

EDITORIAL DISCUSSION*

Marek Krajewski: *Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for accepting our invitation to take part in this discussion about the cultural and social consequences of the pandemic. I would like to begin by introducing the people we have invited to participate in this meeting, which, given the circumstances, is organized online. We have with us Professor Mikołaj Lewicki, from the Institute of Sociology at the University of Warsaw, Professor Rafał Drozdowski, from the Institute of Sociology at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Professor Małgorzata Jacyno, from the Institute of Sociology at the University of Warsaw, Professor Kazimierz W. Frieske, representing the Academy of Special Education in Warsaw, Professor Michał Buchowski, from the Institute of Anthropology and Ethnology at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Justyna Sarnowska, PhD, from the Institute of Social Sciences at SWPS University in Warsaw, and Magdalena Wieczorkowska, PhD, a sociologist from the Medical University of Łódź. Welcome! We also have present members of Culture and Society's editorial board: Professors Andrzej Piotrowski, Piotr T. Kwiatkowski, Katarzyna Kaniowska, Grażyna Kubica-Heller, and Michał Kotnarowski, PhD.*

I would like to begin with my uncertainties—with a very general question: what have we been dealing with since March 4, 2020? On that day, the first diagnosis of COVID-19 in Poland was announced. As you remember, about two weeks later,

* The discussion was organized by the editorial board of *Culture and Society* and took place in October 2020 online with the participation of members of the editorial board and guests.

a state of pandemic was declared in Poland. Schools, universities, and cultural institutions were closed; mass events were cancelled and very many enterprises switched to a remote mode of work. This caused a significant reorganization of the public sphere and of our presence in it, and it also rearranged the daily life of Poles. Social moods related to the pandemic fluctuated considerably—from great anxiety to disregard and non-compliance with the sanitary restrictions. A denialist movement appeared which rejected the idea that we were facing a pandemic at all and contested the restrictions related to it.

At the same time, it is hard not to notice that we are dealing with the emergence of new forms of mobility, of participation in culture, and that the fact of having to wear masks makes everyday interactions very difficult and changes the rules on which these interactions are based. It is probably also impossible to overlook the perturbations affecting the economic and political spheres. According to many people, the situation in which we find ourselves is an unprecedented and reality-changing crisis that will cause us to live in an entirely new world after the pandemic is over. For others, it's a kind of temporary malfunction after which everything will revert to normal. For others still, it is just one of the many processes that are shaping modern life. Therefore—taking all these doubts and contradictory diagnoses into account—I would like to start with a very general question and ask you to try to give a name to what we are going through. Who would like to begin?—Professor Frieske?

Kazimierz W. Frieske: I would like to say—in order to stir up controversy and somewhat in opposition to our chairman—that nothing special is happening actually: nothing that should bother us particularly, even though thirty million people are ill or a million people have died. According to the statistics, which are, of course, dubious—but this is a separate issue, we do not know whether we truly have any proper data—these are losses, but in fact a hundred years ago humanity went through a similar event. I'm thinking of the Spanish flu. With a view to our conversation today, I looked through the classic sociological literature from that period—in my opinion, the pandemic does not appear in it at all. I found nothing: no references in the classic texts of the sociologists, or of the social or cultural anthropologists. Perhaps then, first, there is nothing to be particularly excited about, and second, I think that now we actually have a language in which we can describe what is taking place, the language of, say, late modernism or postmodernism, if you like. It contains a whole array of terms and concepts that describe this postmodernist reality. They are used, in essence, in opposition to the classical language of the social sciences. A simple example: yesterday I heard a discussion about a possible cure for the coronavirus. The question arose if we had the

right number of doses and if this medicine could be used appropriately. In answer, I heard that the state had bought a number of doses. After all, this is a classic biopower issue. This is just one possible example, but there is Bauman's entire concept of liquid reality, a crisis described as an "in-between" period or, in Sapkowski's words, "Something ends and something begins." The trick is to imagine what is beginning. It seems very clear to me that what we are calling a crisis or an event—what we are all observing—in fact only reinforces or emphasizes a crisis that lies much deeper in our societies.

I would like to call this crisis—perhaps in disagreement with many of you—I think it is a crisis which reveals to us the failure of liberalism, and in particular of neoliberalism, understood as the shaping of society according to the rules which apply in a market economy. Here, of course, I would refer to Sandel, that is, that roughly speaking, a market economy is peachy, but a market society is a nightmare. It's an idea that can't be sustained. This neoliberal idea, that you can organize society the way the market is organized, fails utterly when confronted with the epidemic—it can't be patched over any further.

M.K.: Professor, as far as I understand, your thesis is that the event need not have been a pandemic, which is only a sort of adventitious phenomenon in which certain more lasting trends are manifested?

K.F.: Yes, and just to be clear, I'm not implying any sort of conspiracy concept here—I'm not suggesting anything of the sort, God forbid! It's just that this epidemic—pandemic if you prefer—has highlighted, has caused, various imperfections of the liberal social order to become more clearly visible.

M.K.: In your response, there was also the question of whether the situation we are currently participating in is unprecedented, or whether it is just another event of a certain type that occurred in the twentieth century, like the Spanish influenza. Is today's situation really similar to that of the Spanish flu?

K.F.: This is an abject failure. Think of it! If you look at the history of various epidemics, from Marcus Aurelius through the medieval Great Plague and so on, you can see that in fact—contrary to the idea of progress—we haven't been able to come up with anything new. Isolation? All this has been done before and we are only repeating old patterns, just in a slightly more modern setting.

Michał Buchowski: Yes, in population terms, in population-medical terms, indeed, I think it would be fair to say that nothing special happened, because perhaps more people have died from non-COVID diseases during this time, since March or in general since December. However, several situations have arisen in which the pandemic was just a spark. Perhaps this is a consequence of what the professor was talking about, which is that this is yet another manifestation of the crisis of the neoliberal state, of global neoliberalism actually, and of the attempt to organize society according to those principles. It's being compared to the financial crisis of 2008. That was a crisis of a different nature, but it was also one of the symptoms of the crisis we are talking about. In this sense, something has happened. Perhaps there is an element of truth in what the professor said—that we are reacting in the same way as to various epidemics in the past, that is, by isolation, etc.—but the policy of both the Polish state and all others means that a lot has happened: people have been locked up in their homes, the sanitary authorities and the police have been shutting people down or punishing them; there have been demonstrations against this lockdown in Poland as well, in Warsaw. So on the one hand, seemingly nothing has happened, but at the same time a lot has happened.

K.F.: But it's all happened before, Professor.

M.B.: Yes, but, unfortunately, each generation has to experience its own martial law or war. I'm inclined to look for a certain analogy here because I remember martial law—it was also forbidden to go out in the street, at least after ten o'clock; the police would lock people up and there were various restrictions. They've taken a different form now. In a sense, there are also other reasons and perhaps they are milder and theoretically not politically motivated, but it may also be about a show of power, about how much the authorities can get away with—whether people will let themselves be locked up and how they will react. Perhaps this is some natural social state that occurs at different cycles in every society, just as anthropological rites of passage don't happen every day either, but they do happen. I don't want to draw analogies with non-European societies, but this is some sort of exceptional situation. It doesn't happen every day. It's normal; it's recurring, but it's actually a kind of exceptional situation. Maybe it would be easiest to call it a state of emergency or martial law, only the causes are different.

M.K.: *Thus, Professor Buchowski's pronouncement implies that it's a kind of "old novelty," that is, something which has happened before but is experienced by*

a somewhat different generation, in a different context, in a specific way. Professor Frieske suggested that this had to happen and in this sense it is not exceptional. However, Professor Buchowski points out that we are dealing with a certain element of exception.

K.F.: The nice feeling that we live in a relatively stable world—one whose states are somehow predictable—has dissipated. I could go even further and say that it is not as if Beck's prophecy had come true. Beck talked about risk, and we live in a society of uncertainty, that is, we don't even know how to calculate, in any way, the probability of something happening, do we? We are like Pascal's reed, which the wind bends this and that way.

