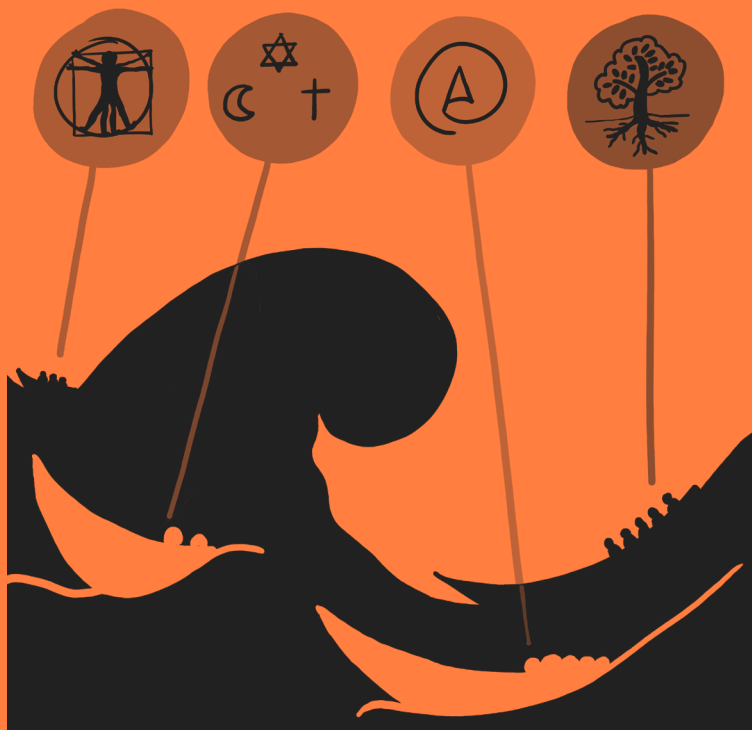


The Coronavirus: Mirror of Beliefs

Josep F. Mària



THE CORONAVIRUS: MIRROR OF BELIEFS

Josep F. Mària

Introduction	3
The Genesis of Beliefs in the West	6
The Coronavirus As a Syndemia	11
Believing in Nature	13
Believing in Humanity	16
Believing in God	20
Having No Beliefs	23
Conclusion	25
Notes	30

Josep F. Mària sj. PhD in Economics (Universitat de Barcelona). Degree in Theology (Facultat de Teologia de Catalunya). Professor of Corporate Social Responsibility and Social Analysis at ESADE. He is a member of the Cristianisme i Justícia team.

Publisher: Cristianisme i Justícia. Roger de Llúria, 13, 08010 Barcelona (Spain)
Tel. +34 93 317 23 38, e-mail: info@fespinal.com, www.cristianismeijusticia.net
Editor: Santi Torres i Rocaginé. Translated by Joseph Owens
Cover drawing: Roger Torres. Layout: Pilar Rubio Tugas
Printed by: Ediciones Rondas S.L. Legal Deposit: B 22735-2022
ISBN: 978-84-9730-526-6, ISSN: 2014-6566, ISSN (virtual edition): 2014-6574
December 2022

INTRODUCTION¹

In the month of March 2020, when the coronavirus crisis began in Barcelona, an acquaintance of mine heard someone on the street say: “If God exists, why does he allow the coronavirus?” *Touché!* It is as if the person were saying: “This coronavirus cannot be explained with the God preached to us by the priests and the Church.”

This serious challenge to those who believe in God is repeated every time a person or a community experiences significant suffering, especially in Western societies. In these societies most citizens assume that all events have rational explanations: they believe in a world that is “disenchanted” (M. Weber). They think that events that can be explained by scientific reason should not be explained by the intervention of angels, demons, or divinities. Nevertheless, the question about the ultimate meaning of evil remains. As a result, unless they have completely ruled out belief in God, they ask questions about how God can

coexist with suffering. Other societies, which remain more “enchanted” and less rational than Western society, do not pose that question: they respond to an unfortunate event by undertaking some ritual action so that God, or some other divine force, removes or corrects the misfortune that has befallen them.

In our highly rational Western society things are different. European philosophers and theorists of the 17th and 18th centuries proposed to answer this question about God and suffering by discoursing on theodicy (meaning “justification of God”). The first famous work on this topic was Leibniz’s *Theodicy, an Essay on the Goodness*

of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil (1710), and thinkers such as Voltaire, Rousseau, and Kant continued the discussion. The problem had already been raised by the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers. Lactantius (245-325 AD), for example, formulated it in terms of a trilemma:

Either God wants to eliminate evil from the world but cannot do so, *or* he can eliminate it but does not want to, *or* he neither wants to nor can eliminate it. If he wants to but cannot, he is powerless. If he can and does not want to, he does not love us. If he neither wants to nor can do so, he is not the good God, and moreover he is powerless. If he can and he does want to eliminate evil—and only this option is fitting for him as God—then where does real evil come from, and why does he not eliminate it?²

In this booklet, however, we will not reason from theodicy because this line of thought uses mainly theoretical reason, but in practice we ordinary humans use also other resources within our reach, resources that are not always rational or coherent with one another. For example, we try to deny the evidence of suffering, or we try to suppress its symptoms without asking about the root causes, or we try to keep a cool head, or we evade the problem (even if just for a short while), or we consult the horoscope or the tarot cards, or finally, we alternate between cursing and imploring God, doctors, politicians, or Mother Nature.

All these actions respond to a broad, heterogeneous set of resources that we humans carry within us and use: we ordinarily conceive of them

in terms of *belief*. What we mean by *belief* is “faith in or adherence to God or to some notion of ultimate reality” (Charles Taylor). Every belief, according to Lluís Duch, consists of three poles that interact in a complex way:

- a) an experience of emotional contact with God (or some notion of ultimate reality);
- b) which is given linguistic expression in *ideas*;
- c) and bodily expression in *rites* or *actions*.

In this conception, theodicy, with its focus on theoretical reason, would correspond only to ideas. However, the complexity of belief forces us to examine actions as well, especially in situations where individual or collective suffering has shaken the ground beneath our feet. Ortega y Gasset compares beliefs to a type of substratum, largely unconscious, by which we approach reality and adhere to God or other notions of ultimate reality.

Such beliefs become visible—expressing themselves in ideas or actions—when individuals or communities are subjected to events that disrupt their lives. The postulate of this booklet is that the coronavirus has shaken up contemporary Western beliefs and has become a mirror in which those beliefs are reflected.

Western beliefs are quite diverse. Their most recent forms originated in the 16th century, when Christianity lost its unity and its monopoly as a system of belief. This loss of unity resulted from various factors: the successes of modern science, the emergence of autonomous ethics independent of the

God hypothesis, and the growth of secular states beyond the control of religion (Charles Taylor). From that point on, both intellectuals and ordinary people begin to believe in nature and humanity as ultimate realities, as existing apart from or in opposition to the God of Christian tradition. Most recently, during the last quarter of the 20th century, many people became disenchanted in turn with the promises and alleged successes of modernity: postmodernists disseminated a type of skepticism that led some to declare, “I don’t believe in anything” or “I have no beliefs.”

