

## Thinking the COVID-19 as an Event: A Physical and Spiritual Illness in the Post-Truth Era

Francisco J. Alcalá<sup>1</sup>

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari posed the need for a milieu of immanence as a material condition for the emergence and survival of philosophy, which in the origins of the discipline corresponded to the society of ‘free and equal friends/rivals’ that was the Greek polis, and nowadays to the equivalence in the commodity-form imposed by global capitalism (1994, 97–98). Therefore, the epistemological and political task of philosophical thought consists – now as then – in introducing a new order or a strictly immanent selection into that milieu, banishing the threats of both transcendence and relativism (Deleuze 1998, 136–137).

These issues are gaining renewed relevance in the context of the COVID-19 global pandemic that we have been experiencing since the beginning of 2020. Although far from enabling philosophical thought to survive, the rise of contagion as a new milieu of immanence seems to certify its decline: public interventions on the subject made by some philosophers have been harshly criticized, mainly for giving free rein to their own obsessions and frivolously subsuming the new problems brought about by the pandemic into those previously posed by their respective ‘trademark’ philosophies. This is so in the case of Giorgio Agamben (2020), whose approach has confused the essential healthcare work of states in the face of a health emergency with the threat of a new state of emergency, leading Slavoj Žižek (2020) to ironically title one of the chapters in his book on the pandemic ‘Monitor and Punish, Yes Please!’ As an author, Žižek, who has also been criticized for envisioning in the pandemic the advent of communism, has performed a remarkable exercise of theoretical boldness – and probably also of editorial opportunism – that seems to replace the old-fashioned owl of Minerva by the charter flight, more in keeping with the times.

In this chapter, I aim to demonstrate that, in this context of the discrediting of philosophy (Diéguez 2020), Deleuze and Guattari’s thought can help us to undertake the task of philosophically addressing the pandemic in its event dimension, which involves both physical and spiritual ‘symptoms’ that demand to be counter-effectuated in an ethical and political response.

### Prelude: what is an event?

When we try to form a more or less spontaneous idea of an event, we usually find its everyday meaning, which is no less profound for that. Thus, for any of us, an event is always 'something' that takes place without our being able to foresee or explain it: a special kind of 'happening' that interrupts the 'natural' – i.e. expected – course of occurrences. Therefore, there is a quotidian sense of the event, according to which it is always that paradoxical logic that governs the unprecedented or the untimely in the real; that which should not take place and yet it has.

Deleuze's philosophy gives a remarkable consistency to the concept of event, considered by the author as the core notion of his thought (1995, 141, 143). The key to understanding the event lies in the implicit definition of the concept contained in *Difference and Repetition*, which is a book focused on a different problem: that of the foundation of thought. Deleuze considers that thought must renounce the foundation when it is transcendent; that is to say, external to the founded reality. This is why he proposes that the foundation of individuals must be interior or immanent to them (1994, 246, 249–250). Thus, the 'atoms' whose changing distributions generate individuals are the new 'ground' of reality, and Deleuze calls them 'pre-individual singularities' or 'individuating differences'. Consequently, individuals are nothing more than a simulation or a by-product of those distributions of singularities that constitute the ontology proper (Zourabichvili 2012, 117).

But what is the place of the event in this approach? Deleuze distinguishes three temporalities or syntheses of time that constitute the three forms of repetition (1994, 94): a physical repetition in habit (living present), a metaphysical repetition in Memory (pure past) and an ontological repetition in the eternal return (future). The first synthesis constitutes a 'pretension' of every individual – persisting, the second one deepens this pretension towards a virtual object that acts as its foundation, the third one undoes every individual and every foundation to restart the process again on new foundations. And the event finds the temporality that is proper to it in the third synthesis (89; Lapoujade 2014, 79). It follows that the third synthesis produces a new distribution of pre-individual reality (the ontological-transcendental or 'virtual'), which entails the reconfiguration of the individuated reality that we are and with which we relate (the empirical or 'actual'). And if the eternal return concerns pure events, it is because the event is precisely that redistribution of the pre-individual singularities that makes up the ontological-transcendental (Deleuze 1994, 246; 1990, 51–52; Lapoujade 2014, 64) – not for nothing, the third synthesis is 'dialectical', and dialectics is the science of problems or pure events (Deleuze 1990, 8; 1994, 188).

