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HISTORY OF PSYCHOLOGY

The Psychology of Global Crises and Crisis Politics

Intervention, Resistance,
Decolonization

Edited by
Irene Strasser
Martin Dege

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Palgrave Studies in the Theory and History of
Psychology

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Palgrave Studies in the Theory and History of Psychology
ISBN 978-3-030-76938-3 ISBN 978-3-030-76939-0 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76939-0>

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This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

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1

Crises, Politics, Psychology—An Introduction

Irene Strasser and Martin Dege

It took a little more than a month from December 27, 2019, when Vision Medicals informed Wuhan Central Hospital that a novel Coronavirus was found in a sample they had received on December 24 (Ren et al., 2020) to the WHO declaration of a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on January 30, 2020 (News, 2020).

A pandemic was finally declared on March 11 (Adhanom, 2020)—two days later, the WHO declared Europe as the active center (2020). It is at this stage that the narrative of a chain of events with the qualifier ‘unprecedented’ began to emerge.

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Attempts at mitigating the Covid-19 outbreak, however, followed classic pandemic mitigation strategies: chains of transmission needed to be broken and health care for those in need provided. Attempts at screening were put in place quickly at Airports, in front of public buildings, and other meeting places (Imperial College COVID-19 Response Team, 2020). New, and perhaps telling, was the hope that government officials and information technology experts placed in technology to trace the virus (Ingram & Ward, 2020). The omnipresent ‘flattening the curve’ became the central goal of governments around the world (Anderson et al., 2020).

At this juncture, public health officials first appeared on stage with recommendations and pleas to the general public to change their behavior.

Dr. Jerome Adams, US Surgeon General, foreshadowed what came to be called lockdown:

Stay at home, if possible, don't go out on any unnecessary travel or trips, and make sure you are staying away from crowded places like movie theaters and concerts. (Fauci et al., 2020)

In the same tune, the now equally omnipresent ‘social distancing’ emerged.

The Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Anthony Fauci, informs us that:

You can actually socially distance yourself from your workplace by doing teleworking. You can socially distance yourself from people in social settings by not going to bars, not going to restaurants and theaters, where there are a lot of people. It's all just [...] so that you have a space between you and others who might actually be infected or infect you. (Fauci et al., 2020)

Public life came to a halt; social distancing, wearing masks, and the absence of public events with in-person gatherings became what some called ‘the new normal.’ In early 2020, governments and health authorities in countries where mask-wearing in public was uncommon began to

educate their citizens that wearing masks protects *the other* from potential harm. Consequently, this *other* was rendered a potential enemy, a potential source of harm for oneself.

And while there was some debate about wearing masks in the beginning, both in populist fashion—for example, from former president Trump (Victor et al., 2020)—and from a more scientific perspective—for instance, from the Chairman of the World Medical Association (FAZ, 2020)—these measures are now largely accepted (Center for Disease Control & Prevention, 2021).

Many of us have by now experienced a so-called ‘lockdown’ or ‘shutdown’ in one or another form; and while total movement control is not the standard, specifically in Western countries—Australia’s four-month lockdown of Victoria marking an exception (Taylor, 2020)—first studies show that such measures proved to be effective for example in the Hubei area in China (Lau et al., 2020). It is important to note that a lockdown, while unprecedented for many, is not an entirely new phenomenon. Earlier pandemics have called for similar measures in certain areas. War, local uprisings, and revolutions, in the past have created lockdown scenarios as well (Ifediora & Aning, 2017; Lucić & Bridges, 2018; Nzussouo et al., 2017). The virus itself is a potentially life-threatening biological entity that has been around at least since October or November 2019 (Li et al., 2020). Its social, economic, political, and health care consequences are, however, human-made.

Consequently, and as with masks and social distancing, there were initial arguments against lockdown strategies—on the political scene prominently and in populist fashion by Brazil’s president Bolsonaro (BBC, 2020) and Trump (Shear & Mervosh, 2020) but also from researchers, prominently perhaps by the Swedish epidemiologist Anders Tegnell (Habib, 2020) as the architect of the Swedish strategy. There is little argument now that the Swedish strategy has failed (Henley, 2020), that Brazil would be better off had they organized a lockdown earlier, and that the large spread of the Coronavirus in the US is due to the initial inaction of the previous government (Imperial College COVID-19 Response Team, 2020). Various arguments have been brought forward against generalized lockdowns: abuse of state power (Didili, 2020), lack of discrimination according to impact on social groups, demographics,

local areas (U. N. D. O. E. A. S, 2020), and impact on the economy (Gros, 2020). Most cost–benefit analyses, however, show that lockdowns seem to be an efficient tool (Rowthorn & Maciejowski, 2020).

After in many countries around the world, the first shock, the first lockdowns, the so-called ‘first wave’ appeared to be over and numbers significantly, albeit temporarily, decreased, a ‘return to normal’ seemed in sight (Hardingham-Gill, 2020). The short-lived dream of a world without Covid-19 that still seems to linger on serves as a reminder to other disease outbreaks, such as, for example, the beginnings of the HIV/AIDS crisis in 1981 (Chin & Mann, 1990), and prevention programs and campaigns in the early 1990s that raised awareness about the ‘best friend’ as a potential threat when it comes to unprotected sexual intercourse. HIV back then as Covid-19 now is rendered as a disease everyone could ‘have’ or ‘get.’ And similar questions emerge: Will there ever be a cure?; Will the virus be defeated?; Will we learn to live with it?

As the HIV/AIDS crisis shows, the tremendous inequalities in different regions of the globe carry a long tail: While in so-called Western countries, health care, prevention services, and treatment are all accessible to large parts of the population, the prevalence of HIV infection in some countries in Africa is still at 15% or higher (Blower & Okano, 2019). In these regions, HIV/AIDS remains a leading cause of morbidity and mortality (Dwyer-Lindgren et al., 2019) and a significant health concern.

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, daily news updates reflect a specific approach to certainty and uncertainty. Mainstream news outlets broadcast the daily number of cases, the number of deaths, rolling seven-day averages and convey to the audience a form of certainty: Even though the virus is not defeated yet, it can be traced and measured accurately. With the arrival of the first vaccines, new statistics are discussed as indicators of effectiveness (Young-Saver, 2020) according to age groups and mutant strains.

Psychosocial effects are also analyzed and show increased distress, family harm, suicides, domestic violence (Singh et al., 2020). With many European countries experiencing their second, third, or even fourth wave of lockdown orders, the outcry for all this to have an end becomes

louder (Dartford, 2021), maybe exaggerated by the looming prospect of successful vaccination campaigns.

In this stage of an increased discrepancy between state measures built on scientific insight and perceived and uttered desires in the public discourse, the behavioral sciences—psychology—are asked for their opinions in public media. It is perhaps a reflection of the state of psychology as a discipline and its place in the public eye that behavioral science and psychology are often confused, intermingled, and confounded in these debates. Stephen Reicher speaks of a fundamental attribution error in the way in which psychology and behavioral analytics are approached (Reicher, 2021). Descriptions of mass behavior as uncovered by the behavioral sciences are often met with mass psychologizations that attribute wrongdoing not to socio-economic circumstances but failure of character. Consequently, failures to abide by Covid-19 rules and restrictions are generally attributed to character flaws of the perpetrators. People who resist lockdown measures, who believe in conspiracy theories, who take the risk of the disease lightly are psychologized as variously crazy, stupid, uneducated, angry, etc. That is, they are considered to be what psychologists (used to) call ‘abnormal.’ As such, they become subject to additional measures (by governmental authorities) should the threat they pose become too strong.

From this emerges a general discourse of compliance to government measures—measures backed up by science—as exercised by the generalized and statistical ‘we.’ The outlier, the one who does not comply, either in general or in specific situations/scenarios, is infantilized. The consequence of this psychologization, infantilization, and shift of blame is the inability to talk and—perhaps more importantly—to listen. In the age of ‘cognitive dissonance,’ the ill-fated confusion of behavioral science and psychology seems to suggest a generalized ‘we’ as the statistical average ‘social animal’ (Aronson, 1972/2017) that acts based on in-group/out-group phenomena and seeks to blame their fellow human beings for failure and misfortune by psychologizing ‘them’ as ‘stupid,’ ‘loony,’ ‘crazy,’ that is to say ‘abnormal.’ In the best fashion of ‘cognitive dissonance,’ this ‘social animal’ fails to reflect upon its own misgivings, failures, and violation of rules.

At the same time, the global ‘social dissonance’ becomes more and more apparent: It is not the virus—the biological entity—that is responsible for global inequalities such as increasing unemployment rates among women (Cooper, 2020), distribution of financial resources (Okereke et al., 2021), and individual access to health care (Bambra et al., 2020). Instead, the unequal distribution of resources is brought to the fore by attempts to control the pandemic orchestrated by the governmental-industrial complex. It is in this context that decisions are made of who gets to live and who gets to die as we fail to implement additional measures to prevent the continuous drifting apart of the rich and the marginalized, the Global North and the Global South, those with access to education and those stripped off their rights.

Meanwhile, within psychological discussions of pandemic mitigation measures, the ‘resilience’ concept is key: Are ‘we’ able to adapt our behavior to tough times, to give up the things we value?; and if so, for how long? (Masten, 2020). The ‘we’ in such questions raised—and answered statistically—refers yet again to a transhistorical and metaphysical ‘we’—the ‘we’ of the human being as a ‘social animal.’ This animal can be classified according to a list of so-called ‘factors’ that have a positive or negative ‘influence’ on resilience. Within the limits of such measurable resilience, the general public (the generalized ‘we’) can be ‘nudged’ (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008) into doing whatever is necessary, given the right ‘incentives.’ The delay of lockdown measures—or conversely (too) early returns to ‘normal’ after the first Corona wave, as it was observable in some countries—can, at least in part, be explained by an assumed limited capacity to ‘cope’ that is, a psychologization of the population at large.

A closer look at the actual lockdown scenarios reveals quite a different picture of this ‘social animal.’ In contrast to what was feared by some, lockdown measures were largely accepted, and people adhered to them. More so, people came together—socially distanced—in different contexts with a sense of community and mutual support (Firmin et al., 2020). Mutual aid groups emerged, and various alternative ways of social exchange were created in solidarity. Rather than individualized infantile ‘we’s’ that are controlled, guided, indeed ‘nudged’ by government measures, into doing what is supposed to be the right thing, a largely

unexpected creative empowerment was created by human beings coming together in solidarity.

The articles in this volume attempt to go beyond this apparent discrepancy between the depoliticized mainstream psychological assumptions and predictions, and real-world scenarios.

Part I looks at ‘crisis’ on a political level to understand how notions of crises and the interpretation of crisis scenarios are heavily intertwined with governmental and state interests. The aim here is to disentangle individual subjectivity, subjectification, and science as forms of politics with the explicit goal to decolonize psychology.

Veronica Hopner, Darrin Hodgetts, Stuart Carr, Nick Nelson, Kerry Chamberlain, and Rhys Ball examine how the measures related to the Covid-19 pandemic brought surveillance, loss of freedom, and a shut-down of everyday life in Aotearoa, New Zealand. The authors discuss the tensions and ambivalences between risks, security, and insecurity and new orders of authority, privacy, and freedom that emerge. To do this, they introduce the conceptual framework of the ‘Psycurity Accord,’ which helps to understand the dynamics and dialectical tensions between risk and security, and they critically discuss what this ‘human security’ generally means in times of crisis.

Danilo Silva Guimarães points out the recurrent sociocultural crises for indigenous peoples throughout history caused by land invasions. He reflects on the Amerindian Support Network Universidade de São Paulo in Brazil and focuses on the dialogical process in establishing a partnership with the indigenous communities. Guimarães argues that each socially constructed reality has a border of unknown. This border is exemplified by the author with the House of indigenous people, an Opy, on the University Campus of Universidade de São Paulo. He concludes by emphasizing the importance of ethical attitudes based on reciprocal relationships.

Faced with the incredible numbers of people suffering from Covid-19 and the effect of mitigation attempts, *Sunil Bhatia* tries to give an expression to this moment of global crisis by first reflecting on his own positionality in the pandemic. From there, he reflects on the role of psychology in the Covid-19 crisis. To do so, he relies on decolonizing and decolonial theory. He shows how the pandemic reveals a psychology

of racism and how we can apply decolonial theory to rethink the discipline. For Bhatia, it is central that psychologists develop a meaningful theoretical vocabulary to reflect on social justice issues.

Nandita Chaudhary begins her analysis of the consequences of the Covid-19 puzzle, as she calls it, from a global perspective. She zooms in on the situation in India, a country where infectious diseases still account for a substantial number of deaths due to the socio-economic situation in large parts of the country. In an ever more fine-grained analysis down to everyday habits and rituals, the author tries to come to terms with how Covid-19 has spread in India and defied most predictions from the early stages of the pandemic. Chaudhary makes the case not only for local knowledge but for a psychology that should be informed by practices on the ground.

In his chapter, *Henderikus Stam* reflects upon the problems within contemporary psychology as they come to the fore during the Covid-19 pandemic. Stam holds that psychology plays an important role today, given how psychologists are strategically placed at various institutional intersections in society. In what the author calls the ‘rush to expertise,’ psychologists respond to the new situation largely with their old theories and common reflexes. Stam argues that today’s world relies on what Achille Mbembe called Necropolitics and the governance of large numbers and that in this world, psychology is often rendered as playing catch-up. The author shows that psychology is effectively contributing to a world of hermeneutical injustice.