M.K.: *I see that Professor Drozdowski wants to speak.*

Rafał Drozdowski: Let me start by saying that I would try to describe what has happened—or what is happening—as a phenomenon that is paradoxical in the sense that, in fact, it is nothing new in its essence, its genesis, its course, and many of its consequences. In this sense, it is indeed possible to say that we should not be taken aback by the COVID pandemic, since it is not the first great epidemic in the social, political, economic, and medical history of humanity, an epidemic turning into a pandemic. Despite everything, however, this awareness that we are dealing with something that should not surprise us—and here I agree with Professor Frieske—is accompanied by permanent uncertainty. As a matter of fact, to this day we do not have the tools—not even such elementary ones as socially accepted or commonly shared statistical data—that would provide a picture of this phenomenon.

K.F.: And this is yet another failure of the various so-called experts.

R.D.: Exactly, there is no consensus on the most likely scenarios. We don't know how things will develop. We haven't worked out any consensus on what we could call remedial policies. This situation is both new and not new. It is not new in the sense that it could have been expected, but it is new in the sense that we are helpless when it comes to anticipating and predicting. In this connection, a huge problem with managing this crisis has arisen.

One more comment. I completely agree with what Professor Buchowski said. In one of our research reports I took the liberty of using

the term “shallow order.”¹ What is new and strikes me is, first, the radicalism in the authorities’ reaction to the pandemic: this lockdown, the closing down at a certain point of three quarters of the real world to which we were all accustomed as something normal. And the second surprise is the people’s consent to this radicalism. Suddenly it turns out that a whole host of institutions that we thought were unusually deeply rooted, that we thought would be defended in a principled and fundamental way, turned out actually to be institutions that can be undone by a simple decree overnight, with almost zero resistance. This is a situation that should be viewed very carefully, that should be observed through the question of the relationship between the authorities and society. It is a great experiment which the authorities are conducting on society, and in fact a great temptation. The entire situation is a great temptation to use such management or exercise-of-power strategies, which are actually absolutely unprecedented. I see a certain novelty in this—the fundamental novelty of the situation in which we all find ourselves.

K.F.: But that lasted a short time, Professor. Three months.

R.D.: I think it was a situation of confidence in the authorities—that they had a plan. When it turned out that they didn’t really—that it was a trial-and-error method—the negationist attitudes of which Professor Krajewski spoke arose. Did it last for a short time—is that really the case? I think it’s too early to answer that question. I don’t want to use terms such as “rematch” or “another incarnation” of the phenomenon, but it has to be taken into account. I think we are still in the midst of this process. It hasn’t finished.

M.K.: *Rafał, perhaps you could try to answer the question: what is your diagnosis concerning the reasons for the shallowness of this order and the ease with which we accept the dismantling of institutions that are important for a democratic state—because this absence of people in the urban space, the lack of crowds, is also very significant, isn’t it?*

R.D.: There are several possible answers. The first is that the legitimacy of these core or nodal institutions of the existing order was weak. The second

¹ The reference is to the report *Życie codzienne w czasach pandemii. Raport z drugiego etapu badań* (http://socjologia.amu.edu.pl/images/pliki/dokumenty/Do_pobrania/Zycie_codzienne_w_czasach_pandemii..Raport_z_drugiego_etapu_badan_wersja_s_krocona.pdf).

—probably referring to doubts or skepticism in regard to the neoliberal order—would be that perhaps this is a good opportunity to refuse to submit to it: to call a spade a spade and express the conviction that it is simply ineffective, that it cannot cope. Therefore, we sort of opt for those who are about to propose some new, illiberal or aliberal scenario. The problem is that this also hasn't happened; instead, it has turned out that those who were very radically and firmly pushing for lockdown did not have much to say beyond that. We actually have only one solution for COVID—isolation. And another—hand washing—in other words, we're going back to the medical propaganda of the 1950s or 1960s, which spoke of “dirty-hands diseases.” It would seem that there should be some deeper, more sophisticated diagnosis of these defensive reactions. This is what has produced oscillation—from trusting the authorities that this is an exceptional period, to a feeling of solitude and the denial of practically everything, because these authorities, having received so much power, do not know what to do with it. They have no idea how to govern. That's how I would answer the question.

M.K.: Would any of our guests like to add something to these diagnoses, to broaden the perceptual horizon on the pandemic and its social consequences? Professor Jacyno and then Professor Lewicki.

Małgorzata Jacyno: Thank you for the invitation. I'd first like to outline the materials that serve as a basis for what I have to say, and namely, I've made use of the research of Professor Krajewski, Professor Drozdowski, and their team, and of COVID diaries. I used studies made before and during the pandemic in different European countries. Before the pandemic, 85% of Poles, when asked if they wanted systemic change—a question that occurred outside of the current political conflict—answered that they did, categorically, want change. The responses were similar in France, Italy, and Spain. I also made use of a survey that came out three days ago, I think, about trust in government. It's lowest in Poland, slightly above 2 on a scale of 0 to 10. In other countries the average is 5–6. There are countries—Finland I believe—where trust is rated 8 on this 10-point scale. Finally, in what I have to say, I refer to my contacts with environmental organizations. Theirs was a completely unheard voice in the public sphere, and I was interested in what is happening beyond the current, ongoing political conflict.

I would agree that the crisis we are dealing with is a stage, an element of a latent crisis that has now become visible, more visible than in 2008.

It began in the 1990s and has been present in the public sphere all the time as a crisis understood in terms of psychology, that is, depression, burnout, stress, obesity, etc. The incidents and excesses have included riots, protests, falling turnout for elections, and the deterioration of infrastructure in European countries, by which I mean road disasters, bridges and, finally, an issue that has not yet reached us—the deterioration of public services in connection with digitization. And it's not just about digital exclusion. For example, it's a myth that the young generation is doing well in the digital world. They cope in those areas in which they function every day, but when it comes to accessing public services, it's precisely the young generation that has great difficulties.

A crisis, in my opinion, has emerged because we are dealing with a different architecture of subjectivity. It is an entirely different crisis, because it affects individuals, but individuals shaped by neoliberalism. Although analogies with previous crises can be sought, the materials I have used suggest that the misfortune is common, but experienced separately. Comparisons have been made here—analogy with previous pandemics, to war, to transformation, and so on. Since this is a phenomenon in the public sphere, I treat it as part of this very crisis reality. On the other hand, a concept that does not fit this set but that needs to be taken into consideration, is suspension. Suspension—it's an unpleasant state where there is some unresolved issue. So I would say that we have a “black-box society,” in the sense that nothing is clear. There is a lot of information and it diverges. It diverges cognitively and it diverges affectively. The difference is also that when there used to be crises, people fell into the embrace of local communities, neighborhood communities, traditions, etc. If I were to try to describe now what the current situation has helped me to define, and what can be understood by neo-collectivism and post-individualism, I would refer to Kaufmann, who says that modern individuals live in a pendulum, that the individual is defined by a sort of “tic-tock” rhythm, a pendulum that swings from holistic and group identities to individual ones. It seems to me that we could observe that, first, this “tic-tock” is getting increasingly quicker, and, second, that the swing toward individual self-definition destroys, or attacks, collective references.

Research indicates very clearly that we live in a kind of make-believe, pretend reality, and that civil society is a spectacle being played out. In short, in these pronouncements and in other materials, the state is not visible at all, and no references to community can be seen. You don't see anything that would categorize us as a society, and it seems to me that in the public sphere—I mean the relationship between government

and society—you can see a systematic exclusion of society from decision-making. I would probably allege something even greater here, which is that in the public sphere, those most responsible for managing the crisis situation did not offer any symbolization, right? There wasn't even much to argue with, that is, no analogy or a diagnosis to categorize the situation appeared. That is what symbolization is all about—it imposes a little something, but it also encompasses divergent affects, intuitions, beliefs about what we are dealing with, how to act. On the one hand, citizens were excluded from decisions, and on the other hand, we are dealing with the systematic transfer of state functions to citizens. For example, provisioning, stockpiling. From what I've heard, there are families that are making provisions for half a year, which involves buying bigger refrigerators, freezers. What I have in mind is a “raft”—that is, that the state has delegated tasks to us: we have to take care of the resources, and we also have to do the emotional work in regard to the people we deal with, precisely because of the lack of symbolization—an aphasia, I would say, in terms of the ability to containerize a crisis situation.