Deleuze, therefore, suggests that the event is a redistribution that forces us to ask ourselves: 'What has happened?' (1990, series 22). This is the question about the event that – silent and inexorable – has taken place behind our backs, redistributing the powers that constitute us or displacing one problem for the benefit of another so that everything will have changed once again.

Hence, in *Difference and Repetition*, the event refers to the logical principle of the redistribution of pre-individual singularities at the virtual level, which transforms the actual or individuated reality and gives rise to the new. Thus, it mediates our relation

with reality as a transcendental field and establishes a new way of thinking about the individuals, which relates each individual reality rather with a constituent other than with the pure identity of a fixed essence. Therefore, the vicissitudes of Deleuze's technical concept do not overlook the quotidian – but profound – sense of the event to which I referred above.

### The COVID-19 as an event: what has happened?

If, as we have just seen, an event is a redistribution of the constitutive powers of reality at the transcendental level that leads to a more or less drastic change in the empirical reality where our individual existence unfolds, we cannot but recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic constitutes a particularly exceptional event in our times.

The pandemic outbreak has been a paradoxical situation in itself, insofar as it has combined the unpredictable with the expected, as warned for decades by the scientific community – and even by a science fiction film by Steven Soderbergh: *Contagion*. In this sense, the possibility of a new pandemic of global impact that was announced in the epidemics finally contained – bird flu (2009), Ebola (2014–2016), Zika virus (2015–present) – as well as in the swine flu or H1N1 pandemic (2009–2010), and of course in the AIDS pandemic (1981–present), ended up being realized in a new coronavirus spread from animals to humans, or rather, from other animals to human animals. And if it is true that there are 'critical points of the event' analogous to the boiling or melting points of matter, which determine whether or not a given event takes place (Deleuze 1990, 80), this time these have been determined by the virulence of the physical spread of the disease and the increased mortality that it has shown.

After the crisis and in the face of the spread of the disease, states were forced to activate a biopolitical machinery that we thought was a thing of the past, whose screeching was hurting the ears of citizens accustomed to the fluid freedom that in today's control societies is synchronized with the rhythm of consumption. We then experience the 'spiritual' effects that the pandemic has brought to no lesser extent, mainly associated with another type of infection: that of opinion in times of post-truth.

Following the above, it is worth asking what the COVID-19 event has been about, i.e. how everyday reality has been redistributed as a result of its unpredictable – but expected – shake-up?

Explicitly or implicitly, most authors who have dealt with the pandemic philosophically have echoed its character as an event. Among these approaches, it is worth highlighting the latest lucid text by anthropologist David Graeber, entitled 'After the Pandemic, We Can't Go Back to Sleep' (2020), which approaches the COVID-19 pandemic as if it were the awakening from a dream that has changed our awareness of everyday reality – a dream to which we cannot return once the threat of the disease has dissipated. Also noteworthy is Bruno Latour's approach in his latest book, *Où suis-je? Leçons du confinement à l'usage des terrestres* [Where Am I? Lessons from Confinement for Terrestrial Inhabitants] (2021), which takes as a model the experience of the protagonist of Kafka's *Metamorphosis* – who also wakes up from a dream, but transformed into a cockroach – to address the experience of the pandemic.

And the truth is that this awakening from a dream in which everything is upside down is a good metaphor for what has happened in this pandemic. Each one of us can make the mental experiment of remembering the first weeks after the declaration of the pandemic by the WHO on 11 March 2020 and the implementation of the restrictions by the public authorities through biopolitical machinery without precedent in this century. We woke up starring in a strange science fiction film – or even a fantastic film – in which everyday reality had become enigmatic and dangerous: we knew little about the disease caused by the new coronavirus, about the terrible consequences that could result from contracting it, or about the mechanisms through which the contagion – that was proving to be very high given the data – was produced. Everyday gestures that form the backbone of interpersonal relationships, such as hugging or shaking hands, and even seeing each other's faces, now hidden under the obligatory mask, had become reckless and even obscene. Daily activities essential for subsistence such as shopping or going to work in the case of 'essential activities' had become an extreme sport that exposed us to contagion and from which we returned uneasy, striving to ward off the spectre of disease through compulsive disinfection. Nothing was as we knew it overnight.

