

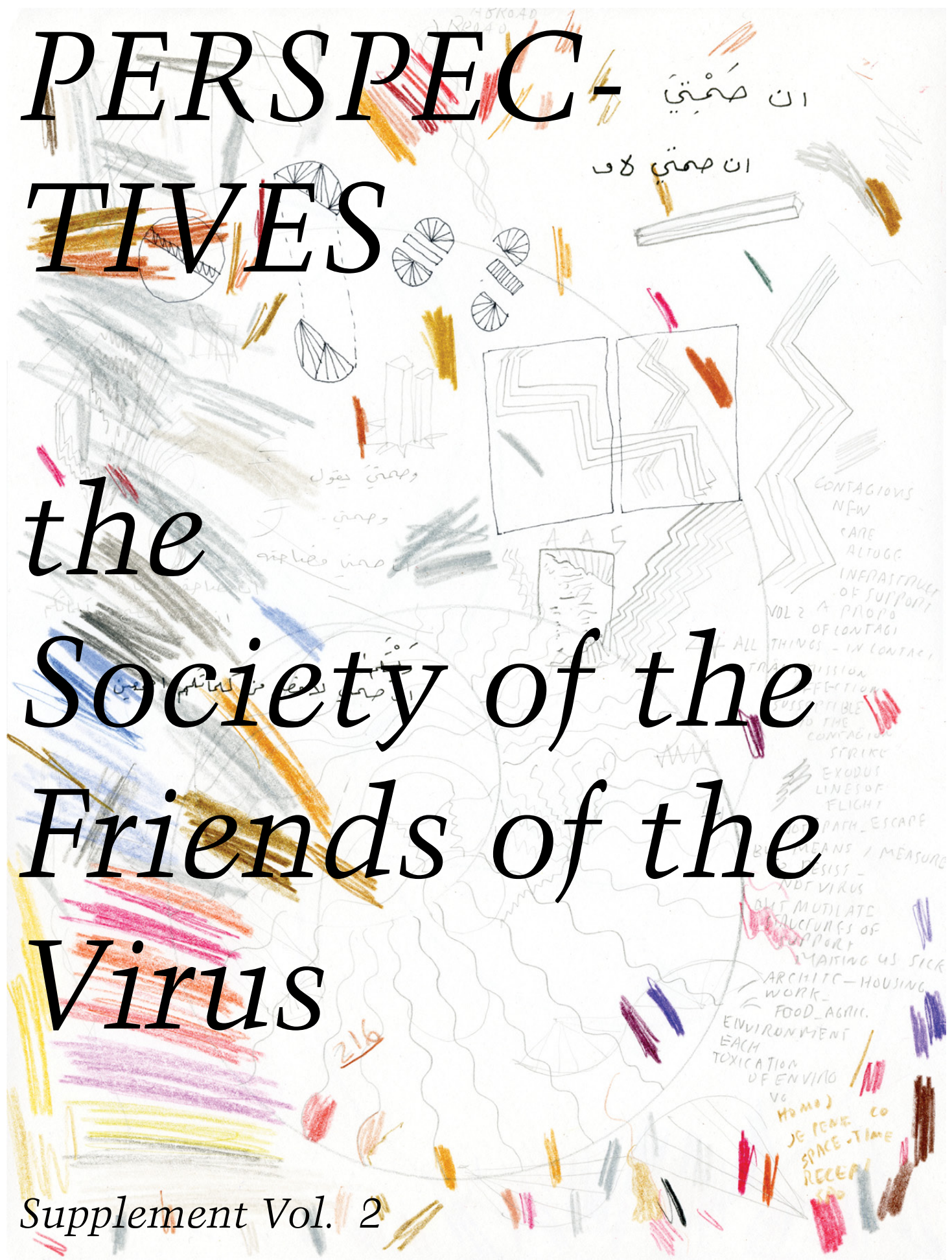
PERSPECTIVES

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the Society of the Friends of the Virus

Supplement Vol. 2



CONTAGIOUS
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INFRASTRUCTURE
OF SUPPORT
VOL 2 A PROPS
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TRANSMISSION
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Discovering we were not alone

Since the beginning of the quarantine, some of us — mostly urban citizens— are discovering that we were not alone, that the world was not made only of humans: not a day goes by for me without receiving a recording of birdsong or testimonies of the joy of their presence. One wonders how it is that we hear them now.

First, one may suggest that we would be less busy, and less busy with what we call habits. Then, some also evoke the fact that confinement would make us experience our lives and those of the birds in contrast: they are free to fly wherever they want. Finally, many of us notice that the silence that now reigns makes birds finally heard.

But it seems to me that all of these reasons should instead be considered from a bird's perspective. Because there is no doubt that the birds have a point of view on the pandemic. The anthropologist Frédéric Keck already suggested it in the case of avian flu, noting that microbiologist and ornithologists had been all the more forced to take "the point of view of the birds on the future" that these constituted precisely a threat and that they played the role of sentries.

Certainly, they are not a threat today. But in the context of the current pandemic, there are other reasons why we should jointly question the bird's perspective and ours on it - to see, perhaps, where our so different points of view converge. Perhaps we can hear them better because we are all, birds and humans, in fact "liberated": we, humans, from the shackles of habits that made us act as silly automata with what surrounds us and, them, the birds, freed from the anthropo-cacophony we hitherto imposed on them; they actually probably have a lot of fun - themselves, no doubt, get along better as they can hear each other far better.

