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**‘Covid – 19 – IMPACT ON CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE,
PHILOSOPHY AND EDUCATION’**

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SHAHAB YAR KHAN

Life of Wisdom

**'Lest the wise world should look into your moan
And mock you with me after I am gone.'**¹

Life of wisdom is always equipped with singularly sympathetic approach towards the world around. Life is not a philosophical problem; it is a relationship with the environment that one lives in and it is an understanding of one's limitations within that environment. Bertrand Russell once wrote:

'Knowledge, traditionally, has been viewed from within, as something which we observe in ourselves rather than as something which we can see others displaying. When I say that it has been so viewed, I mean that this has been the practice of philosophers in ordinary life, people have been more objective. In ordinary life, knowledge is something which can be tested by examination, that is to say, it consists in a certain kind of response to a certain kind of stimulus. This objective of viewing knowledge is, to my mind, much more fruitful than the way which has been customary in philosophy. I mean that, if we wish to give a definition of 'knowing', we ought to define it as a manner of reacting to the environment, not as involving something (a 'state of mind') which only the person who has knowledge can observe. It is because I hold this view that I think it best to begin with Man and his environment, rather than with those matters in which the observer and the observed must be the same person. Knowing, as I view it, is a characteristic which may be displayed in our reactions to our environment.'²

¹ Shakespeare, William. Sonnet 71

² Russell, Bertrand. *Outline of My Philosophy*, Cox and Wyman Ltd., 1994. P.

In our age, however, environment and Nature are discussed and treated like the 'public art'. It has become a part of the fashionable life style to speak of environmental crisis, global warming, climate change on every possible forum available and occasionally stage a rally with few likeminded 'aware-ones' holding placard to save the earth.

Environment, however, is much bigger a problem and will never be solved by banners, slogans and, even, by the COP26 summits bringing nations together to accelerate action towards meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement. The recently held, COP26 summit 2021, understandably, was a terrible failure as well. Glaciers are melting; ancient civilizations are on the verge of extinction and the sea level is about to reach the point of 'no return' when we are holding conferences, enjoying luncheons and having photo-sessions with smiles. Our 'beloved' home, 'this goodly earth'³, is on track to warm by 2.1–2.4 degrees Celsius even if the targets set for 2030 are fully met. Rise in global temperature is already causing havoc in places like the Subcontinent and as a result 'things' frozen for thousands of years are no longer 'frozen'. Already, it has been observed recently, in the north of the Canadian Arctic, permafrost, despite the temperatures around minus fourteen degree Celsius, is melting from the top. Sea level is rising for sure as a consequence but another immediate threat hovers over the horizon, viruses from deep slumber under the ice sheet are reviving. Could Covid-19 be a result of the melting glaciers in China and the Himalayas!

In the following articles, many dimensions of the impact of Covid-19 are covered by the participants of the seminar. Despite the lack of literature available in the libraries about the ongoing

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³ Hamlet, Act 2 Scene 2.

crisis, very subtle and deep observations made by the speakers give the present collection the stature of a valuable record-book. We have registered here our concerns, our fears and our resolve. It is the way the Bosnian youth and the people, like myself, in direct contact with the youth see the crises of Covid-19 tearing apart the mask on the face of our civilization to expose all our crookedness and deformity; as a creature we are left with very little to claim vice-regency of the affairs of this world. Who can forget ever that with the rise in the number of the Covid 19 related cases in the USA in 2020 and later in 2021 with the devastation in India, the only other thing which gained momentum with the first and the second surge of the virus was the rise in the activities of various kinds of mafias, the humans versions of viruses. Situations in the USA and India are only the test cases and can only suggest the level of chaos in other places which do not happen to be as transparent as the greatest democracy in the world, the USA or the largest democracy in the world, India. The pandemic has drastically impacted crime rates across the USA. Media reports constantly document violent crimes rising in several cities and despite a downward trend in minor offences, obviously due to mandatory stay-at-home orders at the end of March 2020, homicide and intimate partner violence have increased.⁴ Black market also 'flourished' during the early phase of the pandemic. From groceries and medicines to toilet papers everything disappeared from the shelves of the markets in many states; black marketeers came forward to replace the vacuum with prices of things for daily use, soaring from 8 to 43 times more the usual rate. Eighty-five percent increase in gun-sale could not be without impact either and the increase in homicide needs to be related to this phenomenon as well.

⁴ Ashby MPJ. *Initial evidence on the relationship between the corona virus pandemic and crime in the United States*. *Crime Science*. 2020;9(6):1–16.

In India, the other end of the world, corruption is reported in almost everything that one can possibly imagine. From the purchase of ventilator to the supply of oxygen cylinders to major hospitals and from the wood required for burning the dead bodies to the transport fares to take the sick to the nearest medical facility, all fell into the hands of those who stand above the law.⁵

A very similar sorrowful state of affairs is observed in other Covid-19 affected countries as well. With the lockdowns having sweeping impacts on all of us; with depression and associated diseases having toll after the shockwaves of Covid-19, this world was transformed permanently in many ways both socially and spiritually. We have, finally, discovered as a civilization that life in many ways is something which we do not originally plan.

But the 'Sin' of self-glorification is always there within us and we find it very difficult to set ourselves free from the clutches of this demon. We have dragged ourselves into a vast abyss of nothingness and from here any scope of recovery needs a pure miracle. We, the vain creatures however, are still engaged in all the 'routine businesses' of that cheapness of life which designed us and our social ideals not too long ago.

The way Covid-19 affected me personally, both physically and psychologically, will remain a part of my life till the end. This suffering, however, was only an additional chapter into the ongoing tragicomedy of life inflicted upon me year and a half before Covid-19 hit the world. In 2018, I was trying to recover from appalling social and academic wrongs done to me by those who at best qualify for 'bi-peds without tails'. Shaken to soul and traumatized, I decided to

⁵ [Corruption is 'second pandemic' during Covid medical emergency, says anti-graft agency - India News \(indiatoday.in\)](#) and also see: [covid-19-unravelling-fraud-and-corruption-risks-in-new-normal.pdf](#)

visit North America. I wanted to attend certain seminars, visit great American Universities, libraries and see my sister⁶ and nephews to overcome the stress and pain of the previous year. People who were the cause of this trauma sat like 'gods' in their tiny, distastefully-ill furnished, narrow offices; they all considered themselves larger than life in these 'pigeonholes'. These are the people for whom the meaning of the words compassion, empathy, dignity and love appear only in dictionaries. These people are all around us and away from them, in an academically vibrant atmosphere, I thought, I would recover sooner. Next doors in Canada, a former student was urging me to visit and stay with him since his children whom I had not met before were keenly waiting to see the man who was the cause of 'spoiling' their father irreparably.⁷ North America was enchanting; academics were full of humility and grace while their students, full of enthusiasm and filled with desire to work creatively. In Canada the towns named after Shakespeare and Stratford were my biggest fascination. I had fruitful meetings with the management of the theater at Stratford, and thought to deliver a lecture at 'Shakespeare Festival Theater' in the following summer. I thought of a performance with the help of a couple of students from our English department, UNSA. We were discussing the possible sponsorship to meet the travelling expenses and many active members of Pakistani and Bosnian community in Toronto were willing to support a lecture delivered by Bosnian students and their Bosnian professor of Pakistani origin.

I returned with great enthusiasm in May and restarted working on my annual play for Shakespeare Drama Club as well; these annu-

⁶ Shumaila Khan Saeed, my sister, is a visiting lecturer for Maths and Stats in various universities in and around Indianapolis (including Purdue and Indiana State University).

⁷ Waseem Khan is settled in Toronto with his lovely family and is an enthusiastic lover of Bosnian and Pakistani art.

al plays were interrupted due to the circumstances created by the 'key holders of the pigeonholes'. Things were going on well and our Canadian project looked promising but then all of a sudden, right before the New Year 2020, all that existed on earth changed, perhaps, forever. Two weeks before our scheduled performance at Akademija Scenskih Umjnostosti, Sarajevo went into its first lockdown. News from around the globe was traumatizing and no one knew how to respond to the crisis. I tried hard to regroup my students, delivered motivational speeches and even thought of performing the play online but in the wake of the growing uncertainties, all the routine methods used as psychological stimulus were of no avail. Enormous academic pressure was mounting on students due to unfamiliar form of online lessons and within a month even those who would not have attended a lecture because 'they had better things do', were desperate to attend a face to face classroom activity and have normal chats at faculty cafeteria. A year of stress and ambiguity passed only to begin afresh the new year of stress and ambiguity. Suspicions and doubts reigned over the world as the 'tailless bipeds' lost control and an invisible creature took over the charge.

Shakespeare Drama Club, my twenty years of hard work, was also in a rickety state, falling apart. But Nature always offers us an opportunity to restore ourselves through our impulse to evaluate better and grow inwardly in crisis. After 'fits' of depression, I rose one morning and thought of using this crisis to our advantage. I realized that almost all the students, sick of the life style, of the new normal of the previous year, were desperately willing to say something loud. Their voices reflected frustration and each one of them had a desire to protest against something though without having any clue; protest against what and how!

The opportunity appeared when I entered into talks with Ibn sina Institute to use their tremendously well equipped auditorium as a platform for students to voice their concerns and register their protest. The way Ibn Sina Institute responded was astonishing. Mr. Hamed Zabihi, vice director of the institute, bypassing all the bureaucratic procedures, gave us a green signal for the seminar in October 2021. The seminar was going to be the first proper opportunity for the youth of the country to give vent to its pent-up emotions and the news spread like fire in jungle; a tsunami of excitement washed away the shores of depressions. The youth for the first time in the country, after the lockdown, was ready to express its concerns in an academic, sober but at the same time, thrilling manner.

The seminar was a great success. Despite our obvious limitations it gave us a great sense of relief, a great sense of confidence in our own potential as well. We contributed to improve upon the existing state of social chaos with our suggestions and protested against the abnormality of civilization which now was standing in front of our eyes naked with all its crookedness fully exposed.

I was aware of the fact that in crisis, humans can grow spiritually mature faster than any school book could ever help to groom. This seminar provided this opportunity to provide more intellectual and spiritual insights to the young brains and guide them with the help of academics and teachers of caliber from schools and universities.

We were fortunate when one of the leading experts of English literature in the region and my gracious dear friend, Dr. Simon Ryle, head of the English department, University of Split, republic of Croatia, agreed to join the seminar as keynote speaker. He graced the occasion with his presence throughout the two days proceedings and

guided the students on affairs of their academic life, their manner of bearing themselves up in the world of academia and most of all how they should stand firm in tough times.

Presence of primary school teacher, Belma Dilberović from OŠ Meša Selimović, Sarajevo added additional colours to the programme. Her motherly smile and angelic talk took us all back to the days of our primary schools. Most 'thrilling' presence among the guests, though, was the arrival of the former Minister of education, Mr. Anis Krivić. Mr. Krivić was the minister of state when Sarajevo went through the lockdown and we were subjected to online lectures and exams. As it was expected, he was bombarded with questions but the way he answered all the inquiries and addressed every single point raised by the members of the audience, gave us new insights into the affairs of the state. We realized that being a father of two school going kids himself, the decision to switch to online education was not an easy sailing for the honourable minister either; his first harsh critics were protesting right there back at home.

This seminar brought me back to some extent to my own self as well. After the interruptions caused by the academic and social injustice of 2017 and the failed attempts to perform whether in Sarajevo or Stratford, Canada, disruption due to the breakout of the pandemic in 2020, this was the first time that I was returning to stage.

This article and the journal is a personal tribute to all those who made it possible personally for me to overcome the vicious cycle of three long years. In a much broader and collective sense, it is a way of saying thanks to those who are living examples of strength when weakness is the decorum of the day and those who are the living specimen of grace when cheap stereotypes are the norms of civilization. These are my students and my friends who, I firmly

believe, will always be the torch-bearers against the shadows of the nights of ignorance.

Special thanks are due to the youngest participant, my fourteen years old daughter, Amina Yar Khan. A promising writer, musician, and thinker; her speech left many stunned and many others full of admiration. Her remarkable effort in speaking her mind convinced us all yet again that our country is nurturing its bright future in our youth. Ahmed Yar Khan also participated, becoming the youngest member of the audience at the age of eight, listening to every single speech with great concern and appreciation. Ms. Amela Vilić's younger brother Ajdin and mother Mrs. Antonia Vilić were also present throughout the proceedings and encouraged every speaker with their blessed smiles and loud applause. We are proud of such mothers and wish if there were more of these supportive role models for the youth in our society. Special thanks to Amra Kaljanac, my wife, for standing by me in all the crises and helping me to stand firm every time I collapsed in life.

Mr. Mohammad Hossein Abbasi Valadi and Mr. Hamed Zabihi, the director and the vice director of Ibn sina Institute respectively, deserve our prayers and standing ovation. May God give them courage and strength to stand for the cause of the welfare of the students' community.

