International Journal of Biology and Life Sciences
ISSN: 2957-9511 | Vol. 1, No. 1, 2022

A Brief Analysis of the Death Theme of The Dead

Xi He

Department of Foreign Languages, Nanning Normal University, Nanning 530001, China.

Abstract: The Hot Zone: The Ebola Story, written by American writer Richard Preston, has become one of the most influential non-fiction classics about the Ebola virus. The book points out that illness can lead to both a diminished life and a renewed spirit. The novel shows how illness can contribute to a shift in social cognition, including a reorientation of one's identity. People worship and praise certain social groups, giving rise to cultural revivals and new ideologies. At the same time, people's cognition of social class is changed, and people's collective consciousness and the consciousness of the community of human destiny are born. Based on the analysis of the responsibilities of each subject in this book, this paper will clarify the corresponding responsibilities of each subject in public health ethics.

Keywords: A Shared Future for Mankind; The Hot Zone; The disease writing; The main responsibility.

1. Introduction

Richard Preston writes in the Hot Zone: The Story of Ebola: In November 1989, the Primate Quarantine Center in Reston, Virginia, USA, received 100 cynomolgus monkeys imported from the Philippines. Within days, two cynomolgus monkeys were dead, and within a month,29 more died. After scientific research, it was found that the cause was the Ebola virus in monkeys (Richard Preston,2016). In the end, the U.S. military put the building on lockdown, executed all the animals, and disinfected everything to stop the Ebola virus from spreading in the first place. Through the fictional story of Ebola virus, a public health event, this book exposes the public health ethics problem of the conflict between individual rights and public good. This enlighten us that in public health ethics, individuals, groups and national subjects should actively undertake their own ethical responsibilities.

2. The disease writing in the Hot Zone

There is a long history of disease in literature. The Homeric epics initiated the Philoctetes curse of disease writing in literature, which was tainted with shame from the beginning. Each national literature has the tradition of writing about diseases. Health status is one of the criteria to measure whether a nation is strong or not, and the flourishing of literary creation reflects the vitality of a nation from another aspect. Writing about disease is common in literature, especially in the different historical periods of plague outbreak, and the literature has written about disease in its unique aesthetic form.

2.1. Illness leads to lethargy of life

The loss of life caused by disease is reflected in three aspects:

One is the physical death of people and society, that is, the end of individual life. As Sontag put it:" Sickness is the dark side of life, a more troublesome citizenship (Sontag,2003). " The disease leads to the weakness of vital signs and the loss of life image of patients, so that the body is emaciated, resulting in the degeneration of physical functions and obstacles. In the novel, death and loss of life image brought by disease run through the whole text. As disease and death approached, people gradually became desperate and could not even control their own life or death. "Once the cells in the machine of life have stopped working, they cannot be restarted. The organism will decay irreversibly, falling into the abyss of disorder and disorder. Not so with viruses. Viruses can turn themselves off and go into suspended animation, but when they come into contact with a new organism, they go into action and proliferate. (Richard Preston,2016)" This shows that the virus is horribly contagious. Large-scale outbreaks of unknown diseases not only lead to loss of life, but also accelerate the demise of old social systems and national civilization.

The second is the social death of people, that is, the alienation of relationships between people. One of the reasons why Ebola remains so deadly is that the disease causes individuals to lose faith and hope. Healthy person projects the patient's symptom on self-body, to the disease defense line, be immersed in despair and psychological crisis. As a result, people are increasingly alienated from each other to avoid self-projection and contagion of panic. At the same time, the isolation and alienation from the external world and the loss of the inner vitality of the self-bring the individual into the irreconcilable physical and mental contradictions and accelerate the disillusionment of the self. In the shadow of Mount Elgon, the Ebola virus began in a cave and spread indefinitely. In 1976, a simultaneous outbreak of the Zaire Ebola virus killed 90 percent of those infected in 55 villages along the upper Ebola River. In 1980, a French expatriate living in Kenya was infected with Ebola. He was engulfed by the virus on a plane and turned to blood. In 1989, 100 wild monkeys in a monkey house in Virginia, about ten miles west of Washington, D.C., died unexpectedly in a virus that was closely related to Ebola Zaire. Each of the timelines depicted in the book is a clear record of the unprecedented devastation wrought by the Ebola virus. "The gate through the gray zone to Level 4 is like a spacewalk, but instead of outer space, you're entering a microcosm filled with living organisms trying to fit into a containment suit (Richard Preston,2016)." And these, no doubt foils the terrible virus. Third, people's spirit is lost and the alienation of interpersonal relations. Marx pointed out that "The essence of man is not an abstract object inherent in a single person, but in its reality, it is the sum of all social relations (Marx,1995).” The traumatic memory brought by the disease causes the distortion, alienation and indifference of the interpersonal relationship, and makes