Therefore, it is possible to accept the thesis that I stated at the beginning about the emergence of contagion, on the occasion of the pandemic event, as a new milieu of immanence that 'equalizes' us all, in the same way as does the commodity-form of globalized capitalism or the society of free and equal friends of Greek democracy – and the truth is that, far from being opposed to the former, the new milieu of immanence is sustained on them. Virtually all of us are COVID-19 patients or carriers, and there we are hence on the same plane of immanence, which must serve as a principle for thinking about the phenomenon. We must start from there, from the universalization of contagion, to establish the new distinctions, practices and concepts that will make this desert habitable again – a desert that we can't renounce, since, as Deleuze's thought teaches, it is the desert of Being or the real. So let us start from this equalization in contagion in our approach to the pandemic, a new transcendental field of thought in this event in which we find ourselves caught up. What does this terrible possibility of falling ill and dying, elevated to the most immediate universality, teach us?

Readers of Deleuze know that, in his philosophy, contagion presents a strictly immanent or 'horizontal' logic that is linked to the earth, which is the logic of the rhizome from *A Thousand Plateaus* and, ultimately, that of the disjunctive synthesis of *Difference and Repetition* (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 6; Deleuze 1994, 41–42; 1990, 179–180). Being is a desert that supports different distributions without reducing itself to any of them; that is to say, opposing an 'inertial' resistance to any attempt to establish a definitive distribution (Deleuze 1995, 146). In other words, the rhizome or disjunctive synthesis is the immanent logic that flattens, redistributes and mixes everything at the level of Being that is by nature univocal or non-compartmentalized. To this extent, it opposes the compartmentalization of Being or its definitive distribution, which always takes place at the expense of the pure immanence of Being, by asserting an external – 'transcendent' – criterion. This compartmentalization, operated by the judgement of attribution, responds to a transcendent or 'vertical' logic that makes the virtual pass into actual existence on the condition that its reality is denaturalized, imposing artificial and therefore always provisional distributions on it.

But let us return to contagion: our societies are built on all kinds of artificial distributions or hierarchies, whose arbitrariness perpetuates inequalities, injustices and grievances that afflict human animals, non-human animals, and even the planet Earth. So while we will not go so far as to speak of an ‘apology for contagion’ (Alba Rico 2020), we will affirm that valuable lessons can be drawn from it to continue with life and thought on the face of earth once the rigours of the globalized disease allow us to do so. Contagion disproves the given reality once and for all and encourages us to rethink and transform it, i.e. it encourages us to distribute the given reality differently. Contagion also leads to a rethinking of individual identity in an era of closing borders and exclusionary nationalism, relating it to the vicinity of a constituent other rather than to an identity established beforehand through an external instance such as essence (national, ethnic, political, gender, etc.).

In this sense, Jean-Luc Nancy identified contagion with com-passion, defining it as: ‘The contact of being with one another in this turmoil. Compassion is not altruism, nor is it identification; it is the disturbance of violent relatedness’ (1995, XIII). The first experience that follows from contagion is thus that of being-with or contiguity and, ultimately, the experience of interdependence. We necessarily exist in common with other human beings, non-human animals, and the planet Earth. Therefore, our existence depends on the existence of other humans and, to no lesser extent, on that of the rest of the earth’s inhabitants and the very survival of the planet in conditions conducive to the development of life.

In his last book published during his lifetime, *Un trop humain virus* (An All Too Human Virus) (2020), Nancy himself made a fundamental distinction concerning the disease that is shaking the world: while in the past most diseases were exogenous or independent of human action, recent epidemics and pandemics are endogenous or the direct consequence of human action. This seems to be the case for SARS-CoV-2 and, in general, for the other coronaviruses that affect our species (HCoV) and cause infection also in animals. It is, therefore, a ‘zoonotic’ disease, i.e. it is a disease that can be transmitted from animals to humans and is probably of animal origin. Not for nothing did the first report of COVID-19 come from health authorities in the Chinese city of Wuhan, who linked twenty-seven cases of pneumonia of unknown aetiology to common exposure to a wholesale market of seafood, fish and other live animals in the city (Spanish Ministry of Health 2021). The way we humans treat the animals we consume, their ecosystems and the planet in general undoubtedly has an impact on the life of this *homo sapiens* who believe they are dissociated from the environment that surrounds them and reduces the other things that exist to *Bestand* (stock).