I wouldn't agree that this is biopower. That's not the conclusion. I'm referring to something that was mentioned and that I think is very important. Western researchers say that we are dealing rather with a simulation of biopower. This is not biopower, because that presupposes raising a ruddy population. However, from what we have experienced so far it seems that probably the authorities' only specifically targeted action is the so-called sugar fee—which I do not like at all and strongly protest. Please note that this is a return to the individualization and psychologization of the crisis. After all, we all know where obesity comes from, right? It's definitely not from prosperity, not from well-being. This says that the sources of our crises are individualistic, psychological, and, if people want to ensure some security for themselves, they simply have to control themselves, take care of themselves.

M.K.: In summary, according to Professor Jacyno, the situation we are in is an episode in a certain long-term crisis, but it is also a significant event because we can clearly see in it the new forms of socialization in which we will soon live. Indeed, the fact of separately experiencing a situation of isolation, of confinement to small communities, and the individualization of social problems seems very significant. This is extremely interesting and unfortunately symptomatic of what is coming.

Mikołaj Lewicki: I understand that in this discussion we can allow ourselves to be more generalizing and provocative. When it comes to the

time of the pandemic, the area in which I feel more competent is the one I've studied—organization and organizational culture—but I'll give in to the temptation to make a brief diagnosis. First, I would refer to a simple definition that certainly fits here. Habermas says that a crisis is a state in which the patient knows that the old system no longer works, but he is still far from finding a remedy; he continues to use the old methods. His body habitually reacts according to the old methods, amplifying them, intensifying them, and at the same time he sees that they are less and less effective and entail more and more side effects. Rafał Drozdowski said that naked power has appeared. It would seem that this occurred when the authorities saw how fragile the order is—that “shallow order” of which we spoke. Perhaps the authorities saw how easily it could achieve its own governing power, but this is more a reflex from the old order. Furthermore, that new order is old; it is basically a return to a networked, proto-feudal social structure or to social-order relations in which the state, as the guarantor of the nation-state's social order, disappears, while smaller centers of power are somehow networked and function somehow. We can speak rather of relative stability, while it is difficult to speak of hegemony, of some kind of domination.

What is my point? Again, I will use a simple metaphor to begin with. What we have seen during the pandemic is the action of an organism that is somewhat reminiscent of a bicycle tire that has been inflated very hard, and there are bulges in some places. You can see that the flexible rubber is weaker in some places and stronger in others. You can see that power is stronger and more flexible where it has been quite vigorous and effective so far, that is, where there is wealth, where there are all kinds of resources. It hasn't cracked anywhere, I would say. The existing order continues, but it's like rubber which, after it's been deformed more strongly, crumples in places when it returns to its normal function. So it's crumpled in various places, and I think that this is especially the case where various systems or subsystems intertwine—I am referring here to Habermasian theory, that is, classical functional theory. There where the systems have intertwined, where they are supposed to work together somehow and coordinate with each other, that is where it is worst—where the health service meets education, and the market meets the public sector. It is a strained but still-functioning structure. It seems to me that the weakest thing is what I would describe as the bicycle frame or rim, that is, what is most lasting, permanent.

I've used a simple—perhaps too simple—comparison here. I simply mean the material sphere, the economy providing the basic resources. We

saw that this sphere is so, I would say, *material*. It's the in-person workers—with all the breakdown of the labor market, on a multidimensional scale, flexible remote work has emerged; we suddenly found that work could be moved, regimes of control over workers could be changed, and so on. This sphere turned out to be supported and founded on this very simple work. As I mentioned, I think we're seeing a retraditionalization, a return to networked, feudal, or proto-feudal orders when it comes to these basic resources. The nation-state—here I will agree with the previous speakers—is becoming less and less effective. It's increasingly defective. It may resort to hierarchy and attempts at centralization in order to organize resources, but this organization is getting weaker and weaker. In contrast, the family and patrimonial structures in which strong local rulers function are getting increasingly stronger. It doesn't matter if it's the family or the local community, these structures organize access to resources and the key is who will participate in the redistribution. Order takes on a paradoxical form—it becomes less hierarchical, especially at the central level, and more marketized and networked. However, in my opinion, this is not a choice between the network and the market, with the network understood as a configuration of strong and weak relations, and the market as something where the most important thing is rivalry or competition between individuals. Both of these elements of relations take insufficient account of the basic order that has so far been organized by the state, that is, the basic resources that have founded our experience of modernity. In this sense I would also agree with Małgorzata Jacyno that what we are seeing now is not the force of biopower but rather the powerlessness of centrally organized hierarchical power. Thank you.

M.K.: *Thank you. I'll make no secret of the fact that I also like the notion of re-traditionalization. We tried to use it in the research mentioned earlier by Professor Drozdowski and Professor Jacyno. Maybe we will come back to it in our discussion.*

K.F.: I think Mr. Lewicki is largely correct. Back in the early 1990s, the criminologist David Garland—who is, by the way, excellent and very interesting—wrote, among other things, about the crisis of the welfare state which promises solutions to various problems of everyday life, and he explored whether this crisis or trouble with the welfare state lies in the various changing mechanisms of redistribution, which can be contested or are not economically efficient, or simply in that “the government does not deliver.” In short, the state is incapable of solving the basic problems facing its citizens, especially if that state is somewhat constrained by

liberal thinking, an emphasis on subjective rights, and so on. Thus, these ideas have already appeared, and, again, we are not facing any new challenge. The challenge is becoming clearer, more painful, especially since we have become accustomed to a certain world, in particular the youth, the younger generation, and suddenly it turns out that this world is just a facade. So with the bicycle it's a bit like this, Professor, that if the rim holds a crumpled tire and inner tube, riding with the knowledge of the potential risks feels insecure. This, among other things, is what we're talking about here.

M.K.: Thank you, Professor, for your comment. I would also like to give the floor to Dr. Justyna Sarnowska and Dr. Magdalena Wieczorkowska.

Justyna Sarnowska: I represent the Youth Research LAB of SWPS University, where we study the younger generation—youth, young adults. We have been considering here whether we are talking about the pandemic as a biological or medical phenomenon, which is undoubtedly a threat to everyday functioning—people get sick, die—or about all the consequences of the pandemic. When I speak of young people, I mean those aged 18–30, when a person can be said to be formally of age, an adult, but socially and psychologically he or she is just entering adulthood and undergoing various social-psychological transformations in order to become an adult member of society. Statistics suggest that in the medical sense the pandemic situation does not concern them. There is a belief that morbidity in this age group is the exception. As a result, these young adults may become convinced that the situation is being presented as much more serious than it truly is and that all the restrictions—locking us all up in our homes, at one time banning us from leaving the house without parental supervision, or banning us from taking walks in the woods, restrictions on dining, entertainment, services—are exaggerated. This can cause frustration.

Professor Buchowski raised the issue of generationalism—could what we are observing be a generational event? At our Center, we conducted an intergenerational study on motherhood. Among other things, we asked women below the age of 30, as well as their mothers and grandmothers, whether the current pandemic evoked any past events. Among the older respondents, there were references to martial law, because of the restrictions and high control of individuals, or to Chernobyl, because that too was such an invisible threat. In the generation of grandmothers there were even references to war—that the current situation is a kind of fight against the enemy. Is the COVID-19 pandemic another generational event

that will mark today's young adults in some way? I think the answer requires observation over time.

M.K.: Could you attempt to define what the pandemic is for young people?—Because in this series of questions we are wondering what it is, how to define it, what categories to use to describe it. What is it—based on your research—especially from the perspective of young people?

J.S.: I think that in those first weeks, months, not much changed for young people, especially for those who had prior experience of remote work. Even though they were forbidden to go out—to a restaurant for example, or to take advantage of the entertainment available to young people in cities or certain local communities—I would say that for them the pandemic entailed above all a cumulation of uncertainties. For the youngest, the adulthood into which they are just entering seems increasingly uncertain, because the reality in which we live is increasingly uncertain. This uncertainty has reached hyper proportions precisely among young people.

M.K.: And then there is the “ratcheting up” of the state that accompanies puberty and youth, the acceleration of this present experience.

K.F.: How will this affect their adulthood? What kind of people will they be when they take on various adult responsibilities? We have observed this in our time. The flower children in America, from the sixties, became more and more conservative as they entered adulthood. How will this modern uncertainty of young people evolve in their adult lives? What I'm trying to say is that the interesting question is not what the current social phenomena related to the pandemic are, but what will all this lead to?