Wade Pickren expands our view from the Covid-19 crisis to equally pressing matters that concern us right now and threaten our existence on this planet: climate change, racial inequalities, loss of biodiversity. Pickren argues that we need to engage in emerging transition discourses to face these challenges and to rethink issues of global social justice. He makes the case for a new cosmology to face these crises, a cosmology that relies on radical relationality, a regenerative epistemology, and a Pluriverse that contrasts with the One-World World as it is anchored in Western Enlightenment traditions. This new cosmology would allow us to think a *psychology otherwise* that is earth-centered and allows us to think of the planet as a living ecosystem that encompasses all there is.

Part II of this book aims to understand the role of psychology and psychologists as practitioners in crisis scenarios. The goal here is to elaborate on the importance of the psychological sciences in times of crisis and render psychological interventions as forms of political action.

Paul Rhodes discusses the Australian bushfires in 2019/20 and the distress caused by this crisis due to threats to homes and lives, but also to climate-related, ‘eco-anxiety.’ He shows how clinical psychology mostly approaches forms of anxiety on an individual level, which he considers as a non-appropriate response to a crisis like this. From Rhodes’ perspective, we need ‘new paradigms of practice that ground the psyche in place.’ As a person who is based in the center of the Black Summer bushfires, he provides an auto-ethnographic perspective on this crisis. Beyond auto-ethnography, Rhodes also refers to research projects he conducted with colleagues and students, which aimed to capture what he calls ‘psycho-erratic distress,’ and the relevance of eco-psychology, aboriginal psychology, and eco-existentialism.

Erica Burman reflects on lockdown experiences and discusses them in terms of occupation and colonization. She asks what the pandemic state and the nation-states are doing to our states of mind with the help of Fanon’s discussion of colonialism, group analytic approaches, and Lacan’s model of group constructed individual subjectivity. Finally, Burman explores what notions of ‘action’ different approaches offer to us that go beyond waiting for the pandemic to be over.

Raquel Guzzo examines, from a critical psychological standpoint, how social inequalities contribute to the current Covid-19 health crisis in Brazil. In her chapter, she shows that the current social conditions and disadvantages are not shaped by the pandemic alone. For the majority of the Brazilian population, the economic and social situation had been in crisis before the pandemic already. Relying on Paulo Freire, Ignacio Martín-Baró, and Klaus Holzkamp, among others, Guzzo concludes that psychology must take the perspective of oppressed groups and develop systematic investigations into the reality experienced by them, in order to contribute to liberation and equality.

Langdon Winner reflects upon the Covid-19 crisis as an instance of worldwide socio-technological disruptions. Looking at how the public response to these disruptions emerged and changed over time, he also

relies on historical comparisons to other periods of major disruptions, such as World War II or the Global War on Terror. It is the hope of the author that the Covid-19 crisis can point beyond itself and shed light on other global disruptions such as the immanent climate crisis. Winner, however, remains pessimistic and assumes that memory and public priorities during the Covid-19 crisis will fade as the crisis fades as well.

David Fryer offers in his chapter a perspective on crises that goes beyond terminologies of ‘unprecedented,’ or ‘natural,’ that is, ‘apolitical.’ He points out that crises are socially constituted and always serve the interests of particular groups. Fryer discusses the crisis of mass unemployment and mental challenges in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, dismantling this alleged relation between unemployment and mental health, which, he argues, is anything but natural. Similar to Rhodes, he challenges the ‘psy-complex’ and its individualistic approaches to mental health crises. Fryer argues that we are confronted, to some extent, with a crisis of our own making caused by politicians, policymakers, and also the ‘psy-complexifiers,’ and the reinscription of neoliberal policies.

The third part of this volume examines concrete socio-political changes and the effects of such change on psychology as a discipline and profession. The aim of this section is to underline the connection between scientific theory, practice, and politics.

Babette Babich discusses accusations of ‘pseudo-science’ and ‘fake news’ rhetoric against scientists who display alternative views. How do we decide what science to regard as ‘worth it’ and what science not? Babich argues that it is not progress that serves as the motivator but maybe a science that never changes; we want ‘the facts’ to satisfy a need to believe in science, in place of religions, as providing us with the notion of sustainable ‘truth.’ In the context of the current Covid-19 pandemic, Babich discusses society, politics, and science as they negotiate mask-wearing, vaccinations, and social distancing. She reflects on the police state, the role of surveillance, Necropolitics, and, not least, the psychology of lockdown.

Jamil Khader confronts two controversially discussed perspectives on the Covid-19 pandemic: The reflection on the Italian government’s response to the pandemic by Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben and

Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek's discussion of the pandemic. In elaborating also on the pandemic in Israel/Palestine and the impact of debates on philosophical theories and conspiracy theories, he maps the pandemic onto the history of settler-colonial violence, occupation, and disaster catastrophes. Drawing from an Egyptian dystopian TV series called *Al-Nehaya* (The End), Khader illustrates his considerations with a recent example of popular culture that displays aspects of anti-semitic and Masonic conspiracy theories and simplified normalizations of 'good,' and 'evil.'

Ian Parker situates the Covid-19 outbreak in its political context and discusses some key conceptual issues. He points at the capitalist conditions under which the current pandemic became possible in the first place, including, on the one hand, industrialized farming, genetic engineering in agriculture, and the destruction of natural habitats, and on the other hand, bureaucratic mismanagement, and the dictate of keeping production and consumption going. Parker examines different political responses to the crisis before considering strategic demands we should make of the state and each other. Finally, Parker discusses four elements of 'viral resistance' and how to avoid returning to the kind of normalcy that helped to cause the crisis in the first place.

In the final contribution to this volume, *Thomas Teo*, in his chapter, argues that Western countries currently face a return of fascist subjectivity. In relying on the idea of Necropolitics among others, Teo argues that fascist subjectivity justifies the destruction of the racialized and subhumanized Other based on a socio-relational ontology. Specifically, during the Covid-19 crisis, persons with a risk factor are rendered diable for the sake of the economy. Teo realizes that we must fight such fascist subjectivity, and he concludes his chapter with strategies to resists.

The contributions are interdisciplinary in scope and aim to broaden the horizon of psychological research, to contribute to psychology off the beaten paths with the explicit goal of a political and politicized psychology that allows us to rethink global and local challenges and crises of our times.

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Part I

Decolonization



2

Assembling the Psycurity Accord in Response to the Early COVID-19 Outbreak in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Introduction

We live in an epoch characterized by substantial risk: pandemics, natural disasters, crime, poverty, and disease (Grünberg, 2013). Increasing

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Switzerland AG 2021

I. Strasser and M. Dege (eds.), *The Psychology of Global Crises and Crisis
Politics*, Palgrave Studies in the Theory and History of Psychology,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76939-0_2

global interdependence of societies and uncertainties in the modern age has enhanced public awareness of, and concerns regarding, such risks (Beck, 1992; Centeno et al., 2015; Ekberg, 2007; Giddens, 1991). Although risk is global and trans-national, Beck (2002) reminds us that risks are not always shared equitably, with some groups carrying a greater burden than others. Experiences of risk are often contingent on the intersections of social class and place, gender and sexuality, religion, age, health, political affiliation, culture, and ethnicity (Beck, 2002; Centeno et al., 2015). Notwithstanding the dynamic conditions of risk, experiences of risk often involve common psychological states of ambivalence, uncertainty, insecurity, fear, and anxiety (Ekberg, 2007; Mythen, 2005). Such risks can be mitigated by establishing conditions that promote security, and which provide an underlying prerequisite for social, economic, political, and cultural stability (Tanaka, 2019).

Central to this chapter is the importance of understanding the complexities of, and tensions surrounding risk and [in]securities. We offer the notion of the Psycurity Accord as a conceptual frame we discuss below for understanding the dynamics at play in balancing issues of risk and security. We use this framework to explore dialectical tensions around risks and [in]securities evident as Aotearoa New Zealand responded initially to the COVID-19 crisis, and document how this Accord is in a constant state of becoming as the crisis unfolds and risk-mitigating practices to promote public security evolve.

The concept of human security is contested and constitutes “an area of concern rather than a precise condition” (Buzan, 2009, p. 29). Security is essentially about the protection of people from the risks posed by present and future vulnerabilities (Dunn Cavelty & Mauer, 2010). Different persons and groups will have different priorities around security (Stevens & Vaughan-Williams, 2016), which can fluctuate according to time, place, and need. Personal security can provide people with freedom from physical and psychological violence (Gasper & Gómez, 2015). Health

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security can provide for disease management and adequate health care (MacIntyre et al., 2018). Employment security can provide the basis for civic participation and human flourishing (United Nations Development Program, 2014). Progressive political security can limit repression and human rights violations (Williams, 2013). Military security can work to ensure the safety of the state and its inhabitants (Baylis et al., 2013). While it is important to emphasize the positive and potentially inter-linked aspects of these forms of security that often complement each other, it is also crucial to acknowledge that there is a dynamic tension between these areas where calls for increased security in one area can lead to considerable insecurity in another resulting in such issues as repression, poverty, hunger, illness, and increased risk for others. Security, thus, is a contested concept that poses considerable dilemmas that are difficult, if not impossible, to solve.

Relatedly, surveillance is now a pervasive contemporary means to mitigate risk and promote security (Grünberg, 2013). Surveillance is undertaken by both public and private institutions employing a raft of technologies and has become an integral part of everyday human experience (Chesterman, 2011; Doyle et al., 2012; Lyon, 2010, 2015). Surveillance, however, is a double-edged sword. As well as constituting hazards to privacy and raising a raft of ethical concerns, surveillance can offer benefits to nations, communities, businesses, and individuals by providing information to thwart terrorism, prevent crime, and protect public health (Seele, 2016; Wright et al., 2015). Communities can use surveillance practices to make their environments safer and free from harm as well as to exclude and repress outgroups.

Particularly worrying consequences of increased surveillance include changing powerdynamics between those undertaking the surveillance (watchers) and those subject to the surveillance (the watched); giving greater power to the watcher to coerce and control the watched (Lyon, 2007; Pridmore & Zwick, 2011; Richards, 2013). Broader negative consequences include threats to privacy, freedom of movement and rights of association, the unjustified transformation of citizens into suspects, and the creation of environments that suppress human rights (Richards, 2013). Today, particularly in the context of a pandemic, the intrusive use of surveillance technologies may be accelerating shifts

toward screening and profiling particular people and groups. Information gathered from surveillance can be used to catalogue people into race, gender, socio-economic status, political and sexual orientation categories as a basis for repression, misuse of power, force, coercion, and discrimination (Chesterman, 2011; Jeffries, 2011). In short, processes of surveillance are experienced by members of particular social groups as enabling practices of social inclusion and exclusion, a “political organization of difference ... [and] a technology of social sorting” (Jeffries, 2011, p. 180). Surveillance offers a means of excluding people from the ‘moral envelope’ or scope of justice of a society and as a result can render them subject to reduced rights and unjust treatment (*cf.*, Opatow, 2017).

An important concern of surveillance activities arises from its implications for privacy. The rise of surveillance has led some scholars (e.g., Chesterman, 2011) to propose that societies are facing the end of privacy in an increasingly insecure world. Privacy is also a contested and culturally relative concept, which is essentially about the expectations of people, groups, organizations, and institutions (Lyon & Zureik, 1996). These expectations are usually understood in a context of rights about anonymity and confidentiality, controlling information about oneself, limiting institutional accessibility to personal lives, and restricting intrusions upon persons (Flaherty, 2014). Recent scholarship suggests that expectations of privacy are associated with contextually dependent norms (Martin, 2015, 2016; Nissenbaum, 2004). These normative expectations are reliant upon who is involved, the type of information involved, and the situation.

Contextualizing the Psycurity Accord

The increased use of risk mitigation practices to promote security in contemporary societies brings both benefits, such as enhanced safety, and costs, such as loss of privacy. These costs and benefits are usually held in some state of contingent, balanced tension that can be usefully approached from the perspective of a social contract (Martin, 2012, 2016). Here, we approach the complexities and tensions surrounding the COVID-19 response in Aotearoa New Zealand informed by the

perspective of a contingent social contract (Martin, 2012, 2016) and Assemblage Theory (Delanda, 2016). Such social contracts are usually underpinned by notions of consent and obligation (Hobbes, 1651/1991; Locke, 1690/1960), agreement between parties (Freeman, 2007), expectations of equilibrium, and principles of justice (Rawls, 1971). Social contracts can be implicit, contingent on some form of implied exchange, or explicit, embedded in laws, regulations, and public policies. These contracts involve expectations, and are generally protective, often providing a basis for resolution when expectations are violated or move out of balance. Moghaddam (2008) usefully extends the logical social contract with his concept of ‘the psychological social contract’ focused on how people understand and manage themselves in relation to a social order. According to Moghaddam (2008), these negotiations of social structures, institutions, and normative systems constitute a dynamic and “...active participation in collective life and in the collaboratively constructed and collectively upheld versions of social reality that come to dominate society” (p. 882). We take this concept further in terms of understanding such social formations by drawing insights from Assemblage Theory.

Drawing on this idea of a psychological social contract, we have also opted to use the term accord to avoid some of the rigidity and ideological baggage associated with contracts in an epoch of neoliberalism. An accord is a more dynamic and contingent way of understanding the agreement and can mutate as situations evolve. We consider that the concept of a psychological social accord is widely applicable but varies in and by context. It is socially constructed and implicit but can be explicit when breached. Briefly, the Psycurity Accord is an explanatory lens for understanding challenges and tensions that can arise in balancing risk and security, and the potential losses for privacy and human rights through restraints on freedom of movement and association, for example.

