



Coronavirus "Covid19" or Collective Mourning

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Received: 26 Oct 2020; Received in revised form: 16 Jan 2021; Accepted: 04 Feb 2021; Available online: 14 Feb 2021

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Abstract— *The Covid-19 pandemic caused by the coronavirus appears on November 17, 2019 in the city of Wuhan, central China, and then spreads around the world. Several countries quickly took drastic containment and disinfection measures for their citizens. However, the virus, comparable to that of the Spanish flu, is spreading all over the world paralyzing entire countries, causing psychosis and plunging the world into a crisis not seen since World War II. to the pain of losing a loved one is added, in this period of epidemic and confinement, the distress of not being able to organize a funeral ceremony and of being deprived of any possibility of saying goodbye to the deceased, of being together between relatives to comfort each other.*

Keywords— *pandemic, accident, collective grief, collective death, individual grief.*

INTRODUCTION

The term bereavement refers to both the loss linked to the death of a loved one, the period of suffering that follows this painful event, the rituals associated with the death and the evolutionary psychological process following the loss or "grieving". By extension, this term refers to the psychic changes accompanying other types of loss (separation, but also social and professional failures). So, grieving means experiencing deep and intimate pain, because in most cases, bereavement is experienced in the privacy of the couple, the family or in the circle of friends. But, when death affects a large number of people, mourning is also experienced collectively. The pain experienced by family and friends remains intimate, but it is not private. From then on, a painful and very complex bereavement begins, it is a double bereavement: personal and collective.

1- Collective death: elements of definition

Collective death does not exist in a form listed as a contemporary reality, but it is an object in its own right that requires attention and deepening. Indeed, numerous studies of anthropology and sociology of death have questioned the technical, cultural, ritual and therapeutic aspects of it. Several works have been done on the First World War, the war in Algeria, the Jewish genocide, the terrorist attacks ... Certainly, the inventory of articles published in the Bulletin of the thanatology society, over

thirty years of publication, shows that the use of the expression "collective death" is non-existent whatever the field of study. L.V. Thomas, a specialist in this field of research, uses the expression "collective death" in his book *La Mort*, but he only devotes a few pages to it. This researcher does not precisely define this category, but only indicates that pandemics and disasters belong to this type of death.

C. Herzlich and J. Pierret also used this expression but in a different sense. Through their work on the sick and diseases, they evoked a transfer of "collective deaths", such as epidemics, to the care of sick people by nursing staff, which explains the title of the book: *Malades yesterday, today's sick - From collective death to the duty of healing*. From this perspective, collective deaths are dated and historically outdated.

In addition, another meaning of the term is noted: R. Guise, in his book *Les romans de "fin du monde"* - The problem of collective death in the literature of the imagination in the nineteenth century, defines collective death in these terms:

We consider that, in order to be able to speak of collective death as a subject of literature, a whole society must know that it is doomed and live in anticipation of the moment when death will strike all those who compose it, a situation that sometimes provides wars and epidemics. As long as

we do not limit ourselves to adding or opposing individual reactions, we can observe reactions to death which are quite paradoxical

In this book, the definition of collective death is relevant, it takes into account more virtual than affective data. Thus, two ideas should be remembered: collective death is in no way a summation of individual reactions and it is followed by specific reactions. We do, we can not find any use of the expression in a particular field of research, that it is not in anthropology, medicine, history or law. We notice a wide variety of objects of study, issues and definitions. In the *Bulletin de la société de thanatologie*, the bibliographical elements refer to works on accidents and catastrophes, to articles by journalists on virtual threats (apocalyptic threat, chemical and biological weapons, third world war), to genocides current, past or forgotten by the media and finally to science fiction novels on the apocalypse and the figure of the monster. The key phrase in all of these references is "Wars and Apocalyptic Threats - Collective Death".

The relative absence of this notion in the field of the sociology and anthropology of death is justified by several factors. Certainly, several studies have undertaken the analysis and explanation of the evolution of behavior and representations relating to death. From the 1950s to the 1960s, a new field of research opened up to untapped areas. Thus, a good number of works were published in the 1970s and 1980s. First, the work of P. Ariès and M. Vovelle in history initiated this movement. Then, in sociology and anthropology, the works of L.-V. Thomas, E. Morin, J. Ziegler, J. Baudrillard and J.-D. Urbain took part in deciphering this death and understanding the stakes. In the 1970s, P. Baudry noted that the sociological or anthropological discourse about death, dying and the dying was critical and protesting. We then moved on to more specialized research on hospitals, cemeteries, funeral directors ... Today, like P. Baudry, we are wondering more about the relationship between the living and the dead, and this in the space of everyday life. These analyzes and these approaches are essentially nourished by two parameters: death as a sociological reality and death as anthropological and ontological data.