M.K.: I think we'll get to that. Now I'd like to give the floor to Dr. Wiczorkowska.

Magdalena Wiczorkowska: I represent the sociomedical milieu. I am a sociologist by training but I have linked my professional life with a medical university. I will look at the problem from a sociomedical perspective, if only because I work among doctors and teach future doctors, so I also have a rather medical perspective on the pandemic situation. I receive information on a regular basis from people who are on the front line, as doctors dealing with the pandemic and who come into contact with hospitalized patients. Our students are off in quarantine. Right now, for example, we have about 150 students in quarantine after

an integration camp to prepare for their first year of college. Another thing is that the challenges for teaching are enormous, because medical education requires a clinical approach, and direct contact with the patient is essential. At the moment, at the time of the pandemic, training medics is very difficult, we face serious logistical and organizational challenges, and we have to reconcile this with the sanitary regimes.

As far as the COVID phenomenon itself is concerned, however, it must be remembered that what happened in March had as its basis an objective reality in the form of a disease, which is SARS-CoV-2. We cannot, therefore, deny the fact that the medical authority at some point appeared and the first decisions were based on expert medical knowledge. What happened a few months later, after the lifting of lockdown, certainly makes us see a blur of political decisions taken under the guise of medical decisions. More and more often we see that the pandemic, in its medical dimension, is a pretext for taking further political or social decisions, for pushing something through, somewhere, sideways.

However, I wanted to refer first and foremost to what I deal with professionally to a great extent. Dr. Sarnowska was talking about young people; we in our team are now interested in older people. We are also doing research on COVID and the impact of strict isolation on psychosocial and health outcomes for the 65+ group. In this group, the picture of the pandemic is vivid; it is synonymous with anxiety. If we take a holistic view, this anxiety is visible in some measure in everyone. It affects all age groups, not just seniors. However, in seniors, it is fueled immeasurably by their reliance on the media and how the media present this disease and its health risks for the elderly. Based on preliminary survey results, I know that a great many seniors have given up going to the doctor, not just because there was a lockdown, but because they were just afraid to go to the doctor. These are the ones who have comorbidities.

You are probably familiar with the disseminated media message that those who die are elderly people who usually have comorbidities. This triggers the following thinking mechanism in seniors: "Oh, I'm 65+, I have comorbidities, so if I catch something else, I'll definitely die, and if I catch COVID, I'll definitely die." This fear, fueled in older adults, is still present. At the same time, we have the deniers who think it's all exaggerated, that the disease doesn't exist. This group encompasses a lot of different attitudes, and on the other hand, we have this group in which this fear is constantly reinforced and grows. The picture that emerges for us here, primarily from these studies of older people, is that of COVID as a kind of fear for myself, for my health, but also for the fact that there

will be people around me who will not be able to help me, for example. Let's remember that these are people who are very often dependents, who require this support to some extent. The lockdown meant that they were virtually deprived of it from one day to the next.

Another thing that came out very strongly in this research is that there is great stratification, a great increase in inequality, if only in the digital sphere. These are digital abilities, competence in using electronic media to deal with a variety of current issues. Thus, certainly, these social inequalities—in relation to this group of seniors—have also increased thanks to COVID itself. In summary, I definitely see, at least in the initial stages, while the pandemic was developing, the influence of medical power on political decisions, but that has weakened a lot at the moment, and on the other hand—to use a metaphor, the metaphor of fear—I would refer here to Frank Furedi's concept of a culture of fear. This is the concept of the culture of anxiety, where this anxiety is escalated, and various experts speak out. These experts have very different, often diverging and often contradictory opinions, and this additionally causes an imbalance in attitudes and exacerbates this fear of the invisible, because an illness, in the physical sense of the word, is not visible to these people. Thank you.

M.K.: Thank you very much to the last two speakers. What they said was important because they reminded us that an epidemic is not just a metaphor, which is good for thinking about crises, but it is also the experience of specific people, a painful experience, and this is the case regardless of whether we treat it as something that has already happened before or as a new phenomenon. If you will allow me, I would like to glide to the next question, which derives from the assumption that a pandemic is a phenomenon that has affected us all, although each of us is in a slightly different situation. It is therefore a phenomenon that is both universal and highly differentiating. I would like to ask you who the victims of this pandemic are. Who has lost the most from it? Who is the most affected by it? Has the pandemic in any way rebuilt relations between different categories of people? Has it created some new, previously non-existent types of social inequality? Is there perhaps someone who has won from this pandemic? I do not know if you have come across probably the first major publication on this subject: the essay "Tomorrow Has Come" by Ivan Krastev. He predicts, for example, the emergence of a new kind of passport in which it will be noted whether people have or do not have antibodies against the coronavirus, and which will become the basis for more or less employability. We heard a moment ago about the differences in experience between young and old people.

Thus, if we were to go in that direction, treating the pandemic as a differential phenomenon, who among you would like to speak?

R.D.: Why don't I start. In a moment you'll probably talk in more detail about who has gained and who has lost. I would like to try to answer why such a peculiar re-composition of social inequalities takes place in general. Until recently there was a very common interpretative motif to the effect that authoritarianism would feed on the pandemic, that it would favor it. It seemed that a variety of countries that were less democratic, differently democratic, or in any case more collectivist than individualist, would be better able to deal with the challenge. Moreover, there were voices proclaiming the end of globalization, pointing out that the pandemic is an incentive, a mechanism that legitimizes the nation-state, the autarkic state, the self-sufficient state. For example, it was pointed out that such a state would be more secure because it would shorten all possible cooperative chains. It seems, however, that contrary to such announcements or interpretations, nothing of the sort has happened. On the contrary—as has already been mentioned here several times—the state has proved helpless. Power has proved to be unwieldy, and it is possible to believe that the inequalities we are about to discuss are the result of a total, or almost total, withdrawal by the state from many of its previous commitments. In short, we are dealing with the privatization of a society that has been left to its own devices.

We have talked here about a crisis of neoliberalism, but the paradox is that this crisis of neoliberalism, in my opinion, leads to an intensification of neoliberalism. It leads to the turbo-marketing or turbo-commodification of many spheres of life that were previously—for better or worse, but nevertheless—regulated by one or another public policy. I would say that the first victims of the pandemic are all those who are condemned to compete in this privatized order and at the same time are deprived of strategically important resources that allow them to cope. I'll take a random example and stop there because it justifies the rather dramatic conclusion of our research.² The losers are those I would call, perhaps a bit pretentiously, “the logisticians of everyday life,” that is, people responsible for the logistics of everyday life. First and foremost, of course, women.

This is one aspect of that re-traditionalization we mentioned. In short, the losers are all those for whom the pandemic has clearly shown that their emancipation and empowerment was, like the existing order, very shallow, very superficial, and very illusory. And it doesn't take much for this empowerment or emancipation to regress. Maybe I am looking at it

² “Życie codzienne w czasach pandemii.”

a little structurally and therefore too generally, but these, from a structural point of view, are the first systemic losers.

M.K.: *Does this mean the return of naked strength, naked competition in social relations and the elimination of all that is weaker?*

R.D.: That's what I predict. It seems to me that what we are dealing with now—and in a while it will intensify—is a crisis of public policies and policies that correct the processes of commodification. As a result, we are returning to a system of very strong social competition based on resources that are either privately owned or owned by very narrow, very local communities, communities which are—whatever you wish to call it—condemned to each other.

M.K.: *This is a question of course in reference to the thesis put forward by Mikołaj Lewicki, whether we are not dealing with a return to a neo-feudal or even tribal order in which it is not individuals who compete, but small, very inbred, family-like, local groups, and they are the subject.*

R.D.: Yes. What's important is that they're competing through resources that have either been privatized or that have simply remained at their disposal. That's what's going to happen in a moment with flu vaccines. We can already see it happening. This is perhaps a cheap example, but unfortunately a pretty clear one.

K.F.: I persistently cling to the idea that everything has already happened. Professor, you've just actually told us, like Saint Matthew, that to the rich more will be given and as for the poor, even what they have will be taken away. Those who have fewer resources will have even less; those who have quite a lot will have it increased. And that's basically what the various data show. That's one point. The other is that you very aptly saw that this somewhat places emphasis on the network structure of society, so in short again, really, the first reading that comes to my mind is—Granovetter? But someone might say that these networks or communities—now I'm invoking the idea of my mentor, Adam Podgórecki—may be dirty, that they may appropriate resources that were once more or less public and use them exclusively for the benefit of the members of their own group.