The balancing of risk and security is underpinned by notions of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (Bannister, 2005; Hegtvedt, 2006), which are foundational to the Accord. Distributive justice is important as it is centered on how costs of risk-mitigating practices, such as surveillance (loss of privacy and freedoms) and benefits (increased security), are shared or distributed fairly across persons and

groups (Homans, 1958, 1974; Rousseau, 1989). Procedural justice is also important in ensuring equity in the treatment of different persons and groups within the material efforts to mitigate risk and promote security. Interactional justice is further concerned with relational processes and this form of justice is entangled within expectations that trust, respect, and dignity will be upheld in efforts to balance risk and security (McNall & Roch, 2007; Steeves, 2008).

Accordingly, the concept of the Psycurity Accord offers a useful device for interrogating the tensions and challenges that arise in relation to promoting security, sustaining expectations of justice, and holding human rights in perspective. We further extend our conceptualization of the Accord through the lens of Assemblage Theory before applying it to the response to COVID-19 in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Assemblage Theory (DeLanda, 2016) offers a useful lens for thinking about dynamic tensions in the Psycurity Accord, especially how this social formation coheres and reassembles in everyday life as situations change. The key idea is that the social world does not have a stable or rigid ontology and is comprised of various assemblages that form a social or relationally contingent ontology. Assemblage Theory offers an orientation toward how elements of society interrelate with each other as interwoven aspects of larger heterogeneous and transitory mosaics or social formations. As Anderson and colleagues (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 177) note, an assemblage is both “the provisional holding together of a group of entities across differences and a continuous process of movement and transformation as relations and terms change”. Elements in an assemblage can include values, conventions, places, objects, people, material practices, and events. Assemblages are also made up of moving elements that shift in and out of primacy in relation to evolving events.

Our focus on tensions speaks to the relational co-existence of elements in the often-stilted dance of an assemblage. Here, we must keep in mind Deleuze and Parnet’s (1987, p. viii) proposition that “in a multiplicity, what counts are not the terms or the elements, but what there is between”. Rather than focus on the inherent properties of discrete elements like risk or security, the focus shifts to the functions of these elements in the broader social formation and how it impacts other elements and situations (DeLanda, 2016). In short, Deleuze’s relational

philosophy is useful in situations such as pandemics, which are evolving rapidly.

We are interested in how the Psycurity Accord takes shape over time as a social constellation comprised of tensions between contingent elements. Central to this is an exploration of public reactions to heightened security and material practices that restrict freedoms and privacy. As McFarlane and Anderson (2011, p. 652) note, assemblages are “a way of thinking the social, political, economic, or cultural as a relational processuality of composition and as a methodology attuned to practice, materiality and emergence”. It is worth emphasizing here that just because assemblages are fluid and dynamic social constructs does not mean that they lack material form or historical implications (DeLanda, 2016). Our Psycurity Accord is articulated through the permissibility of material acts, such as heightened surveillance practices and border closures that impinge on our freedoms and privacy, but which many of us accepted—at least initially—as being necessary.

By way of further background, Assemblage Theory is concerned with processes whereby often heterogeneous elements come together as part of a larger formation. One key aspect of the present assemblage is what Deleuze and Parnet (1987, p. 70) refer to as a “geography of relations” that reflects what Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 25) call “a logic of AND”, rather than “either/or”. According to this logic, one element is not hierarchically absorbed by another but co-exists through connective alliances and tensions with other elements. For example, within the Psycurity Accord, risks are linked to surveillance, rights, and [in]securities in dynamic and evolving ways.

In the following sections, we explore the dynamic relationships between central elements in the Psycurity Accord as an evolving assemblage within the territory of Aotearoa New Zealand and our initial response to the COVID-19 outbreak. We illustrate this with issues of quarantine and legal challenges which constitute a tense relationship between the health and legal systems.

Pandemics, Kaci Hickox, and COVID-19 in the Courts

Reflecting the logic of, AND, tensions in the Psycurity Accord we foreground how all elements also retain some independence within the assemblage through which they form parts of an orchestra (DeLanda, 2016). As these elements move (for example, a risk gets more pressing), the Accord can morph and new material practices, such as social distancing, can emerge, while others may be discontinued. In Aotearoa New Zealand, as the risk from COVID-19 was perceived by some to lessen, we also witnessed more breaches in prescribed security practices at that time and the reassemblage of what was tolerable in terms of impositions on freedoms and rights. If material practices, such as the lockdown, did not shift with the public consensus then the New Zealand Government risked breaching the Accord and losing the support of the body politic.

The Psycurity Accord was reassembled throughout the initial national response to the pandemic. It took preliminary shape through the early and clear communication of the risk of COVID-19, and the presentation of a plan of action in the making, that seemed plausible to a frightened and insecure populous. Over time, the Accord became less stable and began reassembling as an ever-increasing number of dissenting voices reasserted the primacy of risks to the economy over those to public health.

Medicine traditionally occupies an interesting position in relation to issues of risk, security, surveillance, freedom, and privacy (Kennedy et al., 2018). Bhugra and colleagues (2015) argue that medicine involves a social contract within societies that is largely implicit. Global health threats such as COVID-19 raise tensions around security and how population controls to ensure public health should operate (McNabb, 2010). We know from pandemic threats like Ebola and associated cases, such as that of Kaci Hickox in 2014 (Hickox v Christie et al., 2015), that this Accord can be highly contested and resisted by some individuals.

Hickox was a licensed nurse who returned to the United States after a month working with Ebola patients in Sierra Leone for *Médecins Sans Frontières*. Hickox declared her contact with Ebola patients upon arrival

in New Jersey, and after lengthy questioning was placed in the Airport quarantine facility. Despite assuring officials that she was asymptomatic, and had strictly adhered to protocols in Sierra Leone, Hickox was detained and then escorted home (Hickox v Christie et al., 2015). The State of Maine petitioned for severe restrictions on Hickox's freedom of movement and association, Hickox immediately contested these restrictions and raised issues of procedural justice about the surveillance of her health and losses of freedoms (Mayhew v Hickox, 2014). She argued that due process was not followed because there was no hearing to assess if the severe restrictions on her liberty were necessary for public safety (Hickox v Christie et al., 2015).

Although adjudicating Judge LaVerdiere found Hickox's surveillance was not lawful, in that there were no legal grounds to restrict her freedom of movement, he nevertheless stated that:

the Court is fully aware that people are acting out of fear, and this fear is not entirely rational. However, whether that fear is rational or not, it is present, and it is real. Respondent's actions at this point, as a health care professional, need to demonstrate her full understanding of human nature and that real fear exists. She should guide herself accordingly. (Mayhew v. Hickox, 2014)

LaVerdiere's comments highlight the inherent psychological nature of the Psycurity Accord, which goes beyond any legal or regulative processes in relation to notions of justice around risk and security. In this case, surveillance and quarantine are enmeshed within wider social norms about how members of society should behave in terms of the public good. This case highlights the role of fear and trade-offs around human rights in actions to mitigate risk and ensure public safety. The same arguments posed by Hickox have also been made recently in Aotearoa New Zealand during the COVID-19 lockdown, with a small minority of citizens questioning the legality of such measures, and two people mounting a failed legal attempt to sue the New Zealand Prime Minister and other government officials on grounds of unlawful detention during the lockdown (Nottingham & McKinney v Adern, Bloomfield & Black, 2020). In terms of the Psycurity Accord, we outline how these cases reveal the

importance of state interventions being procedurally just to minimize contestation and breaches of social contracts in times of crisis. Such legal challenges also highlight the dynamics of the Psycurity Accord as they result in changes to government pandemic containment and eradication strategies. In Aotearoa New Zealand, these dynamics have sparked judicial, governmental, and public deliberations regarding what procedures are appropriate to ensure public security in response to COVID-19, and where the balance should lie in the suspension of rights (*cf.*, Gatter, 2016).

Tensions surfaced by cases, such as Hickox in the United States, also resemble cases concerning COVID-19 in Aotearoa New Zealand, and speak to the complex functioning of the Psycurity Accord, and the differing understandings of this social formation that are in play at any given time. They highlight how people often accept state intrusions to ensure public safety. However, there are also expectations that freedoms and privacy will not be unduly breached, and that any surveillance processes will be fair, equitable, and appropriate for the severity of risk. These cases also highlight how responses to pandemics, like other assemblages, are territorialized (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). As DeMaria (2004, p. 58) argues, to be accepted, these contracts must be based on scientific evidence as well as societal values, including: “how people live, how society is viewed, the balance of liberty, property, privacy rights, and individual autonomy with safety, security, and public health”.

The first case of COVID-19 was reported in Aotearoa New Zealand in February 2020. Subsequently, a four-level alert system was introduced that set out various levels of response and freedom. Level 1 was the most liberal, and Level 4 was the most restrictive, at total lockdown except for those deemed essential workers. On March 25, a State of Emergency took effect and the nation moved into level 4 lockdown (New Zealand Gazette, 2020). The borders had been closed a few days earlier except for returning residents who were detained in self-isolation or government-managed facilities. As a key securitizing agent, the government identified the existential risk of COVID-19, and invoked legislation granting government entities extra-ordinary powers to prevent any activity that heightened public risk in order to protect

the physical, social, and economic health of the country (Unite against COVID-19, 2020).

Implementing a lockdown can be viewed as an act of territorialized governance, which Hillier and Abrahams (2013, p. 32) argue “requires the stabilisation and fixing of certain forms of social interaction in order to maintain social harmony”. At this time, we saw the increased use of symbols, and mantras such as ‘Go early, go hard’, ‘Be kind, be good’, ‘We can do this’ and our ‘Team of five million’ employed to promote solidarity and public conformity. As the infected cases increased, so did the perceived risk and public willingness to endure intrusions by the State into their everyday lives. The early assemblage of the contract appeared relatively cohesive with one major poll reporting that 87% of respondents supported the State’s response to the pandemic, and 90% indicated they were complying with the new restrictions and practices such as social distancing (Spoonley et al., 2020).

However, such accords are rarely, if ever, universally accepted. There were early breaches of the Accord and legal challenges raised. Some people did not accept the severity of the risk to health and contested having their freedoms removed. Some breaches reflected the efforts of people to try and keep their businesses afloat and continue trading until forced to shut down. Breaches also occurred as people sought affordable food unavailable in their area because more affluent groups were panic-buying staple items. These breaches signal that there are multiple risks and multiple (in)securities in play in a society confronted by such a threat. As the weeks progressed, the rate of COVID-19 cases decreased, further breaches occurred, and people were granted more freedoms; the balance between risk mitigation and security was reassembled. These dynamics reflect the assertion that “assemblage boundaries are indeterminate and frequently challenged, transgressed and/or extended as new connections occur and old one’s rupture” (Hillier & Abrahams, 2013, p. 20).

An important example of reassemblage was the judicial review in *Christiansen v The Director-General of Health* (2020). During the most stringent phase of the lockdown period, Oliver Christiansen returned to New Zealand to be with his terminally ill father and was placed in managed isolation. His father’s condition dramatically declined within

the quarantine period and it became evident that his death was imminent. In applying for early quarantine release, Mr. Christiansen argued that he showed no signs of COVID-19, and his father was being cared for at home by family members. He pledged to observe social distancing, and to return to managed isolation within 24 hours of his father's death. Despite these assurances, Mr. Christiansen was declined an exemption from quarantine on three occasions, and subsequently took the matter to the High Court.

The adjudicating Justice Walker determined that, although the Health Act Order may have been applied correctly, there were legal grounds for exemption on reasons of compassion, low risk of transmission, and exceptional circumstances. She went on to say that:

No matter how necessary or demonstrably justified the COVID-19 response... Decisions [...] must be proportionate to the justified objective of protecting New Zealand, bearing in mind the fundamental civil rights at issue – freedom of movement and of assembly. (Christiansen v The Director-General of Health, 2020, para 67)

In her judgment, Justice Walker invokes the heterogeneous and competing elements of risk, security, and freedom that are central to the assemblage of the Psycurity Accord and raised issues around the power of the State and procedural justice. She highlights the relational processuality of the Accord and its material implications (DeLanda, 2016). This judgment invariably prompted processes of reterritorialization, whereby new rules or practices were established (Hillier & Abrahams, 2013). Rapid reviews undertaken by the Ministry of Health regarding humanitarian requests for access to dying relatives and processes for making such decisions were reconstituted and decisions regarding five other cases overturned (Whanganui Regional Health Network, 2020).

Through such cases, we can see how tensions between perceived risk and restraints on freedoms of association can shift quickly in times of crisis. We can also see how the courts function as an interdependent and independent part of the Accord, and how tensions within the Accord regarding what is permissible are managed. Rules and regulations hold an assemblage together in dynamic ways, and are central to reassemblages.

Other institutions in civil society, such as the news and social media are also relevant here.

The Psycurity Accord Is Mediated

Many of the tensions in the Psycurity Accord are deliberated upon across news and social media platforms, what Silverstone (2007) referred to as the Mediapolis. This is the mediated public domain of contemporary society that is also subject to issues of symbolic power and restraints on who gets to participate. It is useful to draw on exemplars from the Mediapolis to highlight some of the tensions around what actions are appropriate at different points in the evolving crisis. The Mediapolis is also where the positive and negative implications of security practices and intrusions can be witnessed publicly.

Trust and support in the government response can be a fragile element of the Psycurity Accord and is being both championed and challenged within the mediapolis. Here, some lines of argument about appropriate courses of action are also subject to political machinations. This is evident in attempts from some quarters to minimize the risk from COVID-19, question the legality of lockdowns, and call for a return to 'normality'. It does seem irresponsible at one level to undermine trust in the Government in a time of crisis. However, this assemblage is taking shape in an age of partisan politics and encompasses attempts by some stakeholders, who are used to exercising considerable symbolic power, to shape the public narrative to meet their political ends.

