ideologically, left-wing politics is more equipped to face the social challenges occurred by this pandemic, whereas in what concerns the fate of liberalism, many authors insist that 'the spread of the virus complicates the implementation of policies consistent with liberal international order, potentially destroying the order in which liberal democracies participate' (Norrlöf, 2020, p. 799). Consequently, I defend the idea that biopolitics ensures a cyclical, natural and progressivist alternance of left-wing and right-wing principles, such ideological nuances regaining their doctrinaire nuances only in a post-pandemic world: to reboot this pandemic society, we need to depoliticise biopolitics, thus, to govern not for the sake of the left or the right, but for the good of a society that has no need of political competition, but of political cooperation.

3.3. The compatibility of public health measures to protect the lives of citizens with human rights should be coherent and attainable, so that the temporary suspension of universal rights will not lead to censorship, discrimination, xenophobia.

Governance must provide conditions for biopolitics, not thanatopolitics (Foucault, 2003). It is not the arbitration of death, but the protection and disposition of life in the

social space that is the main concern of political action. The public sphere pointed out some of the important themes of this direction. For example, limiting access to medical services regardless of the severity of the medical case, invoking caution in social distancing and avoiding overloading the health system; access to key medicines in a treatment regimen as a form of respecting the right to health;[4] non-compliance with the principles of the right to privacy by limiting travel in order to reconcile professional and family life or forms of civil partnership; limiting religious freedom by imposing robust and essential restrictions in combating the spread of coronavirus on public cult activity, etc. It is not the effects of the medical crisis that will be ungovernable at the end of this pandemic, but the social reactions to the medical crisis.

3.4. Democratisation of biopolitical security. We need the transparency of any form of protecting the life and health of citizens in public spaces through biometric surveillance.

There are gaps in communication between the state and citizens in the administration of protocols to prevent the spread of coronavirus. The progressive increase of state intervention in the administration of civil life has generated panic among the population. People thus knew the invisible and subtle force of the 'invisible hand'. The fact that there is a virtual biometric surveillance only ensures the effectiveness of this protocol and the production of disciplinary effects on subjects or patients. This does not mean that the measure cannot be felt as invasive. We live within digital societies, whose advantages can be valued not only along the informational or cognitive sphere, but also within medical or social environments. However, the transparency of biocommunicability is a crucial measure to make known to citizens that the surveillance of the disease does not coincide with the surveillance of individuals; governing the Covid-19 crisis overlaps with the limits of prudence and biosecurity. Authors such as Albert et al. argue that 'COVID-19 is a threat to global security by the ontological crisis posed to individuals through human security theory and through high politics, as evidenced by biosecurity' (Albert et al., 2020, p. 1). Although such arguments are quite plausible and embraced by experts in the fields of biopolitics, a problem still remains: biosecurity will be reshaped from now on, as the biggest danger is not the virus itself, as Harari would put it, but the behavioural effects, in terms of control and surveillance, of this pandemic. According to Harari, Covid-19 taught us that contemporary history struggles between 'the choice between totalitarian surveillance and citizen empowerment'. It is not surveillance for the

---

4   In this pandemic, the access to Euthyrox has been restricted for many weeks to patients suffering from thyroid disorder. The crisis of Euthyrox began in Romania in April 2020, at first being speculated that its missing from the market was the effect of infodemia: people thought that its administration could prevent the spread of Covid-19. In fact, the distribution of medicines in time of Covid has been one of the greatest challenges of this pandemic. The same happened with Siofor, a drug applied in the medical scheme of treating T2D, or with Vitamin D. Therefore, the Romanian Government considered the possibility to produce part of this medicines internally, so that importations would not affect the right of patients to medical services. One of the greatest outcomes of this crisis was to raise the awareness on the fact that we begin to import more and to produce less; hence, in a post-pandemic world, different countries should focus on increasing the capacity of self-production in vulnerable industries.

sake of combating the virus the worst danger threatening our democracies, but surveillance for other reasons than sanitary ones. It is one thing to have your phone ringing after passing by a Covid-19 infected person – as tracking applications monitor the circulation of non/diagnosed patients, and it is another thing to use this pandemic as a precedent for perfecting systems inside- or over-the-skin-surveillance that could easily emerge in dystopian, newer totalitarian regimes (Harari, 2021).

3.5.   Controlling the effects of automatising labour in different economic sectors in order to reconsider and preserve the value of manual labour, individual effort, working time, within both essential and non-essential industries.