R.D.: Yes, of course.

K.F.: I'm exaggerating a bit, but this is a question aimed at reconstructing the professor's representation—are we going to face a world of such networks, of dirty communities?

R.D.: And amoral familism.

K.F.: Yes, but whether it is moral or not is a matter of judgment of another order. The atrophy of a civil society in which we care about the common good? That's the question. I am perfectly aware that it is inelegant to ask difficult questions, but we are faced with such tasks.

R.D.: If I may also add to what you've said—I also think that another mechanism that will imply new social costs, which have not been taken into account until recently and which will provide us with new losers, is a different form of solidarity. I would call it, paradoxically, a particularistic solidarity—a solidarity that allows for a great many exclusions. I think this is what awaits us in discussions about the economy when one begins to talk about people who are more and less deserving of support in one way or another. I think that Maslow's hierarchy of needs will then become the key. It will be thinking in simple terms of prioritizing needs, preferences. This is new if we take the recent past as a reference, when we thought very differently about services, for example.

K.F.: I would insist that it's always the same, regardless of the platitudes by which we try to describe reality. This is actually the only point of contention between us. The professor's representation is heading in the right direction; I think it will happen like that, but it only underlines the fact that the platitudes we use to describe our society are unreliable when confronted with reality.

M.K.: *Let me rephrase the question because so far we have established the shallowness of emancipation and the defeat of the already lost. I was wondering how to reconcile Maslow's hierarchy of needs with the losing logisticians of everyday life, because they are, after all, the givers of services and they are the ones who satisfy the most basic needs. If we consider this hierarchy of needs, the winners should again be those working in grocery stores or raising hogs.*

R.D.: Or they are losers because they are on the front lines, whereas they are winners in the sense that they enjoy recognition.

M. B.: I will briefly touch upon several issues which have already been raised here. First, will society be networked or solidarity-based? I think that in different places in the world and in different contexts, we have different contradictory tendencies. One of them is individualization. Working from home, distance learning—all these things lead to an acceleration of those tendencies that were mainly attributed to Western culture. The individualization of life has been taken to an extreme that we did not know before, because, after all, we met in different forums. Maybe it's temporary, but it will accelerate certain processes—everyone will sit in their apartments and connect with others; it will be a network, but a virtual one. And the university will not be the university it used to be. I recently read a text by Wojciech Sadurski. You can teach different things in this way, but it's not the same as teaching in a lecture hall and what a direct relationship gives, when after the lecture hall you can go for a coffee or a beer to continue the discussion. In my view, the consequence of the epidemic will be an accelerated individualization of life—one pushed to the limits, or to less known limits—and not necessarily amoral familism.

The second issue is the role of the state. Even if the state is not in control of certain problems, it still has the power to do things to us. It can also change itself. The simplest examples—we don't leave our homes; we don't travel abroad; planes aren't flying; and they can also turn off the Internet and nothing will happen at all. Moreover, the state is not so completely lost in all this. Besides, it turns out that different countries have dealt with the crisis in different ways and have mastered the disease in different ways. I recently found in Richard Horton's book a compilation of data—from September 1st of this year—which shows, for example, that 0.03 people per 100,000 people died in Vietnam, and nearly 90 people per 100,000 died in Belgium. At the top of this list of countries with the highest mortality rates per 100,000 people are all the Latin American countries and Western countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Spain, and Italy.

Whereas countries like Japan and China have dealt with this epidemic, through management, in a relatively effective way. So the West has failed, the Americas have failed, and these countries have not. There may be some cultural conditioning at work here, in addition to the regime that can be put in place. There are also various countries where there are some regimes, and they have failed. Russia, which is considered to be an authoritarian state in a sense, comes to mind—although perhaps it is a different kind of power than power over everyday life—and yet there the

morbidity was high. Who lost out? Rafal Drozdowski mentioned women. Many people, especially in the care economy are now on the front line, and at the same time—as we all know very well—these people are hopelessly paid, all over the world. They are the workers in care homes, and in social care, in hospitals, in kindergartens, and so on.

In this care economy, in the paid sector, two thirds are women, and in the unpaid sector, three quarters are doing home care, unpaid work. On top of that there is domestic violence. The press has written about the fact that the first and main victims of a kind of psychological crisis are women locked at home with men. And here there's a paradox: in Turkey, which has the largest gap between men and women in the workforce among OECD countries, the lockdown has caused one to hear that husbands whose wives haven't seen them in the kitchen for twenty years are now cooking. So perhaps the lockdown will bring about what is being fought for, urged, in many societies—a broader distribution of domestic roles?

M.K.: Professor, I don't want to worry you, but our research shows that working remotely has increased the number of household duties that women have to shoulder. This is probably due to the assumption that if a woman—a wife or a mother—is at home, then she becomes a housewife again and the full responsibility for taking care of the household falls on her. However, you have raised a very interesting issue: cultural differences. I have a question in this connection: could we try to relate these differences to Polish society and talk about different ways of experiencing the pandemic, for instance, in the city and in the countryside? Have you noticed anything like that?

M.B.: I haven't done any research on this issue. I've talked to people from the countryside and from the city; I've seen people in the countryside and in the city. Maybe the differences stem simply from cultural habits. In a large city, as I saw, for example, yesterday in Warsaw, people are wearing masks, and in Poznań as well, although it varies, sometimes with a mask on the nose, sometimes without. In the countryside, on the other hand, people generally don't pay attention to it; they're more indifferent. Perhaps they are more susceptible to the idea that "That pandemic or whatever there—it doesn't affect us."

M.K.: I would also like us to consider whether the pandemic is not a metropolitan phenomenon and, consequently, whether it is not directly related to the modern order, i.e., to the metropolitan part of the community, while people living in villages or small towns are affected to a lesser extent.

M.B.: We can talk about these cultural conditions on the basis of the data that we find and also by observing what is happening in certain countries. In societies in the Far East, a significant number of people wore masks whether there was a pandemic or not. Perhaps it was easier for them. Moreover, perhaps they are more disciplined societies—if it is said that something must be done, that there is a threat, they comply. Perhaps it is forced, or perhaps it is culturally imprinted somehow. These are my guesses.

M.K.: *Thank you, Professor. We've come to the subject of differences. Any of you? Professor Jacyno?*

M.J: I would like to start from the fact that society, as a certain idea, has been lost. In the public debate, in public discourse, there is talk about losses related to education, and of course economics, but there is no reference to the social costs, and this, to my mind, confirms that there is no turning back from neoliberalism. As usual, the social costs are not included in the speeches of, let's say, the government. What is this loss based on? In a way, it's such an ambiguous feeling; it's nice to hear, when you are pointed out as the victim of a crisis situation. But what I would like to point out is that an end to flexibility is being revealed. It has been said for a long time that the boundary between private and public, between work and leisure, is blurring, that these times, these qualities, flow between each other. Now the diagnoses that are being talked about in Western countries point to an exhaustion that occurs alongside depression, anxiety, boredom, and various other emotions. We are dealing with the demolition of a certain moral-economy contract, namely, that we have no "at home" and although we talked about such flows, the boundaries have now been weakened. This can be said now not only for women who are at the same time teachers, parents, and interveners. For the whole family it means the demolition of some mental structure, some sense of having coordinates despite living in such a complicated world and despite these flows and blurring of boundaries.

I will now refer in general to what I have heard. I do not see in Poland what French and Italian sociologists, of very different provenance, have noticed, that during the pandemic the division between the elite and the people—between the elite and the common people—functioning in completely different modes, became apparent. I certainly agree with pessimistic terms such as "dissensus." There was a brief moment of reversal of the hierarchy when we saw that we owe our existence to the

popular classes, that we are alive because of the economy and not because of economics. This brief experience was then obliterated by the middle class on social media, but it seems very important. We are dealing—in my opinion—with an intensification of class conflicts, which is expressed in the fact that on the Polish political scene it has become apparent that the left is neoliberal—it barely refrains from orientalizing the popular classes. I am aware that this is happening in a situation of political conflict, but it is clear that the left represents the interests of the middle class and the meritocracy. This is a class and generational conflict.