Moreover, if all death is seen as a fundamental disorder, how is collective death perceived, therefore? Indeed, death constitutes a radical cut of oneself with the world. Normally, funeral rituals symbolically manage this separation in order to integrate the deceased into the world of the living as beneficent ancestors or as members of a lineage. Rupture is a characteristic that all researchers attribute to death. L.-V. Thomas put it forward when he took death as the most dramatic form of the disorder. It is a disorder that manifests itself as a social disorder

(separation, pain and bereavement). In front of this disorder of "expression" there is a disorder of "going beyond" which compensates for the rupture of death. Thus, the disorder of overcoming constitutes a collective reaction to face the pernicious disorder of death.

Indeed, the symbolic and factual concomitance of death and disorder is highlighted by all the researchers who have worked on this theme and have visited the field for the observation, description and interpretation of the rites of passage. from death to the afterlife. This is anthropological data common to all societies, valid for almost any type of death. These recurrences are very important, of course, we also know that the character of the social responses to the primordial disorder varies from one era to another, from one culture to another. Indeed, not all dead have the same potential for disorder. Some are more dangerous and should be treated with even more care. Thus, L.-V. Thomas mentions that "death" does not exist in itself, it only exists as a notion. The death of a child, an old man, a mental patient, a chronically ill or a death row inmate does not lead to the same disorders or the same treatments. Thus, deaths from suicides and road accidents in adolescents indicate that some deaths have a higher evocative power than others. The resulting social danger must be taken care of by the family and more broadly by public policies.

2- From road accidents to the CORONA pandemic, what is collective death?

Collective death does not exist in a form listed in scientific or even everyday language. Thus, wars, attacks, genocides, epidemics and catastrophes are considered independently. In addition, these facts of nature are compared on different criteria such as the number of victims. In this article we have proposed different elements of definition of collective death. Now we will return to the definition of the object of study by characterizing internal events and differentiating them from those at the periphery, such as traffic accidents.

Thus, it is considered as collective death quite occasionally several victims, which crystallizes into an event and requires specific ritualized treatment. Admittedly, this definition requires clarification, especially as regards the number of victims. In fact, despite the use of the qualifier "collective", the death toll is neither operative nor sufficient. What gives these deaths a collective character is the echo they take. As an example, consider the following two events: The Furiani disaster had a very significant impact. However, it does not belong to the most deadly tragedies with less than twenty deaths. Likewise, the terrorist attacks of the 1980s and 1990s in France caused few victims. But they are considered "collective deaths".

Moreover, road accidents do not fall into this category, despite the thousands of deaths annually. From this perspective, determining a quantified threshold through which the qualifier "collective" can be used would be the wrong target. Thus, all collective deaths materialize as an event, whatever their specificities. Consequently, the duration of the actualization of the phenomenon can manifest itself over a long period as for the two world wars, the Jewish and Armenian genocides, the AIDS epidemic and the Corona pandemic, or over a reduced and unique space-time. for technological accidents and natural disasters. The violence of the shock (physical or emotional) also has a significant effect on the construction of the event. This violence is reflected in the deterioration of the bodies, the reason for the disfigurement and its corollaries in terms of representation are also drivers of the event. They will require treatment of the bodies due to the fear of contamination relative to the imaginary "evil-dead".

Indeed, these elements brought together inform us about the short-term event dimension. They also help support the idea of collective death. However, this observation is only possible after testing two other series of medium and long-term indicators. Those of the treatment and the memory of the disaster.

to the event dimension already mentioned, is added that of ritualization. Indeed, several criteria relate to the treatment of bodies. Thus, the regrouping of the victims in a "fiery chapel" when the death is simultaneous, the presentation of the bodies to the families, the funeral ceremonies in the presence of political and religious authorities are all indications of a ritualization of these collective deaths. These deaths are also defined by the expression of multiple mobilization and solidarity. Indeed, in front of the representation of an external threat and in the face of the violence of the shock, responds the need for a collective support based on mobilizations and on the expression of solidarity as if to affirm that social links have no been marred by the disaster. Moreover, the mobilization manifests itself through the creation of an associative environment made up of victims, families and friends. The objective of its associations is to claim rights: demand for compensation, the possibility of bringing a civil action, the right to know the causes of death and the responsibilities involved. To this first action, other motivations are added such as get together in order to face the unknown, share with others what we have just experienced, campaign for information and avoid other tragedies of the same type.