In the Aotearoa New Zealand COVID-19 situation, emphasis in media deliberations was placed on a key tension around public health and economic wellbeing. This tension appears central to shifts in the assemblage toward less intrusive interventions into everyday life. Correspondingly, mediated deliberations included vested interests, such as business owners who see their livelihoods as being placed at risk by the lockdown. A key concern was that the government was unnecessarily putting livelihoods in jeopardy by going 'too early', 'too hard', and 'too far'. Those advocating against the lockdown minimalized the risk of COVID-19, argued that the lockdown was out of proportion to the

problem, and that life must return to normal quickly. This was highlighted in news items presenting calls for the government to open the economy at our borders. To quote one item: “The government has been under increasing pressure from the opposition and business groups to re-open the country, with the Employers and Manufacturers Association (EMA) urging the government to make the move to spark a recovery for businesses” (Radio New Zealand News, 2020a).

These complaints became particularly pronounced during the period of decision-making around when to come out of a highly restrictive level of lockdown, and into more liberal levels. For example, an opposition politician is cited as saying that he saw “no plausible reason based on the data to stall the transition to level 2”. This politician also proposed that people have already ‘organically’ moved to level 2 despite us being at level 3 at the time (Radio New Zealand News, 2020a).

Here, we see the intersection of risks that are being framed as competing concerns when in fact they are interlinked. The argument that lockdown was no longer necessary was then countered by an epidemiologist who refuted the assertion that the country had already moved to a more liberal form of lockdown, proposing that we should stay locked down for longer. In doing so, this expert transcends the framing of risks to public health and the economy as competing. He is quoted as saying:

People have lost their livelihoods over this, and we have to just make it worthwhile. And that means keeping your physical distance for a few more weeks, until we have a nice, clear patch of no infections. And then the big prize of that effort is that we can go back to life almost as normal. (Radio New Zealand News, 2020a)

As signalled in Government efforts to manage this tension, it was argued that if Aotearoa New Zealand opened too early it risked wasting all efforts to eradicate the virus and would have to retreat into more restrictive lockdown conditions. This would be even worse for the economy. We see key elements in play in the negotiation of balance in the Psycurity Accord in the form of news outlets, businesspeople, politicians, and public health experts all framing arguments and reassembling the balance of the Accord.

Balancing Surveillance and Privacy Within the Accord

The Mediapolis offers numerous items featuring tensions around the need to balance issues of surveillance and privacy. Below, we reflect on these processes in relation to a prominent news item focused on the issue of digital contact tracing as a key risk-mitigating strategy. This is constructed as both necessary to ensure public safety and as an intrusive breach of privacy (Pennington, 2020). Prior to the pandemic, it is unlikely that the public would have supported normalizing digital tracking of citizens. Therefore, balancing the issues of safety and privacy, and what intrusions were palatable to the public in general, and civil society groups, became highly salient in the Psycurity Accord assemblage around the COVID-19 pandemic.

The need to trace people who have been exposed to the virus became evident early on and talks began with the intelligence agency, Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB), on how to best achieve this. It was proposed that the contact-tracing system would seek to identify 80% of people who have been exposed to a case of COVID-19 within three days, and be implemented on a voluntary basis. Intertextually, the involvement of the GCSB was significant as an agency controversial for its activities around surveillance. This previous history led Amnesty International and civil liberty groups to express concerns regarding risks that contact-tracing technologies could also be employed for the purposes of mass surveillance. These groups used the news media as a channel to call for more information about the proposed tracking App and further assurances from the Government that the technology would not be misused for mass surveillance. A Law Society spokesperson raised additional concerns around the possibilities for fraudulent access to private information and risk to peoples' financial security (Pennington, 2020).

The Digital Identity Industry Group proposed that transparency was crucial in terms of what technologies were to be utilized for tracing and how information would be stored and used. These concerns were followed by a quote from the Ministry of Health who stated that the information would not be stored long-term and would “not be used for

other purposes” (Pennington, 2020). The public was assured that data collected to track COVID-19 infections would only be used for ensuring public health, and would be regularly deleted.

Groups such as the Law Society and InternetNZ were also cited as emphasizing the importance of the Government taking time to consider “...issues around privacy and security and human rights”. Emphasis was placed on the need “...to bring the community along with you. Be transparent about what you’re proposing, because we’re more likely to have buy-in for any technical solution to actually be successful” (Pennington, 2020).

These processes of mediated debate and challenge reveal the reassembling of issues of surveillance and freedom as the Ministry of Health worked with various stakeholders, including a security agency, public sector groups, and private companies to develop the infrastructure for contact tracing. This occurred in an age of heightened concerns about intrusions that have come with state-sanctioned mass surveillance, and as such calls are being made for the development to be conducted in as transparent a manner as possible. The balance here has shifted somewhat due to the pandemic, but such concerns remain. Civil society groups and members of the public are presented as being more willing to be traced for purposes of risk mitigation if transparency is a key feature of system development and deployment. In the end, a simple app was released by the Ministry of Health and adopted on a voluntary basis, and there were no major subsequent controversies regarding its implementation.

Again, this example foregrounds tensions between key stakeholders in the development of a national response to COVID-19. These tensions are evident between the potential positive security gains from the use of digital tracking technologies and perceived and real negative losses in terms of personal privacy that are implicated in what is acceptable under the Accord. These tensions are never fully resolved and morph again as the COVID-19 response evolved and issues of surveillance and privacy continued to shift.

Returning to an Inequitable System

As noted earlier, the issue of multiple risks affecting different people is important. The application of the Psycurity Accord around COVID-19 is located in a wider societal and global context of multiple risks and [in]securities related to intersections of disadvantage and precarity shaped by gender, ethnicity, social class, and so forth. These intersections inhabit the everyday lives of members of the precariat, many of whom were designated as ‘essential workers’—people such as cleaners who collect rubbish or sanitize communal spaces to mitigate risk for the rest of us.

It can be argued that what we witnessed is how the precariat function as shock absorbers in a crisis. During a lockdown, such workers cannot work from home and must venture out, placing themselves and their families at increased risk of infection. It can also be argued that the current pandemic crisis exacerbates existing insecurities for the precariat around housing and food, and contracting respiratory infections from dwelling in often overcrowded, cramped and damp housing. These issues are all part of our public deliberations.

One news item reported on how the pay of contract cleaners for a major local organization was cut by 20%, down to the value of the government’s wage subsidy. This took those workers below the legal minimum wage. The move was ‘possible’ because the cleaners were not, strictly speaking, employees, but contractors. The reduced income further exacerbated the risks to stability and health associated with precarious lives by making it even more difficult for these workers to meet their basic living expenses. One person interviewed had two teenagers and had not been to the supermarket for six weeks due to the lack of income. Instead, the family had to rely on charity food parcels. When discussing her less than the living wage income, she said: “It’s very stressful, it’s all I have, and it doesn’t even pay half my rent” (Niall, 2020).

Further tensions surfaced about stakeholder politics in the assemblage, around reporting on the issue of indigenous (Māori) sovereignty and the powers of the settler society. These related to several provincial tribal groups setting up checkpoints to protect their communities from people breaching lockdown rules coming into the area. We might

also approach this as an example of community-led surveillance that raises further tensions. The Government attempted to take a pragmatic approach to this development by, where possible, assigning police to work alongside local Māori in these checkpoints, rather than trying to ban them and increasing conflict between the Crown and Māori. However, what also surfaced here were tensions between people from different indigenous and settler backgrounds and accusations of ‘separatism’ and ‘racism’, demonstrating the malleability of the Psycurity Accord assemblage. Coverage of this issue illustrated tensions around who has the right to restrict the actions of other citizens and the legality of different surveillance interventions to mitigate the risk of COVID-19, played out within deeper and more historic tensions similarly manifested in recent ‘Black Lives Matter’ demonstrations in the United States and elsewhere around the world (Radio New Zealand News, [2020b](#)).

Further Reflections on the Psycurity Accord

We have approached the Psycurity Accord as a conceptual mosaic that manifests in various ways within everyday settings, but that have been retextured by the current pandemic. Central are concerns around what is acceptable to the public in mitigating risk to achieve public safety, and how any balancing of these issues is contingent and open to reassemblage. When the risk is perceived to be genuine and pressing—as with the rapidly developing COVID-19 outbreak—then immediate violations of personal freedoms through heightened security measures are more likely to be deemed acceptable. As the situation evolved, the level of perceived risk and what were deemed to be appropriate responses to ensure public safety also shifted. Perceptions of competing risks to health versus the economy became central to public deliberations regarding what actions and restrictions were appropriate. For example, risks to public health and life were mitigated through practices, such as lockdowns, social distancing, and contact tracing. However, these practices were also framed by some prominent commentators as constituting risks to the economy. This led to shifting balances in tensions between the risk of the virus and the threats to the economy, contributing to a

reassembly of the Psycurity Accord. The dynamic relationship between elements in this assemblage might be considered metaphorically as an ungainly dance. The elements are often in step or balance but can get out of step, such as when the Government initially limited mourners at funerals to ten people. Some entities in the public push back, the Government readjusts, and we are back in step again.

It is important to note that the consequences of current mechanisms of pandemic risk mitigation, including quarantine, lockdowns, and checkpoints, can be double-edged. As well as saving lives (Seele, 2016; Wright et al., 2015), these mechanisms encroach on freedoms, rights, and livelihoods (*cf.*, Richards, 2013). Events such as those explored in this chapter reflect the processes involved in balancing risk and security, and raise political, moral, ethical, social, and economic concerns (Muldoon, 2016). The concept of the Psycurity Accord is useful for understanding the complexities and tensions surrounding contemporary risk mitigation practices and incursions into privacy and civil liberties.

When the risk is perceived to be genuine and pressing, as for example when there is a credible threat of a pandemic, violations of privacy and restrictions on movement and association through heightened security measures are more likely to be deemed acceptable than in more benign situations without such threats. As issues around risk and security intensify, it is crucial that scholars develop research agendas that extend current knowledge of the complexities involved. In order to develop and evaluate the Psycurity Accord further, research needs to explore its various articulations and tensions that emerge across different contexts. This is important because assemblages are territorialized and shaped by the context within which they come together (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Such assemblages, as discussed here in this chapter, illustrate a context largely dominated by a responsive and humane government. Even so, it is important to note that we are speaking to the Psycurity Accord in a country whose everyday landscapes are being reassembled, but in ways that are in keeping with the public good.

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3

Amerindian Paths Through Recurrent Sociocultural Crises

Danilo Silva Guimarães 

This chapter presents some reflections about the Amerindian ways of thinking and acting in contexts of crisis they face since the invasion of the Europeans to their lands, now called South America. We are based on our work constructing the academic service named Amerindian Support Network, from the Institute of Psychology, *Universidade de São Paulo*, Brazil, since 2012. This culture and extension program is based on reflections in the History and Philosophy of Psychology concerning theoretical and methodological problems of psychological research and professional practice. It opens an opportunity for students to engage in training practices for becoming researchers and/or psychology practitioners, living the challenges for constructing partnerships between indigenous communities and the academic community, aiming at the implementation of care

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actions addressed to both contexts (Achatz & Guimarães, 2018; Achatz et al., 2016; Bertholdo & Guimarães, 2018; Guimarães, 2015, 2016, 2020a; Guimarães et al., 2019; Lima et al., 2019).

Through a dialogical process, step by step (cf. Guimarães, 2020c), we realized that establishing partnership with the indigenous communities should regard ethnic self-affirmation processes. The promotion of forums in the indigenous communities and the university set a ground for inter-ethnic equitable dialogues, including indigenous knowledge and the visibility of the indigenous cultures that are strong and active in the contemporary world. An example of these actions was the construction of the “House of Indigenous Cultures” in the Institute of Psychology/USP, at the campus of the University.

It was surprising, despite the fact that we are in a country with 305 indigenous ethnic groups, speaking around 274 native spoken languages, that indigenous people didn't have a proper space at USP, the country's main university. It changed when the Guarani people proposed to us a project, and we found the paths to construct their House (cf. Lima et al., 2019) an *Opy*, a type of ceremonial house, for singing special songs and dancing, among other health care practices. The *Opy* is also a place for dialogue, conflict solutions, and political decision-making for the community, a traditional house usually found in Mbya Guarani communities, now placed on the university campus. The construction of the *Opy* at USP was made viable in 2017 with the Institute of Psychology administration's support, the funding of the pro-rector of culture, and extension from University and CAPES (Coordination of Superior Level Staff Improvement) via funding to our Graduate Program.