We are determined to rise above this crisis. I hope many others will join us too. But the way the new year was celebrated around the world, a devastated world which is still suffering from the disease with no real cure, is yet another statement that the Sin of self-glorification is inherent and only a very few blessed one are liberated from the clutches of this demon. I wrote last year, protesting against these 'New Year's celebrations'. This article remains valid as a

statement of disgust, and perhaps will always be a protest, against unsympathetic, selfish and ignorant among the mankind.

'At the hour of the midnight, 31st December 2020, it seemed, the mankind was at war with Nature all around the globe. People, who were living in Sarajevo during the siege, some three decades ago, confirm that it did sound like war, as if the city was bombarded from all corners by aggressors. Once again, vain and pompous reptilian mind within the creature that has nothing in hands to control, neither life nor death, was pretending controlling all, knowing all. Last year, just a day before the display of these 'fascinating booming sounds and shiny colours', Nature's warning had appeared.⁸ We all turned blind eye and went on with the normal-routine cheapness called celebrations of 'the new beginning', wasting millions of dollars to enjoy booming sounds and shiny colours while 11 percent population of this world, according to official count, went on with its normal-routine starvation. Who would believe in another phase of time, if ever this reptilian mind allows this world to reach another phase, that there lived once a creature with claims of religious spirituality and secular rationality, celebrating something as vague scientifically⁹ and as unrealistic astronomically as new year over the virus ridden dead bodies of two million people to mark yet another beginning. Will this creature ever learn the meaning of the most used words in its daily vocabulary; words like modesty, empathy, solidarity, love, sacrifice and conscience. It seems that we need perhaps another five thousand years' evolution to get rid of the opposites of these words which define us today as a crea-

8 30th December, 2019, Dr Li Wenliang (the first person to detect the new virus, Covid19) sent a message to fellow doctors warning them about the outbreak and advising they wear protective clothing to avoid infection. (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-51364382>)

9 Chinese and Korean (the Lunar New Year), Iranian (Now-ruz, the commencement of Spring), Telegu and Kannada (Ugaadhi, lunar-based New Year), Tamil (Puthandu, Solar calendar beginning on 14th April), Jewish (Rosh Hashanah), Islamic (al-Hijriyah) are only a few to mention among many such calendars where first January as New year's day does not fit in even today.

ture; words like pompousness, selfishness, egocentricity, cruelty, greed and ignorance. Ill-gotten gains lead to joy only for a short while even in a tragedy of Shakespearean proportion. The concept of festive 'beginning' without much to claim as success before the previous 'ending', sounds like a ludicrously naïve concept anyway. Seeing the enthusiasts emotionally charged commitment to this strange 'beginning' (which starts with the counting backward from 10 to zero in dramatic and frenzied yelling around 12.00 midnight; ironically, the 'bewitching' hour in traditional sense), we are forced to rephrase the old idiom into, 'failure has many fathers'.¹⁰ In the words of John Henry Jowett (1864–1923)¹¹, 'Every other beginning is a perverse beginning, and it will end in sure disaster.'¹²

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¹⁰ The original idiom: 'success has many fathers, failure is an orphan'.

¹¹ John Henry Jowett was a prolific writer and preacher. During his life time he was considered 'the greatest speaker in the English-speaking world'

¹² Jowett, J. H., *My Daily Meditation for the Circling Year.* Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press.

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Covid 19 and Higher Education

Introduction

The basic aim of this paper will be to explore the connection between Covid-19 and higher learning. It will predominantly explore the difficulties which occurred among doctoral candidates during the period of uncertainty from 2020 to 2021. The paper will also focus on the Ph.D. cycle/studies both in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also abroad.

Primarily, the paper will examine several key elements which made the Ph.D. cycle far more challenging during the period of the pandemic than ever before. Namely, this paper will focus on the experience of foreign students who had to face lockdown measures. Additionally, the paper will focus on the fact the world economy has been heavily affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, thereby many doctoral students also became frightful of their academic careers, since doctoral expenses were rapidly rising. Hereinafter, the paper will also tackle some of the experiences felt by the doctoral candidates when their own emotional responses are taken into consideration. In other words, it will explore how students reacted to the online-classrooms and how the gloomy age of uncertainty marked their own emotional and/or cognitive processes.

Lastly, this paper will focus on my own experiences. I will primarily examine how Bosnia and Herzegovina was not exempt from the sheer chaos of the pandemic. In the final segment of this paper, I will briefly examine my own expectations during the beginning of my doctoral studies. However, although I was also faced with difficult times, I managed to find great inspiration and comfort in the area which I was academically exploring. Literature itself served as a beacon of light, a mirror which taught me that everything eventually passes and that even very troublesome periods and even plagues cease at one point forever. It became apparent that literature managed to both teach and delight my heart and mind. Works by William Shakespeare in a particular way served as my private, safe haven and they provided escapism during the 2020-2021 period. The first portion of the paper will present some of the experiences found outside the boundaries of Bosnia, whereas the second segment will primarily focus on my personal reflections and thereby it will be presented as a more subjective discourse on the topic of Covid-19 and higher education.

The world as we know it today is in a constant state of flux. The Covid-19 pandemic has altered the basic notions of how education functions on all levels. However, several key elements should be taken into consideration when Ph.D. studies are examined through the prism of the Covid-19 pandemic. Namely, the difficult period has presented doctoral candidates with an entire barrage of issue which they have to try and resolve in one way or another.

Many Ph.D. candidates had to manage their expectations when it came to setting their goals. For example, Ciara O'Brien explains that she had grand expectations at the start of her doctoral journey: "I had grand expectations of what I would achieve in the first

few months of my programme” (O’Brien, 2021). Be that as it may, the expectations were quickly changed due to lockdown measures. O’Brien adds that: “Simple steps still took longer because of lockdown” (O’Brien, 2021). Ph.D. students had to adapt themselves to new (old) surroundings and they had to learn that even simple procedures would take up more time. In other words, many students continued studying from home, their old and well-known surroundings. They would attend online courses, write seminar papers from the comfort of their home, however many elements of administration had to be settled at a much slower pace. Working hours would change constantly, and many administration services took longer periods to complete Ph.D. paperwork. For this reason, the candidates had to adapt themselves to a much slower process. The world itself essentially tuned down and the faster modus of living was now replaced by longer periods of waiting and digitalized communication between two or more persons.

Doctoral students also had to face another setback in their academic achievements. Since the world economy had been shaken to the core by the Covid-19 pandemic, it came as no surprise that tuition fees started gradually rising. Rich countries of Europe, but also within the U.S., started raising tuition expenses for their students. It becomes apparent that:

Doctoral students are in training to learn how to create knowledge, and the role they play in the knowledge economy calls into question how they are viewed by the degree-offering institutions as well as the societies they enter into upon completion of their terminal degree. From the perspective of doctoral students, tuition costs are on the rise across the board among American colleges and universities. (Donohue et al., 2021, p. 535)

Doctoral candidates quickly become responsible for paying their own education. Simultaneously, an entire plethora of students become consumers, whereas on the other side, academic institutions start competing among themselves in order to attract students during the pandemic. Donouhue et al. explain that: "This view of education translates into higher tuition costs as the responsibility of paying for an education is passed down to the student. It also translates into viewing students as customers, with academic institutions competing in a free market to attract students" (535). However, since the world economy is heavily shaken by the lockdown measures and since a significant amount of funding is reduced, many students start competing between each other to get part-time jobs or to obtain full employment in order to pay for their installments. Those who are lucky enough to enter Academia and start teaching other B.A. and M.A. students, or those who are lucky enough obtain different well-paid jobs; often have no difficulties continuing their academic research. Unfortunately, many candidates remain unemployed during the pandemic, simply because of the noticeable reduction in workplaces, salaries and the aforementioned funding.

The external stimuli were not the only aspects which have affected and altered the lives of many pupils in higher education. In fact, more reflection should be placed when it comes to students' personal well-being. Many Ph.D. candidates had to take on enormous quantities of workload in their research and studies while instantaneously adapting to the new online environment. Both the students and the educators have been placed in a position where they have to meet various online challenges, but the educators also had to create online surroundings where Ph.D. candidates would feel welcome and more at ease: "These variances challenge educators to create an environment where students' feel welcomed and there

is an ethic of care for their overall well-being. One's well-being encompasses more than just feeling well. Well-being is defined by one's experience with health, happiness, and prosperity" (Alsandor and Trout, 2020, p. 151). Although many students remained home and started submitting their essays and attending classes from home, many felt burdened by the amount of work which had to be implemented in order to grow and develop their skills. Namely, many students tried working 'overtime' during their research. The students were pressurising themselves both cognitively and emotionally. O'Brien explains her own experiences by stating the following: "Putting this pressure on myself was emotionally and physically exhausting, so, when I was getting constructive feedback, I took it as criticism instead of help. I expected myself to do things perfectly the first time" (O'Brien, 2021). The emotional turmoil which accompanied the era of fear and uncertainty in 2020 definitely left a remarkable mark on the minds and research skills of younger Ph.D. candidates and applicants. Even though the face-to-face modus was rapidly changed to the online format, many internet platforms helped students complete their obligations and submit their papers, thereby they were able to finish the studies or semester obligations. It should be noted that not all students' personal circumstances were taken into account during their academic research. Personal physical and mental health issues were not considered, whereas students had to focus predominantly on their work or finances and not their well-being. Platforms such as Zoom, Blackboard and Kaltura contributed to online teaching and learning methods. The level of change which many students experienced showed the basic hallmark of the rapid transition (Alsandor and Trout, 2020, p. 152). On the other hand, many researches gave everything to complete their research in order to fulfill their doctoral obligations. However, during

the difficult period of the pandemic, the higher disruption of productivity actually resulted in lower well-being among the candidates.

Lambrechts and Smith (2020) described the phenomenon of change among the productivity of doctoral students and the alternations regarding the well-being of the candidates:

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the higher the disruption to productivity, the lower the wellbeing reported by respondents. Researchers in their fourth year of a full-time doctorate, for example, reported the least productivity disruption of all years, and the least impact on their well-being. Compared to other domicile groups, international students from countries outside of the EU reported the highest impact on their wellbeing (84.5% stated that their wellbeing had been adversely affected). Female respondents again reported a significantly higher impact on their wellbeing than males; and, once again, this difference is not underpinned by variance in caring responsibilities (86.0% of females reported an impact on their wellbeing, compared to 71.4% males; $p=0.000$). (27)

It becomes evident that there is a connection between the academic productivity of doctoral students and their own well-being. The Covid-19 pandemic has penetrated all spheres of scholarly work and created upheavals when it comes to candidates and their dissertations. Moreover, Bosnia and Herzegovina was not exempt from this rule. Doctoral students in B&H also had to face the previously-mentioned changes in their own education. Taking into account the personal perspective, I also had to face a wide array of difficulties which somewhat slowed down my learning process. Namely, as a Ph.D. candidate, it was also transmitted from the face-to-face modus into the online environment. As the matter of fact, I had to

enter the online classroom during the final semester of my M.A. studies. Because of this experience, the online environment was not a phenomenon completely unfamiliar to me. The world of Ph.D. studies immersed me into a deep quest for knowledge, but also into a world of academic adventures. Mainly, my Ph.D. curriculum was filled with interesting lectures which tackled various aspects of literature, through theory, criticism, literary history and methodology. I focused primarily on the aspects of Anglophone literature and cultural studies. However, the pandemic also took away the pleasure of meeting new colleagues face-to-face. Since the lectures had to be conducted online, I was unable to get better acquainted with other Ph.D. candidates, outside the Anglophone sphere.

On various occasions, I was also musing over the notion of employment. Since the pandemic greatly affected Bosnian economy, I would often contemplate the notions of economy and finance. Sometimes I was uncertain whether there would be enough room for a young researcher like myself to grow and earn reasonable income in order to complete my goal of becoming a Doctor of Philosophy. However, things quickly changed for better. As I have dealt with literature on so many occasions during my studies, I also found great comfort in such research. Literature for me was a looking-glass through which I could see the reflection of nature. Shakespearean works especially provided guidance. William Shakespeare showed me that this world is a never-ending tale which is constantly changing. The pandemic era convinced me that the entire world can be affected by the same malice at the same time and that we should do our best to help each other, both academically and in other ways. Shakespeare himself experienced life beneath the threat of plague. For this reason, I found that literary studies could connect my current situation to Shakespeare's own time. At certain instances, I also thought how

interesting it is that the Bard and I could share a lockdown life and both of us turned to writing. Shakespeare himself would not attend college and work on his Ph.D., but the Bard of Avon would turn to writing some of his most astonishing pieces of literature during the plague: "The plague was a constant visitor to England in the 16th and 17th centuries. In the early years of the 1600s [when Shakespeare would have been in his early 40s], there was a particularly bad dose of the plague and everything closed down for some months," Bell tells Guardian Australia" (Burke, 2021). Literature, reading, writing and academic endeavors seem to function in perfect synergy during difficult times. Such elements of life when combined together constructed escapism and comfort that I was looking for during the corona crisis.