This wide spectrum of beliefs and unbeliefs in the West has, since January 2020, been reflected in the mirror of the coronavirus. We will begin our description and analysis of this reflection by examining four families of beliefs, which can be expressed in the following general statements: “I be-

lieve in nature,” “I believe in humanity,” “I believe in God,” and “I have no beliefs.” We will try to describe the concrete forms that beliefs have taken within these four families as they face the pandemic, an event that has disrupted the health, the economy, and the daily lives of people in the West and throughout the world.

In chapter 2 we will examine in more detail the idea of *belief* and the development of the four families of beliefs in contemporary Western societies: God, humanity, nature and non-belief. In chapter 3 we will present the coronavirus pandemic, defining it as a contingent event. In chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 we will examine the interactions of the pandemic with each of the families of belief. Finally, in chapter 8 we will draw some conclusions about nature, humanity, and God and also about the structure of the various forms of belief.

THE GENESIS OF BELIEFS IN THE WEST

As we stated in the introduction, what we mean by belief is “faith in, or adherence to, God or some notion of ultimate reality.”³

Beliefs

Any belief is made up of three poles⁴ that interact with one another in a complex way:

- a) an experience of emotional contact with God (or some notion of ultimate reality);
- b) which is given linguistic expression in *ideas*;
- c) and bodily expression in *rites* or *actions*.

There is much variation in the consciousness of individuals regarding their beliefs and the interaction of their three poles. Ortega y Gasset held that ideas are occurrences that become conscious in our mind, whereas beliefs have unconscious components and we can rely on beliefs without being fully aware of them.⁵ Moreover, beliefs

are social constructions transmitted by the societies in which we have lived.⁶ It is this bedrock nature of beliefs that makes them the starting point for our approach to reality and our adherence to God or to some ultimate reality.

Beliefs become visible when individuals or communities are submitted to events that cause them distress. Ortega writes:

Deep down, human beings are credulous; in other words, the deepest stratum of our lives, the one that sustains and supports all the others, is made up of beliefs. These, then, are the solid ground on which we toil. [...] In this basic area of our beliefs, however, huge holes of doubt open up here or there, like hatches. In such a moment we have to say that doubt, true doubt, that which is not simply methodical or intellectual, is a form of belief and be-

longs to the same stratum as belief in the architecture of life. We exist also in doubt, except that in this case our being has a frightening character. It is the very negation of stability. We suddenly feel that the earth itself is dissolving under our feet, and we seem to be falling, falling into a void without being able to help ourselves, without being able to do anything to affirm ourselves, to stay alive.⁷

The postulate of this booklet is that the coronavirus has shaken contemporary Western beliefs and caused them to reveal their true nature. Already in 1947 Albert Camus was warning us of the profoundly disturbing power of epidemics:

Ah, if it had been just an earthquake! A good shaking, and then no more talk of the matter. ... The dead and the living are counted, and the case is closed. But this wretched plague! Even those who don't have it seem to carry it in their hearts.⁸

The Christian Tradition As a Western Belief

The Christian tradition has been foundational in the genesis of Western beliefs. With the coronavirus as a background, we will describe Christianity in terms of *metacosmic soteriology* and *creation*.

Metacosmic soteriology. The theologian Aloysius Pieris distinguished between two great historical families of beliefs: cosmic religions and metacosmic soteriologies. Cosmic religions are those in which believers deify nat-

ural forces and tribal ancestors, considering them as “notions of ultimate reality” (C. Taylor). Nevertheless, in these religions God, nature, and humanity are not clearly distinguished from one another.

In ancient times, people related primarily with the forces of nature, such as sun, rain, moon, wind, and fire. They depended on these forces for their lives and for activities such as hunting or agriculture. The forces were somehow “divinized” and personalized. Divinization of ancestors was added later. People related to their ancestors through rituals, making them offerings and expecting favors in return. When they were aware of having offended the ancestors, they made propitiation. There were specialists who directed these rituals.⁹

In contrast, the metacosmic soteriologies conceive of an Absolute Being that exists beyond natural forces and that is the origin of all human beings, including all the tribes and their ancestors.

Historians of religion speak of an Axial Age around the fifth century B.C., when religious thinkers emerged around the world with a teaching that moved beyond the cosmic sphere toward a metacosmic level and an Absolute Being. The Chinese spoke of the Dao—the Way. In the Upanishads the Indians evoked and reflected on the Atman-Brahman—the Absolute Being. Buddha spoke of the state of Nirvana, about which he preferred to remain silent. The post-exilic prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah proclaimed

Yahweh to be the one supreme God of all peoples, casting aside all other gods. With these figures we have reached the metacosmic level.¹⁰

This second family of beliefs corresponds to the *metacosmic* soteriologies: it seeks the salvation of believers (*soteriology* means “word of salvation”) more than it does an explanation of the world or the cosmos. Metacosmic believers sense that their *experience* of emotional contact with divinity is *ineffable*: no language can adequately express it. For example, an Upanishad written five to seven centuries before Christ, when the Hindu tradition was beginning to move toward a metacosmic soteriology, refers to the divinity as a Spirit that reflects ineffability and transcendence (that which is “meta” or “beyond”):

The Spirit is not this, not that. It is incomprehensible; it cannot be understood. It is immortal; it cannot die. It has no binding links; it is free, free from all ties. It is beyond suffering and fear. Those who know this are not brought to sorrow or happiness according to the evil or good they have done; they go beyond both. What is done or not done causes no affliction. Those who know this and have found peace are in control of themselves; they patiently endure, and they achieve calm concentration. They perceive the Spirit in themselves and see the Spirit in everything. (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*)

Christianity can be considered a metacosmic soteriology insofar as it understands belief more as relationship to God than as understanding of the

cosmos. A Christian theologian said that “the intention of the Holy Spirit [in inspiring the Bible] is to teach us how *to go to heaven*, not how *the heavens go*.”¹¹ Similarly, the Judeo-Christian tradition considers the experience of God as ineffable: “*Si comprehendis, non est Deus* [If you understand, it is not God],” said Saint Augustine. This relative separation of God from nature and humanity is made explicit in the idea of creation, and it has allowed for modern science to emerge as a way of explaining the cosmos.

The idea of creation in Jewish tradition is interpreted as an act by which God limits his own power and allows the emergence of a sphere in which humans are the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26) and have the rest of creation (nature) at their disposal (Genesis 1:28). The Christian tradition especially values the human condition because God the Son has become a human being in Jesus Christ (John 1:1-17). At the same time, it integrates the cosmos into humanity’s creative and saving relationship with God *through* Jesus Christ: “All things were made through him [the Word]” and “God created all things through him” (Colossians 1:16). However, the consistency, meaning, and fullness of created reality do not close themselves off into a form of pantheism; rather, they are understood “in, through, and for Christ.”¹² This “in, through, and for Christ,” who proceeds from the Father and returns to the Father, means that creation is not yet complete but is moving toward its fullness. This fullness, toward which humanity and the cosmos are being led by the Holy Spirit, will be the recapitulation of all creation in Christ

(Ephesians 1:10). The existence of evil and suffering—as evidenced in the coronavirus—show precisely that fact: creation is still in process:

Creation justifies itself and justifies its Creator in the new creation; the *eschaton* will be both “theodicy,” the justification of God, and “cosmodicy,” the justification of the world and of history, with the unparalleled redemption of its negativities.¹³

Contemporary Western Beliefs

The four families of contemporary Western beliefs originated in the 16th and 17th centuries with modern rationalism and the Enlightenment. This latter formulated first a belief in God without religion (deism) and then proposed a humanism apart from God.¹⁴ As a result, many people in the West today can say, “I believe in humanity,” with the implication that they perhaps do not believe in God.