The Work of Amerindian Support Network: An Illustration

We propose to discuss an excerpt of speeches observed in a chapter of the series *Caminhos da Reportagem* (Paths of TV report) entitled “The invisible patient” [O paciente invisível] produced by TV Brasil. In the selected excerpt of the documentary, the news reporter Aline Beckstein presents the activities of culture and extension we promote:

A window to bring two worlds together, the world of the university and the world of the indigenous peoples. This is the proposal of a project at the Institute of Psychology, at USP, one of the major universities of the country. (Beckstein & Vasconcellos, 2018)

Then, David Popygua, an indigenous leader interviewed, says:

As we are facing more issues related to depression, suicide, violence, alcohol and drugs inside the indigenous communities, we observe the unpreparedness in the period of studies of the professionals. So, I think that bring together the leaders, the teachers, the youth, our community to the university contributes to these professionals, to understand how is the indigenous life, what are the challenges of indigenous life. (Beckstein & Vasconcellos, 2018)

The construction of the Opy aimed to appropriately welcoming these indigenous requests, and expressed needs, for them to feel comfortable in the university's environment. From the very beginning of our project, we started to understand that the university needs to change to include indigenous peoples, and the indigenous contribute to improving training practices and knowledge construction in the university. Matsuyama, a psychologist that works in the basic health unit from one of the indigenous communities in the municipality of São Paulo, answers the interviewer:

I've spent six months at the Amerindian Support Network, USP, participating in the meetings. They discussed a lot about how to construct dialogue with someone that belongs to another inter-ethnic context. Then, to have a ground, a theoretical support, a group that discusses it, a study group discussing on how to construct this relationship, without it being oppressive, without it being disrespectful of these differences, able to include it, respecting the temporality of the other, it was very good to understand the possibilities, and how I need to wait. How I need to have patience, how I need to be an available presence, approaching and distancing myself. Mainly, in my undergraduate course, I didn't have any knowledge about the indigenous field, about how to work with people from different cultures. So, it was a supporting group very important to

think these issues. And the lived experiences. So, going to the communities, spending a night in the community, sharing a meal, sharing a ritualistic ceremony. It is very important to make your body sensible. Because it is from the body, when you enter you're with your entire body there. So it needs to be sensitized to be open for getting new knowledge. (Beckstein & Vasconcellos, 2018)

Matsuyama's report tells us about the need to share experiences with indigenous persons in the communities to learn how to work as a psychologist with indigenous peoples. From these experiences, the transformation of typical psychological work strategies and theoretical presuppositions become more adjusted to the reality of the focused community. A speech from a master student (Christina Moretti) presented:

Within the psychology we learn techniques, theories that are always regarding our society, our Western European community. We never think about a psychology of traditional peoples indigenous peoples. Then, it is very important that it is being focused now and we think, not simply take the old theories and fit it in other peoples, but think something different, something that is unique, which look at a different mental health. To understand which are the anguish, which are the sufferings they present, and not simply take what we have and fit it on them. There is an exchange of knowledge. So, when the indigenous are available to work together with us they offer to our students an opportunity of educating, learning their culture and to develop themselves as psychologists that are more able to deal with human diversity. (Beckstein & Vasconcellos, 2018)

An indigenous student (Leandro Gonçalves) says:

We've made a project named "Ancestral re-appropriation" inviting many leaders from many ethnic groups to come here to talk with us to dialogue and say what is the need of each community, how we, as students from USP, could return to all these ethnic groups. (Beckstein & Vasconcellos, 2018)

This set of speeches ends with the conclusion of Ramiro Gonzalez, a post-doc Researcher, about the need for a reconceptualization of the notion of mental health in psychology:

To understand the mental health lead us to understand what is mental health for them. However, from our perspective we can observe that the notion of well-being, well-live, health, is related to the land. So, exactly, if the land is denied to them it is lived as we would name, from our perception as anguish, depression. (Beckstein & Vasconcellos, 2018)

The idea summarized in this conclusion is further developed in a paper (Sousa et al., 2020) in which we make more explicit the relation between health and the notion of serene and trusted dwelling (Figueiredo, 2008). From the excerpts above presented, we can observe that we focus on the construction of links involving the indigenous communities and the academic community, students, researchers, managers, volunteers, including people from communities external to the university, interested in the topics.

Conflicts from the Past

In 2013, we were involved in projects with indigenous youth starting the RAP group Oz Guarani at the indigenous land of Jaraguá (São Paulo, Brazil), a community located 30 minutes by car from the university. The community asked us to support two young guys, around 16 and 19 years old, interested in poetry. When we knew them, they were involved in the composition of a song named *Conflitos do Passado* (Conflicts from the past), almost all the poetry was done. One of my master students at that moment, Kleber Nigro, who has knowledge of music, was available to collaborate with the group. We went along with them in the composition of their first songs, their rehearsals, and their first public presentations.

Below is an excerpt of *Conflitos do passado* (Conflicts from the past):

Conflicts from the past
stand in my mind
people and more people
being slaughtered
trying to protect their lands
they lost their lives and their rights
where's our respect?

Since more than 500 years
 the indigenous are suffering
 with disrespect and a lot of prejudice
 we struggle for rights.
 When those Portuguese arrived
 they stole our land
 they killed my relatives
 and here we are, young people aware
 telling you that it could be different
 without war
 without a fight, we just want to live
 is it so difficult to start understanding?
 We want the land to survive,
 we just want to keep the culture and the behavior.
 We want the land to survive,
 we just want to keep the culture and the behavior. (transcribed from
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-xiPaORBS0>, October 6, 2020)

This poem contains a lot of meaningful information. The video clip, they made to publish the song on YouTube shows many scenes from a demonstration Guarani organized in 2013 when they occupied the *Bandeirantes* highway against anti-indigenous projects from the parliament, and to claim their rights concerning land demarcation. The highway showed in the video surrounds the Jaraguá indigenous communities. The name of *Bandeirantes* highway is an emblematic fact concerning the conflicts reported in the song because the community is surrounded by a highway with the name of those, in the colonial period, were in charge of enslavement and murder of thousands of indigenous. It is also emblematic of the fact that the São Paulo state government palace has the name *Bandeirantes* palace, indicating that the conflicts from the past are still conflicts in the present.

Listening to this song, poetry, we found very meaningful, the fact that it starts with the utterance “Conflicts from the past stand in my mind.” It is a way to talk about themselves, which, somehow, refers to psychology. They address these conflicts, which could be read as part of a field of social conflicts, to the scope of mind, which we could also understand as an individual mind. The popularity of the song among

young people from this and other indigenous communities, indicates that these conflicts are part of many people's actual experience. We were disquieted and motivated, as indigenous psychologists, professors, and researchers, to seek ways to understand the meanings of these conflicts, at the same time, social and personal, and think together with the people in the communities, possible paths to be followed through a partnership with psychological reflections.

A way to psychologically understand these conflicts addressed me to the notion of Self from William James (1890). His ideas are influential for socio-constructivist, semiotic-cultural, and dialogical psychological approaches. Before writing his main works, while he was a student, James has spent around one year in Brazil as part of the Thayer expedition led by the Swiss zoologist Louis Agassiz (cf. Machado, 2010). He traveled through Rio de Janeiro and Amazonia. Many of his letters to the family and friends during the expedition reported how the experience with the Brazilian indigenous natives transformed his ways of thinking. Contemporaneous studies reveal close relations between pragmatic philosophy and indigenous thinking (cf. Pratt, 2002).

The notion of Self in James (1890) is closely related to his notion of experience and the elaboration of experiences through thought and language. He emphasizes the need to apprehend the psychological phenomena as a whole without confusing the experience with the feelings and the thought about the objects of the experience, not with the language used to talk about the experience and its objects. Therefore, the Self is a construct used to give a broad account of something the person experiences as part of what they are. It refers to the possibility to talk about the experiences and the objects of the experiences, as belonging to himself or herself.

From this construct, and from what the indigenous are singing in the song "Conflicts from the past," we could say that it is part of their Self, the conflicts from the past, land, lives and rights losses, experiences of being disrespected, and experiences of prejudice. However, they also perceive themselves as aware youths, vehicles of an alternative to wars and fights, people intending to keep the land and the culture. These reflections take us to the next topic, articulating the notion of Self to the notion of dialogical multiplication, addressing its potential to broaden

the comprehension of the indigenous paths to elaborate on recurrent experiences of sociocultural crises that affect us until now.

Self and Dialogical Multiplication

The notion of dialogical multiplication was constructed 11 years ago, based on psychological propositions from psychology and anthropology (Guimarães, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2018, 2019, 2020b; Guimarães & Simão, 2017; Jensen & Guimarães, 2018; Kawaguchi & Guimarães, 2018). The framework of psychological reflections we refer to here is labeled, since Simão's works (cf. Simão, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2015, 2016 and others), semiotic-cultural constructivism (SCC). It constructs knowledge from dialogues between philosophical hermeneutics and the philosophy of alterity, with propositions from cultural and dialogical psychologies that do not make a dichotomy between affectivity and cognition but articulate them as a unity in the semiotic process of elaboration of the lived experiences. From the SCC approach, cognition guides semiotic elaboration of affective experiences, and there is a unity between perception and imagination embraced in the cognitive-affective elaborations people construct from concrete experiences.

Besides, we observed in classical anthropological studies that feelings assume ritualized modes of expression (Mauss, 1921). The rites of a culture constitute its ethos, socially guided ways of being and live, shaping what we become as persons. These ways of being and life constrain the ways we express ourselves and our ways of giving meaning to the expressions in the field of verbal language.

The cultural psychologist Ernst Boesch (1984, 1991), in his theory of symbolic action, argues that affectivity is aesthetically organized, from the ways people articulate the images available in the rites and myths from a specific cultural field, which provides the matrix for the intelligibility of the lived experiences.

In modern Western societies, the understanding of the lived and narrated experiences demands intellectual, logic-rational judgment to create criteria for validating the utterances. Therefore, modern philosophies were concerned with the conditions for constructing an epistemic

subject, aware, coherent, and able to represent the world with exemption (Figueiredo, 2008). These ideas are part of enlightenment and liberal ideas that excluded meaningful dimensions of subjectivity. The scientist should embody these ideas to construct a new man attached to a notion of progress from mysticism to religion, addressing the philosophical rationality and the scientific instrumentality.

Nevertheless, concrete people, the empirical subjects, could never be fully reduced to the rational frame. What exceeds and has no identity with the calculus of instrumental rationality is being philosophically approached through the notion of alterity. It refers to an inapprehensible dimension of the experience we have concerning ourselves and others.

Therefore, the philosophical-scientific rationality that guides the comprehension of human experiences coexists with aesthetic, political, religious interests and those related to sexuality, among others. They are continuous fields of variation and production of diversities for which the scientific apprehension is always late, constructing new data to guide the necessary theoretical innovations.

When we dialogue with the indigenous worlds, the field of variations and diversification of the ways to give meaning to human experiences expands, even more, indicating the amplitude of the ignorance territory we are situated as researchers (cf. Guimarães, 2020b). The indigenous worlds are structured according to other ritualistic and mythical grounds that guide very distinct paths of reflection compared to those in which modern sciences are grounded. They guide us to what is being named shamanism: a very rigorous and sophisticated way of meaning elaboration about the experiences.

Amerindian shamanism offers, over these five centuries of successive efforts for eliminating our difference as indigenous, the strength for the resistance and continuity of existence of our peoples, our ways to construct and inhabit the world. From these reflections, it is possible to understand how the production of sociocultural crises that became recurrent after the European invaded our lands in the sixteenth century operates in the psychological systems in the diverse levels of dynamic regulation of the Self, structured from the rites, the myths, the reflections, and indigenous shamanism.

As an illustration, in the scope of the rites, we can mention, historically, from the beginning of the invasion, the church's condemnation of indigenous rituals; the imposition of new eating habits, etiquette, and educational practices, addressing to discipline our bodies for the work, either as slaves or as wage earners. And today, we notice the impracticability of indigenous rites when many communities don't have their rights concerning the land preserved.

Concerning the myths, it is possible to notice something like, when in the educational processes of the Jesuits, the images presented in the indigenous narratives became intentionally associated with the demonic images from the Europeans' narratives. Today, the myths considered as mere folklore are driven to lose their potency to reflect the events in the world.

Besides, we notice the obliteration of our ancestral roots' memories. It is indicated by the incipient indigenous studies in the university, the reduced number of documents about important events for our community trajectories. In the scope of the indigenous reflections, historically, there is a delegitimization of the indigenous knowledge, although this knowledge was very useful for the invaders in the lands' colonization. And it is still to the promotion of the world food security and the development of new drugs for biomedicine.

Nevertheless, it is uncommon to see at the universities, courses, or disciplines taught by indigenous professors focusing their proposals about what knowledge is and how to produce it properly. As an alternative to the recurrent promotion of sociocultural crises we face, since the European invasion, which impacts us until now, the indigenous path is ruled by ethics and diplomacy, involving the construction of a way of coexistence as a condition for a healthy way of living. A desired coexistence accepting and valuing differences among all peoples and all beings.

We do not defend, here, obscurantism or irrational relativism. To Guarani culture, for instance, the path of knowledge addresses what they call *Téko Porã*. It is being translated to Portuguese as well-live. However, it cannot be confused with things the capitalist propaganda understands as a good life (cf. Guimarães, 2020b; Sousa et al., 2020). Our myths and rites, in their variation, guide our reflection addressing the Teko

Porã. It implies the construction of people attentive to the interdependent network involving our social life, including human beings, animals, vegetables, mineral beings, aquatic, terrestrial, aerial, visible, and invisible beings, under some circumstances.

Teko Porã is about apprehending these beings as subjects with which we need to create links and mutual commitments and not treat them as objects supposedly available to human manipulation and domination or some economic interests. It is not an easy task, and it is not reduced to a tolerant attitude concerning the other. But it depends on an engagement with the other to cultivate the diversity of serene and entrusted ways of inhabiting the world (cf. Guimarães, 2020b; Sousa et al., 2020). It allows our reflection to update our rites and myths in the dialogue with the facticity of life. These updates don't imply the loss of the foundations of our worldviews. On the contrary, we understand the dynamic of rites and myths variation as reflexive actions.

Pemomba eme

The same RAP group that composed “Conflicts from the past” in 2013, together with another indigenous poet, Wera MC, composed another song, named in Mbya Guarani language “Pemomba eme.” It is accessible on YouTube, a 5 minutes video clip, with English subtitles. We have transcribed the subtitles from the video clip here:

[a selection of Television News speeches]

It was an action writ by the State Government of São Paulo, who have been pressuring to grant the area to private companies.

What prevailed was the anti-indigenous posture of the Temer government. Indians of the Guarani tribe have taken the area where cellphone and television antennas are located, over there at the Jaraguá Peak.