Considering the feeling that they would now be "freer" than we are, I wouldn't go too fast to say it. Many of them are now busy with territorial concerns— serious forms of attachments, territories being "homes" from which one cannot easily move away. And from these territories, precisely, the birds are kept busy, occupying the place, singing, calling, dialoguing, challenging each other, creating links between neighbors, existing, manifesting their presence.

So, from all these balconies from which people sing, everywhere in Italy, in Spain in France and elsewhere, I listen and I discover, with an emotion that I know many share with me, the becoming bird of humans who experience the tremendous power of the sung territories.

COMMUNOVIRUS

An Indian friend tells me that at his place people talk about the comunovirus. How come no one thought of it before? It's obvious! And what an admirable and utter ambivalence: the virus that comes from communism, this virus that communises us. Here is something much more fecund than the ridiculous "corona" (crown) which evokes old royal or imperial histories. For that matter, one should dethrone, if not behead the corona if one wants to use the comuno.

This is what seems to be happening, according to its initial sense, since it in effect comes from the biggest country in the world whose regime is officially communist. And it is not so only in the official title: as president Xi Jinping declared, the management of the viral epidemic demonstrates the superiority of the "social system with Chinese characteristics". Indeed, if communism consists essentially in the abolition of private property, Chinese communism consists - and for a dozens of years now - in a meticulous combination of collective property (or State property) and of individual property (which, however, excludes land property). This combination has allowed, as everyone knows, a remarkable growth of economic and technic capabilities of China, as well as its role in the world.

It is still too early to know how to designate the society produced by such a combination: in what sense is it communist and in what sense did it introduce into itself the virus of the individual competition, if not of its ultra-liberal escalation? For now, the virus covid-19 has allowed it to demonstrate the efficiency of the collective and of the state aspect of the system. This efficiency is claimed so loud and clear that China comes to the aid of Italy and France.

Of course, one also does not miss any opportunity of holding forth on the new lease of authoritative power that the Chinese State is enjoying at the moment. Indeed, everything happens as if the virus came at just the right moment to reinforce official communism. What is troublesome is that the content of the word "communism" keeps getting more and more vague - even though it was already uncertain.

Marx wrote in a very precise manner that with private property, collective property should disappear and should be replaced by what he calls "individual property". By that he did not mean the goods owned by the individual (in other words private property) but the possibility for the individual to become properly himself. One could say: to realise oneself. Marx had neither the time nor the means to go further with this thought. At least we can recognize that it alone opens a compelling perspective - even though a very indeterminate one - to a "communist" theory. "To realise oneself" is not to acquire material or symbolic goods: it means becoming real, effective, it means existing in a unique way.

It is therefore the second meaning of comunovirus that should hold us. De facto, the virus communises us. It sets us all on an equal footing (to put it quickly) and gathers us in the need to make a stand together. That this has to happen through the isolation each of us is only a paradoxical way of giving us to experience our community. One can only be unique among all. It is this that makes our most intimate community: the shared sense of our uniqueness.

Today, in every way, co-belonging, interdependence and solidarity recall themselves to us. Testimonies and initiatives in this direction arise from every place. Adding to this the reduction of atmospheric pollution due to the decrease of transportation and industries, we even have the anticipatory rapture of those who believe that the overthrow of technocapitalism is already here. Let's not sulk over some fragile euphoria - but let's ask ourselves how much deeper we fathom the essence of our community.

One calls upon solidarities, one stimulates more than one, but overall it is the awaiting of the state providence - the very one that M. Macron took the opportunity to celebrate - that dominates the media scene. Instead of confining ourselves we first feel confined by force, though it were providential. We feel isolation as a privation when it is only a protection.

In a sense, this is an excellent refresher course: it is true that we are not solitary animals. It is true that we need to meet each other, to share a drink, to drop in. Besides, the sudden increase of phone calls, emails and other social media evinces some pressing needs, a fear of losing touch.

Are we, for all that, better at thinking this community? There is a danger that the main representative left is the virus. There is a danger that between the surveillance model or the providential one, we are left to the virus as our only common good.

Therefore, we will not progress in understanding that which could be the surpassing of properties, as well collective as private. That is to say the surpassing of property in general or of anything that refers to the possessing of an object by a subject. The very nature of the "individual" as Marx would say, is to be incomparable, immeasurable and unassimilable, even for itself. It is not about owning "goods". It is to be a possibility of unique and exclusive realisation, whose exclusive uniqueness can only be assessed, by definition, among everyone and with everyone — against or despite everyone — but always in relation to and in exchange (communication). It has to do with a "value" that is neither that of general equivalence (money) nor that of an extorted "surplus" but a value that is on no basis measurable.

Are we capable of thinking in such a difficult - even dizzying - way? It is good that the communovirus forces us to question ourselves thus. Because it is only on this condition that it is worth, ultimately, that we strive to eradicate it. If not, then we will find ourselves back in the same place. We will be relieved, but we can prepare ourselves for other pandemics.

Now we have sickness in common.

Now we have enclosure in common.

Now we have exhaustion in common.

Now we have loneliness in common.

Now we have social distancing in common.

Now we have longing in common.

Now we have paralysis in common.

Now we have uncertainty in common.

Now we have empty shops in common.

Now we have poverty in common.

Now we have the madness in common.

Now we have survival in common.

Now we have an inadmissible present in common.

Now we have the police in common.

Now we have our chains in common.

Now we have a struggle in common.

Now we have inequality in common.

Now we have nothing in common.

Hospital for Self Medication

Letter from Vermont

Dear Friends,

Thanks for sending the text, I've been thinking about you these past weeks. Hope you are all well.

We're doing ok, just bought a house in B, and M is about to turn 1! Feels good to be moving into a new home and putting down a root in these uncertain times, I'm excited to plant our garden this spring.