During the 19th and 20th centuries the Christian understanding of human history as impelled by the Spirit was confronted with the theories of both biological (Darwin) and cosmic (Einstein) evolution. These complementary scientific theories revealed that our universe has known “a cosmic evolution of 14 billion years and a terrestrial evolution of life of 4 billion years.”¹⁵ This confrontation of science with religion has given rise to three attitudes: 1) atheistic scientism, which admits only the authority of science; 2) fundamentalist creationism, which rejects scientific authority; and 3) a middle way that advocates dialogue between science

and religion based on the idea of an “evolutionary creation.” The first two attitudes have put those who affirm, “I believe in science, but not in God” in conflict those who affirm, “I believe in God, but not in science.” The third attitude preserves the Christian concept of a *continuous creation*, while extending it over billions of years, and it also emphasizes the autonomy of creation with respect to God: “God makes things so that they can evolve and develop on their own.”¹⁶

The humanism of the Enlightenment formulated an anthropology that understood people as rational beings who repress their feelings.¹⁷ Encouraged by their belief in the progress of humanity, people reduce themselves to *homo economicus* (unilateral economic humans). Human progress, however, has not fully respected either nature or human solidarity. In response to this failure, the romanticism of the 19th century gave priority to feeling over reason, and it demanded that nature be duly respected and not merely mutilated and destroyed in the service of “progress.” In keeping with this tradition of venerating nature, some contemporary Western citizens affirm, “I believe in nature,” with the implication that they perhaps do not believe either in humanity or in God. Today we can identify certain forms of environmentalism or naturism that are based on faith in nature as the ultimate reality.

Finally, in the last quarter of the 20th century, a new family of beliefs appeared, known as “postmodernism.” The postmodernists were reacting against the violence produced both by religions and by the supposedly enlightened liberal and socialist hu-

manists. For example, in the novel *The Name of the Rose* by postmodern writer Umberto Eco, the protagonist utters a warning typical of postmodern relativism: “Flee from the prophets, Adso, and from those who are willing to die for the truth, because they can cause the death of many others, often before causing their own, and sometimes instead of their own.” This sort of relativistic view of religion and modern

humanism has led some contemporary Western citizens to affirm, “I have no beliefs.”

But before we examine these various types belief, we will present the COVID-19 pandemic as a phenomenon that reflects these beliefs. The pandemic is truly a contingent event, a fruit of hazard happening that resulted from the convergence of very diverse causal sequences.

THE CORONAVIRUS AS A SYNDEMIA

What is the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic that has mirrored—uncompromisingly and sharply—our contemporary Western beliefs?

Regardless of where it originated, COVID-19 is a type of zoonosis, the mutation of a virus that affects one animal and then affects another animal. The transfer of the disease to humans from other animals (probably bats) was made possible by human action. The United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) reports that the following human actions are the principal origins of various zoonoses: deforestation and other changes in land use, illegal and poorly regulated trade in wildlife, intensified agricultural and livestock production, increased antimicrobial resistance, and climate change. For this reason, some scientists believe that the fight against COVID-19 cannot be limited simply to restoring human health, but must extend also to restoring the ecological balance.

The spread of the pandemic is both a biological and a social phenomenon. The rapidity of the spread is due first of all to the increased international mobility of people from different countries. A second reason it has spread swiftly is that some governments, yielding to pressure from certain economic powers, have opted for less drastic measures of confinement. A third factor contributing to the spread is the way people relate socially in certain areas. A final factor is that the public and private health systems in some areas were deficient and have resulted in more deaths. In any case, those most negatively affected by the pandemic are the members of the most vulnerable social groups, such as African-Americans in the U.S.

This widespread disease can therefore be called a “syndemic,” in the

sense that various causes, both natural and social, have converged in its propagation. One way of explaining it philosophically is in terms of a “chance” or “contingent event.” Regarding chance, J. Ferrater Mora states:

The distinction between chance and luck corresponds roughly to the distinction between what happens “accidentally” in natural phenomena and what happens “accidentally” in human affairs. The accidental is that which is not necessary, but that does not imply that it is absurd or inexplicable. Both chance and luck designate exceptional events that take place when independent causal series intersect. When a squirrel eats an ear of corn, two causal series have crossed: the series “life and movement of a squirrel” and the series “growth of the ear of corn,” producing the exceptional and unexpected (but not inexplicable) event called *chance*.¹⁸

Using the term “contingent event,” theologian Walter Kasper states the following about the coronavirus:

Even though human errors may have been made in the beginning, [the CO-

VID-19 pandemic] is not a crisis produced by humans, but a natural catastrophe of global dimensions. It is what is philosophically called a contingent event, that is, an event that is possible but not necessary by virtue of a natural law. Something has happened that is not necessary, but obviously possible; it is something that happens to us and “touches” us (*contingere*).¹⁹

The sun rises every day and we are not surprised: it is a *necessary* event. But it is not every morning that a pandemic like COVID-19 is declared. Here it is chance that has come into play, an intersection of independent causal series that ends up touching us: it is a *contingent* event (from the Latin word *contingere* = touch). The complexity of these converging causal series, coupled with the force with which the pandemic has touched us, leads us to formulate ideas and take actions that are based on our various beliefs. The coronavirus pandemic thus becomes a mirror of our beliefs.

What are the images being reflected in this mirror of the various families of belief in the West? This is what we want to examine from this point on.

BELIEVING IN NATURE

From a rational point of view, biological life and human life, as natural phenomena, are already *contingent events*: they result from the intersection of multiple series of independent causes.

If certain physical constants of nature (such as the force of gravity, the speed of light, the charge and mass of electrons, the intensity of nuclear interactions, Planck's constant, etc.) had only "a slightly different value, then the abundance of these nuclei [carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, and other atoms essential for life] would be much less than it is."²⁰ Moreover, the probability of there existing in our universe a planet suitable for life, having liquid water and maintaining a stable atmosphere that is neither too hot nor too cold, and does not crush its living inhabitants, is well below 2/100,000. Thus the Earth is a "quite an exceptional" planet.²¹

As far as the emergence of a single human life is concerned, the probability that any one of us would emerge just as we are is 1/1,000,000; that is

because there is one egg cell and some 1,000,000 sperm in each act of conception. And if you consider, besides, that the probability of your life is conditioned on that of your parents, then the probabilities become absolutely minuscule. We are all highly *contingent* beings.²²

The sense of wonder that we experience upon seeing both the goodness and the contingency of biological and human life has led some people to enthusiastically affirm, "I believe in nature."

Nevertheless, the coronavirus has forced these believers to ask questions, in the sense that it reveals a less friendly but quite necessary aspect of nature: *heterotrophy*. Heterotrophy simply means that many organisms survive only by feeding on other organisms, often causing their death.