people enter the state of social death. The whole world is terrified of Ebola, a highly lethal filoviridae virus with devastating consequences. When Marburg, Sudan Ebola and Zaire Ebola's fourth sister, Reston Ebola, appeared in Washington, D.C., the acute Colonel Nancy Jacks recognized the seriousness of the problem and made the rounds of virus LABS, monkey houses, municipal offices and even the homes of government officials. She jostled for time with researchers and government officials, holding emergency meetings to hash out a plan, even though she was terrified she was almost infected. As some articles have pointed out, there is no shortage of righteous people who have come forward in the past and now, but they have to fight far more than the virus.

2.2. Illness arouses spiritual forces yearning for renewal

Disease can stimulate the consciousness of self - rescue of the life subject. The large-scale outbreak of diseases will certainly become the focus of social attention. The process of human's exploration of diseases is the self-rescue of life. Only by overcoming diseases can life be free from threats. Illness can arouse people's longing for new life. Fromm explained the compensatory effect of emotion in his other-relevance theory. In his opinion, it is a specific need for individuals to be associated with the living other (such as living together), and people's health depends on the satisfaction of this other-connected emotion. This need lies behind all intimate relationships and all feelings that are called love in the broadest sense. Lomu believes that human emotion is not rooted in instinctive needs, but arises from the special environment of human existence, that is, human social needs. As a kind of spiritual power, emotion can suppress the depression brought by disease. This kind of emotion is stimulated by disease, but it also builds the trust and dependence between people to a certain extent. Love can conquer death. The virus affects everyone's life, and each person is not just a cold number, but a living individual. They have their own daily routine, their own family, their own way of treating the world and seeing the world from a different angle. But the virus is also like a living thing, it can easily wreak havoc and destroy fragile human beings. Colonel Jacks's mentor, Mr. Carter, had lived through the 1976 Ebola outbreak in Congo and was arguably one of the people who knew the Ebola virus best. His caution and reverence for the Ebola virus had been passed on to Colonel Jacks, so when the rest of the military's scholars were taking the sample lightly, Jacks was the only one determined to verify it, and eventually proved that Ebola had reappeared. In fact, throughout the long history of mankind, it is men like Colonel Jacks and Carter who have been the silent guardians of mankind. We know all the terrible wars, know the bodies of the Verdun meat grinder, know the long Stalingrad war, countless people sacrificed their lives, in exchange for a new world is not peaceful. Unbeknownst to us, however, there is another battlefield on which mankind has been engaged in a never-ending battle. A defeat would kill as many people as any war. It is in such desperate circumstances that survival becomes a luxury. Survival became what everyone wanted.

3. The consciousness of Community with a shared Future for Mankind in the Hot Zone

In this book, disease is the catalyst for a shift in social perception and the emergence of a sense of community of human destiny.

The first is the reorientation of individual identity, that is, the deconstruction of anthropocentrism. The inability of man to overcome disease shows that man is not the master and center of nature. People's fear of disease originated from the fear of the unknown world. After the powerful natural disaster wreaked havoc, people put themselves in their place and regained the awe of nature. Faced with a sudden public health crisis, people are overwhelmed by harsh reality. Rolston, a representative of ecocentrism in the 20th century, pointed out that nature has a value and an inner integrity independent of human behavior, which is not subject to human will. All the characters in the novel seem to be deprived of the right to speak, but they are imperceptibly endowed with the right to talk. Man, finally falls from his pedestal and reexamines nature, and nature returns to the center of the world from its marginalized position. The ecocentrist scholar Aldo Leopold proposed the concept of land ethics, in which human beings are only members of the natural community, rather than masters and conquerors. People are powerless in the face of the disease, and then turn into passive submission, which profoundly reflects the pessimistic fatalism of people, but also reflects their anxiety, grief, and melancholy of magical fatalism. According to the book, in order to avoid the public panic and riots caused by the Ebola virus event, the CDC and other government departments emphasized the importance of privacy to reduce the social panic caused by the event. This practice is based on the idea that people panic when they learn about infectious diseases. It can be seen that the CDC's "malicious speculation" is that "people will follow instinct rather than reason when faced with life and death." In the face of existential crisis, they argue, people are often at their most savage.