For about 9 months I've been working for a non-profit food hub that distributes local food to schools, hospitals, and coop grocery stores in the region. I manage the warehouse and drive delivery routes. So this week has been especially busy as we help get local food to coops that can't keep up with the "panic buying" demand. The supply chain is being strained, as big distributors like ~~United Natural Foods~~ are sending all their trucks to urban ~~Whole Foods~~ and canceling orders to local coops. In this context our work has become really essential.

At the same time, K is concerned about me driving deliveries and potentially getting sick, since we have to care for M. So it's a bit of a paradox: wanting to do the mutual aid/relief work while also caring for self and family. We're just going to take it one week at a time, as the situation is evolving so rapidly.

Hope you are somewhere safe during this crisis. Looking forward to reading and writing more soon.

Sending love,

-S

the vi-r-us

I can't exactly pinpoint the time it started for the world.

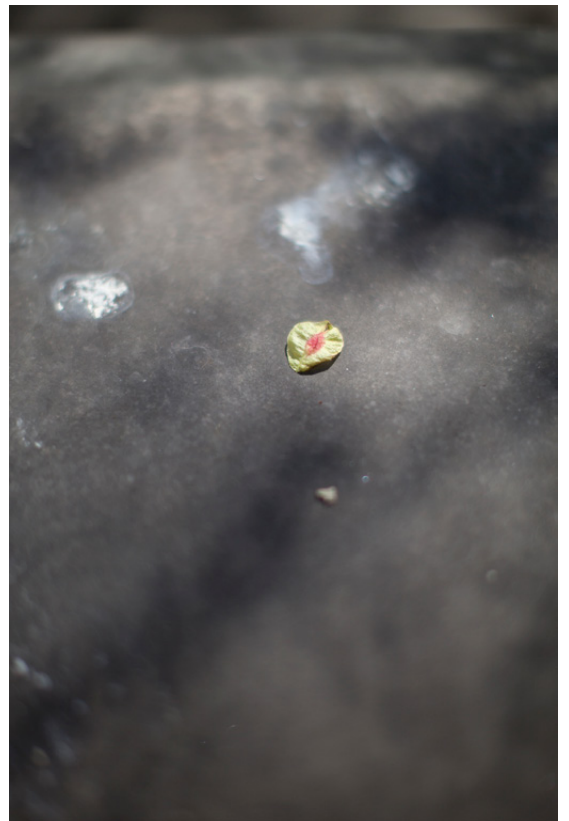
As for us, yes, I think we caught it that year when, after the summer, we started receiving a lot of messages from Felix's school about great innovations in the upcoming course, requirements, online apps, homework, exam preparation, calendars. The school had decided that the first month would be entirely on the Internet, so that children would become familiar with the new software that they were going to use throughout the course. We had been so happy in the summer, Felix had played so much, he had crushed his knees so many times against the ground in the park, he had climbed so many trees and he had bloomed in such a wonderful way in those days without schedules, that now such an avalanche of cyber schooling seemed almost incomprehensible to us. We were stunned. Felix was only seven years old. We decided not to get overwhelmed, to take it easy. During the long summer, we had acquired some happy, although strenuous, habits. The day flowed in a frenzy of games, readings, songs, dances. Felix cultivated inclinations, tastes. Not a day passed without learning a new choreography, he liked to put his hands to the bottom in the mass of different cakes and pastries, he had invented a complex sport that was played with the park swings and a basketball, and that included the declamation of certain dramatic sentences that increased or decreased the luck of the players.

He infected us: we followed him into that flow of improvisations, more or less chaotic, we accompanied him on his drifts, in the absence of school, pretending that we did it for him, but it was also for us. We split the day in two and would take turns to be with him, but in the morning or afternoon that we had "time for ourselves", we would not stop looking at the clock and yawning in front of our screens. In those years, the advantages of the transition to "teleworking" had been aggressively sold everywhere, and we were part of it. Soon we began to ignore both the apps of the school and those of our work, with the pretext of having connection problems and long ill-cured flus, while we gave ourselves to learning the nonexistent language that Felix had invented, to telling stories, to thinking how we were going to live when we were fired from our jobs, to inviting friends to long dinners, and to figuring out how to fix our own plumbing.

It was a bright autumn. We were accumulating unread messages in our inboxes. After three weeks, they all arrived already written in capital letters and spoke of urgency and "LAST CHANCE". One day we started to open the ones from the school and we discovered that the deadline had passed for Felix to earn an acceptable score in reading, writing, mathematics and social sciences. Without that minimum number of points accumulated, which he should have achieved with his online assignments, Felix was not allowed to attend face-to-face classes.

But by then, yes, I remember, by then Félix had already become very close friends with Alicia and Pedro, a couple of kids who often went to the same little park as us, a rather abandoned place that people used to take their dogs to relieve themselves. And we had already started to make friends with Alicia's mom and Pedro's dad. They were in the same situation, they had not done the required online homework with their kids and now they were not going to take them to school. We shared something else: we had been spending a lot of time with our children lately, and we had hardly worked at all. In other words, we had hardly sent any Content to our companies, we had not organized any Event, nor had we put our bodies in the Logistic input-output chain, and therefore we had received almost no points. Both children and adults, we were running out of points.

Luckily, Carmen, Alicia's mother, had many friends who had been living like this for some time, with almost no points, and she helped us with lots of tips and tricks. One of the most important, and that we later learned that many people had been using for a long time, was to go to the weekly farmer's markets where you could get vegetables



and fruits without points, in exchange for hours of work in the farms. To keep things simple, we used to leave the city with the farmers themselves, in their vans, when the market finished. We stayed for a few hours to work and then came back hitchhiking.