A heterotrophic organism is one that cannot produce its own food and must instead take food from other sources of organic carbon, mainly animal or vegetable matter [...]. In other words, ours is a planet where creatures live off one another. The process often appears cruel and barbaric to the human eye, but the truth is that we live in a paradoxical creation, of which this is a central feature.²³

When heterotrophy is incorporated into the belief in nature, three variants of the belief appear: 1) some fantasize about nature, forgetting this fundamental characteristic; 2) others accept heterotrophy as a necessary law, extending it to human relations; and 3) still others endow nature with a will or a soul.

Believing in a fantasy-type nature that is totally good contrasts with believing in a humanity that is totally good. For believers in a fantasy-type nature, heterotrophy dismisses “all the Rousseauian fantasies that would have us believe that nature is peaceful and that violence has been introduced by humanity.”²⁴ Certainly, heterotrophy makes it difficult to believe in an all-good creator God, but it also makes it difficult to believe in a nature that is totally good (thus turning it into a fantasy). Charles Darwin was already expressing doubts about such a fantasy:

Darwin wrote to his friend Gray: “I cannot quite convince myself that an omnipotent and beneficent God would have created the ichneumonids with the explicit intention that they would consume the innards of living caterpillars.” [Ichneumonids lay their eggs inside living caterpillars, and the larvae,

after hatching, eat the still living caterpillar.] The great naturalist thus expressed his disgust at this phenomenon of predation. It is as if certain forms of predation go beyond the needs of survival and approach sadism.²⁵

Second, there are those who accept heterotrophy, but apply it without distinction to nature and humanity. For example, certain authors have interpreted the coronavirus as the earth’s reaction against the excess number of human beings on the planet: the least fit must be eliminated for the good of nature.

Behind the statement that human beings are a plague on the planet lies the idea that the ecological crisis will be solved by eliminating part of the population. According to this way of thinking, the excess number of human beings is seen as the cause of the crisis, and the death of a good number of them is the only way to restore the ecological balance. The question then is: who will die? [...] In a capitalist society it seems quite plausible that the criteria would be productivity and meritocracy, but such criteria would in reality only cover up the tremendous class violence against those at the bottom. The “disposable” people—such as the homeless, the undocumented migrants, or those living in shanty towns and slums—would most likely be ejected from the system.²⁶

Such social Darwinism falls into the naturalistic fallacy: it tries to pass off as *natural* (understanding “natural” as that which is *necessary*) a set of laws that regulate human relations, but

that are *contingent* and can be modified with changes in human behavior.

Finally, there is a third group, which attributes a will or a soul to nature; like those who adhered to what we have called the *cosmic religions*. Some authors in this group describe the coronavirus as a “cunning” pathogen that nevertheless “faces a dilemma”: “The faster it kills, the more difficulty it has in widening the scope of its expansion.”²⁷ Some people with this belief express the hope that nature (baptized by different names, one of them “Gaia”) will survive even after the extinction of human beings on Earth.

Gaia is a strong-headed lady—a system that has worked for over three bi-

llion years without people. The surface of this planet and its atmosphere will continue to evolve long after human beings and their prejudices have ended.²⁸ (Lynn Margulis, microbiologist)

We are not destroying nature; we are just co-creating a new nature in which there will be no place for us. Is not this pandemic an example of a sinister new nature? We shouldn’t worry too much about the survival of nature: it will survive, just changed beyond our recognition. (Slavo Žižek)²⁹

Our earth will survive—it has done so through several major crises in the past three to four billion years. . . . Creation will have an evolutionary future with or without us.³⁰

BELIEVING IN HUMANITY

We will describe here the ways in which the pandemic has mirrored the beliefs of those who today in the West claim to believe in humanity.

Believing in people practically

During the COVID-19 crisis, many people have been *practical believers in humanity*, in the sense that they have undertaken actions/rituals on behalf of other people, especially the victims of the pandemic. Perhaps without actually formulating their beliefs in ideas, they have risked their lives and health in order to care for the sick in hospitals: in their physical, mental, or spiritual needs. These practical believers in humanity include medical staff, cleaning personnel, pastors who accompany the dying or hospital staff who have connected these dying people with their relatives. Beyond the hospitals there are workers who provide essential services during confinement; there are teachers who help to normalize

their students's lives; there are companies that have changed their operations in order to produce personal protective equipment; there are volunteers who attend to the needs of the homeless; and there are politicians who exhaust themselves trying to manage a situation for which they have no reference points.

But there have also been *practical non-believers in humanity*. These include the economic sectors and the political forces that want to maintain economic activity at full steam, even though they know that more deaths would result, especially among the poor, than would be the case with prudent confinement. There are also the vaccine fraudsters and the companies (pharmaceutical or otherwise) that have abused their position to en-

rich themselves. Finally, there are citizens who have irresponsibly refused to quarantine, breaking the rules and helping to propagate consecutive waves of the virus.

So this practical belief in people leaves us with an ambiguous balance. At the end of his novel *The Plague*, Albert Camus states: “In the midst of plagues we learn that people do more things worthy of admiration than of contempt.”³¹ In any case, a certain *hope* has emerged; while it is perhaps poorly defined in terms of *ideas*, it is *experienced* and *practiced* as service. The motto that emerged during the first wave was “Everything is going to be alright.” This expression spread fast in Italy, in songs and posters hanging from balconies, and it has resonated widely in songs in various languages. A nurse in a Barcelona hospital used it to accompany the dying:

The ward is crowded, and there is constant noise from every direction, but Laia puts everything aside and sits next to him; she holds his hand tightly and closes her eyes. He is no longer alone. His breathing slows down. The wrinkles on his face disappear as the nurse caresses his hands gently. “Everything is going to be alright,” she fibs to him. He also knows that it isn’t true, but he clings to that hand that is connecting him with the world. It is his farewell.³²

Believing in the nation

“Everything is going to be alright.” Yes, but not for the biological lives of those who have died. Because people

die, collective beliefs have appeared, especially linked to the nation or the country.

Pandemics have the unique power of making death something collective and not individual. We die one by one, but when disease takes on the dimensions of an epidemic, we seem to be all dying together. ... The community feels threatened as a whole, and this shared feeling carries a very strong emotional charge.³³

These collective beliefs have been introduced into the narrative of the fight against COVID-19, conceiving it as if we were at war with an enemy. The German president called people to reject the military narrative and to treat the disease as a humanitarian crisis, but he has been the exception. In contrast, military officers in the United States and Spain have appeared in press conferences, not only legitimizing coercion but proclaiming eschatological victory, despite the failure that each death represents. This deceptive language was denounced by Vicenç Villatoro:

The use of the war metaphor exasperates me because it is not done in good faith. It is done to mobilize patriotic ardor, to legitimize a state of exception loaded with uniforms and medals, and to remind us that the state has a monopoly on the legal capacity to coerce. Not only that, but its aim is to prepare us for the proclamation of victory when the worst of the crisis is over, as if all the deaths that have occurred were the unavoidable toll required to achieve this glorious finale. Is this a victory

despite the death toll? No, it is defeat by body count.³⁴

Salvador Cardús commented on the same dishonesty with bitter irony:

We will always be consoled by the emotional proclamation of the Minister of Defense at the closing of the mortuary in Madrid: “They did not go alone: the army was with them.”³⁵

This belief in the nation (which is only a *part* of humanity) has been translated into practices that are inconsistent with international solidarity, such as the hoarding of medical supplies and vaccines or the refusal to accept the pandemic’s economic consequences. Donald Trump’s “America First” slogan has in practice had many more followers than those who have actually proclaimed it. Unfortunately, it has for the most part proven true that “the crisis humanity is going through is its inability to become a complete humanity” (Edgar Morin).