The last set of factors concerns memory and collective recollection. Thus, the presence of a commemorative monumentality which is expressed by the construction of a memorial is very interesting. Generally, each celebration takes place every year on the anniversary date of the

drama: December 1 for the World AIDS Day, November 11 and May 8 for the two world wars, April 24 for the Armenian genocide, September 11 for the New York attacks. This celebration is characterized by a codification of ritual sequences, such as the minute of silence, the laying of wreaths, the call to the dead through the names of the victims.

Coronavirus "Covid 19", a collective death?

The Covid-19 pandemic is a pandemic of an emerging infectious disease, the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19), caused by the SARS-COV-2 coronavirus. It appeared on November 17, 2019 in the city of Wuhan, central China, and then spread around the world. China quickly took drastic containment and disinfection measures for nearly 60 million people. However, the virus, comparable to that of the Spanish flu, is spreading all over the world paralyzing entire countries, causing psychosis and plunging the world into a crisis not seen since World War II. Confronting this pandemic with the analysis model, already mentioned, we c leads to the conclusion that this is indeed a collective death. Of course, this qualification may be the subject of debate. To demonstrate that it meets the definition criteria set out, it is necessary to examine the stages of its event-based and ritual construction.

B. Paillard, In his work *L'Épidémie - Carnets d'un sociologue*, goes against this point of view. He asserts that "epidemic death has no name and epidemic deaths are deaths without status. Despite their number, the victims of social tragedies do not find a place in the register of celebration of collective deaths ". For him, there is a difference between pandemics and other collective deaths (Collective accidents, catastrophes, wars, genocides and massacres.), The dead are caught in another system of representation. On the one hand, death is shared, on the other, it is ignored and even rejected. In the case of epidemics and pandemics such as Covid 19, plague, cholera and AIDS, the dead lose all identity. Those in charge quickly dispose of the bodies, which results in the absence of collective memory, which escapes commemorative reason. This is, perhaps, due to the specificity of epidemic disease which refers to the horror of death-rot, to the impossibility of controlling a galloping death, to the idea of a social error and a collective sin. . Society protects itself from its deaths. Thus, the absence of treatment of death by prescribed rituals, the absence of a memory and the social rejection inherent in this disease do not allow it to be qualified as collective death, although it has a character that is sort of the ordinary.

On the contrary, we believe that the Covid-19 pandemic can be described as a collective death. In fact, to study the eventual construction of the pandemic, we had recourse to

an article by C. Herzlich and J. Pierret. The initial aim of this article is to highlight the birth of a social phenomenon in public space. Its analysis made it possible to identify several indicators favorable to the characterization of collective death. First of all, the pandemic has generated ancestral fears relating to contamination but also to the figure of divine punishment which has a moral implication for the victims. From the start of the drama, a discourse of the haunting pandemic has been constructed that mixes scientific and symbolic information. In the first place, it is the media, social networks in particular, that make the Coronavirus exist in the eyes of public opinion. In the first weeks, we witnessed the characterization of evil, we tried to identify it, to give it limits. This is how his name came to be. From then on, it became a common name. Officials have used estimates of the number of people carrying the virus as well as the risk rates of future infection. The need for answers is emerging, which shows that a society cannot remain indifferent to such a danger and must take action. The idea of the social bond is mentioned on numerous occasions. The pandemic has become a public health issue, but not only it questions us about our life choices.

By way of conclusion of this part it turns out that most of the criteria allowing to define a collective death are, therefore, present: the creation of united groups constituted in associations, the elaboration of the Patchwork of names and other types of monumentality, the need for ritualized mourning and the choice of an anniversary date (November 17).

3- Collective death always leads to traumatic mourning.