[Wera MC singing in Mbya Guarani language]

You destroyed our land
and the forest we had
Do not destroy
Do not destroy our land

Do not destroy our land and our forest

[Glowers from Oz Guarani singing]

The shaman rises and makes his prayer

We will take the rattle with our warrior hands

We will rise up and show our dance

We will sing in our holy shrine and empower the women

The elders rise and play takuapu

[an agglomeration of indigenous people protesting in Portuguese]

Land demarcation now! Land demarcation now!

[An speech from Marçal Tupã, a Guarani Leader murdered in 1983, in Portuguese]

I believe that...

...throughout Brazil...

...will rise, or have already risen...

...well-informed Indians...

...will raise their voices...

...in defense of their race.

[Wera MC singing again in Mbya Guarani language]

You destroyed our land

and the forest we had

Do not destroy

Do not destroy our land

Do not destroy our land and our forest

[Jeff from Oz Guarani singing in Portuguese]

Through this beat I speak of my life

I speak of the youth's life in the city fringes

I am tired of crying

The stories of the past make me bleed

One more child has died in the wee hours

Where is the solution for child mortality?

I was born to fight and will never be alone
 The Sun woke me, Nhanderú rose me
 Again here I am
 Bringing this awareness message to my brothers
 I have remembered God
 You best believe, I stand fast
 When tomorrow comes
 I just want to wake up with a smile, be sure.
 Trying hard not to make more mistakes than I already have
 In 1500, bro...
 ...the invasion happened.
 And until today...
 ...the bombs keep falling on my brothers.
 In defense of indigenous rights
 Oz Guarani have arrived
 Resistance! Pow, pow, pow!

[Wera MC singing again in Mbya Guarani language]

You destroyed our land
 and the forest we had
 Do not destroy
 Do not destroy our land
 Do not destroy our land and our forest

[David Karai Popygua speaking loud to his peers during a protest in Brasília, Brazil capital]

This minister will not evict us from our land! We will fight! We will fight!
 We will fight! Guarani! Resist! Guarani! Resist!

[An indigenous woman speaking loud during a protest in Brasília, addressing her speech to Brazilian president]

I only wish he'd be a man!
 Just be a man! As much as I am a woman!
 And come out! Come out and face us!
 I don't need my warriors! Just us women!

[Yakuy Tupinambá speaking during a protest, based on resistance theater, in the courtyard of the college of the Jesuits, São Paulo, Brazil]

The faith that you, José de Anchieta, represent...

...was our death!

Brazil needs to be exorcized...

...from the ghosts of the Bandeirantes...

...and of the Jesuits! (transcribed from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHj5Aq685T0>, October 6, 2020)

Recurrent sociocultural crises throughout the history of indigenous land invasions are presented in this video clip. A multitude of complex layers of sociocultural crises modulates the Self of people affected by the past colonization processes and the present coloniality (cf. Mignolo, 2017; Quijano, 1993). The impacts of these crises resonate in their songs and subjectivation processes. They are recursively updated, assuming new shapes each moment of the history demanding the update of myths and rites without this implying the loss of our worldview's foundations.

A shamanic adage very repeated in indigenous meetings says: "I can be who you are while still being who I am." From this perspective, knowledge is understood as a movement addressing alterity that puts us at risk of getting lost in self-alteration due to the meeting with the other. But it is enriched with the potent encounters that allow the exchange of knowledge, enabling the continuity of life in the dwelling-place of all peoples, that is, the totality of the earth we have to live.

From the encounters and disencounters with the colonizers and Brazilian state society, the indigenous paths in the early exchange with psychology we are promoting, and the indigenous psychology resulting from this rising exchange with the indigenous paths, have in the, the indigenous paths in the early exchange with psychology, and the indigenous psychology resulting from this rising exchange with the indigenous paths, focuses the ethical need of valuing ethnic and cultural diversity.

The pandemic crisis promoted by COVID-19 is, then, considered another opportunity for human beings to understand the consequences of objectifying relationships without adequate compensations that the process of environment manipulation demands. It is reflected in the superimposition of a people to another throughout the history of colonization and coloniality (cf. Mignolo, 2017; Quijano, 1993). Human

beings always needed to feed themselves, producing changes in the environment to lead their lives. However, today is crucial to rethink the proportions of these changes and their impact on the possibilities to ensure the life of human beings on the planet. The beings we live with are not passive objects available to exploration, manipulation, and accumulation by few subjects. Breaking reciprocity in the diplomatic relations between the peoples and the other beings we live with leads to a cycle of successive crises that can put at human risk conditions to continue walking viable paths that are worthwhile to be followed. On the contrary, the Amerindian Support Network proposes a path of dialogue that respects and includes the plurality of ethically oriented perspectives addressing knowledge production and ways of inhabiting the planet.

Limits of Understanding Without Participation

The social realities, grounded in the rites and myths, guiding perceptions, imaginations, and human actions in each cultural field, are distinct. Considering that each reality is socially constructed, there is a border of unknown, a territory of ignorance, which is evident between the paths followed by the distinct traditions. Each socially constructed reality that guides perceptions and imaginations, constraining human actions, is largely unaware of meaningful dimensions of the other socially constructed realities. Consequently, within each socially constructed reality, there are objects referred to in the language from a specific culture or a specific cultural field that are nonexistent in the other sociocultural field.

The reverences from our language can be existent or nonexistent in different sociocultural fields. For instance, The House of indigenous peoples we have built at USP is referred to in Guarani language as an *Opy*. A sort of house that has no equivalence in the university's culture. There is no translation to *Opy* in Portuguese, and a literal translation is impossible. They are terms and objects that exist in a cultural field but that are nonexistent in the other artistic area.

Similarly, other terms are untranslatable. The notion of *Teko Porã* is not well translated from Guarani to Portuguese. There is no word in Portuguese or even a set of words that can express the meaning of *Teko Porã* in Guarani. Besides, the word psychology; Psychology is a term that exists in Portuguese, from the cultural tradition of modern western societies. However, it has no referent, it has no equivalent in Guarani language.

When we try to communicate from a language, from a sociocultural field to the other, we make approximations. And even in these cases, when the translations are sought, similar words are often used to address distinct objects. For instance, in the notion of land, we talk about indigenous land. However, the notion of land that is usually conceived by the market logic from part of Brazilian society makes the property speculation, interested in seizing the indigenous lands or interested, somehow, treat this land as a commodity. For the indigenous peoples, the use of the word land doesn't have this meaning. It refers to another experience: the experience we have in relation to something that cannot be bought or sold. The land is only one for all beings, the land doesn't have an owner. So, it is a conception that the land is a common space for all beings, where all beings would inhabit. This is the case when the use of the same word ends up referring to very distinct objects, considering both languages.

On the one hand, there are words without translation between the cultures, on the other hand, people from different cultural fields use the same word, although they use the same word, they are referring to very distinct objects. Therefore, we are observing that translation always produces mistakes (cf. Achatz & Guimarães, 2018; Viveiros de Castro, 2004) because the terms used refer to distinct objects and subjects that exist or do not exist in each other's socially constructed reality.

Considering that communication produces mistakes, some senses and meanings about the experiences can be shared. Some shares can be produced or constructed depending on the participation we have with the other in their struggles and life. It has a consequence for methodological propositions when we are interested in knowledge construction. Because to know the social reality depends on personal participation in the social environment.

Participation allows the embodied awareness, guiding perceptions, and imaginations in the engagement with the other (cf. Guimarães, 2020b; Guimarães et al., 2019); An engagement that is essential for knowledge construction. Then, the Amerindian paths through the recurrent socio-cultural crises I tried to remark here are paths that aim to propitiate a meeting with the other, an encounter with the diversity different from the encounter, 500 years ago our lands were invaded. An encounter that propitiates engagement, exchanges, knowledge construction, and not domination or elimination of the difference.

The process of domination and elimination of the difference, transforming the other in object for the control of a specific social group, is recurrently happening. Our meetings with alterity have been disastrous encounters. At least, we perceive these encounters, from the colonization, with the invasion of the lands, the transformation of the lands in commodity, and the transformation of the people in commodity makers. That is, the entire system is concerned with the objectivation of the world and the objectivation of the people. However, the indigenous paths, our paths, emphasizes the valuation of the other as subject and the possibility of reciprocity in the exchanges.

Acknowledging that the reciprocity in the exchanges is hard to achieve and it is not an easy task, we do not here suppose that the encounter with the other will always be harmonic. Nevertheless, it is relevant to emphasize the construction of reciprocity, diplomacy, exchanges, which could be valuable for both sides, although considering all the challenges they encounter with the different could bring.

Final Considerations

A brief expression from indigenous youth that started a RAP group named Oz Guarani, at the Jaraguá, in the west zone of São Paulo (Brazil), was presented to discuss a way indigenous are elaborating meanings of successive sociocultural crises their communities face.

The contemporaneous crises are linked with the colonization process, since the invasion of the indigenous lands by the Europeans from the sixteenth century on, until the maintenance of the coloniality logic today,

in the diffused efforts to administrate and control our ways of being indigenous.

A discussion addressing the notion of dialogical multiplication was, then, unfolded in the context of the emergence of indigenous psychology, related to the work that guides our continuous personal and academic involvement with indigenous communities in São Paulo (Brazil).

We look at dialogical multiplication processes, in which senses and meanings are constructed about crisis experiences recurrently lived by the indigenous since the Europeans invaded their lands.

Finally, we presented proposals that emerge in indigenous reflections, addressing a reversion of the effects of successive crises through the maintenance of a serene and entrusted way of living in relation to human cultural diversity and the diversity of beings cohabiting the land we live in.

Indigenous peoples invite us to cultivate our engagement in the path for diversity's coexistence: the earth is one for all beings; therefore, an ethical attitude based on reciprocal relationships is prioritized, instead of the logic accumulation or the epistemic conversion of the other to objects to be controlled or manipulated. Nevertheless, reaching higher levels of reciprocity in self-other-world relationships is not an easy task. It depends on a heavy dedication for knowledge construction addressing the *Teko Porã*, which is an impermanent, dynamic, and continuous ethical reflection and healthy oriented way of living with all the beings in the environment.

Acknowledgements I thank Professor Giuseppina Marsico for inviting me to the keynote on which this chapter is based. Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (FAPESP), process number 2018/13145-0.

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4

The Pandemic is a Mirror: Decolonizing Psychology and Racism in Times of COVID-19 Crisis

Sunil Bhatia

I wrote this chapter for the keynote address I gave in May 2020 for the Psychology of Global Crisis conference at the American University of Paris (Bhatia, 2020). The pandemic since then has gone through several intense waves in the United States. In late October 2020, over 100,000 people were succumbing to COVID-19 per day in the United States. This pandemic is a moment that points to profound loss that is felt through thousands of deaths, social distancing, family suffering, financial insecurity, loneliness, deterioration of mental health, a rise of collective anxiety, fear, and rage. At the time of writing this chapter, WHO reports that over 46 million people across the world have contracted COVID-19, and approximately 1.2 million people have died. In the United States, CDC reports that are over 10 million cases and approximately 240,000

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deaths. So, this my modest and somewhat hurried attempt to comprehend this much sorrow and human suffering. The chapter is organized around three central themes. First, I speak about my positionality or where my body/self stands in relation to the COVID-19 crisis. Second, I draw on decolonizing and decolonial theory as a framework to help us understand the psychology of the COVID-19 global crises. Third, I use the concept of coloniality to understand the psychology of racism that is revealed in the pandemic within the United States. Finally, I conclude by offering some brief thoughts about how the decolonial turn offers us an opportunity to reimagine the discipline of psychology.

Self, Positionality, and Theory

The Nigerian-American writer, Teju Cole, published an essay in the *New York Times* that is apt for this moment. He says, “We Can’t Comprehend This Much Sorrow: History’s first draft is almost always wrong—but we still have to try and write it.” (Cole, 2020). The pandemic is an opportunity for thinking about the role of psychological theory in understanding the pandemic. Let me start generally with the role of theory in these times. The American poet Adrienne Rich (1986, p. 213) writes, “Theory—the seeing of patterns, showing the forest as well as the trees—theory can be a dew that rises from the earth and collects in the rain cloud and returns to the earth over and over. But if it doesn’t smell of the earth, it isn’t good for the earth.”

One question that has preoccupied me during the pandemic is how do we make theory, the dew that rises from the earth and gives back to the earth? How can we make psychology dewy and muddy like the earth and, importantly, for the earth? Another way of asking this question is: How psychology as a discipline helps us understand this crisis that is unfolding across this earth? Having said that, the word crisis feels too abstract and generic in this moment. What I know for sure is that how we define the meaning of the crisis depends on who is succumbing to the crisis, whose lives are at risk, and who gets to tell the story of their suffering or risk?

The psychology of this crisis is the psychology of asymmetric suffering. I have the means of rowing my boat away from the COVID storm—I can keep my boat at bay while others have to pass through the raging storm every day. Having the space to write and think about the pandemic from the comfort of my home feels safe and yet distant. I have numbness. I have distant grief. But I have not cried or wept incessantly as one does in the throes of deep loss. But I know there is extraordinary grief and pain out there. I read about loss and death in papers every day. My maximum worry right now, in this moment, is I would not be with my elderly mother in India if she becomes COVID-19 positive. I imagine her lonely death. I will not be able to be there for her last rites.

I am living my lockdown life anticipating loss, death, and threats from the virus. I anticipate mourning. The crisis has locked me down, but it has not threatened my livelihood or my life. I know there are millions of low-wage essential workers who are disproportionately people of color and are paid minimum wages and who do not have healthcare themselves and yet are risking their lives to provide care for COVID-19 patients. If you live in the United States and are from Navajo Nation or Latino and African-American community, the virus is likely to hit you hard on every front.