Finalising the title of one's dissertation, but also electing an appropriate mentor to supervise one's work is a particularly important element in any candidate's life. During the spread of corona, my own faculty professor, the Associate Professor ShahabYar Khan, Ph.D., dedicated his own time to writing extensively about corona and education. As a Shakespearean scholar, Professor Khan focused on the Bard and his contribution to the world. I have found great inspiration in Professor Khan's work, his philosophy and his own academic endeavour. He has taught me much of Shakespeare, but also of philosophy, education and way of living, through literature and Shakespeare, as well as through history and arts. During my own finalising of the dissertation topic, I decided to contact Professor Khan and ask him for guidance during the Ph.D. cycle. Since he had previously been my M.A. mentor, I found great inspiration in Khan's teaching methodology. He has published extensive articles concerning the pandemic, corona, literature, Shakespeare and education. Some of Professor Khan's new titles include: *'New Be-*

ginning' A Pseudo-concept in Shakespearean Art, Shakespeare, mi isumrakcivilizacije, The Face Behind the Mask: The End of Time in Shakespearean Drama, Nek kuga vas odnese, /Vi ubojice, izdajice, sve!. These articles are the most intense response to the ground realities of Covid. In one of his articles, Khan himself recalls: "At the hour of the midnight, 31st December 2020, it seemed, the mankind was at war with Nature all around the globe" (Khan, 2021, p. 1). The opening line of his article serves as a reminder for myself of the period which would not only affect the whole world, but also my own education process. It would not be long after this date that I and all of my peers would be rapidly moved into online-classrooms.

Be that as it may, studying anything during the 2020-2021 pandemic time has not been an easy task. However, studying literature in English during such a difficult period has been an enlightening process which helped me move through the day and through my own academic obligations. The collapse of economy, emotional turmoil and the lack of human contact have been facts which created great disadvantage in general education. Nonetheless, I was able to follow my dreams and still do what was necessary in order to complete my tasks. After successfully completing all of my obligations, I started realising that I should enjoy smaller things in my Ph.D. cycle. In fact, I started enjoying every moment of completing my seminar papers or my presentations and realised that I soon managed my expectations. The Ph.D. road has not been an easy one during the time of the pandemic, but it has been a worthwhile process, one which I will remember for years to come especially once the corona pandemic is officially over.

Conclusion

This paper analysed the connection between doctoral studies and the desperate time of the corona pandemic. Moreover, this paper was divided into two main segments. The first segment analysed some of the basic points, worries and problems which occurred among various Ph.D. students in different parts of the globe. However, the discussion afterwards shifted to a more personal perspective. The second portion of the paper analysed my own reflections on the Ph.D. cycle/studies amidst the pandemic.

Firstly, the paper delved into some of the biggest problems which different Ph.D. students had to experience during their new, online environment. It examined the difficulties of lockdown, the rising costs of tuitions, the grave changes in students' personal well-being, the amount of work which different candidates had to cover, but the paper also examined the disruption of creativity among those Ph.D. candidates who would immerse themselves fully into the Ph.D. procedure. In addition, the paper also explored the importance of choosing one's Ph.D. mentor, as a person of great academic significance and as someone who guides the candidates on their academic journey.

The second and the final part of the paper shifted towards my personal perspective and agenda. Namely, I described some of the main features of how I was personally affected by the corona pandemic during the period of 2020-2021, and I also focused on the notion that Bosnia was not exempt from the hardships of the pandemic. I explored the notion of how sometimes I would miss the

real-life close contact formulated between peers and how I would be worried about possible employments after my doctoral studies, due to the devastating crash in Bosnian economy. However, I also provided a more positive perspective wherein I presented the idea that literature as such, especially Shakespeare's works, provided great comfort for my academic achievements. By studying what I loved the most and by focusing on the positive sides of literature in general, I was able to successfully surpass any academic or emotional obstacles which occurred during the aforementioned period.

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VILIĆ AMELA

COVID-19 Effects on Contemporary Literature

With the arrival of the virus known as COVID-19, many aspects of our daily life have been affected tremendously for the better or the worse. Literature as such, was no exception to the viruses vicious circle, however, it has allowed new aspiring writers to be seen through numerous social media platforms, as the pandemic has caused a great lockdown. Although the stage has been given to new thriving authors, it has caused great demand from the readers as well, stripping the authors in the process of their patience as well as the quality of their work. Furthermore, it has yet again raised questions if the writers are prophets or just great observant, as Emma Donoghue has written a novel that is closely related to our current condition.

To begin with, electronic books (eBooks) are digital versions of printed books that are read through any digital device a reader possesses (Pervaiz, Brogan, 2012). Many have (mainly members of the faculty) switched to eBooks, and students were into e-contents. In consequence of the pandemic leading to a lockdown, the reading habits among the students have increased by more than 40% only to decrease at the end of the quarantine (Parikh, Vyas Parikh, 2020). Nonetheless, readers across the globe have been allowed to explore various genres by surfing the internet and they would

have permission to their favourite literary text in no time, although it did depend on their preferred choice of publishers and applications and it is important to mention that the accessibility of e-books is measured through view, download and print (Umut, Soydal, Tonta, 2010, p.317). For example, ACM, IEEE, Springer, Oxford Press have made their digital resources available to all for free, and readers would inform themselves about the virus without worrying too much about the flow of information (Parikh, Vyas Parikh, 2020, pp 4-6). However, this availability was also gravely affecting people because of the constant flow of numerous information. WHO (World Health Organization) proclaimed this to be a period of infodemic, where readers and viewers were bombarded with various forms of information, and some of them were proven to be false. Speaking of misleading information, it has become a danger as well when surfing the internet in search of valuable data, and separating fact from fiction is a great struggle. Donovan argues that social media should be held accountable for spreading these types of information which can be harmful and that researchers have to take certain measures to prevent this from happening (2020).

Being overwhelmed with everything happening around them, both readers and writers find comfort in the world of literature. The WHO organization-defined this overabundance of information which overwhelmed people as an infodemic. However, not everything about social networks is bad. According to Wiederhold, social media can help an individual to alleviate anxiety by maintaining their platforms, as it reduces the sense of isolation and stress (2020). This includes various networks for various reasons. For academic purposes, sites like Research Gate give a grand opening for researchers to publish their work. Other researchers of the same field have an opportunity to recommend or comment on the published work, and students

might be inspired to write an essay on a similar topic or to prove their thesis through an already written material. Furthermore, social storytelling networks such as Wattpad have launched a new 'Paid Stories program' in 2019, where readers are giving their support to authors by paying with 'coins' to read a certain chapter. Of course, they do not have to pay it right away, as the Wattpad team has informed the readers that they will have a preview of several free chapters to see if they like the story. This method made some of the pre-existing genres popular, such as the Cellphone novel which originated in Japan that was unknown before in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the outbreak of Covid-19. Furthermore, topics related to COVID-19 have been created, and researchers have gathered an open database of literary texts related to the virus (also known as LitCovid) and it has been widely used among people since the data about the pandemic was available to all. (Chen, Allot, Lu, 2021).

Besides Wattpad, we have applications such as Inkitt, where readers are allowed to read all the books for free, and social networking platforms such as research gate where academic works are published and available for students to explore and learn freely. Another interesting platform used by aspiring writers was none other than Instagram. Through their Insta Stories, they would share excerpts of poetry with their followers who would have the option to react, but unlike Inkitt and Wattpad where comments are public, through Insta Story the comments are automatically sent to private messages.

Speaking of different types of social networks, another important aspect of contemporary literature in the pandemic would be the distinct relationship between readers and writers (or performers and their audience). Already mentioned platforms carry a certain amount of expectation the targeted audience has from the writers.

Inkitt would be the harshest in terms of criticising the work of an author, while Wattpad users are more demanding of the release of new chapters. Both of these particular segments create an enormous amount of pressure which often leads the writers to quit their literary text halfway through. As much as it alleviates stress it can be the source of it as well.

Finally, the most prominent part of this essay is an example of a contemporary literary text, as the coronavirus engraved itself as the main topic in the world of literature.

For this particular research, Emma Donoghue's novel 'The Pull of the Stars' overhauls the struggle from the patient and medical care's perspective and would be used as an example to point out the crisis that we are facing as of 2020. Before getting into some details of the said novel, Donoghue has stated that she had been writing this book since 2018, and was inspired by the historic event of 1918 known as the Great Influenza epidemic. We follow our protagonist Nurse Powers, who is a medic nurse working in a maternity ward where she tends to pregnant women who unfortunately had caught the flu. „COVER UP EACH COUGH OR SNEEZE...FOOLS AND TRAITORS SPREAD DISEASE” (Donoghue, 2020, p.2). Through her journey towards the maternity ward, Nurse Powers reads out some of the posters that allude to the current system that is required from people to follow, and that is to wear masks regularly, and the same rules apply to the pandemic that we are currently facing. Another aspect that is closely related to the coronavirus would be that death was inevitable and it could not be foreseen. There were occasions where Julie Powers would comment on how a patient who was in perfect condition just a moment ago, would be found dead in the next. It is interesting how each chapter was named after a

colour which represented the state of well-being of an individual that caught malady. Donoghue has pointed out in an interview that she had done her research carefully and it does raise the well-known question about whether or not writers are prophets or just good observers.

To conclude, the circumstances of the COVID-19 had led to people feeling under the weather, but literature has been a saviour in these times of need. However, it is important to keep in mind that although it has helped many thriving authors to be seen and has raised the most important questions of the characteristics of a writer, it has also pointed out the terrible impact of the infodemic and the pressure put on writers results into negative outcome for the work itself. On the topic of whether authors are great observers or just had divine inspiration, personally would say that it is more observational than the act of a supernatural force. My reasoning for this would be that all that needed to be said was already said, but it had to be repeated once again because no one was truly listening.

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MAKSUMIĆ ZERINA

Pandemic and the Contribution of Social Media

During the time of extreme social distancing, wearing gloves and double masks, social media, and the Internet, in general, became an important place to be. Mainly, because it was the only way to stay in contact with, well, anyone except your household members.

Before we delve into the positive aspects of social media and its contribution, there is an honorable mention: the negative aspects. And we cannot just pass by them nonchalantly. Since it became the only occupation of some age and social groups (as if unemployed, retired, in school, remote workers, etc.); those people who were affected by heavier use of Internet devices reported massive problems with headaches, bad eyesight, pandemic pounds, and many other health concerns. Just a very valuable mention for all of those who had to start wearing glasses, who always needed to have a painkiller by their side because of headaches and problems with sleeping, those who had gained weight, and all of the people whose health has been affected in any way.

Since the birth of civilization, humans have encountered various epidemics and pandemics which overall caused panic, destruction, morality, and obviously, health issues. For the first time in human history, we have a pandemic that is heavily documented, has been talked about and had a social media impact.

Social media has had a very bad reputation since its inception. Indeed, social networks pose a number of dangers, especially for those who do not use them properly. However, the corona virus pandemic has highlighted many positive aspects of social media and it is clear that without them we would not have endured the epidemiological crisis nearly as well as we do.

Since the pandemic emerged at the highest peak of the information age, many authors have already pointed out numerous positive and negative consequences. This paper is focused on the positive aspects, of which there are many, thanks to social media.

Infodemic

The COVID-19 has posed serious concerns to public health. During this period of crisis, the World Health Organization (WHO) reminded countries that the spread of this virus can be significantly slowed down or even reversed through the implementation of robust containment and control measures. The WHO has also warned the public to be careful while reading and spreading health recommendations from untrustworthy online sources of information. Myths and 'misbeliefs' about the prevention and spread of COVID-19 not only create global panic but also pose risks to people's lives and public health in general. Rampant misinformation on the disease slowed down the efforts of public health bodies to hold back the outbreak. Therefore, the role of public health bodies in communicating the right message and in the right form to the public is crucial (Sabat et al., 2020). In March 2020, politicians talked about the virus as a Chinese hoax. Others suggested that it was nothing to worry about because even forcing hot hairdryer air up the nose would kill it (Buchanan, 2020).

Hence, in addition to being a global health threat, COVID-19 is referred to as an infodemic. In the United States, a study early in the corona virus pandemic found that the volume of low-credibility information about the virus shared on Twitter fully matched the volume of more legitimate news coming from the New York Times and the Centers for Disease Control. Among the consequences, disbelief in the benefits of vaccines is now growing so fast that researchers estimate most people could be against vaccination in a decade or so. This is despite vaccination being one of medical science's greatest success stories (Buchanan, 2020). We have all had direct access to content through platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and so on, which could leave its users easily affected by rumors and questionable information. This information can strongly influence individual behaviors and therefore, in some way, limit the effectiveness of governments contra measures to the virus. Platforms were additionally used by politicians, political and social movements, and worldly, national, and state-level health organizations to share information quickly and to reach a lot of people.

COVID-19 has increased the World Health Organizations' usage of social media as well that the WHO also created an informational network at the beginning of the pandemic. Immediately after COVID-19 was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, WHO's risk communication team launched a new information platform called WHO Information Network for Epidemics (EPI-WIN), with the aim of using a series of amplifiers to share tailored information with specific target groups (Zarocostas, 2020).