Believing in science

A variant of the believing in humanity takes the form of “believing in science.” What this involves is not so much believing that science is a form of knowledge that helps us solve problems, but rather trusting that science will solve all human problems and that it will grant us, sooner or later, victory over disease and death. Gianni Vattimo reflected on this belief in a short story:

The best scientists in the world come together to design the most powerful

computer ever known. They manage to finish it after years of dedication and a huge financial investment. To test it, they gather the most powerful leaders on earth. The oldest leader has the honor of asking the computer the first question: “Does God exist?” The screen flashes and the machine’s powerful voice reverberates in the room: “Yes, now!”

With the appearance of COVID-19, people’s belief in science has lessened: the inability of doctors to treat the disease adequately has made people feel that science will never overcome death. Also, our blind trust in science has led to the ecological deterioration that facilitated the emergence of this pandemic as a zoonosis:

One thing is certain: the [COVID-19] crisis should cure us once and for all of our naive trust in human progress. For a long time now we have assumed that the collateral damage of sustained economic growth would be compensated or minimized by the fruits of this same growth. Despite the evidence and the warnings of scientists, we convinced ourselves that we had nature under control.³⁶

However, with the passage of time, medical and scientific efforts have borne fruit: effective treatments have been found for those sick with Covid, and highly effective vaccines have been created. Thus, when this pandemic is compared with previous ones, some are reaffirmed in their belief in science as the ultimate reality. In the midst of the third wave, philosopher Josep Ramoneda enthusiastically wrote:

At times of great uncertainty in a society like ours, where the capacity of religious discourse to console has lost much of its strength, science has been since the beginning the great hope. Today, the most legitimate form of truth is the scientific, and we expect it to solve everything through its connections with medical practice and technology. Only science can redeem us. But as the pandemic drags on, the dystopian horizon suffocates spirits and gives rise to mistrust. [...] Still, science has undeniably won the game, and it will undoubtedly emerge stronger from this episode, especially when we gain some perspective and realize that, thanks to it, this pandemic will have been, despite everything, one of the mildest of human history. Saying that now, of course, sounds almost blasphemous.³⁷

Ramoneda's statement reveals two characteristics of "believing in sci-

ence." First, it shows that people's belief in science acts as a substitute for religious belief providing a source of hope (when "the capacity of religious discourse to console has lost much of its strength, science has become the great hope"). Second, the claim that "science has won the game" makes science into something worthy of our faith, our allegiance, and our hope. Science has gone from being a source of certain and useful knowledge to being an ultimate reality that must be obeyed without question or carping.³⁸ Certainly, to speak of "winning the game" requires us to forget all the fatalities now that we have "gained perspective and realize" that victory has been achieved. Let us note, then, that believing in science involves excluding an important part of humanity from its beneficial influence. Ramoneda seems to acknowledge this when he grants that talking about victory is somewhat *blasphemous*.

BELIEVING IN GOD

The coronavirus has given rise to several variants of the assertion “I believe in God” in the Western world, which is marked by the Judeo-Christian tradition.

First of all, some Christians have explained the coronavirus as a divine punishment: God taking revenge on those who transgress the norms of traditional morality. Their arguments encompass various fields of morality and public policy:

People theorize about the origin of COVID-19, with an amalgam including everything from divine revenge to satanic activity, and passing through the catastrophic consequences of a post-Christian Europe dominated by Islam and homosexuality, or a Chinese conspiracy against capitalism.³⁹

Such believers would heartily affirm, “I believe in a God who punishes infidels and protects only his faithful.”

Second, this type of explanation has reinforced in some people the belief that religious behavior can immunize us against the pandemic, with the result that some fundamentalist Jews and Christians simply ignore public health anti-contagion measures. Consequently, religious services have been held without precautions and without limiting numbers, and some of them have resulted in infections and deaths. Believers of this sort would affirm, “I believe in a God who allows me to ignore science.”

Third, fundamentalist beliefs have entered into a secret alliance with the economic interests of those who oppose confinement measures, thus reinforcing conduct that is contrary to medical recommendations:

The virus has opened the way for thousands of charlatan pastors to record provocative videos for their mostly poor and uneducated flocks, in which they preach that the only way to protect themselves and be cured “of this plague” is “by having faith and believing in God.”⁴⁰

In this variant of belief in God, the powers of capitalism use religion as the opium of the people to justify public policies favorable to the rich. By encouraging such belief, the rich are urging the poor: “Believe that God is a quack pharmacist, because that way we will continue to earn lots of money, even if you die.”

Finally, many believers and most Church authorities have tried to banish from people’s mind the image of a punishing God, and they have urged the faithful to obey the orders of doctors and government officials, to accompany the sick, and to care for the poor:

After closing down the Vatican to prevent it from being a source of contagion among pilgrims, the pope confined himself and invited millions of the faithful to do the same and obey health advice.⁴¹

When people in this category say, “I believe in God,” they are referring to a merciful, non-punitive God who in the face of suffering does not waste time talking, but silently goes to work. As the German theologian G. Augustin affirms:

In times of crisis it is perhaps better that we talk less *about* God with the people and more *with* God about the crisis.⁴²

For these believers it is not enough to say, “I believe in God”; they feel the need to ask theoretical and practical questions about *what* God they believe in. (Remember: belief = ideas + experience + practices.) If we don’t know what God we believe in, we reduce God to an idol:

If we have learned anything in recent times, even before the coronavirus crisis, it is that the problem of *idolatry* is more important than the problem of *atheism*. ... It is not enough to believe in God or to affirm generically that “God exists,” saying, for example, that “there’s *something*” or that “there’s no watch without a watchmaker.” It is also important to be fully aware of *what God we believe in*, because we may say that we believe in God, but what we end up worshiping is an idol: the work of our hands, with eyes that do not see, ears that do not hear, and a heart that does not feel. And it may be an idol that demands that we offer it innocent victims and bloody sacrifices.⁴³

Asking ourselves what God we believe in helps us to unmask idols so that we gradually discover a “God above God” (Meister Eckhart) or a “God beyond the God of theism” (P. Tillich).⁴⁴ Such a belief is similar to the *metacosmic soteriologies* we described in section 2; these are compatible with rational and scientific explanations of nature, and they produce coalitions between faith and science that strive for the integral welfare of every human being.

COVID-19 once again engages us in an intense dispute between scientific

advances and religion, between reason and faith. [...] No one disputes that we must focus our efforts on science and technology to defeat the tyranny of

COVID-19, but those efforts should be complemented by religion, which is the best way to prevent dehumanization, an ever-present danger to our society.⁴⁵

HAVING NO BELIEFS

If we start from our definition of *belief*, it turns out that saying “I don’t have any beliefs” makes no sense. Every person has profound affective experiences that are expressed linguistically in ideas and gesturally in rituals or actions. However, the postmodern context, which is skeptical of Christian and modern beliefs, considers “non-believers” to be all those who deny any belief that produces exclusion or violence. Postmodern skepticism can veer in two directions, either toward belief in money (runaway capitalism) or toward post-truth.