In May 2020, a photograph of an Indian daily wage worker, Rampukar Pandit, went viral (The Hindu, 2020). The photo showed him in pain and anguish, sitting on the side of the road in Delhi speaking to his wife about their sick 11-month-old son. Given the lack of public transport, he told a reporter that he started walking toward his home in Bihar, a 745-mile trip. Exhausted and hungry, he stopped at a bridge until he could not go any further. He said, “All I want is to go home and see my son.” His well-wishers intervened and arranged transportation, but several hours later, he learned his son had died.” A few days later, when he reached his village, he said, “The rich will get all the help, getting rescued and brought home in planes from abroad. But we poor migrant laborers have been left to fend for ourselves. That is the worth of our lives,” he said in Hindi, “Hum mazdooron ka koi desh nahin hota” (We laborers don’t belong to any country). (The Hindu, May 2020).

The poor from around the world are dying from hunger, loneliness, exhaustion, and housing insecurity on top of other pre-COVID-19

diseases like malaria, typhoid, diarrhea. One common sentiment we hear from workers employed in the informal economy is that starvation will kill them before the Coronavirus. If the pandemic were a mirror, it would show us the worst cruelties of our socially unequal system: disregard and contempt for the lives of the poor, racism that kills, and an economy that is run on exploits the invisible labor of people from vulnerable communities.

Now let me return to the question I posed before. How do we make sense of these crises? The Indian laborer Rampukar asks us to consider what is the worth of his life, what is the worth of his son's life. He asks us: "Whose lives are considered disposable in this crisis?" One way to answer Rampukar's question is, perhaps, to ask another question: whose lives did we consider worthy before the pandemic? Whose lives are given importance in our discipline?

The Crisis of the Pandemic and People: Understanding Coloniality in Decolonial Frameworks

Decolonizing psychology sheds light on how Euro-American scientific psychology has become the standard-bearer of psychology around the world, whose stories get told, what knowledge is considered as legitimate, whose idea of development is considered ideal, and whose lives are considered central to the future of psychology and the world (Adams et al., 2015; Bhatia, 2002, 2018; Bhatia & Priya, 2018a; Bulhan, 2015; Kessi, 2017; Misra & Gergen, 1993). There are 356 million Indian youths (United Nations Population Fund, 2014), who make up the world's largest youth population but remain so utterly invisible in the discipline of psychology. Like many other social science disciplines, modern psychology and human development emerged during the height of European colonization and were often complicit in advancing "scientific" knowledge that depicted natives as primitives, savages, backward, and inferior beings.

American psychology produces research findings about social, emotional, and cognitive functions based on 5% of the world population, but these American findings are posited as having universal applicability and relevance for 95% of the world (Bhatia, 2020). For example, the *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* devoted a special section to the theme of “Decolonizing Psychological Science.” Writing in the introduction to this section, Adams et al. (2015) argued for the creation of a “decolonial psychology” (p. 230) that not only speaks to the lives and concerns of the privileged minority that reside in WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic) societies (Henrich et al., 2010) but also to the lives of the global majority of the world—especially those who live in marginalized cultures of the global South (Bhatia, 2018). For example, U.S. psychology not only is overwhelmingly North American-centric, but U.S. psychologists remain unaware of how its history and culture shapes its theoretical and methodological frameworks and assumptions about individualism, stress, and trauma (Christopher et al., 2014).

The question of psychology and decolonization has been taken up extensively in the *South African Journal of Psychology*. Apart from various papers appearing in general issues, a special issue was devoted to examining the meaning of decolonizing Africa(n)-centered psychology (Ratele et al., 2018). Ratele et al. argue that “Whereas ‘Blackening’ African psychology might go some way towards decolonizing psychology in Africa, decolonization entails more than racial and linguistic representation. Numbers are attractive because they are easily quantifiable; however, decolonization must extend beyond counting to something more slippery” (p. 340). Central to their conception of a decolonized psychology is psychology that speaks to how African communities and people’s lives are shaped by gendered, cultural, intellectual, economic, social, and psychological power. The abovementioned engagements with decolonization and psychology reveal the complexities and paradoxes contained in the praxis of decolonizing psychology (Macleod et al., 2020).

Decolonial and decolonizing theories emerge out of different and often incommensurable genealogies of native studies on settler colonialism, decolonial theory from Latin America, and postcolonial theory

that is rooted in European colonialism of Africa and Asia. A decolonizing perspective shows how contemporary psychological science and psychological theories are inextricably linked to the legacy of colonialism, coloniality, settler colonialism, and created through the Euro-centric nexus between power and knowledge (Bhatia, 2002, 2018, 2020; Bhatia & Priya, 2018b; Macleod et al., 2017). Decolonization means dismantling those structures of colonial violence and injustice that have shaped people's lives in the majority of the world. It means undoing the nexus of colonial power, Western modernity, racial capitalism, and Euro-American psychological knowledge that has created and contributed to multiple systems of oppression (Racial Capitalism, Poverty, Slavery, Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy, Genocide, Extraction, Colonization of Land, Water, Air, Erasure, Exploitation, Patriarchy, Sexism, Racism, Debt, Neoliberal Order, Asymmetry of Rules in the Global North vs. the Global South, Ecology) (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 2007; Quijano, 2000).

Decoloniality means intentionally naming the cultural values, ethics, motives, and assumptions embedded in WEIRD/American knowledge systems that have caused epistemic violence and epistemicide or "killing of knowledge" (Santos, 2014). It means decentering meanings of personhood that define bodies, psyche, soul, and selves through the ruthless language of neocolonial and neoliberal enterprise, rugged individualism, and credentialed autobiographies (Bhatia, 2020).

In my book, *Decolonizing Psychology: Globalization, Social Justice and Indian Youth Identities*, I draw on evidence based on an ethnography that I conducted in three class-based communities in Indiato show how the legacy of colonialism is still alive in psychology. I challenge the dominant theories of Western psychology and shed light on "absences" of psychological inquires and worldviews that have been deemed irrelevant, minimized, and written off as unscientific, qualitative, lacking power, indigenous, local, and non-Western. Through analysis of interviews, participant observation, and focus groups, I show how contemporary Euro-American psychology has once again taken on an imperial guise, a neocolonial turn in the developing world through new instruments and forms of knowledge production. Decolonizing psychology rests on the

claim that contemporary psychological science bears some resemblance to the structure and mechanisms of colonization (Bhatia, 2018).

The origins of American psychology are rooted in the teleological narrative of modernity and identity. For Walter Dignolo, modernity's point of origination is in Europe, and the western civilization is built on the edifice of coloniality, so there is "no modernity without coloniality" (p. 3). Decoloniality does not entirely reject the social and ethical "progress" of modernity but proposes delinking the process of knowledge production from universality and superiority of Western knowledge. Anibal Quijano (2000) and Walter Dignolo (2007) write that decoloniality shows us the darker side of modernity and gives us a glimpse of how knowledge and power were used to colonize, subjugate, and erase the lives of indigenous people and people of color through extraction, subordination, and slavery.

Kopano Ratele, Josephine Cornell, Siphon Dlamini, Rebecca Helman, Nick Malherbe, and Neziswa Titi (2018), for example, write that Eurocentric knowledge and Euro-American psychology overlooks the impact of imperialism, wars, politics, and local cultural values. They argue that we need to engage in a "productive debate as to how to decolonize African psychology and to work towards Africa(n)-centered psychology as situated decolonizing practice and knowledge" (p. 332, emphasis added). In this vein, Shose Kessi (2017) reminds us that psychology was born of a colonial and apartheid system. Academic psychologists, she notes, were complicit in producing knowledge that aided in the oppression of Black people. She argues that "Categories of race were salient and instrumental in producing various forms of oppression, often legitimized through academic work" (Kessi, 2017, p. 507). Thus, decolonizing psychology highlights the locatedness of knowledge production, (neo)colonialist assumptions that are embedded in 'mainstream' psychology, and the need for contextualized epistemologies, methodologies, and practice (Macleod et al., 2020).

One of the key ideas that is relevant for decolonizing psychology is to inquire into how coloniality shapes the core theoretical and methodological foundations of the discipline of psychology and how it shapes everyday cultural practices:

Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such nation an empire. Coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism. Coloniality is different from colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and every day. (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243)

The concept of coloniality is very instructive in understanding why COVID-19 has disproportionately caused intense and unequal suffering in communities of color in the United States. Since the onset of the pandemic, I have been thinking about how racial coloniality has caused such devastation in African-American communities in the United States. Racial coloniality refers to the racialized inequities, hierarchies, and systems that are based on the long-standing patterns and structures of power. These racialized systems shape colonial institutions, administrations, and practices, knowledge of the law, education. The current racial dominance of White supremacy generally is derived from the colonial system of racial oppression and continues to consolidate during the shaping of modern America under settler colonialism and through post-colonialism in Asia and Africa. COVID-19 is a reminder that we breathe racial coloniality. In a classic and much-cited article Anibal Quijano (2000) writes:

In America, the idea of race was a way of granting legitimacy to the relations of domination imposed by the conquest. After the colonization of America and the expansion of European colonialism to the rest of the world, the subsequent constitution of Europe as a new identity needed the elaboration of a Eurocentric perspective of knowledge, a theoretical perspective on the idea of race as a naturalization of colonial relations between Europeans ... and non-Europeans. Historically, this meant a new way of legitimizing the already old ideas and practices of relations

of superiority/inferiority between dominant and dominated . . . So the conquered and dominated peoples were situated in a natural position of inferiority and, as a result, their phenotypic traits as well as their cultural features were considered inferior. In this way, race became the fundamental criterion for the distribution of the world population into ranks, places, and roles in the new society's structure of power. (pp. 534–535)

The racial toll of COVID-19 then can be connected to this age-old history of racial coloniality, capitalism, and White supremacy. South African scholar Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020) recently articulated a decolonial interpretation of the COVID-19 crisis. He argues that to engage in a “decolonial reading” is to locate the COVID-19 crisis in the modern global order that is largely defined by colonialism and a singular Eurocentric conception of modernity, society, and well-being. This dominant knowledge system is part of our social, political, and mental systems and is expected to solve all the human inequities and problems across the globe.

Eurocentric conceptions of what it means to be human are predicated on racist and sexist social classifications, racial hierarchization, and capitalist approaches to ecology and the natural environment, particularly their reduction to natural resources that are causing worldwide ecological problems, as well as the condemnation of all other spiritualities, while universalizing Christianity, and modern heteronormativity, where gender is deployed to inferiorize and superiorize certain people for purposes of domination and exploitation. (p. 3)

Subsequently, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020) writes:

A poignant point is emerging, which is that the knowledge that carried us over the past 500 years and has plunged us into the current civilizational crisis cannot be the same knowledge that is used to take us out of the present crisis and into the future. The way COVID -19, just like the global financial crisis before it, successfully took the world by surprise might be a sign of epistemic crisis—a crisis of knowledge which is no longer able to predict challenges and problems, as they come and let alone being able to successfully protect people. (p. 5)

Decolonizing psychology shows us that the COVID-19 crisis reveals a structural and epistemic crisis—the knowledge about the world we have is inadequate and insufficient in creating conditions of justice and equity for people across the globe. One aspect of decolonizing psychology is engaging in de-racialization. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2020) explains that the COVID-19 pandemic “has easily crossed the color-line, exposing all of us to danger. This means that racial discrimination along the line of the human must come to an end” (p. 17). The psychology of the COVID-19 crisis is inherently linked to what DuBois has called the “color-line.” The project of deracializing psychology as part of a larger project of decolonizing psychology begins with documenting, mapping, and confronting how the field of psychology has contributed to the project of colonialism and advancing ideas of European racial superiority.

One dimension of the psychology of the current crisis is rooted in the long-standing racial crisis and the question of whose lives are considered worthy and whose lives have always mattered in psychology. Psychology as a discipline has been complicit in advancing the project of racial coloniality for over 100 years. Liberation psychologist Mary Watkins (2019) writes that given psychology’s history of colonialism and coloniality and its complicity in advancing racism, capitalism, sexism, militarism, and homophobia, “psychology is itself in continuing need of liberation, of critical deconstruction (p. 206).” The history of colonialism, transnational connections, slavery, genocide, or heterogeneity are not fully accounted for in scientific psychology’s concept of culture. When these concepts do appear, they are broadly classified as variables or their political and social “messiness” is stripped away.

Race, Coloniality, and Psychology

For more than 100 years, Euro-American psychology has essentially provided the raw material from which the psychological portraits of the non-Western “Other” have been drawn. Key pioneers of psychology, professionals, such as Darwin (1871/1888), Hall (1904), and Spencer (1851/1969), played an important role in implicitly providing philosophical and “scientific” evidence to demonstrate the innate mental

inferiority of non-Westerners and the essential mental superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race. Europe's political leaders used such evidence to justify and rationalize the colonial oppression of their non-Western subjects. For example, a large part of Darwin's (1871/1888) book, *The Descent of Man* focuses on this question, and at one point, he addresses the question by suggesting that with "savages, the weak in body or mind are soon eliminated; and those that survive commonly exhibit a vigorous state of health ... We must therefore bear the undoubtedly bad effects of the weak surviving and propagating their kind" (pp. 205–206).

What is essential for us to know is that Darwin's work on evolution allowed many European intellectuals to establish a scientific link among culture, race, and psychology. Graham Richards (1997) notes that Darwin's evolutionary theory provides the "overarching" conceptual framework for all psychological inquiry. The founder of the American Psychological Association, G. Stanley Hall, wrote a chapter in his famous book on adolescence titled "Ethnic Psychology and Pedagogy, or Adolescent Races and Their Treatment." He writes that history has recorded that: "Each of the great races has developed upon a basis of a lower one, and our progress has been so amazing that in it we read our title clear to dominion. If they linger, they must take up our burden of culture and work. This sentiment has found several remarkable expressions in Europe within the last few years, both by *soldiers and thinkers*" [italics added] (Hall, 1904, p. 652).

