

Stanimir Panayotov | Intropostface to Lockdown Theory

(2020-09-23)

This issue of *Identities* is a diary. A diary of a plague; a document of fear and paranoia; a testimony to an unfinished time of future barbarism.

Initiated at the very beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and published on our website as a series of op-eds and essays, all forty texts in this issue had their temporal constraint - their very own particular date that contained the corpuscular context of their own writing of the disaster. Thus, each and every one of these texts is an icicle that should be grasped predominantly in the time slot in which it was *not* yet melting.

This is not to say that some, or even all, of these essays, or whatever genre they embody, have no extra-temporal and outer-contextual veracity. It is in their situatedness, in their particular dating that the texts represent a geodesic layering of affects relevant to a deep and varied gamut of the human (or not) condition amid the capitalopanic that this pandemic was, and still is.

There are two inherent responses in all of these responses to the COVID crisis published here: they are all written in isolation, in the so-called "lockdown," and they are all in various forms theories of what is going on beyond that very lockdown. The lockdown was our monad: the theory was our universe. These essays speak spontaneously about what all of us could not quite experience in terms of isolation by rehearsing the inner experiences of the pandemic we all had/have. Thus, they are not theories about theory. The texts gathered here congregate around the great viral outside of the lockdown. But whilst this real experiencing is here documented, it is also decidedly situated as "theory," and not as a philosophy or philosophies of that very experience.

Unlike some vastly boring debates of Italian-French provenance on the preceding relevance of someone's "theory," the lockdown

theories we at *Identities* published were the kind of para-philosophical journalism that the conjecture truly demanded from us, the theorists. We have the odd and unexpected privilege to be the most prepared for humans for this pandemic. We are all trained to live between four walls; spend hours on end on our butts; with very few minor disturbances in our daily routines, the lockdown did not change much for us writers and thinkers. This is why we were able to react by way of theorizing with speed and eloquence and perhaps a certain voluntarist sass to what many experienced as domestic terror. But none of this stoic preparedness predetermined how to theorize the sleazy membrane between virus and lockdown. The texts here, some of which are now reworked by their authors, document in many ways the lapidary modus of theorizing the extra-mural virulence of our worlds with minimal and/or vigilant reference to theoretical idolatry.

Save for several exceptions, most of the writers were invited to respond to the lockdown, and to do so in a non-doctrinal (but not anti-theoretical) way. Particularistic accounts of affects claiming that the survival game here is theoretical, and thus outer-personal, are rather scant. It was and still is vital to account for the numbers and the dates all along, just as it was deadly important, at least in the very outbreak of the pandemic, to monitor, and thus integrate in our daily life, the constant flow of numbers, the death toll, the infographs, the data driven virus that is still unfolding. At the end, the theories of the lockdown here do not so much try to contain the contagion, as they want to co-experience with an anonymous reader the unanimous panic of a world that bombarded us as some sort of networked *horror vacui*.

The Lockdown Theory series served the purpose of locking out the potential of theoreticians' spontaneous relevance to the great outdoors. If our theories of the lockdown were documents, then our documents are in turn situated and rigorously theoretical protocols of, hopefully, an honest disaster management.