With the fall of the Berlin wall, global capitalism, which worships money as the new god, has had a free hand to impose itself on the world. With the advent of COVID-19, the economic powers have used religion to continue and consolidate their takeover, as we saw above when explaining how “belief in God” is preached to the poor in ways that turn religion into the opium of the people.

But postmodern skepticism has also drifted towards post-truth, which is strongly related to politics:

Post-truth ... is not exactly a lie; rather, it is a situation in which proven facts weigh less in the creation of public

opinion than do emotions, beliefs, and prejudices.⁴⁶

Competing fiercely with “proven facts” (science) are the populist narratives that appeal to “emotions, beliefs, and prejudices.” These narratives lead to a particular form of political belief, belief in the populist leader.

Populist leaders use post-truth in deploying their basic strategy: 1) simplifying the complexity of a society’s problems, 2) proposing to solve them by a simple action, and then 3) setting themselves up as saviors who are capable of carrying out that action effectively. This strategy is wrapped in

patriotic sentiments that make rational discussion impossible; they simply oppose “our own” (good people) to “those others” (bad, guilty people). The problem is that the “guilty people” end up being minorities that are easy to eliminate or discriminate against. For example, Duterte in the Philippines focused on eliminating small-scale drug traffickers while Donald Trump in the US vilified African Americans and Latin American immigrants. This type of strategy allows the ruling classes to maintain their privileges and stay out of the spotlight of public opinion, even though they are the principal generators of poverty and inequality.

Some populist leaders, confronted now with the coronavirus, have been exposed as frauds. The pandemic is a problem whose complexity exceeds the comprehension and the control of populist leaders. Moreover, its consequences—serious sickness and countless deaths—are visible and terrible. There is no way for populist leaders to claim that they will be the saviors who overcome the disease because that requires the participation of the entire population: *keeping distance, washing hands, wearing masks, providing good ventilation, etc.* Thus, if the society allows even a minimum of freedom of information, epidemiological data will unmask the lies and the failures of the populists. Many analysts point out that it was Trump’s poor management of COVID-19 that dislodged him from the US presidency. In early October 2020, a British journalist cited data to demonstrate Trump’s recklessness:

Only 16% of the world’s population believe that the American president did what was necessary, a percentage even lower than the 19% who believe the same of the Chinese president, Xi Jinping. [...]. Part of the damage to Trump’s reputation stems from his mismanagement of the coronavirus in the US. With more than 210,000 dead, America has a death rate five times greater than its share of the world’s population and more than 200 times greater than the per capita death rate of China, where the pathogen originated. A recent study of excess mortality found that the US had a death rate 28% higher than Europe, despite having a lower population density, a younger median age, and three extra weeks to anticipate the pandemic. It is tempting to place all the blame on Mr. Trump, and in fact, much of it does belong to him. He has refused to create a national coronavirus strategy, he has flouted social distancing, ... and he has intimidated US government scientists.⁴⁷

Populist leaders may gain popular support when their political arguments are set over against those of other politicians, but they are undone when their political arguments are set over against the number of fatalities. The laws of nature are inflexible, so that relativism and post-truth will end up crashing against them, as against a wall. It is no accident that one of the persons who collaborated in the defeat of Trump was not a politician, but a doctor: Anthony Fauci, the chief government epidemiologist.

CONCLUSION

This booklet is an attempt to discern how contemporary beliefs are reflected in the mirror of the coronavirus. The resulting images allow us to draw lessons in three areas: 1) in relation to nature, humanity, and God; 2) in relation to the forms of belief; and 3) in relation to Judeo-Christian tradition as a source of inspiration for beliefs.

Nature, humanity, and God

In relation to nature, we have seen that its laws are inflexible. Death comes to those who seek to evade them by practicing rites or taking action on the basis of beliefs that simplify the complexity of an event that is contingent—and very dangerous. This is the context in which we should understand the declaration of Pope Francis: “God always forgives; humans sometimes forgive; nature never forgives”. The laws of nature must be studied if we are to advance toward a healthier humanity and a more sustainable natural environment. The scientific community is using those laws of nature in order to

find medicines and vaccines against COVID-19.

In relation to humanity, we have learned that we humans are far from mastering nature with our science, even though science has prevented many deaths, compared to previous pandemics. We have also seen that we humans are beings who thrive on hope. We hope for a longer biological life; we hope for the survival of nature after the extinction of humanity; we hope for collective forms of survival such as the nation. We place our hope in human leaders who will save us, or in various versions of God. However that may be, many of these forms of hope reveal that “humanity unable to

become a complete humanity” (Edgar Morin).

In relation to God, we have seen that certain conceptions have turned God into a vindictive judge (the virus as divine punishment) or a quack pharmacist (strict morality is the needed medicine or vaccine). We have also seen that religion is being manipulated by the economic interests of the ruling classes, who have not hesitated to disparage confinement in the name of “freedom.” Finally, many Christians have known how to “keep quiet about God”: they silently show support and compassion for the victims, and they respect medical science and the measures it proposes. These Christians profess beliefs that understand Christianity as a metacosmic soteriology, for it hopes in an ineffable God made human in Jesus of Nazareth, a God whose Spirit leads cosmic and human history toward its fullness, and a God who has made us capable of using science toward that end.

Idoltrous forms of belief

Because the coronavirus is a *contingent* event (resulting from the interaction of various chains of independent causes), it has considerable complexity. Such complexity will produce sinister consequences if it is combated on the basis of beliefs or ideas that try to simplify it. As theologian Walter Kasper has stated: “The contingent world cannot be compressed into a system.”⁴⁸

Another name for *system* is *idol*. Out of a desire to control everything that threatens our lives, we humans succumb to the construction of idols,

which simplify the complexity of nature or humanity and which reduce the incomprehensible grandeur of the metacosmic divinity. And we do all this in order to justify actions that appear to protect us from threats.

These idols reinforce a type of belief that has often been a source of violence in human history. In historical periods prior to modernity, each religious belief was considered to be the only true one, and violence was often exercised against the believers of other religions. Since the start of modernity, this violence has been visited, with greater or lesser intensity, on those who affirm and celebrate their belief in God, or nature, or humanity in their different variants. In the mirror of the coronavirus, these beliefs take on the following forms:

- a) they reduce the complexity and incomprehensibility of nature, humanity, and God to a closed system of *ideas*;
- b) they prevent people from opening themselves to an *emotional experience* of harmonious relationship with nature, with humans, and with God;
- c) and they distract individuals and communities from performing *actions* or *rituals* that rebuild respectful relations with nature, fraternal relations with humanity, and hope-filled relations with a merciful and saving God.