Second, people will worship and praise a certain social group, mainly in the identity of doctors. Being a doctor is a symbol of security and life. Because of the plague, the whole society's recognition of doctors reached a climax. Doctors become the spiritual support of people. They promote the progress of public health, popularize medical knowledge, establish medical institutions, and bring hope to patients. The scene where Nancy, who is both a doctor and a soldier, gets involved in the virus is the most disturbing. The protective suit she was wearing had a leak point, and the Ebola blood filtered through layer after layer of dead space to find a new host. The last layer of gloves was so thin that she could see the bandage through the gloves, just under the Ebola blood. She put the last layer of gloves under the tap. The glove continues to expand without leaking (Richard Preston,2016). Doctors risk infection while dealing with the injured, but they are on the front lines. It is because of the existence of doctors, so that people's panic heart has a chance to breathe. People have more respect and gratitude for doctors.

Third, it spawned a cultural renaissance and a new ideology. The disease inspired new forms of literary writing, shook the old social concepts, and the social atmosphere and social civilization were quietly changing. According to the book, front-line researchers objected to the cover-up of Ebola. But when it came to contracting Ebola themselves, their attitude was very different. Peter Yellin feared being sent to prison for isolation. He chose to hide his risk of infection and broke up with his fiancee. Tom Geisbert, who was married, was kicked out of his home when he told his wife he was at risk of infection. All the objects he came into contact with were

disinfected and discarded. In order to fulfill its responsibilities and obligations, the health administration department of the United States immediately took quarantine and treatment measures when the "blood epidemic" was found, so as to cut off the route of transmission. However, to some extent, the privacy protection of people who have been in close contact with cynomophagocytic monkeys infected with the "blood epidemic" virus may be ignored while strictly strengthening supervision, which will lead to social discrimination against such people, highlighting the collision between supervision and privacy. The virus accelerated the collision of old and new ideas, and the disaster experience made the social thought rapidly civilized, old and new. People have a deeper understanding of science, medicine and civilization, and start a new life. These changes have important implications for the modern society with frequent public health events: When disaster strikes, human beings should rethink the relationship between man and nature, Revere nature and reflect on how to face the disaster factors in nature, so as to further promote the construction of ecological civilization.

Fourth, people's perception of social class has changed. The outbreak has shaken entrenched racism and sexism in society. Whether black, white, male or female, people live in the same social environment, the probability of infection is the same, the probability of death is similar, and the fear of disease is similar. Disease knows neither color nor blood. The mass death caused by the disease is present in all different classes, and the response to the virus and the results are equal in all races, regardless of skin color. In short, all public health professionals should have the ability to "recognize what is morally relevant in a situation, to understand how one sees it, to appreciate the different perspectives of others, and to face dangers and dilemmas with others".

Fifth, people's collective consciousness and the vision of a community with a shared future for mankind were born. As a virulent infectious disease, Ebola virus is inherently hostile to human health and well-being. It harms all human beings rather than individual races, nationalities and classes. This "person" is both universal (encompassing the entire human race) and concrete (for specific and unique lives rather than abstract numbers or races or genders). Under the virus, everyone quickly became a community with a shared future, and people worked together to deal with the common enemy. Because they are in different social strata, various groups bear different social responsibilities and have their own interests, so they should have different moral standards and norms, and must have the common value goal that can reflect the public health ethics. This is still relevant today: mankind should strengthen worldwide cooperation, build a community of shared future for the region and for all mankind, jointly cope with sudden public health crises, and safeguard and promote the development and progress of public health and human health in the region and the world at large.

4. Conclusion

With the deepening of globalization, countries and ethnic groups in the world are increasingly closely connected. Countries have become a community with a shared future for mankind, sharing weal and woe with each other. In recent years, the global spread of flood, fire and public health crisis also proves the correctness and foresight of our consciousness of advocating a community of human destiny. In a word, individuals, groups and countries, as the subjects responsible for public health ethics such as "blood epidemic", have different responsibilities, but they are not isolated, and objectively there is a mutual relationship and interaction. In fact, disease and medicine have become part of the social culture. However, no matter how the virus develops, as long as people work together, they will surely usher in a better tomorrow.

References

[1] Richard Preston. Blood epidemic: The Story of Ebola Virus [M]. Shanghai: Shanghai Translation Publishing House,2016.

[2] Selected Works of Marx and Engels LM. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1995:60.

[3] Sontag. Metaphor of Disease M]. Cheng Wei, Trans. Shanghai: Shanghai Translation Publishing House,2003.

[4] Sun Hongwei. Body "Poetic Form" and "Body Politics" -- on Irish poet Paul Muldoon's illness writing Ding. Foreign Literature,2021(1): 141-152,160.

[5] Yuwei Yuan. Inspiration from "Monster" and "Plague" -- An Ecocritical Interpretation of Mary Shelley's Two Novels [Ding]. Journal of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, 2021(2) : 101-109,159.

[6] Zhu Hailin. Public Health Ethics: Ethical Interpretation of Public Health Issues [J]. Journal of Henan Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences), 2012 (1):65.