Although usage of social media initially caused the infodemic, proper usage of social media brought the cure. Due to much misinformation, WHO has made sure that every Google search which contains

“corona virus” directs the users to WHO. Many medical professionals are using various platforms, and have initiated movements such as #stayathome #stayhome #vaccinated

In addition to the unprecedented success of the World Health Organization in labeling information on the internet, the entire infodemic situation provided us with an important lecture. It allowed us to learn how to adequately filter the vast amount of information we encounter on social media. This experience is especially important in the context of forming the right philosophies in the future regarding political campaigns, conspiracy theories, or ideological movements which in recent years mostly use social media to spread their ideas.

Increase of online services

Isolation has left people with no choice but to turn to social media. The Corona virus pandemic is impacting countries across the globe, with people entering self-imposed quarantine to avoid spreading the virus. At the same time, we must listen to what is happening on social media sites. People are using these avenues to connect with ones they love, share messages and kill time while in isolation (Haynes, 2021). For example, the Facebook analytics department reported over 55% increase in messaging and a 35% increase in video calls, during March 2020. Usage of the Zoom platform has gone up by 66% in February of 2020. In the little research, I conducted through Instagram story questioner, which had around 150 examinees, aged from 18 to 30, I found out that 63% of my followers involved have installed Tiktok during the pandemic. 91% have searched for health-related information on various social media platforms and informational sites, and 73% have reported that they have contacted more people than they usually would.

In the July of 2020, 54% of respondents watched more shows and films on streaming services, while 43% claimed to spend more time using social media (Kemp, 2020). Significant growth in the usage of social media during the pandemic caused some interesting phenomena in the market. While the value of most stocks on the market has significantly fallen, the IT industry has experienced a boom. For many years we have been gradually transforming our lives into virtual reality, but sudden turn up, as a pandemic is, boosted this process. Pandemic converted traditional workplace into tele-working, traditional education into e-learning, etc. What we can expect in the future is that the IT industry, in line with the new capacities, significantly improves the quality of virtual life, making it more safe and real.

Generally, social media gets a negative reputation for work related purposes. Keeping one's personal life and work life separate, is what society deems as acceptable. While that has worked for previous generations, ne studies prove that it is much easier for people in today's workplace to connect with their social circles via social media(Hanna et al., 2017)

Mental health correlation to social media

Putting aside these negative aspects such as anxiety and depression, there are many more positive sides to which we could turn our heads to. During the hardest stages of social distancing measures, humanity sciences were the only way out of the mess the world was in. That was when our poets, writers, psychologists, philosophers, journalists, religion and art students, professionals, and professors took the spotlight. They have helped us through various social media platforms to find meaning, to cope with our thoughts, to feel self-compassion, gratitude, courage, and positive emotions. Our

mental health is equally important as our physical health and both balanced make a healthy person.

During the period being, many support groups were made on Facebook in our country. People were also able to be in contact with psychologists, who have had a hotline that was open 24 hours a day, at some point in pandemics. We were making group video calls to stay in contact with our colleagues, family, and friends. Singers were making online concerts on their social media profiles that went live. People of humanity sciences united and tried to make that period of time bearable through social media platforms.

The risk of mental health disorders, including psychological distress, is, in general, high among university students and might increase during pandemic with a lack of social support especially for international students. Stress can be defined as physiological arousal in response to environmental threats and challenges that are subjectively perceived as overwhelming an individual's resources. It is a natural bodily reaction to challenge or demand; nonetheless, prolonged stress can diminish academic performance and provoke maladaptive behaviours. Social support is vital to mental health. According to the stress buffering hypothesis model, social support attenuates the International Journal of Applied Positive Psychology effect of adverse events and decrease stress and symptoms of depression among students. Stress intensifies with lack of social support, isolation, and loneliness (Mosanya, 2021) which causes COVID-19 sickness, constitutes a global challenge to well-being. Positive psychology constructs of grit and growth mindset may offer a solution to this challenge as both are associated with psychological resilience. A growth mindset describes the underlying beliefs people have about the malleability of intelligence, and grit refers to

dedication to long-term goals. The present study explored whether such constructs could constitute protective factors against the academic stress associated with loneliness and perceived lack of control among international students (n = 170).

The importance of social media for mental health was particularly emphasized during rigorous epidemiological measures, when the only chance to receive social support was through social networks as Facebook or Instagram. IT based communication tools helped us not to feel completely isolated and lonely. Thanks to social media, we were never a part of the recently popular phrase - "social distancing", as the distance was only physical.

Studies show that there are four types of frequent fears during pandemic: infection, shortness of basic necessities, social isolation and loss of income (Sandín et al., 2020). In light of the potential for social media to be used to express anxiety, quell anxiety through social support and information seeking, and even incite anxiety, it is important to examine the interaction between social media use and feelings of anxiety during times of crisis. This is especially important because crisis events, such as pandemic, are likely to produce additional stress and anxiety within individuals experiencing or witnessing the events. Even in times of non-crisis, the effect of social media and its relationship with mental health has prompted exploration. Some studies found that greater rates of passive social media use were associated with higher depression; whereas more active use was associated with lower levels of depression. As social media may be a key method by which individuals connect with friends, those with stress or anxiety might use social media at even greater rates in times of crisis, especially crises in which individuals are prevented from having face-to-face social interactions. In sum, social media

is a powerful source of information and social support for those in crisis. Considering the widespread popularity and increased use of social media (and technology, generally) among both parents and children during the COVID-19 pandemic it is assertable that public health and disaster-relief campaigns that are thoughtfully designed and targeted for specific age groups are promising routes for providing informational and emotional support during crisis (Drouin et al., 2020, p. 7)we examined parents' (n = 260

E-learning

As we were forced to find another way of communicating, delivering, and listening to lessons, concerts, watching plays, sessions, and so on, we turned to social media.

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, online education became a pedagogical shift from traditional methods to the modern approach of teaching-learning from classroom to Zoom, from personal to virtual, and from seminars to webinars. Previously, e-learning, distance education, and correspondence courses were popularly considered as a part of non-formal education, but as of now, it seems that it would gradually replace the formal education system if the circumstances enduringly persist over the time (Mishra et al., 2020).

In the current COVID-19 pandemic, social media has the potential, if responsibly and appropriately used, to provide rapid and effective dissemination routes for key information (Chan et al., 2020). Without social networks, as they are today, the entire education system would certainly not be able to withstand strict epidemiological measures. If the pandemic had broken out just ten years earlier, we would have to choose between health and education.

Platforms such as Zoom and Skype work, and still are widely used

for transferring information and teaching online. A survey done by Tunji Oki, an organizational psychologist at Google, noted the dates more introverted people, in general, are now participating in online activities. Even at our own apartment, I have noticed that many shy students, introverted by nature, were able to express themselves better, without the awkward feeling of people staring at them. We have all felt more united in a strange way, and we are prone to helping others in various ways. We, as students, have all had empathy for each other, and were always there to help, talk, and resolve any possible issues.

There is one of the many positive aspects of e-learning that I would like to particularly emphasize – open book exams. Traditional exams are unfortunately very often based on questions that only require a good memory. Now that teachers are aware that students can easily find an answer to that type of question, exams require more essential knowledge of the subject and that one truly understands the matter. Simply put, e-learning puts learning in front of memorizing.

The corona virus pandemic has significantly popularized e-book reading. Nearly half of my Instagram followers that responded to the questioner said that they read at least one e-book during the pandemic and it is not necessary to point out how important reading is both at the individual and social level.

Some studies say that 35% of people in the world have read more books than usual since the pandemic began (Global English Editing, 2020). The findings reveal that the COVID-19 pandemic situation has a positive and significant impact on consumer intention to purchase books online. (Nguyen et al., 2020). In addition to reading much more, the transition to e-books is also significant for the environment, as the amount of unnecessarily printed books is reduced.

Saving the Earth

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly transformed the work environment and work demands of many individuals, who have started working from home, through the concept of tele-working. In addition to tele-working, many families were faced with the situation of helping their children, who, being equally confined at home, started to take distance learning classes (Tavares et al., 2021). In spite of the negative aspects of corona virus on the globe, the crises had a positive impact on the natural environment. Countries, where the movement of citizens was seized to stop the spread of corona virus infection, have experienced a noticeable decline in pollution and greenhouse gases emission. Recent research also indicated that this COVID-19 induced lockdown has reduced environmental pollution drastically worldwide. It is estimated that outdoor air pollution kills 7 million people each year worldwide and more than 80% urban population is exposed to unhealthy air. Since people stayed at home, the last two years paved significant improvement in air quality, especially in areas like Wuhan, as well as in northern Italy and a number of metropolitan areas throughout the USA. In China, emissions of harmful gases and other pollutants dropped about 25% at the start of the year 2020 and the quality of air improved up to 11.4% with respect to the start of the last year, in 337 cities across China. WHO estimated that this change has saved 50,000 lives in China. It is shocking to realize that millions of people die every year because of polluted air, smog, and soot which are considered to be slow killers (Khan et al., 2021).

The Platform for Better Air Quality has even launched a petition among health and environmental professionals with the demand:

“Lockdown the cars, let’s get our city back!” (Bojovic et al., 2020)

During extreme social distancing, while our lives revolved around social media, we could see some blissful scenes in the media. Many animal species have returned to their natural habitats, which was unusual for us to see, as we moved them away from their habitats earlier with our presence and actions.

The second perspective from which the struggle to save the Planet during COVID-19 can be viewed is connected directly to social media. Increased use of social networks has stimulated environmental movements to the highest level so far. Never before have environmental messages reached us as much as during the pandemic.

Humorous side

During periods of crisis, people attempt to find coping mechanisms in order to lighten an existing problem (Torres et al., 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic has been accompanied by a tsunami of memes on social networks. Typically in times of crisis, people struggle to maintain a high spirit. Humour provided a tool for coping with stress and comfort in the shadow of isolation, unemployment, and the horror of death. The closures imposed during the coronavirus pandemic gave people plenty of free time. This fact, together with access to sophisticated apps, resulted in a spontaneous global wave of pandemic-related memes (Kertcher& Turin, 2020).

A meme is an idea, behavior, or style that is spread on social media for humorous purposes in a picture format. Humour was a way to soothe our nerves during the pandemic, where we would make fun of ourselves in order to make other people laugh or to laugh at other peoples' jokes, pictures, or videos. It was a powerful way to manage the unmanageable, because making fun of the situation makes us

feel like we are in charge and that we have control. Vulnerable and isolated, we were finding that the joke is now our most reliable shield.

Studies demonstrate that generating humor can help people cope with the pandemic by reducing anxiety, and increasing their sense of control. Although the use of humor will not directly curb the spread of COVID-19, it is much safer than drinking bleach (Bitterly & Schweitzer, 2021). It is proven that humor enables people to not only celebrate values, perspectives, and multi-faceted experiences inclusive of societal, cultural, and personal roles but also the pains brought by the present crisis (Torres et al., 2020).

Conclusion

The first association with the mention of the pandemic and social networks is the multitude of negative consequences we were exposed to in the recent period. The best way to understand how wrong we are is to imagine a pandemic outbreak without social networks in the shape they hold today. It is evident that without social media we would have to choose between our physical health, education, and even mental health. This trilemma is something that no one should ever be faced with.

In general, social media has made us much more adaptable and prepared for the changing environment. Virtual life is all about flexibility and being able to do whatever we want whenever we want it. The pandemic has forced the whole IT industry to take a massive step forward in providing online services. In a brief period of time, online platforms have become a much safer place that offers many opportunities, transforming the online world into reality by saving us from boredom, loneliness, and even contagious diseases. And giv-

en that pandemic has transformed the world now and forever, this is only the first step into our new lives and our new 'normal'.

The keyword is "positivity". Companies that practiced positive thinking found new innovative ways to create capital. Individuals that maintained a clear mind, learned how to detect false information and how to cope with hard times through humor. Those who care about the environment turned crisis into opportunity by using social media to strengthen their movements. And that is the whole point - turning something negative into favorable. There is a saying that economists especially love to mention: "In the midst of every crisis, lies great opportunity." Isn't that the point of humanity? Shouldn't we join our forces during the most intimidating periods, and make this world a bearable place to live in? Absolutely! I firmly promote the powers of positive philosophy, which all of us should be familiar with. We learned, and still are learning, how to adapt to these circumstances. Empathy and the power of altruism are the two things nobody can take away from the humanity and professionals of human sciences, which we are to use in the most captivating ways in order to bond this sporadic world together.