But messages kept coming. Debt claims, eviction notices, threats of dismissal. The surprising thing was that, always advised by Carmen, who told us that there was nothing to fear, we ignored them and later saw that the threats were not carried out. On the contrary, a few months later, the messages began to be in fact much less aggressive, referring to “the unexpected and difficult situation we are experiencing globally”, they spoke of “the harsh period of uncertainty we are going through”, and declared themselves flexible in the face of “the global drop in productivity”, offering us postponements, and even cancellations of debts and rents. It was then that we realized: what we were doing, leaving school, stopping work, not using points to live, millions of people around the world were doing it too, all at the same time. And we learned from our friends that this fever, this desire to change our lives that had come upon us, this whatever, was called “the virus” throughout the world.

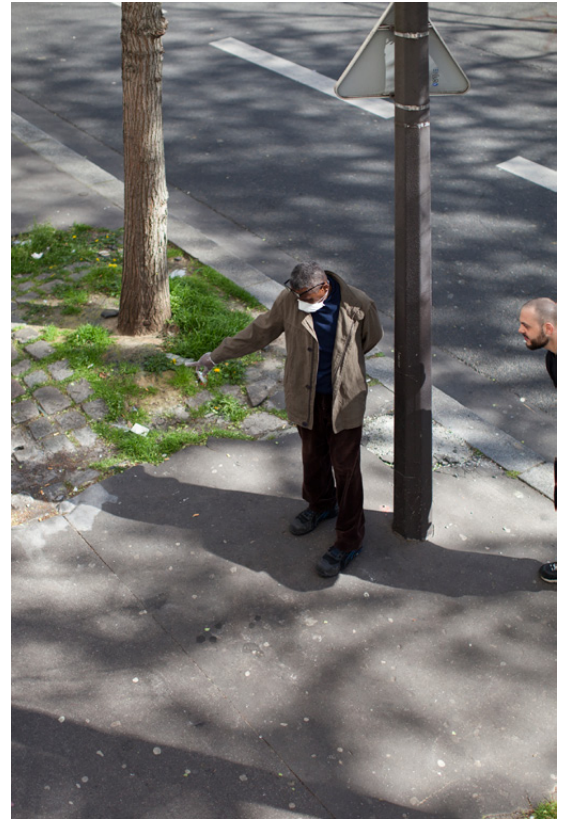
Because of our little trips to farms near the city we ended up becoming good friends with a group of people who had left their jobs on a large soy plantation and had settled in the abandoned fields of an old hippie, son of a wealthy family, who let them grow vegetables in them. He had also allowed them to transform some barns into houses. There was plenty of room, and we often stayed with them for a few days. Felix had his friends there too, we really liked going. But we also liked going back, to dinners in our apartment, to our filthy little park. We ate better than ever, we did a lot of exercise in the farm and playing tag with the children. Our immune system had never been more robust.

Every time we returned to the city it was more noticeable that many more people had been infected with “the virus”: we saw half-built skyscrapers, closed shops, museums, theaters, schools were closing. Airports, the stock market, governments. My memories of all this are a bit fuzzy, I confuse different moments. There were bad, hard years. Hunger, wars. Still, for some was easier than for some other, we got news of friends around the world being persecuted, accused of all kinds of false charges, imprisoned, their crops burnt. Communications were failing, but I remember the images of all major cities deserted, the swans splashing again through the now crystal-clear waters of the canals of Venice. Desperate, bankers began to transfer points to all citizens to stimulate consumption and thus “the economy.” But it was too late already. Most of us didn’t know what to do with the points anymore, we didn’t need them.

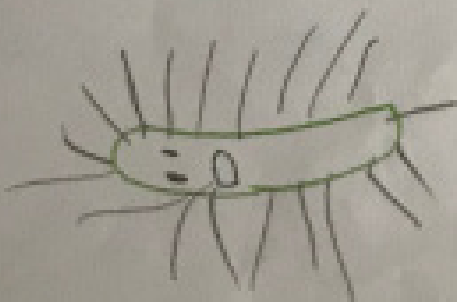
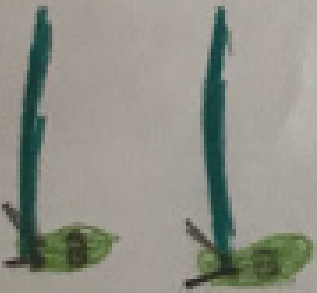
By the way, speaking of animals: a few days ago, the other afternoon, I went out for a walk in the fields with Felix, and we saw with the binoculars a very strange one: a pangolin. Yes, pangolins are those mammals with scales, the ones that when they are scared they turn into a ball like woodlouse. Felix is already eighteen years old, and has become fond of going for walks with his binoculars. He tells me that the forest behind the farm has grown several kilometers in recent years, since the soybean farm that separated us from it was abandoned, and that it is now full of interesting species. We don’t get too close, anyway. When the exploitation of soybeans began to cut trees, in the old days, before “the virus” began, the animals in the forest suffered a lot of stress. “Some misfortune could even have happened”, Felix told me, “not just for them, but even for humans”.

“Yes, it could even have happened”, Felix told me, “that a bat or a pangolin like the one we saw the other day would have run away from the forest, scared by the destruction of its habitat, and would have ended up bringing some disease or something to people”.

But “the virus” came, and everything changed.



My diary and
adventurs



Day March 16,2020

Hi jay, 'It's me your friend M. Tody there is NO school til the last day of SUMMUR because there's a virus cald the CORONA VIRUS.