Traditionally, epidemic deaths are rejected and have no status, Colardelle seeks materiality in the epidemic, but concludes that there is no evidence of collective burials. Indeed, if the pandemic is considered as a marker of our imagination of death and of our memory, the physical remains have disappeared. This absence is viewed in different ways: on the one hand, most ailments do not leave a real mark on the skeletons. On the other hand, patients are always excluded, this exclusion must be taken into account as a primary factor in the reaction against the epidemic, the only way to effectively combat contamination. In addition, burials are carried out in haste and bodies are excluded from parish cemeteries. Epidemic death is, therefore, dispossessed of traditional funeral rituals and is separated from the family bond, even if by successive mediations it will be dealt with by the community. M. Colardelle affirms that "epidemic death therefore no longer has, in the eyes of the living, a memory existence. Excluded, in fact, from the lineage, he will only return to the commemoration in collective form "

But what is left for the survivors? Their mourning? According to Freud, in mourning we especially cry the part of ourselves who disappears with the loved one. In collective deaths, we react according to the extent to which we feel concerned physically, but also psychologically, emotionally. In fact, any disaster is terrible, especially when it comes to the deaths of men; it is even more so if it affects our loved ones. It becomes clearer but yet difficult to recognize that, alongside the number of victims, the unexpected, wild, unusual, unpredictable nature of the event, the feeling in the face of collective deaths has a topographical facet: close to us / far from us . Indeed, this psychic estrangement can act as a denial-type defense when we are faced with the unbearable collective death that we can neither prevent nor flee. In collective deaths, the first instinct is to protect lives, your own first and foremost, those of those close to you and those of others with more or less dedication, with more or less selfishness. In the face of disaster, feelings of grief, anger and revolt are left aside; they will come back more or less easily afterwards and sometimes they cannot come back. The only feeling which is essential and which it is difficult to control because it is not of the order of the will and the conscience, it is the fear and its various consequences being located between the inhibited stupor and the disorderly and frantic commotion. Thus, a set of defenses are put in place unconsciously: minimization of the impact of death, delay in awareness, attenuation of affective reactions, a sort of moral anesthesia, rationalization and search for information likely to help conceptualize or represent in words, images, what is happening, flight into action which often makes rescuers (medical staff) courageous who think about their mission before thinking about their survival, resorting to religion , possibly superstition or magic. Because it is obvious that these great catastrophic events lead to a movement of regression, the collective effects of which we can clearly see in the crowds.

In fact, it is in the face of these disaster situations that mourning is re-socialized, it has a double dimension: a personal mourning which has particularities in these circumstances and a social mourning that is both reactivated and particularized. Since the dawn of humanity, death has constantly been experienced collectively until the very last decades when the growing development of individualism has succeeded in privatizing it, in socially marginalizing it, it does not appear much in the past. our social life. As a result, bereavement has become a private, family affair that takes place in privacy. Of course, in the face of the disaster, there is a collective dimension of mourning.

Collective mourning must be recognized, acted according to the usual rituals of a culture. The fact of limiting the contagion involves a reserve on the gathering of the bereaved. In all mourning rites, the social group accompanies his death to his final place. In the event of an epidemic, this convergence is obviously prohibited. No doubt it can give rise to substitutes, but what makes a ceremony its human value and its very concrete effects on the mental and physical health of an individual and a group, will not be possible. Here too, the question of substitution arises. Virtual cemeteries give us the idea of setting up Internet sites that can accommodate messages for the dead or allow the compilation of collections of photos or films of the deceased. The bereaved can confide their thoughts and testimonies there, share them with relatives.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can put forward that if the disaster and emergency situation can be prepared in material terms and for the use of the different experiences carried out by a community and other countries, the psychological and sociological aspects of a large number of deaths, are more complicated to discern. The twenty-first century is in the midst of change in terms of death and mourning and engenders a consideration that goes beyond the crisis situation. Our ethics are complex, we find ourselves faced with the obligation to both worry about the individual who should benefit from the mourning rites to which his life, his beliefs, his social group allow him to claim. But we must also think of our whole community which hopes for a particular mobilization when it loses an important group which composes it. What is more, we must think about the future that is at stake in any historical treatment of a particular situation: what will be remembered? How will our descendants accept the testimonies of what we have been able to put in place? How will the great history transcend the singular histories of the population? Mourning has consequences not only on the cultural level but also on the mental and physical health of citizens. The death of our loved ones is a real morbid risk factor with effects on the cardiovascular level and weakening of the immune system. But the most important consequences of bereavement are found in terms of mental health in terms of depression and addictive tendencies (alcoholism, smoking, dependence on psychotropic drugs). How could we therefore act to limit these consequences? It is our ethics to prevent them as much as possible while preserving the memory of our contemporaries who died during this collective event that would constitute an influenza epidemic.

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