As Covid-19 induced automation and labour disparities, leftist agendas began to seduce public spheres as they have been focused on reducing job losses and increasing the role of the human intelligence and force work within different industries. Recent 'findings suggest that COVID-19-induced automation may exacerbate labour market disparities, as females with mid to low levels of wages and education appear to be at the highest risk of being negatively affected' (Chernoff & Warman, 2021). In fact, this pandemic reduced physical interaction as much and, as incidences of Covid-19 became lower, the economic scenario that this crisis added a 'shadow cost' (Korinek & Stiglitz, 2021) on labour has increased. For example, the costs of adapting a business to Covid-19 conditions have accelerated the appetite for remote or automatic work, by case. However, by the time we will see if this pandemic caused a new Industrial Revolution, we must understand that in different non-essential domains, many jobs have been conceived as redundant and, consequently, attracted a modest financial support from the state. On the one hand, many non-essential domains should be redefined as essential domains: for example culture, in order to save the production of culture and arts and the employees of creative cultural sectors from collapse. On the other hand, labour markets still have to implement technology in order to ensure a so-called material progress of automatising labour. The greatest impact of this pandemic will be, in terms of revaluing human work and effort, a new wealth distribution supported by the degree of automatising labour in each society.

3.6.   Increasing human empathy by assuming solidarity with all life forms. From this point of view, species life is a political strategy.

Preserving and improving life does not reflect a simple task of the biopolitical agenda, but also an ecological turn of state policies. However, this is not a matter of reflection on natural policy. The climate crisis caused by technological exuberance and its improvement with the social isolation of individuals forces us to reconsider the relationship between nature and individuals through the prism of nonhuman species. This pandemic was an opportunity to restart ecosystems: nature took back Venice, as cruise ships disappeared and its biosphere began to manifest freely, from ducks to dolphins. However,

the moral is that lockdowns have been a benefit for certain species but 'nature will not heal' (Owens, 2021) in two months of emergency-state that supressed any human public activity.

3.7. Combating forms of national isolation in the name of state biosecurity.

The delayed reaction of solidarity promoted by the European Union towards certain countries radically affected by the pandemic – such as Italy – may set a risky precedent for increased hostility, not transnational hospitality.[5] An external biopolitical platform is one of the few projects that can optimise common biosecurity standards for the future of the European Union. Governing the coronavirus crisis means, in a biopolitical framework, governing the mobility of the population in all its aspects: professional migration, economic cooperation, free or cultural tourism, as correlated phenomena in terms of inclusion and social emergency. Fragility must not become a lesson in humiliation between states, but a morality of common sense. As we see, the pandemic occasioned a particular context in which racist discourses began to flourish: we have seen the European waves of Asianophobia, after the Wuhan case, and the riposte of Asian French citizens who rise the campaign *#JeNeSuisPasUnVirus,* and nowadays we see that this trend begins to reactivate older forms of racism, such as antisemitism. Moreover, during this pandemic, resilience became the core value of our contemporary societies. The need for social distance called, in turn, for the principle of solidarity in solitude. Isolation forms raised beyond anxiety, hate, racism and lack of empathy. A study recently published by INSHR-EW (The "Elie Wiesel" National Institute for Studying the Holocaust in Romania) revealed that the pandemic reactivated anti-Semitic attitudes that began to manifest progressively in online spheres. Therefore, costs of isolation can be, at least from a political standpoint, devastating for cultivating civilised and emphatic public spheres.

3.8. Legislative innovations in the field of increasing security and protecting the lives of citizens should not take advantage of the anomy or vulnerabilities of democratic models.

This is possible in the direction of maximising state intervention at the level of individual life. History has shown us that politics tends to turn any crisis into a field of totalitarian experiences. Therefore, to any biopolitical action of the state, the citizens react, naturally, by suspicion. Individuals question whether prevention measures are far too restrictive. Citizens wonder if the measures imposed for population surveillance and control do not develop, symptomatically, disciplinary effects that can turn into authoritarian reflexes. People need to understand organically that the state of emergency is not a pretext for

---

[5] See the Kantian distinction between hospitality and hostility from *Perpetual Peace,* later on retaken critically by Derrida.

turning these interim measures into long-term surveillance protocols, which increase state intrusion into civilian, community and individual life. But in order to assume that the state of emergency does not develop rules that will last even after dropping such crisis, nor does it offer a way to compensate the vulnerabilities of democracy only for a class of privileged subjects, citizens must confirm their trust in the state, as a long-lasting process grounded on culture, which nowadays is mostly considered a non-essential domain.