This form of idolatry was explained by Francis Bacon 400 years ago when he spoke of the “idols of the tribe,”⁴⁹ and eventually it took the concrete form of belief in human progress:

We have a teleological conception of human experience, as if it were governed by laws that lead us inexorably to a better world. Human events, however, result from a sum of factors in which imponderables abound. No matter how much we appeal to the laws of God, history, or nature—or believe in unlimited material progress—the wiles of reason do not always work out well, and there is no happy ending either in Heaven or on Earth.⁵⁰

This type of idolatry has recently taken hold of people in the form of conspiracy theories, about which the historian Yuval Noah Hariri says the following:

Global conspiracy theories argue that a single sinister group is responsible for many of the events we see happening around the world. The identity of this dominant group can vary: some believe that the world is secretly ruled by freemasons, witches, or followers of satanism; others believe it is ruled by aliens, reptilian humanoids, or various other cabals. But the basic structure is always the same: the group controls almost everything that happens, even as it slyly conceals the power it exercises. [...] All these conspiracy theories have the same basic flaw: they assume that history is very simple. They start with the key premise that manipulating the world is relatively easy. A small group of people can understand, predict, and control everything from wars to technological revolutions to pandemics. [...] Of course, there are many real conspiracies in the world: individuals, corporations, organizations, churches, factions, and governments are constantly contriving to carry out all kinds

of plots. But their contradictory actions are precisely what makes it so difficult to predict and control the world as a whole.⁵¹

Even so, these various forms of idolatry end up not only sacrificing a large part of humanity but also ruthlessly degrading nature and mutilating the hope that keeps human hearts alive.

Harmonious forms of belief

The coronavirus pandemic has revealed forms of belief in which harmony becomes manifest, especially when attention is focused, not on ideas and idols, but on concrete people and their relations with one another, with nature, and with divinity. In the mirror of the coronavirus, these beliefs have shown a dynamic that can be described as follows:

- a) we have *acted* conjointly with people who go out of their way to save human lives and to preserve the planet on which they live;
- b) we have thus had the *emotional experience* of belonging, all of us, to a single human family, of being dependent on a nature that we must respect and enjoy, and ultimately of hoping in a God who overcomes individual, human, and cosmic death;
- c) and instead of rejecting or ridiculing the diverse *ideas* of people of different beliefs, we have begun to dialogue with them.

Even so, we are dealing with harmonious forms of belief that are both *incomplete* and *precarious*.

First, the beliefs are incomplete. How can a child who has lost a par-

ent to COVID-19 experience complete harmony? How can we experience complete harmony when we are aware of our undeniable mortality? How can we talk of harmony in the face of humanity's failure to "become a complete humanity" (E. Morin), seeing that governments have responded to COVID-19 by privileging their own citizens over those of other countries and have very often yielded to the pressure of the most powerful?

Second, the beliefs are precarious. Many of those who were saying that "everything is going to be alright" and who every evening applauded the front-line workers from their balconies have forgotten their own responsibility in transmitting the virus and have contributed to its expansion in the subsequent waves. If we Europeans did not learn after Auschwitz, are we going to learn now, after the coronavirus? Will we return to the "new normal" without changing our old attitudes towards the environment, attitudes that have accelerated the spread zoonoses, or without changing our old attitudes toward social injustice, attitudes that have caused an excess of deaths, especially among the poorest? Are we going to continue to trust science and progress blindly without taking personal responsibility—through our beliefs (experiences, ideas, actions)—for working day after day on behalf of harmony? Are we going to keep surrendering to the power of economic interests that do not hesitate to sacrifice or discard the poor? Are we going to continue to be fooled by populist leaders? Or, the contrary, are there values that we have practiced and defended both individually and collectively? I think of values like soli-

arity, humility, willingness to accompany those who suffer, appreciation of the importance of low-skilled but "essential" jobs in times of pandemic, etc.

Judeo-Christian inspiration

Our Judeo-Christian tradition can inspire us in putting these values into practice and encourage harmonious forms of belief. I find truly amazing the power of Isaiah's prophecy, which is clearly aligned with the metacosmic soteriologies:

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth [...] Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious. (Isaiah 11:1-10)

We note that Isaiah describes a new threefold harmony: 1) harmony among all humans (“a signal to the peoples,” “he will decide with equity for the meek”); 2) harmony in nature beyond heterotrophy (“The wolf will live with the lamb; the leopard will lie down with to the kid”, “the newly weaned one will stretch out his hand over the viper’s den”); and 3) a trusting relationship of all creation with God (“the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord”).

Christianity associates Isaiah’s Spirit of the Lord with the Spirit of Jesus of Nazareth, who works in human and cosmic history with the hope of achieving ever greater harmony:

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the

Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. (Romans 8,22-24a)

In terms of *experience* and *action*, the harmonious forms of belief can be understood in diverse ways: some understand experience and action as the fruits of the Spirit of God; others, as a manifestation of the profound energies of nature; others, as the burst of joy one feels in being fully human; and others, according to the conceptions of their respective non-Judeo-Christian religious traditions.

Whatever their inspiration, these forms of belief will not flourish by adhering to the reductions that make them idolatrous; they will flourish only by dialoguing with one another about the many situations that threaten the lives of people or the health of the planet. No matter how dire the situation (even if it’s a coronavirus pandemic), this dialogue of beliefs (experience, action, and ideas) will help to bring cosmic and human history to its fullness.

1. The author sincerely thanks the members of the CJ Theological Seminar in the 2020-21 academic year for their comments on and discussion of the various drafts of this booklet.
2. RUIZ DE LA PEÑA, Juan Luis (1988). *Teología de la creación*. Santander: Sal Terrae, p. 162.
3. TAYLOR, Charles (2007). *A Secular Age*. Cambridge: Belknap-Harvard, p. 1.
4. “Religious phenomena are always structured on two levels (*paliers*): a primary level, which is an intense and astonishing experience of emotional contact with the divine principle; and a secondary level, in which the primary experience is socialized and rationalized, giving rise to differences both in beliefs and in cults and rites.” DUCH, Lluís (2001). *Armes espirituals i materials: religió*. Montserrat: Publicacions de l’Abadia de Montserrat, p. 82. What Duch calls “beliefs” is what we (following José Ortega y Gasset) call “ideas.”
5. ORTEGA Y GASSET, José (1934). *Ideas y creencias*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial.
6. In this sense, the set of beliefs that coexist in a person can be compared to Alfred Schütz’s idea of “the world taken for granted”: “Like their actions, the emotions of individuals and their interpretation of themselves are defined for them by society, and this is their cognitive gateway to the universe that surrounds them. Alfred Schütz synthesized this reality in the expression, ‘The world that is taken for granted,’ referring to the system of apparently self-evident and self-validating assumptions about the world that each society engenders in the course of its history. This socially determined worldview is already specified, at least in part, in the language that the society uses.” BERGER, Peter (1992). *Introducción a la sociología*. Mexico: Limusa, p. 165.
7. ORTEGA Y GASSET (1934). *Op. cit.*
8. CAMUS, Albert (1947). *La peste*. Paris: Gallimard-Folio, p. 109.
9. AMALADOSS, Michael (2016). *Experiencing God in India*. Anand, Gujarat Sahita Prakash, p. 23.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
11. GARCIA DONCEL, Manuel (2010). “‘Creación! pero ‘creación evolutiva’,” *Iglesia viva*, p. 242. April-June, 27. (Italics are ours). The theologian is Cardinal Baronio, surely inspired by Saint Augustine.
12. RUIZ DE LA PEÑA, Juan Luis (1988). *Op. cit.*, p. 76.
13. RUIZ DE LA PEÑA, Juan Luis (1988). *Op. cit.*, p. 84.
14. See TAYLOR, Charles (2007). *Op. cit.*, chapters 6 and 7.
15. GARCIA DONCEL, Manuel (2010). *Op. cit.*, p. 28. “What was there ‘before’ the Big Bang? We know that the universe is 13.77 billion years old. Beyond that, everything is opaque; there are only unprovable theories.” Jon Marcaide, astrophysicist, in *La Vanguardia* (July 23, 2021), p. 64. In relation to the categories of time and space, Raimon Panikkar argues: “Time has no end because the end is itself temporal [...]. Space is space because the limit of space is itself spatial.” *Christophany: The Fullness of Man*. (2004). New York: Orbis Maryknoll, p. 140.
16. GARCIA DONCEL, Manuel (2010). *Op. cit.*, p. 35.
17. MÀRIA, Josep F. (2020). “Más allá del yo protegido.” *Razón y fe*, 1446, pp. 57-68.
18. FERRATER MORA, Jose (1971). *Diccionario de filosofía*. Buenos Aires: Ed. Sudamericana, Vol. I, “azar,” p. 169.
19. KASPER, Walter (2020). “El coronavirus como