Recognizing this does not imply that we should accept the invariably stupid discourse that the pandemic is an act of revenge taken by Nature – with a capital letter – against the excesses of human beings, their *hybris*, appealing to a theological-moral narrative to explain an infinitely more complex phenomenon and bordering on justifying the humanitarian tragedy of the disease through supposed collective guilt. Nor does it imply accepting the ‘whitewashing’ of what has happened with symmetrically inverse stupidity, which leads to disregarding the warnings of specialists and precedents to exempt human beings from all responsibility, shielding their current way of life and once again entrusting the way out of the crisis solely to technology (‘Once the dog has

been vaccinated – from the borders inwards, watch out – rabies is over’ ... for the moment).<sup>2</sup>

At this point, we should not disregard Badiou’s idea (2020), according to which the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic follows from two intersections: an intersection of nature with human society (we know that bats carry a wide variety of coronaviruses and the genetic origin of SARS-CoV-2 leads to these animals, and we also have information about the poor sanitary conditions of the Wuhan animal market: Spanish Ministry of Health 2021), and an intersection of the current globalization, which has enabled the rapid global spread of the virus, with the archaic hygiene measures that characterize this type of animal market.

Anyway, it follows that there is a ‘contagion’ that is constitutive of the human species – the most collaborative of all primates (Diéguez 2020) – and arguably of life on earth itself, at the basis of the terrible contagion that worries us today. The event of the pandemic that causes the second one makes us aware of the first one. And we also become aware that there is probably no better way to ward off future manifestations of this pathological contagion than to take care of our constitutive contagion, i.e. our contiguity and interdependence with other human beings, non-human animals, and the planet Earth. If the experience of pathological contagion awakens the immunitary individual from their dream of immunity, the experience of contiguity or constitutive ‘contagion’ awakens the individual from their immunitary dream. The pandemic event thus brings us back to the ecological experience of the planetary community, which is not exclusively human. Humans cannot survive alone, but neither can we survive with our backs turned to non-human animals and the planet Earth.

Therefore, the individual does not emerge unscathed from the pandemic event. The COVID-19 actualizes the milieu of immanence of global capitalism in the universal possibility of contagion, revealing in addition both the interdependence and the vulnerability of human lives (Badiou 2020) – in relation both to the lives of other human beings and to the ecological niche that hosts them. And this rediscovered vulnerability also has socio-political and economic consequences. It makes us aware – again: awakens us – of the nonsense in which economic and social relations are embedded, which until now seemed so reasonable to us. This sudden realization is certainly consistent with Deleuze’s assertion that there is a subjective mutation correlated with the event that leads to perceiving as intolerable what was hitherto quotidian (2007, 234). Graeber puts it brilliantly:

In reality, the crisis we just experienced was waking from a dream, a confrontation with the actual reality of human life, which is that we are a collection of fragile beings taking care of one another, and that those who do the lion’s share of this care work that keeps us alive are overtaxed, underpaid, and daily humiliated, and that a very large proportion of the population don’t do anything at all but spin fantasies, extract rents, and generally get in the way of those who are making, fixing, moving, and transporting things, or tending to the needs of other living beings. It is imperative that we not slip back into a reality where all this makes some sort of inexplicable sense, the way senseless things so often do in dreams (Graeber 2020).

Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic makes us experience the nonsense of a large part of the hierarchies on which our routines, movements, relationships, expectations and, in the end, our lives are based. Isolated from the inertia that underpins their daily lives, confined individuals realize the senselessness of spending so much time away from home working while paying someone else to look after their children or investing more time in building one's CV than one's biography. They also realize the value of care work – at home, in hospitals, schools, nursing homes, etc. – and the importance of public services such as health and education, which so many voices used to denigrate in the name of the neoliberal dogma of private management and tax cuts . . . We realize that even to the point of valuing the service to the general interest provided by the postman, the haulier or the shop assistant. We end up thus, as happened in Spain, going out onto the balcony every evening to applaud the health workers who care for the sick at the risk of their lives while the rest of us are confined – at least, those of us who can. And we realize, in the end, that perhaps the disposition of reality and, among it, that of the life projects and expectations that we have – assembled around the 'promises' of an economy that is ultimately indifferent to our well-being – do not make as much sense as we had imagined, captivated by the dream from which we have just awakened and into which we will probably fall again when the situation has normalized. It is certainly not a good sign that the noise of petty political debate, if not outright hate speech, has replaced that of applause.

Finally, I will consider the 'spiritual' symptoms of the global phenomenon that COVID-19 is, from the point of view of its origin in the aporias that the 'return' of biopolitics – confinements, curfews . . . – entails as an unexpected brake on the fluidity of control societies (Deleuze 1995, 177–182), as well as from the point of view of current post-truth dynamics.

Foucault placed disciplinary societies between the eighteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, when they would have reached their splendour and then ceded their hegemony to control societies. In both cases, it is a model of social domination, albeit built on different social and technological foundations. Disciplinary societies are characterized by confinement, which makes the individual pass throughout their life through different institutions that exercise a form of sovereignty over them: they thus exercise their power over life through confinement in the hospital, school, barracks, prison, etc. However, with the deepening of democracy, the increasing consolidation of individual freedom and the development of digital technologies, these disciplinary societies that 'moulded' individuals by confining them to institutions are giving way to control societies, which exercise their dominion over individuals through more sophisticated techniques that make it possible to manage life in an open space. As Deleuze eloquently explains, there is a shift from an economic model based on moulded currency and factory labour to one based on fluctuating exchanges and office work, which 'modulates' individuals – that is, continuously moulds them in space and time – with devices such as merit-based wages, teleworking and continuous learning (178, 180).

It follows from this brief description that many of the 'spiritual' symptoms brought about by the pandemic are due to an unexpected return of some of the biopolitical methods that characterized disciplinary societies within today's control societies:



confinement, curfews, mobility restrictions, etc. These are mechanisms based on confinement to whose limitations the contemporary individual is not accustomed. Not for nothing did Deleuze note that the two societies had two very different juridical ways of life and that the recent transition from one to the other was already a source of hesitation in the law of the time (179). Anyway, we can at best speak of a return of some of the characteristic elements of disciplinary societies in today's control societies, but we can by no means speak of a regression towards the former. On the contrary, state management of the pandemic confirms Deleuze's description of control societies on a global level at every point: the empire of digital numbers (*chiffre*) that determine access to information (180), the control mechanisms that determine at every moment the position of an individual in an open environment (181), or Félix Guattari's fantasy of an electronic card that would allow us to move freely by opening a series of barriers ... until it was subject to temporary or permanent restrictions, carried out in the so-called 'COVID passport' (181–182). It also confirms his intuition about a new medicine 'without doctors and patients', but with carriers ('potential patients' and transmitters) and 'risk subjects' to be controlled (182).

In this situation, there is in our societies a diversity of reactive responses to health measures taken by governments, marked by two dominant tendencies that are at home under cover of post-truth. On the one hand, there is a proliferation of those who are unjustifiably sceptical and rebellious against the advances in knowledge of COVID-19 and the health measures adopted by governments, just because they suppose that – in case they are mistaken and get sick – they will not get the worst of it thanks to their socio-economic status, relative youth or good general health. On the other hand, there is also a certain 'fear of freedom' in some sectors, mostly progressives, which welcome almost any new restriction adopted by governments – when they do not openly demand it. They perhaps have in common the misunderstanding of the meaning of legitimate freedom; the former confuse it with a childish form of agency, the latter with an immunitary withdrawal into individual security and convictions under the pretext of the common good.

Thus, it must be acknowledged that – as Adorno warned – opinion can also be infected, and its speed of expansion or contagion in this crisis does not lag behind that of the virus: we, therefore, speak of an 'infodemic' that runs parallel to the pandemic. Consequently, it is possible to affirm, with Taylor Shelton (2020), that we are facing the first post-truth pandemic in history.

