

**Zizek, S. (2020). Pandemic! COVID-19 Shakes the World. New York and London: OR Books. 107 pp. ISBN: 978-1-68219-301-3.**

With an intellectual background dominated by political economic reasoning, Zizek reveals the different reactions of governments in developed and developing countries to the Covid-19 through this book. He skillfully grafted psychoanalytic studies as a deep scalpel cutting through covering the framework of language, media, history, civilization, and psychology to reach social phenomena that emerged during the pandemic. This work, then, becomes one of the comprehensive writings to increase knowledge about humanistic ideas. Analysed from various points of view, this work is the opening of pandemic corridors that have not been fully conceptualized.

The interrelation of the book outlines three important terms. First, the handling of the pandemic with the ambivalence of barbarism blended with communism. This possibility is based on the predictions of the management of policies of the two superpowers, the US and China. The idea of barbarism is based on the prediction of economic inequality between developing and developed countries in early 2020. Meanwhile, communism relies on the framework of plausibility to embrace global solidarity in order to overcome the pandemic.

Second, the complexity between personal choices and group choices in dealing with the pandemic, because for Zizek, the management of these needs is substantially different. Personal choice prioritizes efforts to save oneself both in terms of health and personal safety. Meanwhile, the group's choice is driven by hope and mutual support in the midst of the crisis that lurks behind the pandemic. Zizek considers that the best alternative to control the spread of this virus is to implement radical democracy. Radical democracy goes hand in hand with alternatives that grow out of global solidarity.

Third, the question of Zizek's neo-communism which was developed using a unique reasoning and is a polished psychoanalytic of Marxist thought. He criticized Trump's statement that he did not believe the policies of the World Health Organization (WHO) as it was too China-oriented.

Chapter 1 begins with the emergence of the pandemic in China accompanied by the experiences of governments of various countries in dealing with pandemics. This chapter outlines the possibilities for cross-

border cooperation. Žižek's analogy is that in the middle of a catastrophic ocean, we are all in the same one boat. So, the only alternative to keeping the boat afloat is solidarity. Chapter 2, then, reviews the impact of the pandemic on mental health by focusing on the material and immaterial working-class stratification, as well as on the panic buying phenomenon.

In chapter 3, Žižek highlights a growing storm around Europe. There are two things specifically referring to the European economy. First, the neoliberal criticism reliant on the manufacturing industry in urban areas that is unable to respond to the challenges of the crisis, both economic and medical. Second, several countries in Europe have geopolitical problems such as the refugee issue which was not resolved before the pandemic came. In chapter 4, Žižek opens a discourse on transitional networks. The spread of the COVID-19 virus has triggered the emergence of ideological viruses such as fake news, conspiracy theories, and issues of racism. In chapter 5, the focus is on people's reactions to the epidemic such as denial of the fact that the COVID-19 virus exists and knitting hope in its aftermath.

In chapter 6, the author describes the success of Wuhan in resolving COVID-19 and turning it into a new tourist destination as a reflection of policy adoption in other countries. In chapter 7, the main point of the existence of the media is to spread educative messages to the public so as to foster a change in attitudes individually and socially. The global crisis due to the pandemic has become a reality, and the implications of the anxiety change the perspective of the entire global population toward economic and politic. The construction of capitalism, which made up of computers and driven by a handful of elites, has begun to shift towards what the author calls global solidarity.

Chapter 8 illustrates the importance of dealing with legitimate controls and predictive policies that are unpredictable in democratic societies. Totalitarian forms such as the lockdown policy carried out in Italy are evidence of the silence of people's aspirations. The author cites Agamben's statement explaining that social control, which is then answered by an overreaction to the virus, gives rise to statements of racism, as Trump calls COVID-19 "the Chinese virus". Chapter 9 explains that Agamben's view indirectly causes friction in social relations, work, friendship, religion and politics. The author closes with the operationalization of the ideology needed to answer the big questions of the medical crisis, the economic impact, and the crisis of political psychology.