I'm having so much fun reading plants vs. zombies Timepocalypse.

March 17,2020

Dear jay, today my mom and I are going to make CHOCOLAIT COOKIES!

I saw a friend from my school in the street, but her mom say we culd not meet again because she was taching my face. She also was saying that thei dog is very happy now because they give him a lot of ATTENSIUN and many WALKS.

3/18/2o

If you don't want to get sik Jay drink ginger water with tulsI every morning. I have lots of jars with magic plants and things for you.

Cats can also do magic if they put their legs on your leg, or arm, or your belly when it hearts. I don't have a cat but I also don't have a belly ache.

Yikes!! I heard we have a FOREST inside our bellys. I don't like to think inside my body because I hate blood but I can send magic to my forrest with my magic powers.

TODY'S DATE: March, 19th 2020

DEar Jay,

When wE went to school every morning the subway was too much full of people and they looked like they were mad. My mom had to fought them sometimes because they tried to smushed me to get into the train.

Maybe now they can't go nowhere. they are more happy? I wonder I'm HAPPY.

My parents are home and we do all things we want to do or nothing

My mom used to rush all the time, and once she fell on the street, now she don't run

There is a pig dog dog pig in plants vs zombies and its name is TWISTER. She is a rare Guatemalan pig dog dog pig and instead of shooting she farts at the zombies.

Hi diary,

Today I have painted 2 paintings. One looks like a piece of chesse that is being thrown into a basket.

I send a picture to my grandpa WHO Is also painter

I have a grandpa that we adopted, and he is a painter and lived on a horse bak 4 years and then he was adopted by the native americans and lived with them for 45 YEARS! He wers a cowboy hat and has a cain, and alwys tells me I love you grandson.

Once grandpa gave me a special stone bear made by the native americans to protec me. Now he is there with them. He likes eagles and zedar tree.

He also says always I'm confortable being ancomfortable, that is funny but I have no idea what it means.

I have many granpas and grandmas and many cosins. I want all the old people to CURED for the virus. Family grows everywhere like mushrums.

March, 21 Today

TODay I feel like crying, and I say to my parents that I need to cry, and I cry. I don't know why this happens but I feel very good afterwards.

Sometimes I think I wish I had pet, but then I would be sad to have it in a BOX. Our apartment is like a box. Buildings in the city are full of boxes where people live. That is sad too.

I think animals must be confused because we make them live in different places.

I heard the story of a funny cute animal called pangolin who ate bat poo with something in it which is now making people sick. That's why school is closed and works too.

I think the bat was confused because he can't find anymore his habitat. And the poor pangolin was sold to be eaten.

I like the word PANGOLIN.

21/3/2020

Hi Jay, we have passed more 8 days and nights now without school. The teachers have started today to send us ASSIGNMENTS. I did 2 but I don't feel like doing all.

Today the sky is flat and grey, it's very cold and it's raining almost snowing. Only two days ago it was very sunny and very hot like in summer. I heard birds singing, maybe they are freezing today? This is a Spring.

In New York we are lucky because there is a lot of sun. Only some days there is no sun. I can see that the sky moves fast. In my school assignments I have to write everyday what I have for breakfast and how is the weather like. That's why I know.

DAY March 22,

Hi Jay, it's me your friend M. My mom says that the supermarket shelves are almost empty. I'm happy because it was boring to go to the supermarket, because it took long time because there were so many things to choose like a million cheses, or 200 million cans, I was dizzy and bored and I was always asking for GUMYS, squeeze, dried mango, candy, whatever I saw. It is like in the Lego store, some one million of thousand hundreds of pesos, and I wanted everything and at the same time I don't know what. I was crying.

When babies are born they don't ask for anything, well they need only one milk, and love and we love them, but then they start to speak and then they always want things. Why do we always want more and more things like toys?

I see my friend E on the cell screen and we talk everyday. I hide under the blankets and we watch videos together sneaking from my mother JA JA

TODAY IS March 24, 2020

I'm learning cooking many things.

I want to plant MUNG beans in the fire stairs because they are the queen of beans, and they make us very strong.

I wonder if people are cooking a lot now that all restaurants are closed.

I wonder

I liked to go to school because I see my friends, but we always have to do something now this now that every time a different thing they call it THE SCHEDULE.

They told me in school that going to school is my job, but I'm a kid and I don't want to work like adults to be upset in the subway. I like learning I like playing.

I am very happy that I don't have to do home school now!! Instead I can learn dance moves with videos or do other things. I like dancing gost BUSTERS

TODYS' DATE:

I don't know what day it is. What is Monday, what is Wednesday, what is Saturday?

I think that it is BORING.

Why people looks diferent the days that we go to school than the days there is no school?

I think that's strange.

ZOMBOSS: is the leader of the zombies he always creats inventions but the plants always wins because sometimes his inventions go wrong, well they don't go wrong but the plants destroy them

His favorite snaks are called popsmarts and they are the brain flavord treats. Caus ZOMBIES EAT BRAINS!

agggg

In timepocalipsys he creates a son vakium that absorvs the sun rays so plants could run out of power and his zombies could rowl the world

DEAR FRIEND Jay,

Now is spring and the sun is shinning. We can plant in the roofs or in the bildngs bakyards, and we exchange with other neighbors things. Like one says I have tomatos, and berrys, and beans, ok, I made these ten breads, and many cookies, ok and I have this or that potato, and carrots, or I can sing a song for you. But I'm worried with squirrels they will aet everythng. But no problem, maybe we can cover the plants or make like a trasparent room for them and they can see the sun.

