

## ASMR 2

We live in the Anthropocene, the age of humans, in which we act as if we were most important above all else.

We have an enormous impact on our environment and view all problems of civilisation through the lens of our 'planetary self'.

As of now, around three quarters of the biosphere have been transformed by humans, and, moreover, our contact with biodiversity is becoming elusive. We live in the 'Homocene', a homogeneous environment transformed by men. In effect, when we're exposed to animal pathogens, we're not prepared to deal with them.

Conditions conducive to an outbreak of an epidemic have already existed before, but in the Anthropocene the potential scale and speed of it rapidly grows. However, what defines the human era most significantly is the high risk of natural disasters, which are getting out of our control and lead to the ripping of the social fabric and the destruction of the foundations of our civilization. If we don't change our lifestyle immediately, in a few decades, or sooner, even the most prosperous societies won't be able to cope with the impending anomalies: floods, droughts, animal extinction – and also epidemics.

The scientists have stated this for many years. Many of us pay attention to them, but the authority of science has its downside, that is *solutionism*, the belief that technology alone can save us and is the silver bullet for the problem that stem from our lifestyle. Why change our lifestyles and economic system when one can apply a cure-all? Aren't we all longing for a return to normal, the life as it was before, and the development of effective vaccine?

It is believed that the vaccine will solve all problems, but, nonetheless, we might suspect that considering the risk of virus mutation it won't. Viewing the vaccine as a panacea that will enable us to go back to the old days is naïve. It's impossible to overcome a crisis unless we realize that our problems lie in our way of thinking. The development of a vaccine might seem as a benign event, but its effect will be imperceptible, since it's not going to change the nature of our thinking and behaviour. Even if we reckon with the climate scientists and conspicuously adhere to their recommendations regarding the preservation of our planet, the social aberration will manifest itself differently. It can be compared to the attempts of treating alcoholism with hypnosis. Alcoholism is a

symptom of unsolved internal problems, and a very destructive one. If the hypnosis drastically closes the outlet of them, they're bound to surface in a different way.

The standstill and the looming loss of the nearest future might stop the rat race and the commitment in keeping the business as usual. We've seen the hyper-consumerist economy of the growing GDP, rushing headlong towards who-knows-where, come to a halt. We were given the opportunity to reflect, pause and question the existing understanding of common sense, the one which lies behind the stalemate in the area of climate politics and the degradation of our planet. And although economic hibernation as well as physical distancing paradoxically have the potential to bring people and social groups together, not everyone has the time to reflect at the moment. Therefore, even if everyone started to care about the climate change, it wouldn't hinder the growing acceptance of global inequalities and capitalism – whether based on fossil fuels or different ones.

We must engage in discourse reinforcing the need for effective social structure that will protect the health and life of citizens. Now is also the time to think of a world in which the quest for profit can be transformed into the quest for quality of life. Does juggling three jobs and working ten hours a day to afford unnecessary gadgets has to be the norm?

And, indeed, the effects of re-evaluation of our situation are starting to be visible. *The Financial Times* published an editorial about the necessity of abandoning the neoliberal rules and the need for replacing free market with effective state, redistribution and social programs. The Spanish government has nationalized all private hospitals. More and more countries are deciding to invest billions not only in corporations, but also in ordinary citizens. Consequently, there's a growing belief that adapting to the anomalies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century resulting from the deterioration of the environment will require substantial social programs for the poorest, or even dropping out of the quest for growth. There's a whole herd of swallows that spells waking up from the pandemic with an impaired common sense and a new status quo. Nevertheless, having experienced an obligatory fast and various limitations of freedom, wouldn't people like things to go back to normal and engage in the suspended consumption, supposing they'd be able to afford it?