

STATUS QUO?

An artistic journey through the Covid-19 pandemic

zamus:
ZENTRUM FÜR ALTE MUSIK KÖLN

English translations by Noam Zur

Hermann Hesse: Sprache – Language

The sun speaks to us through light,
Through fragrance and colours does the flower,
The air speaks through clouds, snow, and shower.
Within the secrets of the world
Lives an insatiable desire
To disrupt the silence of all things
In words, gestures, colours, sounds
To express the secrets of realities.

Here the origin of art springs forth,
Eternal experience strives for words,
For revelation of the spirit of the world
To be proclaimed by human lips.
All life yearns for language,
Be it in words or numbers, colours, line, or sounds;
Language evokes our vaguest aspirations
To build an ever-higher throne of purpose.

In a flower, red and blue,
In the words of a poet,
The building of creation searches inwards,
Always beginning – never ending.

Where word and sound join forces,
Where songs resound, art flourishes,
Each time the meaning of the world
Its entire existence anew unfolds
And every song and every book
And every picture unveils a look
A new – the thousandth attempt
Life's unity to implement.

To dive deep into this unity,
summons music, summons poetry
To understand the diversity of all creation,
A mirror gives enough reflection.
All confusion one encounters
Becomes clear and simple in verse:
The flower laughs, the cloud rains
The world makes sense, the silence speaks.

Eugène Ionesco: excerpt from Rhinoceros

I'm not going to follow you, I don't understand you! I remain as I am. I'm a human being! A human being!
It's an impossible situation. I can't bear the sound of them any longer. I'm going to stuff cotton balls in my ears!
There's no alternative but to convince them.
But to convince them of what?
And are these changes reversible? Aye, that's the crux of the matter, are they reversible at all? It would be a labour of Hercules, far beyond me. Anyway, in order to convince them, one would have to talk to them first.
And in order to talk to them, I would have to learn their language. Or they, mine...
What is my language? Is it German? It must be German. But is it German, though – what is German after all? I can call it German, and nobody could say it wasn't. After all I am the only one who speaks it.

What am I saying? Do I understand myself, do I understand what I myself am saying? And what if they are the ones who are right?
What do I look like? Who do I resemble?
Who are all these people? Who is that? And that? And that over there, is that? Or is it me?
Yes, I recognize myself, this is me, that one, that's me!
I can't change, I've gone past it. I would want to, I really terribly would want to change. But I simply cannot.
Oh well, too bad! A plight always comes unto him who wants to save his own kind! Very well! I will defend myself against them all! I'll put up a fight against the whole world! I'll take on the lot of them!
I am the last human being!
I will remain so until the very end!
I WILL NOT CAPITULATE!

Erich Fried: Status Quo

Those who want
The world to remain
As it is
Don't want it
To remain at all

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Johann Christoph Bach

Oh, that I had water enough in my head
and that my eyes were springs of tears,
so that I could bewail my sin night and day.

My sin overwhelms me.
Like a weighty burden, it has become too much for me,
Therefore I weep so, and mine eyes flow with tears.
My sighing is great, and my heart is sad,
for the Lord has filled me with grief
in the day of his wrath.

Monika Grütters

"I receive daily requests to grant artists a privileged position. I know and understand the living situations of artists very well. But the situation of the self-employed is not singular to artists. Solidarity with makeup artists, custodians, podiatrists and lecturers is also an important value – or should we treat them differently?"

David Erlen

"No! We do not request a privileged position. We stand here for solidarity, for fairness – equal rights for all! We must not let that seed of discord which is sown time and again take root! Together we are strong!"

Erich Fried: Letzte Warnung – Final warning

If we don't stop fussing about
Our daily worries
Our hopes
Our loves
Our fears
Our grief
And our longing
Then the world will end

If we do stop fussing about
Our daily worries
Our hopes
Our loves
Our fears
Our grief
And our longing
Then the world already has ended

Katja Heinrich: Excerpts from an Artist's Diary 30.3

My goodness, these are crazy times... Corona...
Quarantine... Lockdown ... Out of the blue.
All performances – cancelled. All my jobs until June – gone.
No idea how things will go on.
I'm feeling incredibly fragile and on edge.

9.4

We have been in Lockdown for 4 weeks now. 4 weeks since I last worked outside my own home. 4 weeks ago was the last time I saw my parents-in-law, when I brought them an apple pie for his birthday - and put it in front of their door...Without hugging him. My head is spinning.

21.4.

Will this be the year, the spring, that changed EVERYTHING? Will it ever be like before? Will I die from Corona? Or die of something else? This year, or later? All events are banned until the end of August, for the time being... I feel like I'm in one of the Sci-Fi movies I've seen... it always starts with a virus. Then quarantine, fatalities, police, contact ban, policing. Outside, the sun is shining, and my heart cannot comprehend that I will not be able to start out on a Santiago di Compostela pilgrimage the day after tomorrow. That I am at home – must be at home, that I am not working – not allowed to work.

15.5.

I am weary to the bones. Unbelievably tired. Exhausted without end. The last months have been difficult. I am sitting here and I'm sad. Or am I not sad, but simply incredibly tired? I've had enough. I'm empty.

5.6.

Today I am fed up for the first time. Of bloody sitting at home. Of being cooped up. Of eating together. Of being watched. Of drinking alcohol. Of good food.

6.6.

A whisky before bedtime. Thrown back on myself. I can't do anything, I can't control anything. Just - live... do nothing ... nothing to boast about ... relevant to the system? No justification... Who am I, if I don't work? Who am I? Now?

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12.7.

I'm sitting on the waterfront. The dog is leaning against my legs and watching the birds in front of us. Sunset at the river. I'm leaning against a warm wall and slowly I realise that Corona is like a focal point on everything. On our society, on private issues.

16.9.

Sometimes everything comes into focus. Room depth. Depth of field. Beauty. I'm crying. Again. My insides have tensed up in paroxysms of grief. The clown with the sad truth. Not smoking.

3.11.

I can't take this any longer. I want to go to the cinema. And to drink a massive glass of wine beforehand. And after. I want to touch other people. I want to BE touched.

14.11.

I would be so incredibly happy to know that all of this is worth doing. Or even better - that this thing will end, and everything will get better. It's really difficult not to smoke these days... not to feel that everything is worthless, all of a sudden. No one could imagine that everything one has worked for, everything one has accomplished, will suddenly be worthless - overnight.

28.11.

Slowly the headache is going away. Somewhat. Enough to be able to write. Corona changed everything. Corona has made it painfully obvious that nothing can be planned. Freedom is the "mot-juste". Freedom... my intelligence doesn't help me one bit. I'm tired of going through the world with a splitting headache, seeing, without being allowed to have control. Over myself, my life, my plans...

Erich Fried: In der letzten Zeit – In the last few days

In the last few days
Almost daily
Things are happening
That make one wonder
These might really be
The last few days

But maybe –
It is up to us
To ensure
Whether they are
Or are not

Frank-Walter Steinmeier

"After this crisis is over we will wake up to a different society. We don't want to be a fearful, suspicious society. We could be a society with more trust, with more thoughtfulness, with more hope."

Antonia Caldara

Come, come, merry revellers, and crowned with roses even in Heaven we shall celebrate this day.