The buildings are way too taller and taller and they will need really huge gardens. Like giant gardens. What to do? For starters, we could get rid of the big bildngs, tear down them to make them as hig as this house and then on the roof, we would need all our friends to help us make a garden on the roof

Also too much told bildngs give too much shadow and darkness to the city, this is a problem for growing food in the gardens.

Now is good because nobody in the world can work and do so many things so they are not making more tall buildings or anything. The planet EARTH must be also happy for not working, not doing anything, maybe she is taking a brek, she must be very tired like adults of doing so many things.

If you are so tired you can get sad and upset and sik, and then you cry. That hapened to me sometimes at the end of the day when I go to school and afterschool and then homwerk and then too much tv.

ANOTHER day

Hi Jay, thank you for making me write and tell you all my ADVENTURS.

Today I am a jaguar because I wear a jaguar tshirt that I got from mexico. I am not scared. They say is a magical animal. And today my mom became a mountain and my dad grass. I can climb them and rol on them or nothing and just be a jaguar.

And tomorrow I will know tomorrow.

-M & B & L

A LETTER TO FRIENDS OF THE DESERT



My dear friends,

There are few things in life more comforting at a time like this than writing letters to your dearest friends. I hope this one finds you as healthy and beautiful as I carry you within me. Some of us are living with great suffering these days, but friendship - that is, being as close as possible to one another - makes it possible for us to share and therefore diminish this suffering if we wish. This is simply because, by virtue of friendship, we are effortlessly led to live with each others' lives. In this cloister which has taken us in, we must remain open as never before to the wind of friendship which, as we know, is capable of blowing beyond any distance.

As you may have noticed, we have found ourselves, for a few days or weeks depending on our respective countries, reduced to a quarantine in a time which, in a disturbing coincidence, is also that of Lent, a time traditionally devoted to introspection, to renunciation, and perhaps in the end to reconciliation. As anyone who knows me well can attest, I have always thought that there is no such thing as "chance", and that "chance" was only a way of speaking to reassure ourselves, a superstition with which we force ourselves to believe that what happens, and the way it happens, has no meaning for us. So I thought this coincidence to be part of the signs of the times that we are called to interpret.

In the Gospels it is told that during this time Jesus was "driven" by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, and that there, in this period of asceticism, he suffered the temptations of the devil.

This is a topos that can be found in several stories of the Old Testament, beginning of course with the adventurous journey of the Jewish people to flee persecution. Different stories, but all signs that the desert is a "trial" [prova]. Of course, the life of each of us has passed through desert periods. It does not always go well, and we bear the scars. At least, that has been my experience. But those times when we did come out of it stronger are the ones that, when you think about it, allow us to still be alive. The exceptional thing is that sometimes, as today, the test is at once individual and collective, to the point of involving entire peoples, if not all of humanity.

We who have always scrutinized the inexorable flow of history, looking for the signs of the event that would interrupt it, therefore cannot stand still in the face of what is happening. An extraordinary event, which makes us realize that we don't have enough words to describe it. The desert is also the absence of words, speeches, repetitive and pleasant sounds. Moreover, in Hebrew, the term used for "word", *dabar*, and that for "desert", *midbar*, have the same root: from this, we can assume that it is precisely because the desert is a place deprived of words that it is most conducive to the revelation of the Word as an event. The first thing to do, then, is to listen, to tidy up inside oneself enough to be able to welcome the event. But to listen to what, exactly? In an interview with a nun I recently read, she says that obedience is to be understood in its etymological sense, as *ob-audire*, "to listen before, in front of". "Listening to reality" is the true meaning of obedience, she concluded in her cloister. I believe it is an exercise of this kind that the period calls for.

In the desert there are no streets, no paths that have already been traced out and need only to be followed. It is the task of those who cross it to orient themselves and find their own way out. There are no shops, there are no sources of water, there are no plants. Everything appears motionless because in the desert there is no production. There are no bars, and there are no social centers. There is nothing that we would imagine there to be in a place considered "livable". We can say in the end that there is nothing human, and that is

why in the book of Deuteronomy it is said that in the desert there is a screaming loneliness. I know very well that a great part of this time we are living through seems to be made essentially of this screaming and dehumanization, and I understand the distrust and horror in which we are sometimes captured and led to despair. The vulgarity of so much of the “music” that falls in the early evening from Italy’s balconies these days does not manage to cover this scream - the scream covers everything. In fact, after the euphoria of the first days, this ritual is already disappearing: many understand that it doesn’t quite sound right. Changing the scream into a song depends on our sensitivity, our tuning to the event. No, we must not twist in despair or freeze in denial. There are many ways of despairing and denying, and often, in the turmoil of which they are made and which they convey, they seem to be opposites. Let’s not be fooled. Let us truly listen to the song of reality.

One must think of how, in those old books, it is said that the Garden of Eden was the first victory over the desert chaos. That it was in fact planted in the center of where there was nothing, neither bushes nor grass, neither river nor anything else. It has indeed remained unforgettable, that garden, as a promise of the happiness to which we aspire: a place of abundance where there is neither work nor exploitation, where everything is in balance with everything. In their best moments, people thought this to be the only existence worth living. Victory in and over the desert means nothing more than access to the possibility of a life that is more true, rich, happy, and therefore more free.

In this precise moment, each one of us lives their own trial [prova], and it is not easy to distinguish between the one endured by the body and the one endured by the spirit, as we usually tend to do. Perhaps this is the occasion, not another tomorrow or who knows when, to reunite what we are usually inclined to consider divided. You know it better than I: our civilization has been, from top to bottom, the civilization of division. Let us not allow it today to deepen this schism again and again.