While post-truth theorists often appeal to 'objective facts' to combat it (McIntyre 2018), both the negationism of COVID-19 and the desire for authoritarianism seem to prove Bruno Latour was right when he stated in a recent interview that a fact without cultural background is a lamb among wolves (Latour 2020). It is useless to wield scientific facts in a cultural context whose ideological and/or emotional obfuscation offers them no support and flatly refuses to accept them. Furthermore, theorists such as Lee McIntyre, when he states that 'these critics were missing the point of what science was really about: engaging facts rather than values' referring to the post-structuralists (2018, 130), overlook at least two important issues.

The first issue was already pointed out by Descartes when he indicated that it is typical of *esprits malsains* (sick minds) to intend to conduct themselves in the world of



life with a certainty similar to that provided by science (1999, 359). Translated into this context, we could put it this way: scientific facts do not offer unambiguous guidelines for articulating a life project following them so that when we are involved in the world of life and are people as well as scientists, it is inevitable that we also commit ourselves to values. This, I repeat, makes us people, not outmoded metaphysicians or relativists conjured against truth. Nietzsche becomes more topical in this respect, and with him Deleuze once again, because affirmative values, devoid of resentment and oriented towards the common good – which we could qualify in political terms as ‘republican’, following Pérez Tapias (2020) – are those that will make it possible to elaborate a consistent narrative that does not succumb to the narcissistic and self-serving temptation of post-truth that delegitimizes the available scientific evidence on COVID-19, envisages implausible international conspiracies or identifies the health measures adopted by governments with a re-edition of the totalitarian state. Therefore, we need to build a narrative or a cultural background for scientific facts so that they can be taken into account in the formation of public opinion and democratic decision-making without succumbing to scientism dogmatism or, of course, to the damaging relativistic influence of post-truth.

The second issue that McIntyre’s approach neglects is that, rather than with scientific facts, ordinary citizens relate to data that are presented to them as having this epistemological status. In other words, we generally do not have direct access to scientific facts, but rather to their representation in the form of the data offered to us by science, science communicators and an endless number of falsifiers who want to pass off their information as scientific, using social networks, the web or the media to circulate it at a global level. This distinction makes it possible to understand that post-truth cannot be fought against by wielding only scientific facts independently of the cultural background that allows people to decide between data claiming such a status. In an interesting and well-documented article, Shelton shows how data alone is not only no antidote to post-truth, but that post-truth itself is based on data-centred societies:

It’s evident that coronavirus has revealed not only the general inadequacy of our data infrastructures and assemblages, but also the more general shift towards a ‘post-truth’ disposition in contemporary social life, wherein ‘objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief’ (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016) . . . But . . . It would be a mistake to see the centrality of data as being somehow the opposite from the larger post-truth apparatus that leads data and facts to exist on unstable ground. Instead, these two ostensibly opposed dynamics are fundamentally intertwined and co-produced (Shelton 2020, 2).

It is thus paradoxical that the production, analysis and consumption of data on COVID-19 during the pandemic have not improved the objective knowledge of the virus and the disease it causes in the wider society. In this respect, the founder of the COVID Tracking Project said: ‘The point is that every country’s numbers are the result of a specific set of testing and accounting regimes. Everyone is cooking the data, one

way or another. And yet . . . people continue to rely on charts showing different numbers' (Madrigal 2020). Thus, we can conclude that it is partly this hegemony of data, the representation of the desired 'naked' fact, which gives free rein to its distortion to favour the circulation of post-truth. Much is said about the manipulation by governments and private institutions to serve their interests, but 'the less commented upon dynamic is how these actions remain cloaked in the veneer of being data-driven and scientifically grounded even as the actions and ends to which they are put are anything but' (Shelton 2020, 2).

### Conclusion: politics of the event or how to be at the height of what happens to us?

In Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, the logical sequence of socio-political change sets out the political challenge that the event proposes to us. First, there is an event as an act or an incorporeal transformation that goes unnoticed and extracts an assemblage of enunciation that realizes it – 'workers of the world, unite!' (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 83). Second, this event-assemblage gives rise to a new subjectivity that establishes equally new relations with all spheres of life, removing itself from the power relations and forms of knowledge of the present assemblage, so that what used to be quotidian becomes intolerable (Deleuze 2007, 234). Finally, there is the need to 'counter-effectuate' the event; that is, to create new assemblages or lifestyles that respond to the new subjectivity, placing individuals and societies at the height of what is happening to them. It is in these unprecedented assemblages where the subjectivity that inspired them by anticipating their forms will be reinserted.

