

COVID-19

The virus that nullified five centuries of materialism

CULTURE

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Finally, we have **the very first images of the coronavirus**. Thanks to a pool of (exceptional) researchers we now have the chance to “see” what the famous the Sars-CoV-2 scourge looks like. The virus was isolated at the infectious disease laboratory of

Sacco State University Hospital.

The work was coordinated by Massimo Galli and Gianguglielmo Zehender in collaboration with anatomical pathology study directed by Manuela Nebuloni of the Luigi Sacco Department of Biomedical and Clinical Sciences. The virus was isolated by researchers Alessia Lai, Annalisa Bergna, Arianna Gabrieli and Maciej Tarkowski while the images were produced by Antonella Tosoni and Beatrice Marchini.

Just so that we appreciate what we're talking about, one of the images was obtained with 140,000x magnification. Seems madness, doesn't it? Only an electron microscope is powerful enough to do this. There is no other way of seeing the famous coronavirus. Now some persons will be disappointed, expecting to see a green monster with sharp teeth. Instead all they will see is just a little fuzzy ball! So considering how tiny the virus is, it is something impossible to see with the naked eye. This is the interesting part of the story.

Forget about the images we may have just seen, which are of course an exceptional technical achievement and, no less, very recent. Let's pretend to go back to a few days ago, before we had ever really seen this virus. Think about it for a moment.

We have been locked in our homes for a month. We cannot go for walks, meet up with people, or hug a friend. We cannot go out for coffee along with all its connected rituals or go get pizza. We are looking for anyway to create homemade yeast in order to make our own bread. We go out once a week to do shopping or spend three hours to buy of couple of "quick things." Some people are afraid and others are desperate. We have been brutally forced to reflect on death, on the purpose and the meaning of our existence. And all this because of what? Because of something that we cannot touch or see? Because of something that does not produce words or sounds and that has no smell or taste? Because of something imperceptible to our senses?

Now here's is the point. For five hundred years we've been hammering at this concept in our culture: the only things that exist are those which our senses can perceive. These are the only things that have a real influence on our life. They are the things we can measure and are part of the material, physical world. All the other things, the meta-physical realities (God, angels, providence, vocation, the soul, etc.), do not exist. They are a mere figments of our imagination, spectres or superstitions. They have no real influence on our life. They are mere concepts.

Well, the coronavirus has had at least one beneficial effect on our lives: it has

opened our eyes. It taught us that something which cannot be measured or sensed can actually have an enormous impact on our lives. The virus has made it clear we've been lied to for five hundred years, namely that the "simple concept which we were repeatedly taught since primary school is totally false.

Of course, the virus has not laid proof for the existence of God, nor of the soul, nor of all those metaphysical concepts that some people, throughout all these centuries, has stubbornly believed. But the virus does prove that empiricists, the Enlightenment, materialists and romantics were wrong. Is this a small achievement? Well, it doesn't seem so small to me.

Personally, I am delighted with this discovery.