3.9. No pandemic should be doubled by infodemia. Fake news feeds civil disobedience, anxiety and panic of the population.

Regaining the pragmatism of public communication in terms of biocommunication could bring an advantage to the media. Providing accurate information on public safety would reduce the state's information monopoly in strategic communication to combat the pandemic. At the same time, the immediate effect would be to democratise access to culture and truth. Otherwise, the state will remain, in its biopolitical vocation, a pure agent of information management on disease dynamics.

3.10. Consolidation of public space as an extension of domestic space.

Cohabitation between individuals is possible through social distancing without affecting cultural values, free time, social liberties, social segregation and respect between individuals. By maintaining protocols of social isolation, people oppose, in a sense, to their own nature: to socialise, to be together. No power is credible if it reduces its governable to an amorphous biomass. It should be a democratic, reflective power, the one that governs critical masses. Biopolitics involves thematising the cultural values associated with life through which we understand the predispositions of a people or a society to empathy, tolerance, cooperation, sacrifice. The model of open or closed societies arising from the management of the pandemic is nothing but the effect of cultures that adopt different mentalities and beliefs in the management of life. Returning to normal means returning to the community. But only culture has the capacity to gradually increase the participation of citizens in the dynamics of society and the state in which they live.

3.11. Reconsidering the relations between the Church and the state in the management of life could lead to more emphatic and efficient social spheres.

It is not just about recognising the church's ability to expand the cultural, symbolic and material capital of a form of spirituality in adapting people to the experience of a sanitary crisis. The Church has developed an eschatology of pandemics (Cunningham, 2008, p. 29) as narratives of the dynamics of this world and solidarity between

individuals. But its role remains to complete the social agenda of a state through a space of intervention in which philanthropy, missionary work and spirituality maintain the ideals of solidarity and community cohesion. The state must not miss the opportunity to turn the Church into a partner for its interventions and social responsibilities. The dialogue between the state and the Church is not an element of anti-modernity. Public power is divided between a political and a social sphere. The state must arbitrate not the freedom of the two, up to mutual immunisation, but their potential to provide citizens with security and trust. The pandemic is not a test of faith. But biopolitics can be a test of secularisation.

3.12. Designing public policies in biopolitical terms.

The epidemic generates risk areas and groups, isolation and immunisation areas, domestic outbreak, militarisation. These things show that the profile of the politician capable of governing such a crisis resists through two political virtues: pragmatism and resilience. Unaccompanied by a historical sensibility, these are not virtues, but only skills. Voters are less and less used to looking at politicians as authors of a country project. This biopolitical crisis recovers the author's function as a competent and virtuous legislator. In recognising the legitimacy of measures to combat the pandemic but also in recognising their reasonableness, people link the authority of the law to the authority of the author. Who develops, in other words, public policies? What credibility and competence do politicians have in proposing laws that are both just and moral for the preservation of the lives and safety of citizens? What is the trust capital and expertise that public policy makers must have for the law not to produce immoral effects when it concerns sensitive topics such as freedom, privacy and human rights? This time, the elaboration of public policies must be done situating as a source, but also as a goal, the life of individuals.

4. Instead of conclusions

One can reject a biopolitical platform for the sake of maintaining governance on either side of the political spectrum. Both the leftist and the right-wing oriented political measures could build their own biopolitical ideological agenda based on these foundations. However, in times of a post-pandemic world, it would be reasonable and lucid to drop political rivalries in order to advance a biopolitical regime that makes use of both wings of the political spectre by securing biological life in front of non-biological undertakings of life, from cultural and economic insights to social ones. The biopolitical left and biopolitical liberalism cross at the heart of biopolitics: these twelve topics could map a post-Covid political agenda for any reasonable governance that would value and cherish the pandemic experience as an opportunity to strength, not to fault contemporary, imperfect democracies. Along this article, a positive sketch of biopolitics as a moderated regime that has nothing to do with its negative governmental tradition has been engaged in order to offer a new perspective on the multiple manners in which not

only our lives, but equally this domain experienced radical changes that redesign the priorities of political interventions across public spheres. In the end, it is not a post-Covid world defying the pandemic the one we would like to live in, but one that turns such despicable historical crises into an opportunity for progress. Resilience is not incompatible with progress: as long as this statement will be supported by empirical facts revealed by governmental decisions that chose to defend life not to use it for electoral advantages, biopolitics will earn a positive place in our future.

References

Agamben, G. (1998). Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life (1st ed.). Stanford University Press.

Agamben, G. (2002). Remnants of Auschwitz. The Witness and the Archive. Zone Books.