Therefore, it is also necessary to be at the height of the event that this illness is – to counter-effectuate it – by responding to its physical and 'spiritual' effects through the constitution of new assemblages. I conclude this chapter by offering some thoughts on the subject.

First, I should point out the need to address our constitutive interdependence at the social, political and ecological levels by establishing international solidarity agreements, effective public policies and interpersonal care networks. Trying to reverse such a global and interpersonal situation like this pandemic on an exclusively local and institutional level would be useless, as well as unsupportive. We must also resist the hate speeches that attribute a nationality to the virus and its variants to pose the problem in terms of a war of nations, and understand that immanence in contagion makes us today more than ever citizens of the world; that is, citizens of the planet Earth and fellow travellers of the other beings that inhabit it and of the planet itself. Only in this way will we be prepared to overcome the ecological crisis that is looming, of which the COVID-19 crisis is probably only a prelude.

Second, it is necessary to realize the political upheaval that the event entails and understand the affirmative role of the health measures adopted in this crisis context. In trying to be critical of state powers and the use of biopolitics, we should not end up supporting a genocidal 'thanatopolitics' also exercised by states in the name of safeguarding the economy and assuming an unbearable human cost (Pérez Tapias

2020). We must understand, in short, that after the upheaval brought about by such an event, biopolitics may well take on an affirmative role, just as Žižek intelligently notes that ‘not to shake hands and isolate when needed is today’s form of solidarity’ (2020, 77).

Third, and finally, faced with the double danger of post-truth and of its critics using it as a Trojan horse to reintroduce the most superficial neo-positivism into contemporary thought, it is necessary to realize the importance of posing problems, of establishing a solvent narrative that cannot be neutral as a dike to contain infodemics and its undesirable socio-political consequences. Without a cultural background of widespread trust in science that recognizes the provisionality of the explanations (‘truths’) it offers us, as do virtually all those who have taken an interest in the way scientific disciplines evolve, any hesitation on the part of scientists in their theories and predictions will be perceived as a sign of relativism that will arouse the distrust of the scientific enterprise and lead to the nefarious pursuit of conspiracy theories and ‘alternative facts’ – and in this pandemic, there have been many such hesitations due to the logical lack of knowledge about the disease and the hasty publication of preprints that had not yet passed peer review. In short, dogmatism is undesirable even when it supports a correct cause, such as science. That is why I argue that it is necessary here to redirect the counter-effectuation in the assemblage towards a promotion of scientific and humanistic culture focused on the formulation of problems, which does not fall into any ‘dogmatic image of thought’ – be it anti-scientific or technocratic.

## Note

- 1 Francisco J. Alcalá is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Granada, currently on a two-year postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Barcelona (Margarita Salas programme). He carries out his research in the Aporia Group of the University of Barcelona and the Project of the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities ‘La mirada filosófica como mirada médica’ (The Philosophical Gaze as a Medical Gaze) —PGC2018-094253-B-I00—. Email:
- 2 This expression translates into the current context the Spanish proverb ‘muerto el perro, se acabó la rabia’ (when the dog is dead, the rabies is gone), the meaning of which is equivalent to the English one, ‘dead dogs don’t bite’.

## References

- Agamben, G. (2020), ‘L’invenzione di un’epidemia’, *Quodlibet*, 26 February. Available online: <https://www.quodlibet.it/giorgio-agamben-l-invenzione-di-un-epidemia> (accessed 30 October 2020).
- Alba Rico, S. (2020), ‘Apología del contagio’, *Ctxt.es*, 9 March. Available online: <https://ctxt.es/es/20200302/Firmas/31282/coronavirus-contagio-apologia-miedo-santiago-alba-rico-covid19-enfermedad.htm> (accessed 31 August 2021).
- Badiou, A. (2020), ‘Sur la situation épidémique’, *Cartier Général*. Available online: <https://qg.media/2020/03/26/sur-la-situation-epidémique-par-alain-badiou/> (accessed: 30 October 2020).