The desert is the place of the krisis, in the original meaning of this ancient Greek word that continues to haunt us: choice and decision. Don’t you think, then, my friends, that today we are all “driven” to exactly that place? Has not the imperative moment of decision come for all of us?

Don’t you think that it is a decision that we should make together, beginning from ourselves, rather than each one for themselves without taking into account the others?

The desert I speak of is the place of trial not because it is an empty space, but because it is devoid of all those things that artificially decorate existences, everything that facilitates and flatters them. That is, it is devoid of the distractions that prevent each of us, every day, from contemplating our own lives with clarity. The desert is therefore the place that allows one to meditate concretely on one’s own life in the world, starting from a place outside the world, in the truest sense. Free of the superfluous, of all that we believed was necessary but we now know is not, because it never was. Conversely, the desert makes us feel the desire for everything that is truly missing from our lives. Along the path that we painfully struggle to open up within it, we then experience the absence of community, of justice, of gratuity, and of true health. Of course, we will also feel the absence of that person we have excluded from our intimacy without fully understanding why, or of the person who has excluded us but nevertheless, mysteriously, we continue to love. A thirst for love? It must be said, yes, in every possible sense. One of you, a long time ago, told me that it was not possible and didn’t make sense to do anything together if we didn’t at least want to do each other some good. Not the abstract good of ideology, but the bodily or spiritual good that one feels in contact. Of course, it has not always been easy to understand what this good consists of, and often instead of good, we have done harm to ourselves. In fact, the few beings that permanently inhabit the desert are always dangerous: hyenas

and demons. They say of Jesus, however, that at the end of his trial, even the beasts stood by him like lambs (Eden!). I have the impression, the certainty, that the moment we touch this reality and obey it, we will indeed “be everything”.

That is why the desert is the place where, through trials and meditation, the strong spirit of a new beginning is forged in a lasting manner. Today, we have the possibility of not repeating a ritual as if it were an ultimately insignificant parenthesis for us and for the world - of tired and useless rituals, let me tell you, we are great experts - but of definitively tearing the veil of History that holds us captive to an evil dream. To go beyond, as an old sage has often told us. At this moment, this means going far beyond the pandemic. It means going on, all together, to another plane of existence.

Tempered by the desert, with the spiritual strength acquired through hardship and the victorious battle with demons, we will be able to return to the world accompanied by a power that is not of this world. A power that now knows, as Jesus told the demon who first tempted him, that one does not live on bread alone, but with and through the Word, which is more material than matter. Christ is subjected to everyday temptations—possession, power, manipulation—matter which is less than matter. The same temptations we have always struggled against — that’s the reason we became friends, remember?

It is this Word which works on us these days, each in their place, each in their cloister, each in their desert, each with a different struggle [fatica]. Places that may be those of a regained intimacy, but which, taken all together, create a single enormous desert that is like a gigantic encounter with reality. Because the desert I am talking about is not the empty streets of the metropolis, which are sad and empty even when they are full and everything flows quickly and makes us sick, but the wild space that exposes us to the Word and within which we fight one by one against temptations. I myself am familiar with many of the temptations I imagine you are fighting these days, for they have also been mine in the past, and partly still are. You know what I mean. One of Jesus’ decisive teachings in the desert, however, maintains that you are not to engage in dialogue with the devil, never, because once you have agreed to do so, no matter how clever you think you are, you remain his prisoner: his speech, his rhetoric, his art of seduction are only so many barriers that close in upon you. How many times have we watched those barriers drive old friends away from us forever?

Day after day, our dwellings are transformed into fragments of a desert wasteland, with its wild animals, its deep, incomparably habitable silence, and its presences, which usually we do not perceive, too overwhelmed by a myriad of other, largely useless things. The challenge is to recognize the right presence, the good one, the one that heals, and to chase away the bad one, the one that makes you sick, that lies to make you lie, that makes you kneel before it in exchange for more power, more things, more worldliness, more recognition, more, more, more... The desert shows us the possible and the impossible.

In fact, the desert was the place reached by the first monachoi, the “solitaries”, those who left an unjust, decadent empire. First they left in small numbers, then month after month, year after year, they became hundreds and thousands and thus began to live together, group by group, in cenobia, a word that means nothing other than what we too have always sought: a place of life in common. Even then, as now, the desert was therefore a test that affected both individuals and the community. Communities formed around the cenobies, and finally cities, which received their spiritual strength from the cenobies. From these solitary people who managed to see, from their retreat into the desert, from this community where everything was in common, a new civilization was born. The civilization that later got lost in the centuries because it lost contact with its truth and, with the passage of time, knelt ever more before the demons of capitalism, the same civilization which is now flickering out. The problem is that it wants to take us with it, to its hell.



This civilization does not end because of the coronavirus. I think it is clear to everyone that it is only an epiphenomenon. This civilization ends because of its arrogance, its insatiable greed, its injustice, because of its having turned the world into a gigantic morbid factory. What else but a demon of total destruction could have been born from a civilization that erected money as the absolute idol, and power as the ultimate end of all things and all existence?

Once we are out of the “emergency” and out of our desert, for we must always consider dwelling within it as only transitory, we must not allow it to be only a parenthesis, full of suffering and death or even of discoveries and memorable moments, to be followed by a return to the normality of before. For it is precisely this normality that has brought us to the point where we are and which can no longer continue except by deepening the destruction. This normality also includes the normality of our earlier way of life, or rather, our ways of surviving and deluding ourselves. I see that many of us are desperately seeking to reaffirm our own normality. This is not good. In all friendship: it is not worth it.

