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# Collaborative Essay: Could Coronavirus Make Academia Livable Again?

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Sharing our research is undoubtedly important. Yet it is equally important to have time to pause, to acknowledge our limitations. Because this *life* as it is, let's say it, doesn't admit *life* itself.

Ana Almar Liante

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I came across the term “quantitative supremacy” a couple of days ago, when I was reading *El entusiasmo* (2017), by Remedios Zafra. It was one of those rare moments when I could get myself to read something other than the news (from family and friends, and, of course, the media). In her book, Zafra describes the affective politics of *enthusiasm and unease* that drive academic and creative work in the times of neoliberalism, and she criticizes the increasing precariousness of workers in profit-driven environments.

When she describes quantitative supremacy, she speaks about “an exponential and performative logic that feeds on impact factors, and that endeavors to create academic value and culture through them” (“una lógica exponencial y performativa que se alimenta de índices de impacto y que se afana por crear valor y cultura académica con ellos” 77). Zafra illustrates quantitative supremacy in several ways; for instance: publishing in academic journals rather than editing books, focusing on “where” you publish rather than “what” you publish, lack of relevance of reflective and creative work (an essential part of Philosophy and the Arts)... Quantitative supremacy also helps explain why it is not possible to stop academic work even amid a life/global crisis. It helps explain why we are here today.

Our current academic life is represented by indexes, by the number of publications or presentations we carry out, by the number of citations of our work, by the ranking of the universities we work at. Nothing better illustrates quantitative supremacy than the current situation, with us scrambling ways of teaching, reading, writing, and presenting in virtual conferences in order to perhaps add one more line to our CVs. At the same time, we must still find the time to exercise, meditate, cook and eat healthy, talk with friends online, and get enough sleep. And yes, sharing our research is undoubtedly important. Yet it is equally important to have time to pause, to acknowledge our limitations: to rebel, resist, and reject the dynamics of neoliberal academia, which demands a never-ending production that leads to the exhaustion of precarious bodies: underpaid yet paying inflated rents, lacking job and financial security all year round if we ever suffer a long-term disease, become disabled, or if a loved-one passes. Because this *life* as it is, let's say it, doesn't admit *life* itself.

The projections of contagions and death tolls that rule our lives nowadays also follow an “exponential and performative logic”: the exponential logic of the virus. Dazzled by the ever-increasing figures of loved ones that have passed away, our attention span diminishes, also exponentially—yet this time, downwards. Several behaviors that develop due to the ongoing situation might follow this trend as well: the number of newspaper pieces we read per day, the number of minutes we watch on Netflix, the number of pasta boxes we stock on our pantries, and so on. By looking at these graphics, one notices the shortage of time against the speeding, multiplying events. Exponential trends are capitalism’s wet dreams: a never ending, ever-increasing curve, faster and faster every time.

Capitalism, like death, is forceful. It imposes its own rhythm, and it brings the vulnerability of the body to the fore. And its own rhythm, hardly surprisingly, is not one that most of our bodies can sustain. Therefore, we must keep thinking of what we should do to keep resisting their criminal alliance. The goal of this essay is to envision radical ways for those of us in academia amidst the pandemic *to acknowledge that life needs to happen*, and that it needs to be compatible with academic production and recognized as such, despite the connivance of a system based on quantitative supremacy that aims to just keep rolling (especially, rolling over us).

It is not easy to focus on reading and writing these days. It was not easy to focus either two years ago, when I was grieving the death of my father while working on my dissertation plus, you know, everything else. I have had a lot of reminiscences about it these days. This time, however, is different. We are not isolated on our (previously perceived as) individual miseries: poverty, sickness, war, natural disasters. This time, everybody else is on the same page. Inspired by a number of conversations with colleagues, I would like to invite *Pterodáctilo* readers and writers to participate in this “collaborative essay” in order to imagine, create and promote radical academic thinking and practices.

Consider this op-ed an extended hand, an open invitation, for those of you who wish (and can) participate. You may contribute by sending us your thoughts, creative pieces or critical essays that deal with these and/or other related issues directly, or obliquely. There will be no rush to produce this collaborative essay, as there should be no rush to produce these days, since most of us are in different places, struggling with different anxieties, and fighting to overcome them at our own pace and on our own way. Because writing collectively should also become a common method in the Humanities, this collaborative essay aims to ignite a conversation that is long overdue.

We will be waiting for your amazing contributions.

Take care, y’all.

Imagen: “No haver escrito para tontos”, Francisco De Goya y Lucientes (1810-1811), Museo del Prado

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