

A disinfected society

Interdisciplinary analyses on the zeitgeist of suspicion



A new sense of insecurity is spreading throughout globalised societies and also takes hold in rich and developed countries. The ‘logic of wealth generation’ is systematically intertwined with the ‘logic of risk generation’ insofar as progress also produces potentials of danger. Every single person increasingly finds themselves subjected to visible as well as invisible threats that nobody seems to be directly responsible for. This sense of exposure, vulnerability and powerlessness against a shared fate plunges our achievement-oriented society into an unfamiliar state of passivity – a radical challenge for our idea of freedom. At the same time, it gives rise to a more ‘reflexive’ examination of our hyper-modernised society as it becomes the subject of scrutiny and problematisation, addressing the threat posed by crises – crises it itself generated – from a theoretical perspective. Fundamental questions to be asked include the dialectics of freedom and safety.

The emergence of Sars-CoV2 saw the introduction of a host of new social signifiers (face coverings, physical distancing, disinfectants, lockdowns, etc.) and very tangible emotional tensions between closeness and distance, opening and closure, the need for freedom and the need to protect seeping into community life. The implementation of Covid-secure measures aims to stop the uncurbed spread of the virus by limiting social contact, preventing social mixing. Cleanliness and hygiene are the guiding imperatives that ensure individual and collective health. The drawing of everyday boundaries, the closure of national borders and the re-employment of border checks reshape personal, national and international modes of contact and exchange. The ‘external’ threat of the virus infecting our bodies

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becomes charged with symbolic meaning. It acts as a counter-force to the subversive deconstruction of social divides by reactivating and redrawing old lines in the sand. As a result, we already find ourselves amidst a new ‘society of suspicion’ where everyone poses a threat and no one is innocent. This situation calls on politics to act and prevent clinical categories of the current health emergency from being transformed into socio-political antagonisms that give rise to new paradigms of division: *immunitas* versus *communitas*, the young and healthy versus the sick and old, open societies versus closed societies, etc. A societal imperative of social and physical distancing can quickly embed itself in individual and socio-political bodies and pivot developments of collectivism to perpetual mistrust. There is a vital urgency to critically engage with the apparent and observable changes in the present as well as their consequences that are set to determine our future.

A new edition (5:1, 2022) of [LIMINA – Theological Perspectives from Graz](#) will critically examine this context and ask pertinent questions pertaining to an immunised/disinfected society ‘post corona’ from an interdisciplinary perspective. The following suggested topics may be of particular interest:

- How does the societal experience of an increasingly intensifying crisis impact the dialectics of freedom and safety and the corresponding dynamics between democracy and power?
- Does the age-old human need for safety and protection allow for alternative approaches and solutions beyond a hygiene-driven biopolitics that could be detrimental to the relationship between individuals and societies in the long-term?
- What lies underneath the archaic fear of infection?
- What exactly is it that infects people and societies? What can they pass on or contract?
- How does this impact education? To what extent does this impact or can be expected to impact on the physical and mental health of young people?
- How can we understand and deal with the current situation based on theological, philosophical, ethical, cultural-anthropological or sociological concepts of hygiene, corporeality, health/illness, infectiousness and death?

- Is there a link between gender and the interrelated topics of cleanliness – corporeality – limitation of public spaces, also in terms of intersectional crossovers with founding figures in different religions?
- Does the focus on survival still allow room for a life of richness, exchange and (ad)venture and how can this be realised?
- What will our world look like ‘post disinfection’?

We are looking for topical and innovative scientific articles for our next issue of [LIMINA – Theological Perspectives from Graz](#). Please submit **your outline** (max. 4,000 characters) to:

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The final article should be approx. 40,000 characters. For more information about the journal, the peer review process and publication guidelines please visit:

<http://unipub.uni-graz.at/limina>

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