Given the Author is a Marxist, the psychoanalytic thinking in this work is closely related to the conception that Lacan developed in the 1930s, namely

the imaginary, symbolic and real phases. These three phases constitute the human life cycle which first question identity. The first stage is the imaginary stage, which refers to how humans recognize themselves through mirrors. In this stage, a person does not know the right language. In line with Lacan's conception, Žižek identifies the world we live in today as a boat, and the pandemic as a reflection of everything that capitalism has done to nature. Massive deforestation that occurs around the world causes inequality of ownership and eliminates the metamorphosis channels of other creatures that give rise to new species such as viruses. From Lacan's perspective, during a pandemic, everyone is like a baby who finds self-fragmentation in the trap of it. At this point, everyone is alienated from themselves and succumbs to an exteriority that language has not yet been able to construct. All aspects of life cannot be coordinated integrally in one control scheme so each country uses a different strategy in dealing with the pandemic. It is this stage that for Žižek gives rise to the functionality he uses to symbolize the pandemic as a mirror and the ideal human self is in the exterior of the same boat. In chapter 2 Žižek clearly reveals this imaginary through his views on policy. Trump is not using China as a mirror that has successfully implemented policies to deal with the pandemic effectively.

At the symbolic level, Lacan explains that the human will is an element of the will of others mediated by language. As the thinkers cited by Žižek argue, humans are empty containers exposed to language and culture. The terms that echoed after COVID-19 was declared a pandemic were social distancing, physical distancing, and similar terms which were descriptions of the rules for dealing with a pandemic. Feelings of affection for fellow human beings are expressed by physical distance, wearing masks and using hand sanitizer.

At this symbolic level, in the Lacan language this is called *Le Grand Autre* (another big one) as a symbol of the rules that support excessive freedom. Policy tools must be adhered to as a method of minimizing the possibility of being exposed to virus transmission. The will of human mobility is limited in such a way. *Le Grand Autre* in Žižek's view is capitalism, the state, and the legal instruments that are set in motion to deal with the pandemic. *Le Grand Autre* according to Žižek and Lacan, collapsed in a crisis situation due to the ineffectiveness of the symbolic role. Žižek predicts that the lack of symbolic effectiveness during the pandemic will bring out issues of racism. We may remember how this prediction came true in the case of George Floyd. It triggers massive race-based demonstrations in the United States. In that spent of time, the public showed the face of barbarism, ignoring symbolic orders, anger without leaders, without rules for distancing. This non-

symbolic situation is a manifestation of the distinction between individuals who follow social rules or realities before the ideology is reformulated.

Furthermore, Lacan believes that anxiety is a reduction of past forgetfulness which is the object of longing. Anxiety in this view divides the subject into objects that cannot be grasped. This means that humans are always in need, while they will always demand the fulfilment of that will. At the community level, for example, this is manifested through panic buying and the circulation of hoax news as a scientific weakness. Žižek uses Lacan's symbolic order to formulate the notion of the importance of global solidarity. A longing fantasy that cannot be expressed by humans in the midst of a pandemic situation. So, Žižek concludes that the pandemic is the end of capitalism as well as the beginning of neo-communism.

The Covid-19 pandemic is actually happening. Our exploitative treatment of nature, an all-technological lifestyle, and uncontrolled development gave birth to epidemics before Covid-19. Žižek reminded us that this phenomenon should be a reflection; the uncontrolled expansion of capital reaching the forests resulted in epidemics as a necessity. Žižek departed from the current epidemic prevention measures as a signal that neoliberalism and capitalism-style lifestyles must stop. The greedy capitalism system turns around to undermine the function of the symbolic order. In other words, desire and symbolic order lead to the dialectical process of the subject which is divided in the private and public spheres.

There are three ironic aspects to this work. *First*, Žižek believes in neo-communism automation as an alternative to replace neoliberalism and capitalism. It always contributes to hegemony and adaptation, as Žižek views in his book with Laclau and Butler entitled *Contingency, hegemony, universality: Contemporary dialogues on the left*. *Second*, the affirmation of the symbolic order with all the devices of abstract authority such as religion, law, and government policies in this work seems contradictory. In his previous work, Žižek viewed the symbolic order as a support for the capitalist system. *Third*, both Žižek and Lacan tend to articulate reality as a subject externality that is dynamic and out of control of the subject. Meanwhile, we see that the hegemony of capitalism as Le Grand Autre also manifests itself in the form of renewal that cannot be touched by language.

The advantage of this book is that it predicts global geopolitics that is highlighted through a multilayer lens, starting from the basis of communication, basis of social, basis of economic, and last is basic of political. This book, therefore, should not be underestimated as a political theory book in general. Because of its richness with this wealth, this book is

highly recommended for interdisciplinary observers such as international relations studies, political anthropology, political communication, sociology, and other social and political science disciplines.

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