- interrupción: suspensión y salida,” in KASPER, Walter, and AUGUSTIN, George (eds.), *Dios en la pandemia*. Santander: Sal Terrae, p. 18.
20. JOU, David (2008). *Déu, cosmos, chaos*. Barcelona: Viena Edicions, p. 116.
 21. JOU, David (2008). *Op. cit.*, p. 119.
 22. JOU, David (2008). *Op. cit.*, p. 147.
 23. O’MURCHU, Diarmuid (2020). “The Death and Resurrection of St Corona(virus),” *A Call to Action*.
 24. NOGUES, Ramon M. (1997). *El mal físic i el dolor: corrupció de la naturalesa?* Barcelona: Editorial Claret, p. 31.
 25. NOGUES, Ramon M. (1997). *Op. cit.*, pp. 30-31.
 26. MARTINEZ, Laila. “¿A quién vamos a matar?” *El salto*.
 27. MARCH, Mariano (2020). “Pandèmies: un risc existencial per a la humanitat,” *La Vanguardia* (April 14), p. 28, and RAMONET, Ignacio (2020), “La pandemia y el sistema mundo,” *Le Monde diplomatique*, pp. 5-6.
 28. O’MURCHU (2020). *Op. cit.*
 29. BARRANCO, Justo (2021). “Zizek torna a la pandemia,” *La Vanguardia* (January 30), pp. 34-35.
 30. O’MURCHU (2020). *Op. cit.*
 31. CAMUS (1947). *Op. cit.*, p. 279.
 32. LLIMÓS, Albert (2020). “La mà de la infermera,” *Ara* (April 7), p. 11.
 33. RAMONEDA, Josep (2020). “Pandèmia, salut i llibertat,” *Ara* (May 20), p. 40.
 34. VILLATORO, Vicenç (2020). “No és una guerra,” *Ara* (April 20), p. 2.
 35. CARDUS, Salvador (2020). “Victòries del nacionalisme espanyol,” *Ara*, (April 28), p. 40.
 36. FISCHER, Joschka (2020). “Responsabilitat o ruïna,” *Ara* (July 3), p. 20.
 37. RAMONEDA, Josep (2021). “Vacunes: de la ciència a la política,” *Ara* (January 27), p. 40.
 38. This distinction corresponds to two meanings of the word “belief,” which can be differentiated by referring to the usage in Latin. The first sense, “belief in science” is formulated in Latin as *credere scientiae* and means “belief in what science says,” because it is true and useful. The second sense is formulated in Latin as *credere in scientiam* and means “complete trust in science,” without questioning or interpretation.
 39. PIERA, Joaquim (2020). “Bolsonaro troba in els evangèlics l’altaveu contra el confinament,” *Ara* (April 20), p. 16.
 40. *Ibid*
 41. (2020). “Presentación,” *Manresa*, vol. 92, p. 211. See the extraordinary exhortation of Pope Francis on March 27, 2020, given in Saint Peter’s Square in the Vatican.
 42. AUGUSTIN, George (2020). “Dar testimonio de la vida en un mundo de muerte,” in KASPER and AUGUSTIN (2020), *op. cit.*, p. 68.
 43. GIMÉNEZ, Josep (2020). “Creer en Dios en tiempos del Covid-19,” *Manresa*, vol. 92, p. 229.
 44. See HALIK, Tomás (2020). “La pandemia como experiencia ecuménica,” in KASPER and AUGUSTIN (2020). *Op. cit.*, p. 94.
 45. RIERA, Felix (2020). “Covid-19 i religió,” *La Vanguardia* (June 2), p. 21.
 46. ALVARO, Francesc-Marc (2020). “El legado de la mentira,” *La Vanguardia* (November 5), p. 30.
 47. LUCE, Edward (2020). “Trump’s debate is accelerating decline in America’s standing,” *Financial Times* (October 2).
 48. KASPER (2020), *op. cit.*, p. 22.
 49. “Tribal idols are found throughout the entire human race, and they are legion: the belief that Nature has more order and regularity than it really has, the tendency to cling to adopted opinions, the harmful influences on our will and affections, the incompetence and delusions of the senses, the aspiration to create abstractions and to grant reality to things that are merely desired or imagined.” FERRATER MORA, *op. cit.*, vol. I, “ídolo,” p. 908.
 50. RAMONEDA, Josep (2020). “Psicologia i política del desconfinament,” *Ara* (June 17), p. 40.
 51. HARARI, Yuval Noah (2020). “Quan el món sembla a gran conspiració,” *Ara* (November 23), p. 25.

Cristianisme i Justícia (Lluís Espinal Foundation) is a study center that was created in Barcelona in 1981. It brings together a team of volunteer scholars and activists who desire to promote social and theological reflection that will contribute to the transformation of social and ecclesial structures. It is part of the network of Faith-Culture-Justice Centers of Spain and also of the European Social Centers of the Society of Jesus.

Booklets CJ

- 177. *Vulnerable Bodies*. J. Laguna
- 178. *Living Better with Less*. J. Carrera
- 179. *The Pandemic Shock*. O. Mateos
- 180. *Why Haiti?* P. Farràs
- 181. *Being Christian in Europe?* V. Codina
- 182. *Toward a (Counter)Culture of Reconciliation*. G. Bilbao, I. Sáez
- 183. *God in Liquid Times*. Theology Seminar of CJ
- 184. *Wasting Food*. J. C. Romero, J. Tatay
- 185. *Recognition of LGBTIQ+ Persons in the Church*. M. Escribano, E. Vilà
- 186. *The Coronavirus: Mirror of Beliefs*. J. F. Mària

Lluís Espinal Foundation sends its Booklets free of charge to those who ask for them. If you are interested in receiving the Booklets in your house, ask them at:

Cristianisme i Justícia

Roger de Llúria, 13. 08010 Barcelona (Spain)
+34 93 317 23 38 • info@fespinal.com
www.cristianismeijusticia.net

All booklets can be downloaded from internet:
www.cristianismeijusticia.net/en/cj-booklets

