

Short Communication

Deep in the Heart of the Tunnel and Pandemic and the Light at the End....When?

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Received Date: Aug 06, 2020

Publication Date: September 01,2020

Millions of people continue to go about their lives amidst the onslaught of the coronavirus pandemic. Scores have gotten sick and thousands have lost their lives. Perhaps the lethality has a less superlative flank. What little we do know about this virus is that it is considerably less deadly than Ebola, which has a 50% mortality rate. Notwithstanding the above, it does not make it less dangerous. This virus has caused a pandemic and serious social and economic consequence have been popping up like a chain reaction. Loss of businesses and jobs, plummeting GDPs of countries, and a disturbing prediction of famine for many regions around the world. The crisis is global and has hit the world market and trade hard. *Market mechanisms will not be enough to avoid chaos and hunger-says the Philosopher Slavoj Zizek.* Byung-Chul Han, a South Korean philosopher has a more optimistic opinion than the Slovenian thinker. He refutes his counterpart and says, "The virus will not defeat capitalism".

The plot of this virus also includes debates and questions about the health systems. Official institutions such as the WHO have had to step back and reconsider some theories. One of them is related to the transmissibility by air and permanence of the virus, which is much more significant than what was initially thought. A letter signed by many doctors and scientists, from the United States and the rest of the world (more than 200 from 32 countries) emphasized that its transmission by air is much greater since it lasts longer suspended in the air or attached to a surface (the virus), and that it does not just fall to the ground after it is expelled from the mouth while speaking or coughing.

A full-blown medical, social, and economic dilemma.

Yesterday I spoke with a colleague via video call who I hadn't seen in person for a long time. He had postponed his specialty in nutrition in order to focus on intensive care medicine. At some point, he said wryly: I wish we had a crystal ball so we could predict the future. Interesting about predicting the future. In my opinion, we humans have always like that angle and now more than ever with all the uncertainty while we are deep in the tunnel. A crystal ball or an oracle would be nice. Ancient man resorted to so-called oracles or other ways of predicting the future. Seventy thousand years ago, Homo sapiens migrated from Africa to the rest of the world seeking to settle and develop themselves. First, they became hunters and gatherers (11,000 thousand years ago) and then went on to form civilizations. Meanwhile, their cognitive evolution continued to develop. Concerning predictions, the Romans observed the flight of birds around 600 BC; and around 1600 BC, the Chinese Shang Dynasty burned bones to foresee the future. There is also evidence of elusive astrology in 2000 BC in ancient Mesopotamia. Each culture developed *DIFFERENT FORMS OF PREDICTING THE FUTURE*. Now, it is difficult to have any kind of official record of the predictions of those oracles, and not even the writings of the famous Delphic oracle located in Greece on Mount Parnassus say whether the consultations were in person or through the high priest (and less if they were of any use).

Today, we still have not found an oracle that can precisely tell us, for example, the date of a vaccine. Nevertheless, we have great allies; the technology and evolution of the exact sciences, such as mathematics. A mathematical model, (the SIR curve), can show how the number of people susceptible to being infected varies, and the behavior of the infectious curve can also help governments implement public policies to protect the population. The COVID-19 or SARS-COV 2 crisis has also shown us that in the 21st century, technology and applied research are also great allies for combating the effects of a pandemic. Digital platforms to be able to telework, fast COVID 19 tests, *apps* designed to help with the traceability of the infected or at-risk population, and many others.

Will there be light at the end of the tunnel?

According to data from John Hopkins University, since its appearance in Wuhan-China in December 2019 and until today July 15, more than 13 million people have become infected and more than 500,000 have lost their lives. All of this has caused a commotion, controversy, and a frantic race against time. The response has been slow, some say, aiming at the WHO.

Others claim that in spite of all the technology that is available, the pandemic caught the world off guard. The truth of the matter is that serious efforts and studies have been made.

The case of the American who returned from Wuhan in January 2020. A follow-up study of the exposure and interaction he had with unprotected people (not wearing masks) was carried out. It was observed that the contagion was rapid and geometric.

The case of the 104 passengers aboard the Diamond Princess cruise ship. This study began in February 2020 with the passengers who were admitted to a hospital in Japan. The fickle nature of the virus was seen and it did not attack everyone equally. The conclusions of this retrospective study were published in June in *The Lancet*.

The race to produce the vaccine involves studying reservoirs and their transmission, as said by York University academic Seshadri Vasani, whose studies and tests on ferrets (who have lung physiology with aspects that are common to humans) have had good media coverage. Details can be found in the medicalxpress.com magazine.

It is true that fresh outbreaks during the European summer and the upward curves in the US and Latin America will postpone the exit or the light at the end of the tunnel (or lengthen the tunnel; however, you wish to see it). Second waves have occurred in part because people have not responded well to being confined or quarantined. The human being, in essence, is a social being just like our wandering *Homo sapiens*, who liked to move and interact with others. Post-pandemic life will undoubtedly have humans who will continue to be social beings, but with nuances. At the very least, they will have to travel less, distance themselves more when speaking and incorporate more detail into their hygiene routine. Teleworking will be here to stay; new homes will be adapted to this modality, and fewer people will be attending physical workplaces in the near future.

The date when the vaccine appears will be a milestone that will mark a trend in social and political life.

Today I spoke to my colleague once again by video call and he learned of my interest in philosophy and reading, and why I have written some articles.

Ah, he said to me - What else are you? ... A poet? An artist?

In addition, I remembered the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa, who answers in one of his stories.

Nothing – I am just a stunned man.

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Volume 1 Issue 3 September 2020

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