I would like to point out that perhaps it is also about those young people who are active in environmental organizations—about the fact that the young have lost a lot? The social costs are not counted; the fact that the young are growing up in a situation of inequality is not mentioned. It is also worth noting that we hear more and more often—paradoxically just now, during the pandemic—that there will be no pensions. It might be said—“And why do we need pensions, because there will be an environmental crisis anyway? Why plan for pensions that there will be no one to receive?” I think youth is a category that has also lost out by the fact that older generations have stopped being caretakers. The intergenerational relationship used to assume some kind of solidarity—the young take as much as they can carry—I’m talking about the traditional order—and they don’t have to repay the old, because they take a lot to be able to pass it on to the younger generations. We see this coming to an end. I would like to point this out, although it is very difficult for me to point out which generations or categories have lost a lot.

I also have to mention something that was a huge shock to me. Among European Union countries we have always been in the rankings before Bulgaria or Romania. Now trust in the government in Poland is two times lower than in these countries. There the index is 3–4; in our country it’s about 2. I think we are dealing with a situation in which society, as a certain idea, has been lost. We have lost a society that should have been defended, as Foucault wrote. We have seen what semi-peripheralism is all about—that on the semi-periphery it is primarily processes that rule, not people. In a sense, the pandemic is an opportunity to revise what the transformation was for us: how we should understand it; what is the subjectivity of our community. We have seen that this subjectivity is not strong.

Apart from the division into the elites and the people, in Poland the question appeared of the ecological crisis and of aphasia as to the possibility of formulating certain projects. This distinguishes us from Western societies. We have also seen that precarity might increase. It’s

not just that according to recent statistics the number of junk contracts in Poland is increasing, but that precarity also includes biological survival. I think that this precarity has shown that in a sense we have been living in a pandemic. The life expectancy of different social categories varied a lot, and now it is over a dozen or so years in Poland. We have two races: a race of long-lived people and a race of short-lived people. We have a race of people who may see their great-grandchildren, and a race of people who, if they see their grandchildren, may welcome them into the world but will probably die shortly thereafter. In our country, the lagging behind Western countries, the inability, the political conflict, hides strong, growing class antagonisms. Thank you.

M.K.: I would like to ask whether, in this collapsing society, in these fractured relationships between people, or with the growing lack of solidarity, it's possible to see any spheres that are resistant to these processes? Please note that all this discussion is focused on victims, on decay, on collapse. I wonder if this is not just one side of the process we are observing and, somewhat hopefully, I would like to ask Professor Jacyno whether she sees any regions of social life that are immune to these destructive processes?

M.J.: I see something positive, but for now only in this formal context. I see new solidarities being built. In my opinion, it would be a positive development if an open class conflict were to be formed; at the moment, it is covered up by ideological spots. I can see such solidarities forming, but it seems to me that the experience of the semi-periphery, plus the new media, have caused something to be abandoned. I am thinking of health care. Several weeks ago it seemed obvious that there would be strong pressure to increase spending on health care. Today, in general, we don't remember about it. Doctors are working not to cure people, but to pay off the public debt they have incurred—that's what's being said at the moment. Such solidarity would indicate that certain solutions are being transferred elsewhere. There is a lot of talk now that there is a lot of conflict in social media and that new authoritarianisms are emerging there.

These kinds of solidarity are supposed to be a kind of health insurance, because there is an intense search for a substitute, because it's about security—it's about survival, understood anthropologically, so it's about biological life, and it's also about the sense of being someone integrated, of being embedded in something. What worries me is precisely this solidarity that seeks some substitute for traditional forms of reducing

the riskiness of coexistence, through pensions, right? In our country this kind of solidarity, guaranteed by institutions, is becoming something archaic, in contrast to France or Germany, for example. By the way, this trust in government is related to how quickly and to what degree they have provided financial aid and support, although the connection is not absolute.

So I think I see something and, of course, if you don't think of the historical process as events that have to accumulate, I think solidarity builds up, the same way you write a book: there is a first chapter, then you move on to the second and the third, and then there's the conclusion. If you understand things in Rancière's terms, and I often refer to him now, then this is the dissensus that has otherwise emerged before in various situations over the last thirty years—this reversal of hierarchy. If our survival in March-April depended on economists, we certainly wouldn't have gotten food—we wouldn't have received supplies. That was the atmosphere, wasn't it? But it quickly disappeared.

K.F.: I also think that not only women have lost. This thread of the conversation is reminiscent of what Maria Jarosz once did when she asked about the winners and losers in the transformation. We imagine that a pandemic can be a source of some fundamental lasting change, a transformation. Women are not the only short-term and quite debatable victims of this COVID transformation. There are all those whose jobs involve something tangible—the physical performance of some activity, such as construction. The winners are those who can do their jobs remotely, ranging from corporate officials to even the doctors to whom I go “on the phone.” The losers are the less educated, who do a variety of manual jobs, though they require a variety of skills. People in one-person service businesses are also losers. In general, people who are employed in services.

To what extent this change is permanent, I don't know. The losers are also young people who are now employed en masse on short-term contracts or civil-law contracts—that motif of uncertainty returns here, but I won't expand on it. My next comment concerns what Professor Jacyno said. Do you remember H.G. Wells's story about the time machine and the society of the future, which is reached by a time traveler? This society is divided into the Eloi and the Morlocks. It would seem that the Eloi are the elite of this society: they busy themselves with poetry, singing, and contact with nature—ecology, to use the language of Professor Jacyno—that is, they are the social elite, while somewhere underground live the nasty Morlocks, machinists who are covered in oil and grease and who

feed the Eloi. The trouble is, however, that the Morlocks systematically eat the Eloi and actually treat them as nice, pretty farm animals.

Is it not the case that the elites are slowly...They are of course needed, but they themselves are unaware that they are basically being bred as food for the Morlocks, for the people or the popular class. I understand that there is a bit of irony in this, but it seems to me that basically what the Professor was talking about is just such a vision of the world. We can show more of these losers of the transformation, of the COVID transformation. It's not only women; it's various segments of the social structure, and I've mentioned two of them. This brings us back to St. Matthew's rule, "Whoever has, to him more shall be given...but whoever has not, from him shall be taken away." Thank you.

M.K.: Thank you, Professor. Now I would like us to move to the last and probably the "simplest" question, namely, what will happen after the pandemic? Will the current situation result in the emergence of some new social order? Let's treat this as a kind of summary...Dr. Wiczorkowska?

M.W.: Since we are pressed for time, I will only briefly address two issues related to inequality. First of all, they certainly haven't just appeared, but have become more visible and deeper. They concern the education system, and I'm not only talking about universities. It happened at every level of education when overnight everyone found out that they were moving to remote education. There was a problem—"Wait a minute, wait a minute, not everyone has access to this remote education"—because not everyone has a computer at home or a phone with internet access. There were also logistical issues connected with the fact that when there are more children at home and suddenly they all need access to e-education at the same time—and the parents work remotely—even in families with high digital competence and, let's say, affluence, there were considerable problems.

Second, I would like to point out that each of us is to some degree a victim of COVID because sooner or later we are all faced with having to go to a doctor, and the epidemic has drastically reduced that for us, and it is becoming more and more widely stated that it is not only COVID itself that kills, it's the diseases that are not being systematically treated because of the limitations that have been created. Cardiology is handicapped, hematology is handicapped, chronic disease issues are handicapped—the chronic diseases of seniors, but also in younger age categories. The inability to go to the doctor, tele-consultations—all this is no substitute for proper diagnosis, hospitalization, the performance of planned procedures,

which have been cancelled en masse. As a result, any day now we will begin to face such a deterioration in the health of the population that that longevity, which is projected to be 120 years, may not be the experience of any of those currently alive because of the neglect of the health care system that is unfortunately now being generated.