Agamben, G. (2005). State of exception. University of Chicago Press. Online: https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822386735-013

Albert, C., Baez, A. & Rutland, J. (2021). Human security as biosecurity: Reconceptualizing national security threats in the time of COVID-19. Politics and the Life Sciences, 40(1), 83–105. Online: https://doi.org/10.1017/pls.2021.1

Arendt, H. (1973). The Origins of Totalitarianism. Harcourt.

Buciu, L. (2020, September 23). Criza de Euthyrox s-a terminat. Romania va putea produce medicamentul. Ziarul Financiar. Online: www.zf.ro/eveniment/premierul-a-facut-anuntul-criza-euthyrox-s-a-terminat-romania-va-19564661

Camus, A. (1942). Le Mythe de Sisyphe. Gallimard.

Camus, A. (1951). L'Homme révolté. Gallimard.

Chernoff, A. & Warman, C. (2021, February 2). Down and out: Pandemic-induced automation and labour market disparities of COVID-19. Vox Eu. Research based policy analysis and commentary from leading economists. Online: https://voxeu.org/article/pandemic-induced-automation-and-labour-market-disparities-covid-19

Cunningham, A. (2008). Epidemics, Pandemics and the Doomsday Scenario. Historically Speaking, 9(7), 29–31. Online: https://doi.org/10.1353/hsp.2008.0035

Cuschieri, S. (2020, May 30). COVID-19 panic, solidarity and equity – the Malta exemplary experience. Journal of Public Health. Online: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10389-020-01308-w

De Mata, I. (2020). European Solidarity During the COVID-19 Crises. Eurohealth, 26(2), 16–20.

Derrida, J. (2000). Of Hospitality. Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond. Stanford University Press.

Esposito, R. (2008). Immunisation and Violence. Biopolitica. Online: https://biopolitica.flinders.edu.au/publication/immunization-and-violence/

Flood, B. (2020, October 7). Jane Fonda says coronavirus is 'God's gift to the left' because it could help Biden defeat Trump. Fox News. Online: www.foxnews.com/entertainment/jane-fonda-says-coronavirus-gods-gift-left-help-biden-defeat-trump

Foucault, M. (1984). What Is Enlightenment. In P. Rainbow (Ed.), The Foucault Reader (pp. 32–50). New York, Pantheon Books.

Foucault, M. (2003). Society Must be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976. New York, Picador.

Harari, Y. (2020, April 28). COVID-19 may bring new surveillance era. BBC World News. Online: www.bbc.com/news/av/technology-52441339

Harari, Y. (2021). Yuval Noah Harari on COVID-19: 'The biggest danger is not the virus itself'. DW. Online: www.dw.com/en/virus-itself-is-not-the-biggest-danger-says-yuval-noah-harari/a-53195552

Heidegger, M. (2013). The Question Concerning Technology. Perennial.

Kant, I. (2018). Perpetual Peace. A Philosophical Essay. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Korinek, A. & Stiglitz, J. (2021). Covid-19 driven advances in automation and artificial intelligence risk exacerbating economic inequality. BMJ, 367–372. Online: https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n367

Lorenzini, D. (2020). Biopolitics in the Time of Coronavirus. Critical Inquiry, 47(S2), 40–45. Online: https://doi.org/10.1086/711432

Nancy, J-L. (1983). L'impératif catégorique. Flammarion.

Norrlöf, C. (2020). Is covid-19 a liberal democratic curse? Risks for liberal international order. Cambridge Review of International Affairs, 33(5), 799–813. Online: https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2020.1812529

Owens, B. (2021, May 30). Nature isn't really healing. The Atlantic. Online: www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2021/05/pandemic-lockdowns-nature-wildilfe/619054/

Pascoe, J. & Stripling, M. (2020). Surging Solidarity: Reorienting Ethics for Pandemics. Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal, 30(3–4), 419–444. Online: https://doi.org/10.1353/ken.2020.0022

Siisiäinen, L. (2018). Foucault, Biopolitics and Resistance (1st ed.). Routledge. Online: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315180496

The "Elie Wiesel" National Institute for Studying the Holocaust in Romania (2020). Raport de monitorizare a antisemitismului in Romania. Online: www.inshr-ew.ro/raport-antisemitism-romania-2019-2020/

Walsh, J. (2014). 'The Hidden Point of Intersection'. Rethinking the Relationship Between Sovereignty and Bio-politics in Foucault and Agamben. The University of Puget Sound. Online: https://soundideas.pugetsound.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=psupc