But we must also pay attention to the normality afterwards, which will be presented to us as the new necessity, made up of prohibitions, lack of freedom and renewed selfishness, all for our own good. Or what improvised prophets will proclaim to be the fabric of the new world, identical to the one before but with different rulers.

We must instead repeat the gesture of separation of the first monachoi: to secede from the decadent civilization of destruction, to build our cenobies, our communes. I have been thinking a lot lately about why we haven't done it yet, why we haven't been able to do it, what has prevented us from trying again, and I haven't been able to give myself any satisfactory answers. Some of you will probably be able to suggest one. I may be starting to glimpse a few that I've yet to consider. In any case, I believe this time, in which we have been “pushed” by the Spirit, deserves a true answer. From us. One that could come from the silence we inhabit, the solitude we aim at, the evil we struggle against. What will we do, what will we see, when we leave the desert?

Once out of the desert, the Nazarene announced that the Kingdom was near. I have always interpreted this nearness not in the temporal sense of a not-too-distant future, which no one has ever been able to calculate, but as something we have, or something that is next to us, as is said of a neighbor. Regarding this closeness, I believe we don't need many more words to understand each other.

I send you my love, and I hope to hear from you soon,

Yours,

- MT

The PROBLEM is GREATER than they THINK

and the DEADLINE is SOONER

and the "Virus" is only one facet of the disaster ...

brought to you by the RELIGION of MONEY
and IDEOLOGY of GREED.

The ALARM is sounding

but the hearing is

IMPAIRED.

POSTSCRIPT

An image has been passed down to us, it is a year before his death, 1826, a 'deaf' Beethoven lies on his sick-bed reading through several of Schubert's first published scores with amazement and rapture. Hardly a soul had heard Schubert's works performed in his lifetime, which was to end abruptly the year following Beethoven's. His sonorities, however, lived long past his 'contemporaries' and their abilities to hear them.

We are no Beethoven nor the Virus a Schubert, but the image remains: deaf we watch/hear the cracks of a new/old epoch burst into the scene, it's not the heavily invested 'anthropocene', though certainly the virus is 'man-made' - that is, a product of the Economy and of the States which cling to and nurture its well-being and its endlessly proliferating 'externalized costs.' But this external is in us now. When death means business, in the 21st century, it literally means business.

But this scene we have now caught a closer glimpse of, is neither the dawn of the cyborg nor the post-human of techno-fetishism. Nor is it, the utopia of a return to a nude and pure life. It is indeed a troubled life we the young (at heart, since by count, and for those who like to keep count, for Capital, we may as well be dead) inherit. The human has always been a metaphor and an image, hosted by and hosting other beings.

Among the ruins and the human-all-too-human deserts, a not so human-human reality confronts us, and though it is tempting to name it the vir-us, that's not it.

It would seem what we are confronted by is an image, fed to us daily as reality, and though we strive to discover or assert what lays behind it, we find ourselves left again with an image inseparable from what we call real, a real and lasting image.

That image is the human one, which has been a skewed and partial one for too many of the societies we have lived in. The troubles seem to have intensified in/when that image made claims of a higher truth, unquestionable, sacred, or later impartial, objective. The latter, making an object of that world and life itself.

It has been told to us that within the Perspectivism and Multinaturalism of the Amerindian and Amazonian tribes of South America, all living things are human, and it is not biology we all have in common, but culture. What differs is thus not a capacity for language, a consciousness, a 'culture' ... nor do other beings lack intentionality or agency, but we differ with our bodies and no less importantly, our uses of the bodies we have been given.

In this regard it would do us well to recall that we know a body by its capacity to affect and be affected. But for the human, especially in what became of 'the West,' increasingly with its colonies, modernities, empires, that capacity to be affected has been seen as vulnerability and that vulnerability as weakness - rather than as an ability and space or zone of contact, *contagione*, of touching and being touched.

The first item of agenda in this new *scene*, will not be the remediation of the disaster by once again placing the anthropos at the center of earth, which awaits its godly works and its dominion and governance over all things. Rather, it will entail a much more difficult process of unworking images, ways of thinking, doing, living, touching, being touched, nothing short of the destitution of the 'anthropos' and the human exceptionalism it has produced. Our common disaster begins as an image, an image of the world, an image of ourselves.

If in the first decades of the last century the revolutionary movements still placing human needs and claims at the center of universality and worldliness, could ask:
What is to be done?

In the first decades of the twenty first century, our revolutionary seems to be a virus, and its question, isn't it evident?

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AND

WHAT IS TO BE UNDONE? AND HOW?

WHAT HOW IS TO BECOME UNDONE?

BECOME

HOW WHAT IS TO BE UNDONE



CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE VOL. 2 SUPPLEMENT:

Si le sirene... anche qui.. un silenzio assordante che viene interrotto da continue sirene.. oggi parlando con G alla fine ci siamo accorti di essere isole, o forse delle poesie, pensavo che la poesia è un'isola come un dialogo è una penisola, e come un romanzo è un oceano o un saggio forse un continente... poi ho pensato a una cosa che ci siamo detti anni e anni fa nell'isola di SPinL, che le isole dialogano nella forma dell'arcipelago, o forse dovrei dire costellazione? E allora un'isola è una stella?

così forse dovremmo tutti raccogliere disegni di isole.. e penso che vorrei tanto vedere le vostre isole

E quelle dei nostri amici

SM
VD
JLN
JJ
SB
BSC
LMC
FVT
M
MT
KOS
AA
BM
RG
GN
LN

AND

THE
SOCIETY
OF
THE
FRIENDS
OF
THE
VIRUS

*IN
THEIR
DISORDER
OF
APPEARANCE*