- Deleuze, G. (1990 [1969]), *The Logic of Sense*, trans. M. Lester and C. Stivale, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, G. (1994 [1968]), *Difference and Repetition*, trans. P. Patton, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, G. (1995 [1990]), *Negociations 1972–1990*, trans. M. Joughin, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, G. (1998 [1993]), *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. D. W. Smith and M. A. Greco, London: Verso.
- Deleuze, G. (2007 [2003]), *Two Regimes of Madness. Texts and Interviews 1975–1995*, trans. A. Hodges and M. Taormina, New York: Semiotext(e).
- Deleuze, G. and F. Guattari (1994 [1991]), *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. H. Tomlinson and G. Burchell, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, G. and F. Guattari (2004 [1980]), *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. B. Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, G. and C. Parnet (1987 [1977]), *Dialogues*, trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Descartes, R. (1999), 'Lettre à Hyperaspistes, Agoust 1641', R. Descartes, *Œuvres Philosophiques*. Paris: Classiques Garnier.
- Diéguez, A. (2020), 'Una pandemia sin norte. Los pensadores no levantan cabeza con el coronavirus', *El Confidencial*, 20 March. Available online: [https://blogs.elconfidencial.com/cultura/tribuna/2020-03-20/coronavirus-filosofia-pandemia-crisis\\_2506407/](https://blogs.elconfidencial.com/cultura/tribuna/2020-03-20/coronavirus-filosofia-pandemia-crisis_2506407/) (accessed 31 August 2021).
- Graeber, D. (2020), 'After the Pandemic, We Can't Go Back to Sleep', *Jacobin*, Available online: <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2021/03/david-graeber-posthumous-essay-pandemic> (accessed 31 August 2021).
- Lapoujade, D. (2014), *Deleuze. Les mouvements aberrants*, Paris: Les Éditions du Minuit.
- Latour, B. (2019), 'Interview with Bruno Latour', *El País*, 1 April. Available online: [https://elpais.com/elpais/2019/03/29/ideas/1553888812\\_652680.html](https://elpais.com/elpais/2019/03/29/ideas/1553888812_652680.html) (accessed 30 October 2020).
- Latour, B. (2021), *Où suis-je? Leçons du confinement à l'usage des terrestres*, Paris: La Découverte.
- Madrigal, A. (2020), 'The Official Coronavirus Numbers Are Wrong, and Everyone Knows It', *The Atlantic*, 3 March. Available online: <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2020/03/how-many-americans-really-have-corona-virus/607348/> (accessed 29 September 2020).
- McIntyre, L. (2018), *Post-Truth*, Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Spanish Ministry of Health (2021), 'Información científica-técnica. Enfermedad por coronavirus, COVID-19'. Available online: [https://www.mscbs.gob.es/profesionales/saludPublica/ccayes/alertasActual/nCov/documentos/20210429\\_GRUPOPERSONAS.pdf](https://www.mscbs.gob.es/profesionales/saludPublica/ccayes/alertasActual/nCov/documentos/20210429_GRUPOPERSONAS.pdf) (accessed 1 October 2021).
- Nancy, J.-L. (2000 [1995]), *Being Singular Plural*, trans. R. D. Richardson and A. E. O'Byrne, California: Stanford University Press.
- Nancy, J.-L. (2020), *Un trop humain virus [An All Too Human Virus]*, Paris: Bayard Editions.
- Pérez Tapias, J. A. (2020), 'Alternativa: o "común-ismo republicano" o "tanatopolítica"', in D. Tomás Cámara (ed.), *Covidosis. Reflexiones filosóficas para el mundo postpandemia*, 406–427, Barcelona: Paidós.
- Shelton, T. (2020), 'A post-truth pandemic?', *Big Data & Society*, July–December, 1–6.
- Žižek, S. (2020), *PANDEMIC! Covid-19 Shakes the World*, New Jersey: Wiley.
- Zourabichvili, F. (2012 [1994, 2003]), *Deleuze: A Philosophy of the Event Together with The Vocabulary of Deleuze*, trans. K. Aarons, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.