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AMINA YAR KHAN

Covid 19, the Past and the Future

It was 2019, the last few weeks...right before the time, when celebrations on grand scale around the world, resounding and booming sounds...which knock even at the walls of heavens, were about to erupt. This world filled with dignitaries and celebrities, the role models of humanity with their routine enthusiasm and revolutionary agendas, was revolving, as if out of habit, in its orbit. All looked good; just before the beginning of the New Year 2020, Sir David Attenborough, the renowned broadcaster was confidently telling BBC regarding the plastic bottles, "I think we are changing our habits, and the world is waking up'. Miss Greta Thunberg, the same month in front of the Swedish parliament was staging "School strike for the climate" and was informing the world media which listened enchanted, "The symbolism of the climate strike is that if adults don't give a damn about my future, I won't either." Indian Parliament a little earlier was keenly busy in removing article 370 of constitution and had imposed the state of emergency in Indian ruled Kashmir. November 2019, Britain was well set to seal the fate of Brexit and leave European Union for good. International day for Tolerance on 16th November had just come to an end, and the World Television Day was keenly awaited; not accidentally the World Toilet Day and the World Philosophy Day had been celebrated on 19th November simultaneously. In Bolivia after 21 days of civil protest, opposition

senator Jeanine Áñez, assumed the role of president. There was a rugby event, football, tennis, cricket, massacres, fires, floods and family issues; the world was a very normal place, with all the great routine fully intact.



But the things were about to change; a grand, intimidating, eclipse was about to happen. Many conspiracy theorists set at work and confirmed that there was something not ordinary about the eclipse of 26th December 2019. “The diamond ring effect” of the solar corona showing around the edge of the moon in the early morning hours in the Middle-east with 5 celestial bodies, **Sun, Moon, Mercury, Jupiter and Saturn conjoined with shadow planet Ketu** (Moon’s south node), meant disaster in Indian astrology. Last time when it happened on 5th February 1962, the world had almost reached its doomsday scenario. Coincidentally, the very same day, on December 26, an elderly couple in Wuhan province, China, visited a hospital. Dr. Zhang, a respiratory doctor detected an alien pathogen emerged from a seemingly ordinary case. Three days later, Doctor Li Wenliang, on 30th December sent a message to fellow doctors around the world in a chat group warning them about the outbreak of a new kind of virus.

The world ignored him as the world was enthusiastically preparing to count back from ten to zero on 31st December and Dr. Wel-
iang, just a day before, was spoiling the moment. Almost two years
later, this great world which divides itself into the Haves and the
Have Nots, the First World and the Third World, the developed and
the underdeveloped, wonders, does it fit humans to proclaim with
puffed up chests glory and greatness.

Covid 19 has smashed the world as it existed before 2020. Politi-
cally and economically we are on the verge of an unprecedented
collapse. World military powers are realigning their troops to se-
cure as many resources as possible for the coming catastrophic
times. Space race for rare earth minerals is speeding up and a new
world order is in the offing. In the light of all which we are witness-
ing around us, Sir Attenborough's plastic bottles, Miss Thunberg's
school boycott, Football, cricket, Olympics, democracies, monar-
chies even Meghan and Her Majesty's quarrel look a bit irrelevant.

Global warming, as much as it affects Miss Thunberg, affects me
but now, after these two years, it is possible that Bosnia Herzegov-
ina ranked among the worst ten hit countries when it comes to per
million deaths because of Covid, may not have enough luxury to
stage school boycotts in front of our parliaments. We are, anyway
among those nations whose carbon print is very low. Our immedi-
ate issue is more serious as it requires political determination, aca-
demic skills, psychological commitment, economic means and civic
harmony to be restored within various ethnic groups of our country,
to maintain our image of a nation. We lack all that we require to
exist and as a young stake holder of this country, I have a right to
know that will there ever be a time when our issues, never mind
how insignificant they are for the world, definitely not as high profile

as plastic bottles, damn you adults and the royal family problems, receive the attention of the policy makers of the world.

We young people of this country demand of our adults, without saying damn you, but with utmost respect; kindly let us know that why shall we not migrate in search of jobs and future prospects and stay back at home.....because we want to stay and never want to abandon our loved ones and all that defines us as Bosnian-Herzegovinian people.

We demand of you to have a youth policy which should update itself annually with realistic data and plans for our education, health and employment.

We demand of our adults to take life seriously and instead of giving us a past, give us a future.

We demand of you to show maturity, humility and virtue in your talks when you assume the roles of our leaders, parents, teachers, religious scholars and employees.

We demand of you to prepare to handover to us a country where injustice, social depravation, nepotism, mentally retarded egoism are not the values of life but cooperation, discipline, modesty, commitment and intellectual pursuits reign supreme.

We want to tell our elders that we are a resilient nation.....more keen to educate ourselves and live peacefully than you have ever been.

We will survive Covid-19, we are adamant to defeat it through vigilance and our faith, we will survive shortage of money and lack of foreign brands but will we survive indecency, corruption of souls, lack of character, unimaginative brains and disgrace?

Give us a better model of life in you and we will make you proud of this country.

I would like to conclude with a poem, one of my favourites, by Robert Frost:

Whose woods these are I think I know.

His house is in the village though;

He will not see me stopping here

To watch his woods fill up with snow.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep,

And miles to go before I sleep.

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BAJRIĆ AJLA

Psychological aspects of COVID-19

The outbreak of COVID-19 three years ago has had a significant impact on the mental health of the general population. If we think back on it, all of us experienced some form of anxiety, what is going to happen to our loved ones, how long will the pandemic last. We locked ourselves into our homes without any face-to-face contact. Many people were and still are worried about their jobs and education. The reactions to quarantine were triggered by anxiety and generalized fear. COVID-19 had a widespread psychosocial impact and it has affected individuals in all walks of life. The prevalence of various psychological problems such as anxiety, depression and stress significantly worsened during the outbreak.

- **Quarantine**

Many psychological problems including depression, anxiety, and stress were experienced by individuals during the COVID-19 outbreak. The psychological reactions to the quarantine were triggered by the mass hysteria and fear that was associated with the disease outbreak. These reactions can vary from individuals to groups of people. The effects of COVID-19 quarantines can trigger various behavioral problems such as anxiety, frustration, loneliness (Wang *et al.*) and can also lead to episodes of paranoia, delusions and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)(Hawryluck *et al.*). Isolation related to social distancing and lockdown is directly linked to feel-

ings of uncertainty and fear of the unknown which results in abnormal anxiety (Khan *et al.*). Jeong *et al.* reported that loneliness and boredom derive from a sudden prohibition of daily communication and socialization and can be associated with depression and suicidal behavior (Cava *et al.*). A lot of previous outbreaks have recorded that quarantines can cause irritability, anger, fear of spreading the disease on family members, anxiety, depression and frustration. Post quarantine-effects can lead to psychological and socio-economic distress due to financial losses (Brooks *et al.*). Quarantined individuals even experience avoidance by loved ones and rejection from participating in social situations at work and/or school. Kids who experience isolation might need special care to deal with their anxiety and fear (Liu *et al.*). Quarantine brought in restrictions to which people of our age are not used to. We are not accommodated to work, learn and teach from the comfort of our home. We are used to being able to see our family, friends and colleagues. Being stripped of these day-to-day normal ways of socialization brought with it a lot of anxiety and uncertainty. All of us understood that being quarantined was the safest option and everyone got comfortable after a certain period of time, but it still had a great toll on our mental health.

- **Work situation**

Health-care workers who are on the frontlines against this disease suffer from insomnia and depressive episodes, which are not documented amongst the non-frontline workers (Su *et al.*). In developing countries such as India, where the healthcare system is overburdened, COVID-cases lead to anxiety, stress and irritation, which might be caused by inadequate hospital supplies (Chen *et al.*). Maunder *et al.* showed us that healthcare workers who are in

a position to provide care for their co-workers, experience anxiety concerning their competence which makes them mentally vulnerable. While on the other hand non-essential workers experience feelings of worthlessness because they cannot contribute to the crisis. Most jobs switched to several online platforms to hold meetings while some just shut down. A lot of schools had to switch to online teaching which created a distance between the teacher and the student. From our own experience, a lot of teachers feel as if they are talking to themselves because it isn't possible to see their students or have active conversations with the whole class and this type of workspace is not motivating for either party.

- **Anxiety**

We have already mentioned how collective anxiety spiked up during the pandemic. The most common cases have been documented among adolescents who are in their formative years, trying to juggle school and their social life. Many of them were already coping with anxiety and this change of lifestyle certainly did not help. It has been observed that adolescents who do not deal with their anxiety risk many age-related diseases such as cardiovascular disease (*Jones.*) A lot of people struggle with the uncertainty around COVID-19 and this leads to over-thinking every aspect of the pandemic, how long will it last, who is going to be impacted, etc. It is very hard to not give in to these thoughts but there are a few things we can do, such as **staying informed** but only through trustworthy sources, **limit social media usage** if we get overwhelmed, **try and focus on things we can actually control** like following instructions from professionals (washing our hands, staying home as much as we can, avoid crowds, etc.), **stay connected with friends and family** through video-chatting, texting and calling because the ones close

to us can provide comfort and lastly, **taking care of our mental and physical health** by exercising, maintaining some sort of routine or maybe even going for a walk in nature (*Smith & Robinson.*) Even if we are not struggling with anxiety, we should check on our friends and family frequently and try to be supportive through these times to everyone. We cannot know what someone else is going through in their head and at home.

- **Depression**

When it comes to depression, the person does not just feel "sad," everything seems bleak, the individual is not interested in daily activities, they have sleep issues, experience low energy, they cannot concentrate, they feel worthless and it can even lead to suicidal thoughts. The development of depression with some individuals only worsened during the pandemic, people lost jobs, some are struggling with their finances, some lost loved ones, etc. Isolation further fuels depression because it cuts us off from people who can give us love and support and the thought of dealing with issues alone can be scary. It is believed that both depression and anxiety stem from the same biological vulnerability so it is not uncommon for one to lead to the other. A lot of people are turning to unhealthy coping mechanisms such as drinking excessively, abusing drugs or just eating unhealthy food. If one struggles with depression the best advice is to seek professional help but we can also use some other strategies such as **distracting yourself** by maybe taking up a hobby or a project we always wanted to do, **maintaining a routine** is also something that might help because it adds structure to our daily lives, **connecting more with others** by moving beyond small talk, it might help opening up to others with our problems (*Robinson & Smith.*)

- **Stress**

Managing stress during these uncertain times can be challenging, the pandemic affected almost every part of our lives, from finances to relationships and from jobs to healthcare. Lack of routine and socialization are common causes of stress during the pandemic. As humans, we are not comfortable with uncertainty and we enjoy our little daily routines, such as having coffee in our favorite café or seeing our grandparents on Tuesday nights. A routine gave us control and when we lost the routine, we lost control which led to collective stress. This stress can cause many problems for our health, so when we are feeling pessimistic or even having panic attacks, it reduces our immunity. When it comes to mental health, we have mentioned anxiety and depression how they stem from the same root. Excessive worrying and stressing out leads to anxiety which, in turn, can then lead to depression. We have to be kind to ourselves and try to help ourselves. We have already mentioned several tips before such as exercising, limiting social media usage, maintaining some sort of routine, taking up a hobby, etc. We must be aware that we cannot control the situation right now, but we can control how we go about it. We have to adapt to our current lifestyle and make the best of it.

- **Conclusion**

Anxiety, depression and stress are not the only marks the pandemic has left on people, though they are the most common ones. Different people deal with different problems and we have to be aware of the signs they show us, intentionally or not. The least we can do is be there for someone who needs us, whether it be a stranger or our best friend.

Nowadays we put more emphasis on mental illness which people did not do before. Talking about our feeling was something to be kept hidden and was deemed as taboo. When we look at the bigger picture, COVID-19 is not the only pandemic of the 21st century. A plethora of mental illnesses emerged during the past few years so it is crucial that we are prepared for what this pandemic brings with it (Tucci & Moukaddam). Mental health organizations and programs should be set up immediately to provide the adequate help that individuals need.

Stigma concerning certain communities, such as blaming Chinese people for the virus, may affect international trade and finance which lead to additional problems and unrest among communities. This stigmatization has led to physical violence in a lot of cases, because people do not educate themselves enough and they trust unreliable sources.

We can see that even during these modern times, which gave us medical and technological advancement; a virus can wreak havoc on mankind physically and psychologically. It attacks our immune system, but it can also attack the mind without attacking the body. Some of us experienced the mental toll on ourselves, and some experienced it through someone they love. It is crucial that we remain kind to others and offer help to those in need. Most importantly, we must help ourselves go through this and we can do that by researching and staying educated on contemporary topics. But with that, we cannot let ourselves get preoccupied with the pandemic, we have to try and get a sense of a normal life, even though the normal we know is gone now and it might never be back. We must remain patient, kind and understanding of the circumstances we live in today. And if you or anyone else you know is struggling with

mental health, the best thing to do is call/visit a local therapist, and if that is not available it is great to just have someone to talk to and rely on.

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KOLAŠINAC EMRAH

Conspiracies, Theories and Covid-19

Conspiracies and theories are a very prevalent trend among people and can be found in various different places, one of my personal favorites being in the music industry. It's something that cannot be avoided and has a tendency to appear during the beginnings of tough situations, Covid being no exception. The corona virus was practically made for conspiracies.

Research studies say that people tend to conspire in sudden hard times of panic. When something negative unexpectedly arises, people are lost and have different questions, and in search of comfort they start coming up with various different answers or assumptions. This gives people a feeling of safety. And of course, the nature of Covid was also very sudden. It's as if it came out of nowhere, with almost no time for any sort of preparation. And this was painfully obvious very quickly, the virus exposed just how unprepared everything and everyone was for an outbreak like this. Naturally, after the virus broke out, many started throwing theories left and right. I will cover a few of them and explain a bit more about them, as well as delve into the human mentality a bit.

