

Hedwig E. de Laoreine

# after corona

at the beginning of the crisis, i started to feel a confidence that hasn't been shared by a lot of people: setting aside the challenging health, medical and financial situation, this unexpected event suddenly opened a door through which we see and understand how vulnerable our neoliberal economies, both national and international, are

but not only our economies, also our brains and mindsets, and: our bodies

in my optimistic mood, seeing the problems seemed like a chance to seek better solutions, to fix those things that obviously do not serve the people, and that obviously do not serve the world. for a moment it could look like a beginning where more people started to care about their lives and those of others

a single moment, and then it has gone again

suddenly fears took over the bodies and the logos, and, in a moment of simply not knowing, we were filled with and haunted by everyone's apocalyptic thoughts and presumptions and fantasies, but also their insight into realities that lie far beyond our usual beliefs in a free society. we discovered how quickly control over our entire lives can become real if politics and brains go mad together

but we can also use our brains to reset our mindsets, and if we manage to split apart the existential aspects of this crisis – subsistence and health – , we may have the chance to transform promised freedom into more real forms of freedom  
for everybody  
which also means an effort from everybody

because one can ask these questions: where is the freedom when we have to stay at home and don't know what to do with our time and our lives? did capitalism bring us freedom

or just distraction? did it disturb our minds to the extent that we thought we were free whilst we were just distracted? and we didn't know?

where has all this education gone that clearly didn't help us to understand who we are? what was it for? and what is its purpose today?

liberalism may in the beginning sound appealing to many people who want to do something, until you start to understand that you are far from being free to do what you want to do. instead of giving you the freedom to become creative and take responsibility for your own outcome, it forces you to subordinate your workforce to the single thought of producing profits. but excuse me, work can be something very different from producing profits. and, above all, work which involves bodies that do the work cannot be understood in terms of product and capitalization

this had been an ongoing illusion and a huge error of western civilizations

an illusion that had been there because of the division of labour: one is the body and one is the head, and the one who is the body is not supposed to use their head. but we didn't put an end to human nature by this controversial division, and the one who is supposed to be only a body still has a head and thinks and has their own experience of work processes and life

only their thoughts are not heard, their experiences aren't given the political weight they deserve and, as technological societies, we are in the running to become bodyless or rather bodystupid until fears make us understand that it is our bodies that give us a home. if they recover or display their animal aspects, which is simply what happens when

a body is caught by fear, our super trained intellectual brains become confused

difficult to get back the control. difficult to ignore the feelings that come to the surface. difficult to have words for what is going on. all this sudden body talk. if we listen we may at least understand that our cultural overestimation of the brain didn't help us to understand the complexities of our bodies. as long as we rationalize the body it is simply supposed to be a machine that we need to bring to work, but when we start to experience it, we start to experience life and all the rationalization in the world has nothing to say about it. we are here and have no clue what the fuck we are doing here

we put our brains in prison and fear our bodies, as we fear our existence

and instead of understanding that, as societies, we adopted directions that are inhuman, we keep silent those who experience their bodies through their work. we make them subordinate their bodies to ideas that do not serve the bodies. and whatever our prisons may look like, even if they seem to be castles, at some point we can no longer avoid understanding that we transformed our own bodies into strangers. we made them become unnatural

and if there is one single thing that really became clear and visible through these corona times, it is that we need to change our approach to work. and that we need to understand the different necessities of different types of work in order to build up politics that are political and not a hidden

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face of neoliberal economy. politics cannot be neoliberal because bodies need time to work. they are not wall street, unless they experience fear, then they produce stress and disease in the tempo of wall street

and we also need to change our approach to bodies

bodies are not robots and not machines

it is true that on wall street it can happen that in stress situations profits can be generated. but this is not true for bodies. they simply become sick

but being sick, even if our destination is in any case death, is the beginning of a possible change. we never learnt how to deal with our fears, and we never learnt anything about what they can give us. but travel through your fears and you will find out about your life. about who you are. and who you are not. what you are and what we all are is vulnerable beings. our life isn't safe, and when our bodies are shackled by fear it is our lives that are shackled. life is something way deeper than what our rationalities try to tell us because rationality and the whole economical system based upon it are mainly there in order to make us believe that we are safe. we aren't

death can take us at any given moment. this has nothing to do with corona. if we experience fear it has nothing to do with corona, but with our lives. maybe corona was a provocation. but corona didn't invent death. capitalism constantly tries to make us forget death. so corona did something that capitalism always tried to avoid. or when did you see an advertisement for, let's say, cemeteries?

maybe we have a chance to move beyond our own ignorance. because if death is there, every day, with or without corona, we can chose our freedom and ask ourselves what is the one thing that makes us happy in this moment. it can even be the case that feeling our fears makes us happy because they make us feel alive. it is our freedom to choose our fears and not let others make profits on our backs. and, further on, not to sell them our fears because we think that something may be wrong. experiencing fear when it comes to existential subjects is to that extent a normal

reaction, as there had been no personal confrontation with one's own mortality

what had been my hope at the beginning of the crisis and what starts to slowly fade away is that we had this chance to become aware of our bodies, of their vulnerability and of our fear of death. and somehow this came to the surface. the more we recover normality, the more this view into the abyss seems to close again. however, we can change nothing at all

about our destination: being dead one day. our freedom now is that we can ask ourselves if we want to face the fears or if we want to continue being blindfolded

and becoming machines

and letting our bodies be occupied by the ideas of others

and our own ♦

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