Piotr T. Kwiatkowski: If you will allow me, I have a brief comment to make on the urban-rural issue. I will just say that to a large extent it is the result of a certain social ecology and I will give just one example. The Lublin province, which, at least until recently, had very low incidence and death rates, has 25,000 square kilometers and a population of 2.1 million. The Warsaw agglomeration, on the other hand, has 2,700 square kilometers, that is, almost ten times less, and 2.6 million people live in it. So if we are talking about differences, we have to remember about the ecological differences, about the fact that we have in the country metropolitan areas with a higher population density, where we have more houses where we share common areas, we also have large areas where we necessarily meet people—the “Mordors” where people work, large stores, supermarkets. There are also areas where the spaces where we meet others are much rarer and much smaller. Moreover, in the countryside a situation where we live in our own house, at a certain distance from our neighbors, is something natural. This is just a small comment on the hypothesis formulated earlier about the metropolitan nature of the pandemic.

M.K.: *Thank you. Dr. Sarnowska, if you would like to make a brief statement, please. We're very interested in an answer to the question of what comes after the pandemic.*

J.S.: In the Youth Research LAB team we try to look at how young people plan and shape the future: whether, in their opinion, they have any influence on it and how. Professor Jacyno suggested that there will be no pensions in the future and that it will be the youngest generation who will suffer the most, because they will completely lose even the possibility of securing their future existence. I would like to draw attention to a certain demographic effect. Today's 18–19-year-olds represent an age cohort some 200,000 less numerous than people who are 10 or 15 years older. Young people may therefore be much less heard in society in the future.

Regarding entry into adulthood, the traditional view distinguishes five markers: completing education, entering the labor market, stabilizing one's situation in the labor market, moving out of the family home,

entering into a lasting intimate relationship, and having children. Returns to the family home increase in precisely such difficult situations as a pandemic. This is hugely influenced by the labor market situation. The lockdown and those first restrictions affected to the greatest extent people who were working on temporary contracts or freelance contracts, in student jobs, which rather forced returns to the family home. There are economic analyses concerning people who enter the labor market during a crisis that show that their subsequent career path is less stable. What will happen in the post-pandemic period? We can anticipate that those who are starting their occupational careers now may be more likely to experience instability in the labor market in the future. I'll end with that. Thank you.

M.K.: Thank you very much. Let us move on to this last question by trying to think synthetically about what will happen when the pandemic is over—of course, we might do that, as Professor Frieske noted at the beginning of our conversation, based on the experience and the reliving of the collective memory of previous pandemics. No one remembers the Spanish flu; no one treats it as an event relevant to the world order. Will that be the case this time? Do you see any fundamental changes that the process we are currently experiencing will entail?

K.F.: If I may—I would still like to ask my colleague from the Medical University of Łódź, who probably has more contact with medical professionals: Do you have any studies that show how the fact of having COVID itself affects the health of the population? This is already thirty million people, so is it the case that the population, through these deferred consequences of a disease that they have managed to survive, is becoming increasingly less well, or not? Is there anything you can say on that?

M.K.: I understand that that is one possible scenario of what happens? Is the population becoming more resilient?

K.F.: Maybe to COVID, but at the same time, less resistant to a variety of other diseases. We will simply become, as a population, health-wise, weaker. We may live the same length of time, but we will live in less and less in good health.

M.W.: Our sociology department at the Medical University of Łódź does not conduct such research; perhaps it is undertaken in clinics, in medical teams. We are currently focusing on seniors, on their socio-

-psychological and health consequences. What will happen after the pandemic? Something will definitely remain. I think that to some extent we will not give up on technology. The pandemic has shown that for many people remote working is much more convenient and much more effective, and perhaps there is a positive effect of the pandemic in that remote working has resulted in greater flexibility in performing various duties and “multitasking” in a positive sense. However, the preliminary results of our short-term research—this is the first stage for now and we have a plan for long-term research—based on the first post-pandemic, post-isolation declarations of seniors, indicate that they are increasingly self-marginalizing, that is, withdrawing from social life themselves.

This also shows some general aspects of social relationships, but I don't want to generalize here. I know how it is in the relationship between the elderly and the rest of society. There is the anxiety that I mentioned earlier, causing an increase in distance in social relationships in general. Approaching another person, getting to know another person, especially for older people, is mediated by the thought “I don't trust them.” This decrease in trust has epidemiological and biological conditioners, but it also affects social relations, because as a consequence, the elderly withdraw; they aren't active, because they are afraid of the people they will meet. That's what I wanted to say. Thank you.

M.K.: I think that the phenomenon you're talking about doesn't only affect older people. The cultural sector reports that people did not return to cultural institutions after they were opened. This is also symptomatic. Perhaps this is a period of growing individualization, as Professor Jacyno mentioned. So who will play futurologist next?

M.B.: What will happen? First of all, just as epidemiologists predicted after SARS that an epidemic of this kind would break out one day, it did break out, and it's only been a dozen years or so. So I think that after this epidemic the world will witness more epidemics—for reasons that are, shall we say, civilizational and population-related. There are situations and places where epidemics of various kinds will arise. Perhaps humanity will develop some way of dealing with them, other than lockdowns, but it will still be a world of epidemics. Second, I think a lot of industries will move to automation, because simply put, robots don't get sick. Industry employs a lot of people that you have referred to as the “folk” class—I don't know why everyone speaks of the “folk class”; there was a folk culture but not a class. These people will quickly be pushed out of the workforce, and after all, not everyone will be able to be employed by Zoom or Microsoft.

Third, there is an issue of migration, including tourism; there will still probably be refugees as well. If epidemics start to recur, then perhaps the limitations of globalization will come; the flow of people will be more controlled. At the same time, this pandemic, like other such crises, can be seen as a breeding ground for innovation. They used to say “progress,” but to take advantage of this aspect, you need to invest. If you want to invest, you need to invest in green industry, which requires work, which means employing people. So it’s a certain opportunity to overcome the problems. This brings me back to a topic that has already been raised—the welfare state, that is, all the types of care that need to be invested in. If we’re going to invest; then we should be investing now. And there is this hope, but it’s also a bit utopian. Thank you.

M.K.: *Thank you, Professor. A very nuanced picture, both pessimistic and optimistic.*

M.L.: I would like to start by saying that the universal pandemic experience is probably the experience of fragility, which connects two worlds. Of course, I’m intentionally exaggerating the difference between the two. Here’s a simple comparison: we all know that before long, some of us will work exclusively online, and offline activities will be for the elite. There will be those who meet in seminar rooms and discuss important issues and those who work in a flexible mode, which is seemingly very accessible and very quick to deliver results. I would say—of course, this is just for provocation—that the world is polarizing, and I would treat the epidemic as a catalyst for that change rather than as something that is interesting per se. I don’t think the dangers of COVID-19, the epidemiological ones, are so great that we need to worry about it. This catalyst for change shows us the two worlds: a world in which the semi-periphery is the vanguard of a neo-feudal order in which resources are organized rather locally, rather in hierarchies, only without the state.

It’s a patrimonial world. I will point out two of its many dimensions here. Poland, where very many own their own apartments, has become a country where you either have a lot of money, more and more mortgaged property, or you inherit it. Such wealth is becoming an increasingly important resource, hence the long nesting, hence the boomerang returns home after the failed autonomization of life, and so on. This is a world in which individualization is very limited, actually a dead end. There is a second world in which we are also dealing with the weakening of the state as a structure that guarantees some framework for emancipation—the emancipation of the individual and life in a world

that is individualized, but in a safe way. This state, of course, is weakened and here there is the question of what Malgorzata Jacyno called “society.” In this respect, I find the research I did in a large IT-sector organization encouraging. The individualization of work resulting from its remote nature could be seen very clearly there. You could see that the hierarchies were weakening, that is, managers, due to the fact that work is done online, actually lose control over what happens in teams.

Work is becoming more networked, more distributed, more task-oriented, and so on. The problem is that this network is becoming less and less diverse, less and less focused on producing innovation. The integration of individual network elements—let’s take Facebook for example, the whole discussion around tribalism, resulting from icon chambers, or such Internet bubbles—is actually a discussion around network diversity. It seems that the fact that network diversity is important can be seen by the middle class, that is, those who see that it makes it possible to effectively manage dwindling resources and social functioning in general. I would see in this some hope that it will become more apparent that being offline, that is, socialization that is not goal-oriented and task-oriented, is very important, and that the kind of economic system that has so far been network-oriented, network capitalism, does not deliver on what it promises, which is precisely this diversity of networks.

M.K.: Thank you. Rafal Drozdowski and then Professor Jacyno.