One of the very first theories that were thrown around when covid-19 first broke out was that someone in China ate a bat soup and contracted the disease. This in and of itself doesn't sound too

farfetched, especially for people outside of China, and many people at first believed this to be true. However scientists explained that that isn't possible. When food is cooked any harmful bacteria dissolves, leaving nothing to poison anyone. And even if it did, it most likely would not be a virus of a global level. People thought this mainly because to most people outside of China, eating bat soup is very unusual, it is not considered very normal. However Chinese dishes are known to have various animals on the menu, so while this may seem strange to everyone outside of China, to them this is a normal every-day thing and has been for a long time. If anything, if this were to be true then people would have contracted a disease like this a long time ago.

Something people did on a fairly massive scale, mostly in the West, is stock up on tons of toilet paper. So much so, that the sales for toilet paper skyrocketed and increased by over 700%. If you walked through the store you would see completely empty isles of toilet paper. People started panicking and got scared that they'd run out of toilet paper completely, and seeing isles of empty toilet paper is far more noticeable and unusual than other smaller products, which contributed to the fear everyone already had. Some stores went as far as stacking piles of toilet paper in front of their stores in order to reassure to everyone that they will be fine as there is enough toilet paper for everyone. But that being said, was there any kind of benefit from this? No, absolutely nothing helpful came out of this. The only thing that benefited are the toilet paper industries and that's it. Owning piles of toilet paper had no use for the virus, it didn't help in any significant way nor did it magically help with being more resistant to the virus. But people still purchased massive amounts of it. This ties a bit into what I said in the beginning, psychologists say that stocking up on things in times like this can make a person

feel like they're more in control of a situation, hence why people did this. Another thing that this situation illustrated well is something called "sheep mentality". When someone or multiple people start doing something, others tend to follow in the same foot without even thinking about what they're doing or if what they are doing makes sense. It's almost like peer pressure, only that you come to your own conclusion that you have to do something because others are doing it, or that there has to be a reason they're doing it, convincing yourself it makes sense because, why else would they be doing it? After about a week, everyone had a bit of time to think about what they did and realized that it wasn't the most useful investment, and sales went back to normal.

4G towers were a big target for conspiracies well before Covid broke out, but even more so afterwards. It already had small communities that were against it and that immediately put the blame on towers, saying how they spread the virus across. They argued how as soon as China implemented 4G towers the virus spread. And while the virus did occur around the time that China started using 4G towers, they're not the first one to have been using them. Korea had already used them in April of 2019. Considering that a lot of people don't know much about 4G towers, some believed at first that this could be true. However, as you can see the pattern through these theories, this too was easily debunked. 4G towers work by sending out frequency waves which give technology access to it. That frequency however is nowhere near as strong as to damage us, especially not on a chemical level. As a matter of fact, its radio frequency strength is calculated to be as strong as that of an ordinary radio player, it simply cannot create viruses. Covid is a virus that is spread from person to person, not machine to person. And if 4G towers had anything to do with this they would have had an

effect on Korea first. Additionally, there are plenty of countries that don't have 4G towers.

The entire legitimacy of the virus as a whole was questioned even. A large portion of people simply didn't believe the virus was real, they were theorizing that it was all made up by the government to have more control over everyone for their own gain. It didn't matter that they saw people die or get sick from it. Others believed it was a man-made virus specifically made to kill off citizens, or older generations since the virus was more deadly for older people than for younger generations. Some went as far to say that Bill Gates was the one who created it. People were connecting the corona virus with the corona beer simply because of the name, stocking up on toilet paper for no reason, blamed all kind of different things for the virus, all of these things, no matter how ridiculous they can sound were also televised. Everyone sees it and it starts spreading, causing even more conspiring, a chain-reaction.

As we can see, people tend to not think in a logical way and make bad or nonsensical decisions under pressure. This virus outbreak has shown just how unprepared we were and how badly we can act. On an individual level of course there are people who weren't affected that much by everything while others' mental was completely destroyed, and when we look at the bigger picture and how a large part of our population was affected and behaved as a whole, it just demonstrates that we are not ready for disasters like this. In a way maybe we needed the Covid outbreak to happen so that we could see how ready we all actually are, from an individual level all the way to countries and so on. We need to use this as a learning experience for the future, we were lucky enough that the virus generally isn't that deadly even if it spread like a wildfire. If it had

been any more dangerous than it is already then who knows in what kind of situation we would have ended up in. We live in a day and age where we have almost instant access to countless information. However, that does not mean it is correct, or that people will try and find correct answers. And with such access, everyone is able to put or write whatever they want on the internet, including people who don't know what they're talking about or want to spread their own ideals. No matter how basic or simple a concept may be, some people will either not be able to understand it or will refuse to do so. For an example, people who believe the earth is flat. You can easily search the internet to see if the earth is flat or not, but some people will ignore those answers and actively search for an article or source that backs their belief up. Some simply cannot comprehend the fact that what they believed in for so long is not true, others might prefer to live in a delusion it feels like. There are plenty of ways to easily find communities centered around a belief no matter how illogical it may be. Everyone 'on there' will agree with each-other which comforts everyone 'on there'. They will be surrounded by people who think the same and consistently reassure each-other that they are right no matter if they really are right or not, or if there are facts presented to them. It makes themselves feel more validated. People nowadays especially tend to act based on what they feel rather than what really is, they would much more believe in something that comforts them instead of reality. So having all of this information is really dependent on how someone uses it, it's a double-edged sword.

All of this has had a big toll on the mental health of many. The fact that not much was known about the virus even from the side of professionals startled everyone because everyone wanted answers, and no one had them, or would hear a different story every day and

didn't know what to believe in. Even now we don't have an accurate answer as to how Covid spread in the first place. There are different assumptions but no 100% sure answer, it is a lot more complicated than people would like to think. The human mind is usually more at rest when it has an answer, whether it be "yes" or "no". It is important to have a concrete answer so that you can start moving on from whatever was picking on you, either emotionally or mentally. Anything in-between like a "maybe" will not allow one to start moving on or start the process of healing, digesting or comprehending. Instead you'll be constantly thinking about what if's, and won't let your mind to rest.

HASELJIĆ MELISA

History of Anti-Vax Movements

“History will repeat itself” is a very famous saying. I just never thought it would be relevant in the context of a pandemic. The history of the anti-vax movement. It is a very relevant topic today, as medical experts fight back the mass spread of misinformation.

Anti-vax movements have always been a part of history, every time a new vaccine would be introduced, anti-vax voices would rise as well. Perhaps from fear perhaps from the lack of knowledge but as soon as something new or ground-breaking is introduced there is always pushback. From the opposition to the smallpox vaccine in the 18th century to the COVID-19 vaccine in the 21st century, the arguments have stayed fairly the same. From mistrust of medicine as a whole to fear of efficiency and consequences.

Just as today, many experts were fighting against stereotypes decades ago as well. An article in The Star Tribute on 17th of April in 1903, shows the author's frustration of people who are evading vaccination laws: “he can do so in a hundred ways. But the law of nature will reach him soon or late. There is no dodging that.” Here the author is alluding to the fact that the disease will catch up onto them if they continue

to evade the vaccine, the only protection they have against the disease. This as we know is a direct parallel to today's age. Today many of the anti-vaxxers are using an argument that their body is enough to fight the COVID19, but while they are repeating that argument over and over again, hospitals are piling up with the people who didn't get the vaccine when they could have. Britain's Chief Scientific Adviser Patrick Vallance said that 60% of people being admitted to hospital with COVID-19 are unvaccinated. This means quite clearly that the vaccinated people have at least some protection from the Covid. After almost 2 years of a pandemic, it is as clear as a day that many people have made up their mind whether they will risk their life or if they will get the vaccine.

Many of the anti-vaxxers in Bosnia and Herzegovina live on Facebook as well as other social media, and even though they do not have actual protests in the streets the campaign they lead online is even more harmful. Every single piece of news that gets posted about the pandemic there are dozens of comments saying things like "vaccinations kill", "don't get it my sister's brother daughters in law got the vaccine and died in an hour after vaccine". On top of this, they share the stories of horror of the vaccine with a great speed no matter how unbelievable it seems or looks.

Religious excuses made up a large proportion, believing vaccines are the devil's work. They see the human body as God's perfect work and vaccines would meddle in something sacred. Many of the anti-vaxxers in today's age believe that their bodies are a temple and would defeat the viruses and pandemics on their own. "So many people in diverse reli-

gious communities believe that our bodies were created by God and we need to cherish and protect those and that we have an obligation to the common good,” Patel told Megan Myscofski of Arizona Public Media. A faith-based approach is a new way of making sure people get vaccinated. When mosques hold vaccination clinics or churches encourage getting vaccinated during mass, believers are more likely to get vaccinated. This is something we have been missing in our country because religion likes to stay out of these issues. It would be immensely helpful if religious leaders would be involved in the vaccination campaigns as much as possible. During the summer Islamic leader in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Reisu-l-ulema) encouraged believers during jummah prayer to get the vaccine and protect the body they were gifted. In summer as Pope Francis spoke up by appealing for people to get vaccinated with approved Covid-19 vaccines, calling it “an act of love.” Today due to the advancement of technology believers all over the world are able to listen in and spread news like this one.

Today we watch the news and follow the stories of numerous rallies of anti-vaxxers fighting for their rights and freedom. One of the biggest demonstrations in history was The Leicester Demonstration March with over 80k participants, complete with banners and a child coffin. The US Supreme Court decided on mandatory vaccines in 1905 by saying: “The liberty secured by the Constitution of the United States does not import an absolute right in each person to be at all times, and in all circumstances, wholly freed from restraint..” Here they said The Constitution does not protect the individual from laws that were made by the same government that made the Constitution.

From the 1860s to the 1950s, those against smallpox ran advertisements, wrote to newspapers, and formed organizations. The same is happening today, with similar fear and wishes, and almost the same exact arguments, the only thing that is different is the severity and brutality of the anti-campaigns. Anti-vaxxers are a minority group, even though they are small they are very well vocal and persistent with complete faith in what they are saying.

There is one big difference between past and present. In the past, people were against vaccines because they were new, unreliable, and sometimes painful, as we know anything new is considered a threat. Vaccines have come a long way, perfected with minimal consequences and with a fast and convenient process. Vaccines have been around for decades. On top of the advances in the medical field, technology improved and now we have the ability to research and see for ourselves what is right and what is wrong. Where is the anti-vax movement coming from then? Even with every possible credible resource available to us, many of the old-fashioned and traditional people choose to believe whatever agrees with them the most. It is easier to accept and believe what you have been taught by your parents, and your parents by their parents than breaking off the generational mindset and forming a separate opinion.

Much of the mistrust comes from the older generation and their mistrust in anything that has not been around for decades such as home remedies. As the younger generation moves back from prejudice and superstitions, it creates a space for trust in the medical field. It might take decades but by the next crisis, our descendants will be better at handling pandemics.

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KUREŠ ALEKSANDRA

Historical Overview of Pandemics

In December of 2019, reality as we knew it changed. Up until this point, many of us worked tirelessly, spending our time in a busy city, never thinking about words such as pandemic, quarantine and lockdown. But once we faced something out of our power and had to be locked in our own homes, everything in the world slowed down. Many of us felt isolated and helpless, something generations of people before us experienced as well. There are numerous pandemics our world and humanity survived, but those that left a lasting impact will be our focus.

Smallpox or variola major is an acute infectious disease. Evidence of the smallpox virus on bones as old as six thousand years, have been found. This disease has reappeared numerous times throughout history but was finally eradicated in the 1980s through vaccination. The symptoms of smallpox include a high fever, headache, and back pain and an eruption on the skin that leaves the face and limbs covered with cratered pockmarks or pox. Smallpox killed 30 percent of its victims, but those who survived were permanently immune to the second infection, although they were left disfigured and sometimes blind. A great pandemic from the Middle East arrived in Europe in 1614 and, epidemics became regular in the 17th and 18th centuries. But besides the Middle East and Europe, there

were outbreaks in American colonies, where it decimated Native Americans, British India and Australia. Although it was known that smallpox was contagious and its victims had to be separated, there was little to be done to help them. Doctors administered bloodletting, enemas and induced vomiting to keep the inflammation of blood regulated. In China technique known as inoculation was invented by a Buddhist nun. Scabs of a smallpox victim were ground and blew in the nose of a healthy person through a tube; the risk of dying was 2 per cent as opposed to 30 percent if they had smallpox. In 1796, a physician Edward Jenner, infected the son of his gardener with cowpox, after he realised that milkmaids were immune to smallpox because they were infected with cowpox by their cows. After being sick for a few days boy recovered, and Edward infected him with smallpox which to which he was asymptomatic. The vaccination was invented.

Antonine plague began in 165 AD, and might be an early appearance of smallpox. The plague started with Huns that infected Germans who then transmitted it to the Roman soldiers who then spread it through the Roman Empire. Symptoms were very similar to smallpox and included fever, sore throat, diarrhoea and in the end, pus-filled sores. The pandemic lasted until 180 AD, with Emperor Marcus Aurelius being one of the known victims.

During the 2013 APGREID project, Prof. Krause and his team discovered the *Yersinia pestis*- the organism behind the Black Plague and the Justinian Plague. This organism was found on skeletons from Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe. The *Yersinia pestis* dates back to the late stone age, emerging in the sixth century as Justinian Plague and Black Death in the 14th century. Plague is transmitted to humans by the bite of the Oriental or Indian rat flea

and the human flea, or from person to person if it's in pneumonic form. The primary hosts of the fleas are the black urban rat and the brown sewer rat. Before antibiotics, plagues had high mortality rates. The bubonic plague was named after boubons, swollen lymph nodes, which caused haemorrhaging and necrosis of skin, that was followed by septicaemia shock and death but, if the disease spread to the lung through blood, it caused fatal pneumonia, and only then, it was transmissible from person to person.

The plague of Justinian was the first recorded instance of bubonic plague that started in 541 in central Africa, spreading to Egypt and the Mediterranean. During the pandemic, rats and humans travelling along trade routes at sea and on land were carrying infected fleas. Besides that, many fleas could be found in rice, wheat grain, clothing and other merchandise carried by traders. The fleas would multiply on the host, but when the host died, fleas would immediately leave and infect new hosts, thus creating grounds for the pandemic. The Plague of Justinian was named after the Roman emperor of the Byzantine Empire at the time. Historians at the time described symptoms such as fever, delirium and buboes. The plague killed over a third of Constantinople's population and almost 100 million people in the world between 542 and 546. The plague was followed by eight-year famine. The social and economic disruption caused by the pandemic marked the end of Roman rule.

The Black Death was the second outbreak of bubonic plague that happened from 1347 to 1352. Tartar armies transmitted the disease by catapulting corpses over the walls of Kaffa (modern-day Ukraine), from where Genoese traders escaped, not realising they already carried the fleas, thus bringing the plague to Constantinople and across the Mediterranean. By 1348 it had reached France and

Germany, then Spain, England and Norway in 1349, and Eastern Europe in 1350. The Tartars left *Kaffa* and carried the plague away with them spreading it further to Russia and India.

The plague caused great social and economical upheaval, again. Nearly 50 million people died, creating a shortage of labour which gave more control to the surviving villagers which prospered and acquired land and property. In Venice, travellers were isolated for forty days in the hospital as a precaution against the spread of the disease. This practice was called quarantine.

Syphilis or 'grande verole', "the great pox" didn't have mortality of the bubonic plague, but its symptoms were painful, and there were few hardly effective remedies. Symptoms such as genital sores, foul abscesses and ulcers over the rest of the body and severe pains were treated with mercury, many patients dying of mercury poisoning as well. This disease broke out in 1495 among French soldiers and spread through Europe at first and by 1520 reaching Africa, the near East, China, Japan and Oceania. From the first appearance of syphilis, it was feared and resented by society- both because it was a sexually transmitted disease and the disfigurement, pain and repulsive symptoms victims were facing. The debate over the origin of syphilis is still ongoing, with some believing that it had been brought to Old World from America by Christopher Columbus and others claiming it existed before his discovery. By the early 18th century, syphilis became more of an episodic disease, and from the middle of the 19th century to the middle of the 20th century, the incidence of syphilis declined except in times of war.

Cholera is a disease caused by infection of the intestine with *Vibrio cholerae* bacteria. The cholera bacteria are often found in

food or water. The first cholera pandemic started in 1817 in Russia, where one million people died. Cholera was then transmitted to British soldiers who brought it to India and later Spain, Africa, Indonesia, China, Japan, Italy, Germany and America. Although a vaccine was created in 1885, pandemics continued with, seven of them happening in 150 years.

The bubonic plague reappeared in 1885 in China and moved to India and Hong Kong, claiming 15 million victims along the way. The pandemic was considered active until cases dropped below a couple hundred in 1960. The plague was initially spread by fleas during a mining boom in Yunnan, but it is considered a factor in Parthay and Taiping rebellions. With most casualties, India faced repressive policies that sparked some revolt against the British.

The avian-borne disease with symptoms such as sore throat, headache and fever claimed many lives of young people across the globe. Starting in 1918 and claiming 50 million deaths, the disease was named Spanish flu because of wide reports of it in neutral Spain. Spanish flu was first observed in Europe before spreading to the USA, Asia and the rest of the world. With no effective drugs or vaccines against it, Spanish flu roamed until the summer of 1919 when it disappeared after most of the infected either died or developed immunities.

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) appeared at the end of 1981 and, by 1989, it had killed 27,408. HIV is a virus that attacks body's immune system and, if not treated, leads to AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome). HIV/ AIDS can be transmitted through: unprotected intercourse, shared needles, blood transfusion of an infected person and from mother to child. In 1996 drug 3TC was developed, which helped many infected with this virus to lead

normal lives. Since 2012 PrEp, an HIV preventative drug appeared, on the market. There were 37.7 million [people globally living with HIV in 2020.

SARS or, severe acute respiratory syndrome, spread through the world in 2003, resulting in more than 8,000 infections and 10% mortality. Laboratories in Hong Kong, Germany and Atlanta isolated corona virus, which was the cause of SARS. SARS is an airborne virus spreading through droplets of saliva, just like cold and influenza. Besides that, the virus can spread indirectly through surfaces that have been touched by an infected person. It mostly affected previously healthy adults aged 25-70 years. The incubation for SARS is usually 2-7 days, during which the person can transmit the virus to others around them. The first symptom of SARS is fever, often high, followed by headache, malaise and muscle pain. After 3-7 days, patients experience dry cough and shortness of breath that might progress to hypoxemia and require intubation and mechanical ventilation (present in 10-20% of cases). There is no cure or vaccine for SARS, and treatments were modified for each patient. SARS was the first severe and easily transmissible new disease that appeared in the 21st century, showing how easily transmissible viruses are through routes of international air travel.

Numerous lives were lost throughout history because of pandemics. But many of these pandemics brought with them changes in society. They brought changes of social order, economic systems, medical practices and even the Renaissance. These changes inspire and bring hope that perhaps we can change for the better once this pandemic becomes another chapter in history's book.

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NEJRA KULOVAC

Covid 19, the Beginning of the End

The sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic changed the course of all of our lives. It was unexpected, and wasn't taken seriously until it started spreading rapidly from China to the rest of the world. All of this stirred tension and paranoia among people, especially since the majority of medical and healthcare professionals were not able to give the people answers as to why the virus was spreading so rapidly and what caused it. As more and more people in different countries were getting infected, professionals were putting in more effort in examining and trying to understand the virus in hopes of finding a cure. The various COVID vaccines that we have today did not exist in the beginnings of the pandemic, nor did any other forms of medicine which could potentially cure an infected person or prevent further spreading of the virus. In fact, the majority of medical experts were claiming that there was no cure for the virus, and that the only thing an infected person could do was isolate themselves and hope that their immune system is strong enough to fight off the virus. However, according to them at the time, the person could be left with permanent physical trauma caused by the virus. It was no surprise when people started panicking and expecting even worse things to come.

The younger population, in particular Generation Z, had its own perception on the corona virus, since it was the worst thing to

happen to their generation. Social media played an important role in shaping their perception. Disturbing videos of people collapsing in the middle of the streets in Wuhan and COVID patients fighting for their lives in hospital beds were being distributed across popular social media platforms, used mostly by younger people. These disturbing scenes seemed to have been taken from an apocalyptic or dystopian movie. As stated by Dein (2020), pandemics indicate the fragility of human life, and engender a paralyzing anxiety that the world is coming to an end, resulting in existential crises (pg. 2)

For religious and spiritual leaders, the pandemic had fulfilled one of the many prophecies which were connected to the Apocalypse or the End Times. For them the pandemic was just the beginning of what seemed to be the End.

Pandemics are as old as human settlements, and religion has always played an important role in defining and interpreting the causes of these virus outbreaks. The religious concept of the apocalypse has always been connected to the outbreak of killer diseases, and other natural disasters. Thousand year old religious scriptures mention contagious diseases as being one of the signs of the End. The most famous known pandemic in history, the Black Plague, which affected Europe and other parts of the world during the mid-1300s, was seen back then as a punishment from God, and a sign of the End Times. In fact, the way the plague affected society back then is similar to how the corona virus changed the course of modern-day society, despite today's medical advancement. The Plague, similar to the corona virus, spread across the globe, to China, India, Persia, and Egypt during the 1340s. Italian writer Giovanni Boccaccio described the state of Europe, precisely Florence, in his *The Decameron* by stating that people were avoiding each oth-

er, and even parents were abandoning their children out of fear of getting infected. The majority of people back then did not understand the biological and natural causes of the disease, thus the only logical explanation was given to them by religious leaders who invited people to repent and prepare for the second coming of Jesus Christ. Only a few university medical schools existed in Europe, but even they heavily depended on the writings of the ancient Greeks, and were not equipped enough to deal with the plague. As stated by Wade (2020), they were unable to save lives, so the city tried to save souls. Dein (2020) states, appeal was made to ideas of sin and of an eschatological sign of Christ's second coming (pg. 2). He continued by mentioning a pamphlet which was being spread at the time called *The Millennium – A Prophetic Forecast*, which warned readers that the flu was only the beginning of the affliction that was stated in the Book of Revelations (pg. 2).

Many 21st century Islamic scholars see the corona virus as a trial and tribulation, which should be faced with patience and optimism. However, a lot of them also believe that the pandemic is a minor sign of the End Times, whereas many Muslims started posting on social media and stipulating it as the „beginning of the End days“. Islamic texts, such as the Quran and Hadith, state that 77 minor signs and 12 majors signs will appear before the Day of Judgment. Minor signs are only the beginning of the events which are to unfold leading to the End Times. Many of the minor signs, which were prophesized by the Prophet or Quran itself, have already been fulfilled according to Islamic scholarship, implying that the Day of Judgment is approaching. Apocalyptic forecasts of bloody conflicts in the Middle East can be found in the 1,400 year old prophecies of the Prophet Muhammad.

In a hadith, the Prophet gave some details about the events that will take place in Syria and Iraq: "There will be such troubles and calamities that nobody will have a place to shelter from them. These calamities will travel around Sham (countries in the Middle East including Syria, Jordan, Palestine etc.) and settle over Iraq. They will bind the Arabian Peninsula... As they attempt to eliminate these calamities in one place they will arise in another." (Kenzul Ummal, Book of Some Thoughts on Doomsday, Vol. 5, p. 38-39). We can see that there a lot of issues going on in the Middle East, especially in Syria, Palestine, and Afghanistan. There are currently many tensions between nations, kingdoms, and political leaders in the world. Another minor sign which has likely been fulfilled, is a mountain of gold appearing at the rive Euphrates. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said: "The Hour will not come to pass before the river Euphrates dries up to unveil the mountain of gold, for which people will fight Ninety-nine of every hundred will die [in the fighting], and every man among them will say, 'Maybe I'm the only one to remain alive'."- (Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim). Here we have the mentioning of the well-known Armageddon or the Great War (al-malhama al-kubra), and many believe that the first part of the hadith has already been fulfilled. These minor signs are just foreshadowing of what is believed to be the Day of Judgment.

As stated by Dein (2020), the term apocalypse signifies a violent or cataclysmic ending of the world. The word derives from the Greek word for Revelation, and it was brought down from the Book of Revelation, the final text of the Christian Bible (pg. 3).

Similar to the Islamic interpretations of the pandemic, Christian scholars also believe that the pandemic is one of the signs of the End Times, which is to be followed by other signs and calamities. According to them the Book of Revelation predicted the pan-

demic more than 2000 years ago. They see the pandemic as a sign of the second coming of Jesus Christ, which is first preceded by the period of the Antichrist, which will be characterized by pandemic outbreaks, natural disasters, and bloody conflicts. Many Christians on social media were sharing threads using the hashtag #Jesu-siscoming, whenever they post something about the corona virus.

Biblical prophecies provide clues as to when the End Times might take place, and it seems that the pandemic is just the beginning of this prophecy. Another aspect of the Judeo-Christian apocalyptic vision is the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, who are harbingers of the End Times. The corona virus has been identified as the fourth horseman, the White horseman, associated with pestilence and death. In Revelation 6:8- "And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth". According to Dein (2020), some Christians claim that the corona virus is proof that the plagues of the Book of Revelation, in particular the seven Seals of Revelation 6:1 – 8:1 are occurring now and Jesus' return is imminent (pg. 5). The Gospels also mention that the pandemics of pestilence would happen before the return of Jesus: "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be ... pestilences ... in divers places" (Matthew 24:7). Many radical Christian believers have contributed to the anti-vaxxer movement by arguing that the vaccine is the so-called Mark of the Beast, mentioned in the Bible. Besides that, conspiracy theorists are usually associated with Christian believers, and many people misuse the religion for their own agenda and political interest.