R.D.: Three points. First, we can try to be optimistic and say that the experience of the pandemic will nevertheless entail an increase in rationality in some areas, for example, in the area of work. The culture of face-to-face meetings is not always advisable; it’s not always a justifiable cost, and so on. Consumption may also become more rational. Until now it has been based on, I would say, egalitarian models, but unfortunately nature has suffered from this egalitarianism. So there is the chance for an increase in rationality in certain areas of life, especially in the organizational and economic dimension.

Second, it seems to me that the experience of the pandemic will entail a verification of statuses and a verification of bonds. In short, I posit that the pandemic was a kind of negation or exposure of many outer appearances—ostensible relationships, ostensible forms of familiarity, ostensible caring. Even ostensible comfort, which turned out to be an illusion—for instance, the apartments purchased in the housing-development market.

Now, the most important thing: I would venture to predict that we are facing a duality of society—on the one hand, we will be dealing with those who are offered the naturalization of risk. Epidemic risk—as I defined it—but this epidemic risk will be more and more generalized. There will be—rather as we just heard—a category of us who will become familiar with risk and for whom that risk will be treated as an unavoidable cost. Perhaps this cost will be covered in a new way; perhaps it will be justified and remunerated differently and with a different market logic, but the fact remains. A certain part of society will be forced to function in a way that is possible and natural, in a reality that may not be natural.

The other segment of this society, on the other hand, would be all those who can afford effective risk management: the voluntary exclusion of the elite. This coincides a little with what Professor Jacyno said about a division into the people and the elite, but for me the “people” are those who will be condemned to social, epidemiological, and medical insufficiencies, to lack of hygiene in the broadest sense, and to cultural lacks. What will be new in the future is that such a situation will be habitual; it will be normalized as a certain optimal model from the viewpoint of the further functioning of society. We will get used to it.

M.J.: The response depends on what future we’re talking about. As far as what’s on the horizon is concerned, the possible solutions, the evolution of what we have is, first of all, an exogenous state, which is, to put it somewhat exaggeratedly, a state that communicates with its citizens through text messages, the transfer of information, and not through spatial institutions. Incidentally, Italian researchers have pointed out that conservatism today, as in the 1920s and 1930s, goes hand in hand with technophilia. There must be no deluding oneself that since the conservatives are in power, they will shy away from replacing the state with such an economy and contacts in the digital sphere. What is being outlined, and what has in fact already happened, is the acceptance of new forms of slow violence, that is, non-obvious, hidden violence. As for people from the less affluent, poorer category, the experience of the pandemic has had less impact on them, because for them risk is something ordinary. That’s how they live; that’s just how life is: risky.

So there is an acceptance, an adaptation. You can see that, and at the same time there is a very strong expression of anger—this kind of Americanization of society—an expression of anger, but without representation, without solution, without projects. This is what comes closest, in my opinion. On the other hand, if I were to think of such

general social categories as if they were mountain ranges, I would quote Christophe Guilluy, a long-time researcher of the periphery, “Now we have a hundred years of class struggle ahead of us.” Which is a lot, right? Why? So that the middle class can see that they actually have the same interests as the popular class. But in general, you can see, if you look at the work of insurance companies—American insurance companies—that they are going to look for new markets for insurance. I think they’re much more likely to discover the Polish health market than, for example, the French or German, and that we will be the first to make use of these American insurances.

We can thus expect a gradual disclosure of class antagonisms. I say this so freely because I know that activists from ecological organizations want to seek some sort of alliance of solidarity with the popular classes: it’s for this reason, among others, that they’ve made contact with me. They know that without them it’s impossible to reorganize and do the ecological transition. On the other hand, I don’t know if the fact that we’ve started to pay attention will make things more ecological and rational, because, as the last data says, 1% or 10% of the richest people consume as much as 50% of the poorest people anyway. So really not much depends on us. Thank you.

M.K.: *Thank you very much. Professor Kwiatkowski? Will you speak in closing?*

PK.: I have two short comments. Professor Frieske started with the Spanish pandemic, but earlier there were various other misfortunes, and in the Middle Ages, the Black Death. *The Decameron* came to mind and it occurred to me that in daily life various people have created islands of isolation and well-being for themselves during the pandemic. This is rarely talked about. Such people have homes somewhere in nice places; they meet with select people, drink good wine, eat tasty things delivered by courier, talk about interesting things. New forms of social life have emerged. We stay at home more, work remotely, and carefully select those we see “in real life.” In many communities, this has created social circles that lead more interesting and intense social lives than before.

The second issue—the topic of the Church and religious celebrations did not appear during this discussion. I think it is worth mentioning in relation to Polish society. We were talking about the role of experts during the pandemic, about disappointment with the experts, but also about the role and influence of experts on certain actions of the authorities related to the restrictions imposed on people. At the same time, during

the epidemic we see the development of denialist movements questioning the existence of the virus and the pandemic, proclaiming that we are dealing with a conspiracy of the media, pharmaceutical companies, and governments. The Church is a sphere of social life and a strong institution where the denialists feel at home, and they repeat that we don't need to worry, providence is watching over us, and in general, "when in trouble, go to God," so we should pray more and worry less. This concerns not only the Catholic Church.

In July of this year, Orthodox Archbishop Job, the permanent representative of the Ecumenical Patriarch to the World Council of Churches, wrote that "The coronavirus pandemic that has rocked the world for the past nine months has revealed various forms of fanaticism. Above all, it has revealed coronavirus skeptics. Often resorting to conspiracy theories of all kinds, they generally reject scientific discourse. [...] Some coronavirus skeptics display a rather magical approach, given that their status, or their belief, is not tied to the virus. [...] Such fundamentalists believe that their place of worship is somehow miraculously protected from the virus, and therefore are unconcerned about health restrictions imposed by civil authorities, which they therefore ignore."

The Church is an institution that functions largely by bringing people together on various occasions to meet and participate in certain practices. And this creates a problem from the viewpoint of various epidemic-prevention policies, according to which it is necessary to limit the size of congregations. In many places in Poland outbreaks occur as a result of large religious celebrations. Traditional family celebrations associated with religious rituals, such as weddings and funerals, have also proven to be sites of infection.

K.F: I would like to say, in maybe three sentences, where I disagree with the other participants—with some of you in particular. First of all, I think that we are facing an increase in the role of the state. The state could be improved, because the pandemic has shown that without the state it is impossible to manage in various areas. Moreover, the pandemic itself cannot be dealt with, because the state has to pay for the very expensive research into the virus, by subsidizing various private corporations. In any case, the state is needed to manage and give us not only social welfare but increasingly also the security of society.

The second point: one of you said that we can count on a return of rational thinking. It seems to me that the opposite is true—uncertainty

shuts down rational thinking, to say the least. In a world of uncertainty, nothing can really be predicted; the chances can't be estimated, and thus rational thinking isn't possible.

The third point, in a nutshell: I think we are going to see the advent of a therapeutic society—the ostensible advent, of course. We are going to become vulnerable, and one of the ways of dealing with that vulnerability, with the disturbances, will be various forms of psychological, not to say psychiatric, help or support, whether pharmacological or therapeutic. I think thus that our societies will become more and more sensitive to disturbances and people will feel it painfully. Hence the idea of a therapeutic society. Thank you.

M.K.: Thank you. To conclude, I would like to draw your attention to a thread that did not appear but which, it seems to me, somehow frames this discussion. It shows very well what the social sciences and humanities are—what their role in social life is. Please note that in the course of our conversation we have been looking for good ways to represent the pandemic, for apt metaphors by which to think about it, to understand it, but there were also empirical motifs. And it would be great if we combined these two aspects. Both are necessary; they are the pillars on which our reflection on the phenomenon of pandemics, which has undoubtedly occupied our attention for some time, should be based.

It is also clear from this discussion that we are dealing with something that has happened before, but which is at the same time being lived anew and carries new consequences because it has appeared in a new context. I think that we will end on this thread, unless someone would like to add a word. For my part, I would like to thank you very much for participating in the discussion, for accepting our invitation. I hope this will not be the last discussion of this kind. I am very sorry for any imperfections in the moderation, but I still can't get used to this form of contact with live, human persons.

PK.: I would like to thank all the participants. It's been a very interesting discussion. I would also like to thank Professor Marek Krajewski, who was an excellent moderator, even though our discussion was held remotely, as befits a debate on a pandemic.