Besides the interpretations from monotheistic religions, other religious and spiritual doctrines have their own take on the pandemic. One of them is Hinduism, which connects the pandemic to the doctrine of the Kali Yuga. A Yuga is a term used to describe a specific time-period in the Hindu religion, usually a century, and that natural disasters, like pandemics, affects the world in every yuga or every century. Therefore, it was no shock or coincidence for the Hindus, when the corona virus appeared almost exactly 100 years after the Spanish Flu of 1918. The Hindus believe that the Kali Yuga is the worst of the 4 yugas, which shall witness natural disasters and a decline in morality among other issues. As stated by Narayanan (2020), Hinduism follows the basic principle 'Dharama-sansthapnaya Sambhavami Yuge-Yuge', which means an avatar or incarnation of God will rise in every time period to ensure justice on the planet. Hindu eschatology is linked to the Vashnative tradition, religious textbooks in which there is mention of Kalki, the tenth and last avatar of Lord Vishnu, who will come to earth in Kali Yuga. As mentioned by Narayanan (2020), the Kalki prophecy is also found in Buddhist texts and is even believed by Sikh followers.

Whether or not a person chooses to believe in these prophecies, there is no doubt that the effects COVID-19 had on the world seemed apocalyptic for many. We can talk about a secular apocalypticism, which is not determined by divine interpretation. There are many similarities between secular and religious apocalypticism, and Dein (2020) argues that COVID-19 had been viewed in apocalyptic terms signifying a radical societal change, and that apocalyptic belief was invigorated by the World Wars, the Cold War, and the threat of nuclear annihilation (pg. 11). The pandemic outbreak has affected many aspects of day to day life and the global economy. It has caused the death of many people, and has affected

many industries and sectors of society. The quality of education dropped during the lockdown, and many schools and students were not prepared for online classes. The outbreak was in particularly detrimental to members of those social groups in the most vulnerable situations, continues to affect populations, including people living in poverty, older people, people with disabilities, and indigenous peoples. Many homeless people suffered, since they were unable to find a safe shelter, and were thus highly exposed to the danger of the virus. Others lost their jobs and were left without a source of income during these difficult times. As stated by Vaishya (2020) the impacts of COVID-19 are extensive and have far reaching consequences, and can be divided into various categories.

Religion can offer comfort to many people during these tough times, and it has been argued by Mishra (2015) that the psychological optimism that patient grasp after being diagnosed with a serious illness is strengthened through religious practices and spiritual beliefs (pg. 5). Pandemics and other natural disasters show us how vulnerable human life is, and it should encourage us to focus on more important things in life. As stated by Mishra (2020), religiosity assists one in overcoming the fear and helplessness one feels during such a time of illness (pg. 5).

However, religious scholars of the past, particularly Muslim scholars, did not rely solely on spirituality and religion when facing such calamities. They focused on trying to understand the causes and effects of the virus, but also ways to protect themselves and others from infection. The Prophet's (pbuh) sayings played an important role in how Muslims dealt with pandemic outbreaks. He said, "If you hear of an outbreak of plague in a land, do not enter it; but if the plague breaks out in a place while you are in it, do not leave that place." (pp. Sahih Bukhari, Book 71, Hadith 625). Islamic

scholars of the Golden Age of Islam such as Ibn Khatib and Ibn Khatima of Granada were known by their Christian contemporaries as the scholars of the plague, as stated by Chandra (2020). Ibn Khatib wrote a treatise during the outbreak of the bubonic plague, that affected al-Andalusia in the 14th century, called *On the Plague* (Muqni'at al-Sā'il 'an al-Maraḍ al-Hā'il), in which he explores and examines the causes of the disease and how it is spread through garments, vessels, by infection of sea-port by an arrival from an infected land etc. This treatise was very useful and was also used by Christian contemporaries who were also trying to understand the plague. On the other hand, Persian polymath Ibn Sina (Avicenna) is believed to be the first proponent of social distancing, as stated by Chandra (2020). His legacy in medicine is becoming increasingly more relevant in the times of the pandemic, since the very idea of quarantine is rooted in his scientific work or multi-volume medicine encyclopedia known as *The Canon (Al-Qanun) of Medicine*, published in 1025. In his work, Ibn Sina argued that a 40-day period of quarantine was needed in order for the body's immune system to effectively fight off the disease.

Muslims weren't expected to rely solely on their faith in God when dealing with such calamities, but instead were encouraged to deal with the calamity as best as possible, and then rely on God. As recorded in one hadith, a man asked the Prophet (pbuh): „O Messenger of Allah! Shall I tie it and rely (upon Allah), or leave it loose and rely (upon Allah)? “He said: „Tie it and rely (upon Allah). “ (pp. Jami' at-Tirmidhi, Book 37, Hadith 103). This hadith perfectly describes how a believer's mindset should be when facing any type of difficulty or calamity.

Despite all of the difficulties that followed the pandemic outbreak, one should not lose hope that better days will eventually come. We should not worry about things which are out of our control, but instead we should focus on becoming better people and spending more time with our loved ones. The pandemic will eventually come to an end, but the good things in life should always bring light to the darkness.

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AMINA ŠEHOVIĆ

Religious and Spiritual Aspects of the Pandemic

When all hope is lost, we return to the questions that have been troubling us since the beginning of time- Who am I? Am I alone in this suffering? Does my life have a point or was I a pure nothingness to which state I will return? As March of 2020 approached most of us were oblivious of the chaos that this world is going to sink in. Actually, we were as a common modern man, equipped with the most advanced technology, usually is – trapped inside the cycle of chasing his own tail in a search for success. Or may be in a search of happiness taking the road of success. However, we failed to sense the shape of clouds behind the skyscraper. As this is the time of perhaps most of paradoxes one is surely that while technology grants us with so many choices and opportunities the modern man is troubled by just that, too many choices. So, quarantine gave us a unique look into a world where everything that used to matter doesn't, where all the obligations that we used to have are now changed, pushed back or erased. The disease was spreading with a lightning speed and before we could wrap our heads around it touched every corner of the world. It affected everyone. There was no escape at least not on this planet. Maybe the thought that the suffering is affecting all of us together, that the great unity is finally achieved could be comforting for a moment, but that moment passed. And we were left with a fear, anxiety that made us search for the rescue in this dark tunnel. And many people found the light in religion or some form of spirituality. The religions today have so many similarities

and some of them are that usually the prayer to God involves using our hands as if we are asking to get hold of something, our mouth to recite the yearnings of our soul and some other movements of the body- to show our fully commitment with both body and soul. We are reminded of the moment, of the very now, that we can only live in. What preachers all around the world were trying to explain to us pandemic did within few weeks- the only thing that we truly have is the present which we should try to shape in a way that we feel complete peace, and eventual happiness. Religion emphasizes unity, family. And the pandemic closed us in our houses and forced us to get face to face with our loved ones. Religion gives us strength then forwards us towards strengthening others around us, making peace within our surrounding.

But what will happen when life goes back to normal? Will we return to our old habits? Will we jump into a pool of options and hope not to drown? Will we lose the perspective that pandemic gave us and leave the connection with our spirit? Christianity, Judaism, Islam made a direct or indirect connection with the diseases and the people's sins so therefore people should burden this to obtain salvation. Some Pagan religions would connect diseases with the evil spirits. But all religions agreed on one solution, a prayer. Asking for redemption, praying, fasting! Maybe these things would not cure the body as people imagined but their approach was firstly to cure the soul. What is known for COVID 19 virus is that it affects people's spirit, making them feel weak, depressed and exhausted. Perhaps that is connected with the thoughts of dying. Nevertheless, we turn to religion to try and find a sense and we end up raising our hands towards the sky. We use the same remedies as people did centuries before. We don't see them as a cure but as a comfort. Indeed, essentially our way of approaching the pandemic has not changed.

Even the terms that we were introduced with, at the beginning of the pandemic, have already existed for hundreds of years. Such is the term quarantine. The practice of quarantine, as we know it, began during the 14th century in an effort to protect coastal cities from plague epidemics. Ships arriving in Venice from infected ports were required to sit at anchor for 40 days before landing. This practice, called quarantine, was derived from the Italian words *quaranta giorni* which mean 40 days (Bassareo, Melis, Marras, Calcaterra, 2020).

Some other sources point towards The Adriatic port city of Ragusa (modern-day Dubrovnik) that was the first to pass legislation requiring the mandatory quarantine of all incoming ships and trade caravans in order to screen for infection (Bassareo, et al., 2020).

But to actually trace the origin of this term we need to go way back to the work where the very idea of quarantine is rooted, in the scientific work of Ibn Sina who had argued for controlling “the spread of diseases in his five-volume medical encyclopedia The Canon [Al-Qanun] of Medicine, originally published in 1025”. Ibn Sina first came up with the idea of quarantine to prevent spread of diseases. He suspected that some diseases were spread by microorganisms; to prevent human-to-human contamination, he came up with the method of isolating people for 40 days. He called this method al-Arba’iniya (“the forty”) (Abbas, Abbas, (2020)).

Why 40 days? Well the answer to this can be found in Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Some examples in Islam are:

- The Prophet Mohamed revealed his Prophethood at the age of 40 year as instructed by Allah.
- Musa traveled 40 years in the desert. Musa spent 40 days on Mount Sinai where he received the 10 commandments.

- Prophet Yunus was in a whales' mouth for 40 days.
- On the 40th ayah of surah Baqarah Allah changes the topic.
- Prophets Dawud and Suleiman each ruled for forty years (Ah-lulbayt: General Q&A, 2020)

And in Christianity:

- Jesus was tempted by the devil many times during the 40 days and nights he fasted just before his ministry began. He also appeared to his disciples and others for 40 days after his resurrection from the dead.
- When God flooded the Earth, it rained for 40 days and 40 nights, and Jesus fasted in the wilderness for 40 days (Bas-sareo, et al., 2020).

Also, there are some common practices that are backed by religion: After childbirth, for example, a new mother was expected to rest for 40 days.

Ibn Sina, in his masterpiece, states that "Body secretions of a host organism (e.g., human being) are contaminated by tainted foreign organisms that are not visible by naked eye before the infection." This definition of a virus is almost the same as we use today (Abbas, Abbas, (2020)).

Akshamsaddin (1389, Damascus -1459, Göynük, Bolu), was an influential Ottoman religious scholar, poet. He was a tutor and adviser to Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror. After completing his work with his master Sheikh Hacı Bayram-ı Veli, he founded the Shamsiyya-Bayramiyya Sufi order. He discovered the lost grave of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari (the companion of Mohamad) in Constantinople preceding the Siege of Constantinople.

In addition to his fame in religious sciences and Tasawwuf, Akshemsaddin was popular in the fields of medicine and pharmacology. Akshamsaddin was also knowledgeable in the treatment of psychological and spiritual disorders.

He mentioned the microbe in his work *The Material of Life* about two centuries prior to Antoine van Leeuwenhoek's discovery through experimentation: It is incorrect to assume that diseases appear one by one in humans. Disease infects by spreading from one person to another. This infection occurs through seeds that are so small they cannot be seen but are alive (Tüfekçi, 2020).

Ibn Sina and Akshemsuddin are both great men who managed to implement religion in their lives. They held on to their spiritual sides not just grabbing them in times of hardships. They made faith the tool that will push them into doing great things. We should try to observe the plague of our time as a teacher that is teaching us a language of love, compassion, appreciation of what we have and who we consider close in our lives. Our lives shouldn't be estranged from the spiritual inspiration that connects us with the divine and that makes a battle with a virus worth surviving.

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**'COVID-19 – IMPACT ON CONTEMPORARY
LITERATURE, PHILOSOPHY AND EDUCATION'**

(Two days Seminar organized in cooperation with Prof. Dr. Shahab Yar Khan
and the students of Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sarajevo, BiH)

22-23 October, 2021

at 'Ibn Sina NAUČNOISTRAŽIVAČKI INSTITUT', Potok 24, Sarajevo.

22nd October, 2021:

Inauguration: 10:00-10:30 am

1. Director "Ibn Sina", Mr. Mohammad Hossein Abbasi
2. Vice-director "Ibn Sina", Mr. Hamed Zabihi
3. Prof. Dr. Simon Ryle
4. Prof. Dr. Shahab Yar Khan

Session I (10:45-13:00 hrs)

Chair: Prof. Dr. Simon Ryle

(Faculty of Philosophy, University of Split, Republic of Croatia)

Interval

Session II (14:00-16:30 hrs)

Chair: Prof. Dr. Shahab Yar Khan

(Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sarajevo, BiH)

23rd October, 2021.

Session III (10:30-13:00 hrs)

Chair: Prof. Dr. Murat Oner

(International Burch University, Sarajevo, BiH)

Interval

Session IV (14:00-16:30 hrs)

Chair: Belma Dilberović, BA razredne nastave

(OŠ Meša Selimović, Sarajevo, BiH)

**Award ceremony and distribution of certificates by the Chief Guest (16:30
hrs)**

Memorable Moments



Memorable Moments