The beginnings of psychology are linked to a time when many European and American intellectuals had conceptualized the non-Western "Other" as an inferior and "primitive" savage (Bhatia, 2002; Richards, 1997). South African psychologist, Kessi (2017, p. 507) writes that the Euro-American roots of psychology have "historically prioritized thinking and practices" that have supported apartheid and colonization through the body of knowledge referred to as scientific racism. Furthermore, she argues that Euro-American psychologists have "contributed to the legitimization of slavery, colonization, apartheid, and the genocide of millions of Africans and colonized people from the global south" (Kessi, 2017, p. 507). Such depictions about the "colonized others" are consistently found in the work of important pioneers of psychology, such as Darwin (1859/1958), Galton (1883), and Spencer

(1851, 1969). The critical thinkers who created modern psychology played a vital role in implicitly providing philosophical and “scientific” evidence to demonstrate the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race (Adams et al., 2015; Bhatia, 2002; Kessi, 2017; Owusu-Bempah & Howitt, 2000). Decolonization entails understanding the larger racialized history of the discipline and how the story of a particular concept is narrated.

Academic psychologists were complicit in producing knowledge that aided in the oppression of Black people. Kessi (2017) notes that “Categories of race were salient and instrumental in producing various forms of oppression, often legitimized through academic work,” and she further highlights that “epistemic justice in our context cannot be divorced from an understanding of the Black condition.” The structure of racial coloniality lives through policies and practices that have been institutionalized and objectified everyday life. Talking about this transformation from subject to object, Fanon (1952/1967, p. 418) writes, “I came to the world imbued with the will to find meaning in things, my spirit filled with the desire to attain to the source of the world, and then I found that I was an object in the midst of other objects.” When psychology speak of a “global crisis,” it is from a dominant local view in which racial erasure, colonialism, and racial coloniality have been an important part of the discipline and the U.S. history. Confronting psychology’s legacy with colonialism and racism allows us to bring attention to the racial and ethnic disparities in physical and mental well-being that the pandemic has revealed. One question worth examining is how a psychology that positions itself as universal, ahistorical, apolitical, neutral, scientific provides insight into a pandemic’s suffering that is deeply historical, political, and social. It is hard to make sense of Black suffering, the Black condition, or Black racial identity in the context of COVID-19 without connecting it to American structures and narratives of color-race and racism and colorblind ideology for the last 200 years.

Colorblind Ideology in Pandemic Times

The racial data is still emerging, and the picture is not complete, but reports are shining a light on racial disparities in the pandemic.

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor an African-American scholar, begins her recent essay titled, “The Black Plague” with the following word: “The African aphorism ‘When white America catches a cold, black America gets pneumonia’ has a new, morbid twist: when white America catches the novel coronavirus, black Americans die.” (Taylor, 2020). Every death, whether it is Black or White, from poor or developing nations, is a tragedy that we must mourn, but what the mirror of the pandemic is revealing is that COVID-19 has a color line, and it is disproportionately ravaging Black and brown and working-class communities.

The psychology of the COVID-19 global crisis is deeply connected to the psychology of colorblind racism. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2020), a sociologist, explains that colorblind racism is an ideology in which racial inequality and discrimination are explained in nonracial terms. The four central frameworks of colorblind racism are, according to Bonilla-Silva (2020): (1) Abstract liberalism (explaining racial matters in abstract terms and decontextualized); (2) naturalization (naturalizing racial outcomes); (3) cultural racism (attributing racial differences to cultural differences); (4) Minimization of racism (undermining and underplaying the role of racism). The most common example of colorblind racism is reflected in the statement, “I don’t see any color, just people.” Such a statement assumes that a person’s race or ethnic background does not play a role in their experiences with racism.

Writing in the context of the pandemic, Bonilla-Silva (2020) argues that the four dangerous tenets of colorblind racism presented above are used to frame the pandemic in the United States and thus prevent the dismantling of structural racism. Bonilla-Silva (2020) offers three instances or case studies of how the psychology of colorblind racism exacerbates the racial crisis of the pandemic rather than resolving it. I consider two cases in this chapter. The first case he cites is how multinational companies such as Kraft-Heinz, Budweiser, Amazon, and Walmart have all created commercials that celebrate “our heroes” in the pandemic. Corporations and community neighborhoods display signs about praising front-line, essential workers, and thanking them for their work and sacrifices. One cartoon, for example, shows a “Supernurse (a white woman dressed as Superman) flying a frail man away from the virus while other echoes the iconic image of two Iwo-Jima, featuring a

White-looking scientist, nurse, doctor, and first responder symbolically planting an American Flag” (p. 3).

Bonilla-Silva (2020) argues that undoubtedly all “essential workers” need to be praised for their sacrifices, but calling them “heroes” makes Americans not able to sympathize with these same heroes when they protest or demand better wages and protective gear for their safety. He argues that the American health care system in COVID-19 times cannot recruit low-wage essential “heroes” to save the system, especially when so many essential workers are people of color. The stories about celebrating “our front-line heroes” do not focus on the fact that many of these heroes are disproportionately people of color and are more likely to be exposed to the virus. He writes:

Black and Brown workers represent 50 percent of janitors, the bulk of nurses in supportive positions (those more exposed to hazardous conditions and receiving less protection), 44 percent of construction workers, 50 percent of correctional officers, 52 percent of bus drivers, a whopping 70 percent of graders and sorters of agricultural products (these are the workers at Tyson, Smithfield, JBS, and other meat packing companies), and 30 percent of police and sheriff patrol officers. The abstract liberal way we discuss “our heroes” blinds us to the racial composition of the group preventing the deeper question from surfacing: why are workers of color overrepresented in these dangerous, low-paying jobs in the first place.” (p. 4)

When corporations, politicians, and celebrities praise these theories, it naturalizes and minimizes their racial condition and provides a nice and polite cover for denying these essential workers of color fair wages, sick leave, and other government benefits.

Another example that Bonilla-Silva illustrates as reflecting a color-blind ideology when media pundits and political leaders speak about the racial disparities of COVID-19 but do not fully explain why those racial disparities exist. President Trump’s COVID-19 Taskforce, for example, tends to reinforce a deficit narrative of people of color, and this narrative opens the door for racist discourses of “culture of poverty.” Bonilla-Silva gives an example of Dr. Anthony Fauci’s response during a conference:

As Dr [Deborah] Birx said correctly, it's not that they are getting infected more often, it's that when they do get infected, their underlying medical conditions—the diabetes, hypertension, the obesity, the asthma—those are the things that wind them up in the [intensive care unit] and ultimately given them a higher death rate.

Thus by not getting to the root of why Blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans have high rates of obesity or hypertension, deficit narratives usually find their meaning in the cultural racism framework, where explanations of racial inequality are made through cultural arguments such as “They are eating the wrong kind of food,” “People of color are last and don't exercise,” and “drink excess liquor, smoke, use drugs and drink more than white people.” The psychology of colorblind racism prevents us from confronting the crisis of enduring racial inequality that is rooted in slavery and in racial coloniality that is manifested in institutions that were borne out of White supremacy and Jim Crow laws. Coloniality refers to the racialized inequities, hierarchies, and systems based on long-standing patterns and structures of power rooted in colonialism and slavery. Racism is the child of colonialism. Racial coloniality lives on after colonialism. These racialized systems and structures shaped colonial institutions, administrations, practices, knowledge of law, education, science, property and citizenship, and concepts of self, other, and community. The current racial dominance of White supremacy is derived from colonial systems and structures. This system created Black slavery, Indigenous oppression and genocide, and xenophobic exclusion of migrants. Racism, indigenous killing, racial coloniality, along with capitalism, extraction, land appropriation, education, law, becomes the principal systems through which colonialism/coloniality is maintained in Asia and Africa and Latin America.

Bonilla-Silva (2020) explains that his three cases studies of colorblind ideology during COVID-19 shed light on how “feel-good stories of equality” reinforce the American cultural myths of rugged individualism and the psychology of self-help literature:

Specifically, the three subjects analyzed promote believing that workers should work at all costs, that hunger can be solved by the actions of good

Samaritans, and that Black and Brown people are dying at a higher rate than Whites because of underlying health conditions and problematic behaviors. Instead of addressing the poor working conditions of essential workers (particularly of workers of color), America's limited welfare state, and systemic racism and its manifestations, the discussions we are having are providing flowery rhetoric to make us feel good. A "feeling good" story works precisely because we are in the middle of a horrid pandemic that has taken the lives of more than 100,000 people. It works because Americans, perhaps more than most people in the world, have been conditioned to both "a rugged individualism" foundational myth and, lately, to a self-help cultural logic. (p. 7)

It is not just African Americans but also other underrepresented groups such as Asian Americans facing a wave of intense racism, verbal abuse, and physical attacks since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On May 26, 2020 (Pilkington, 2020), over a hundred writers, many of Asian and Asian American descent, wrote a letter calling for an end to the rise in anti-Asian racism. The letter describes the rise in hate crimes, violence, and verbal assaults against Asians, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders and how racism, bigotry, and xenophobia continue to be displayed in American society. The letter highlights Trump's racist language use in framing COVID-19 as a foreign "China Virus" and the subsequent rise of xenophobic incidents against Asians and Asian Americans. Since March, the nonprofit Stop AAPI hate has recorded over 2000 reports of anti-Asian American racist acts that included spitting, stabbing, and shunning. Historians have pointed out that similar racial attacks have been launched against Asian Americans during economic downturns and other public health crises.

Structural Racism, Racial Coloniality, and Black Communities

Writing in the *Du Bois Review*, Gee and Ford (2011) state that it was W. E. B. Du Bois, who, almost a hundred years ago, wrote about the relationship between structural inequities and health disparities in Black

communities. He wrote, “The Negro death rate and sickness are largely matters of [social and economic] condition and not due to racial traits and tendencies” (Du Bois, 2003, p. 276). Structural racism is fundamentally founded on the coloniality of racial power created through 400 hundred years of slavery and indigenous genocide (Quijano, 2000). One way the coloniality of racial hierarchy is maintained and reproduced is through structural and institutional racism within the context of health disparities. Gee and Ford state (2011):

Structural racism is defined as the macrolevel systems, social forces, institutions, ideologies, and processes that interact with one another to generate and reinforce inequities among racial and ethnic groups ... The term structural racism emphasizes the most influential socioecologic levels at which racism may affect racial and ethnic health inequities. Structural mechanisms do not require the actions or intent of individuals ... As fundamental causes, they are constantly reconstituting the conditions necessary to ensure their perpetuation ... Even if interpersonal discrimination were completely eliminated, racial inequities would likely remain unchanged due to the persistence of structural racism ... (emphasis in original, pp. 115–116)

Central to decolonial projects is understanding how race and racism were used in the United States since the sixteenth century as an organizing principle to create a hierarchy of people, a system of slavery, and subjugating and exploiting Black people to extract their labor for profit. I use a brief article written by scholars Cornell Gordon, Walter Johnson, Jason Purnell, and Jamala Rogers (2020) to show how the crisis of COVID-19 is shaped by the slow violence of racial coloniality manifested in the legacy of structural racism. To understand the psychology of the global crisis, we have to come to terms with the underlying, preexisting condition of racial inequity and racial disparities. One of the arguments made by Gordon et al. is that the COVID-19 deaths of African Americans are “tragedies, but they are not accidents.” Furthermore, they write that African-American communities, especially in the city of St. Louis, Missouri, “have been delivered to disease by their history—by U.S. history” (Gordon et al., 2020). When I read this article, the phrase being

delivered to disease by history and through slow violence stayed with me. The authors write:

In St. Louis, as in the country at large, the deadly disparities of the pandemic are as unsurprising as they are unsettling. It is not simply that African Americans in St. Louis, as in the rest of the United States, have been left behind, and thus set in the way of the virus. They have been offered up by a history of racist privilege and profiteering—from prisons to poor neighborhoods, from persistent segregation to willful policy failure. (Gordon et al., 2020)

Notice the difference between “have been left behind” and “being offered up.” Offered means sacrificed with implicit and explicit intention. The emphasis is on “willful policy” failure. This is where the concept of racial coloniality becomes vital in understanding how COVID-19 has become an autopsy report on American racism. The authors (Gordon et al., 2020) begin by noting some figures: Milwaukee county accounts for 27 of the overall population but represent over 50% of the COVID-19 cases. Another example they cite is from the state of Illinois, where African Americans make up 15% of the populations but represent 33% of the COVID cases and 40% of COVID-19 deaths. In Georgia, African Americans make up 37% of the population but 62% of COVID-19 deaths. The most glaring statistic emerges from the city of St. Louis, where Americans are 47% of the population but consist of almost three-quarters of COVID-19 cases.

Behind the statistics, there are stories that personalize the suffering of people who have died due to COVID-19. The *New York Times* reported a story of an African-American employee named Annie Grant, 55, who worked at a poultry plant in Georgia for over 15 years. She had a fever for two nights in a row, and her children pleaded her to stay home. Annie’s children received a text from their mother that she had reported to work. Her text said, “They told me I had to come back to work” (Jordan & Dickerson, 2020). Annie became progressively ill and died in hospital while fighting for her life on a ventilator. These were the same essential workers whose lives were never considered critical, vital, or essential were now being told how important their work and bodies were in the

time of the pandemic. This is an example of colorblind racism, where the feel-good stories about our heroes could not care to provide care for Annie. Cornell Gordon and his co-authors give us specific details that show how the disproportionate number of COVID-19 deaths are connected to American history, practices, and policies. They note:

The slow violence that we see unfolding in St. Louis has been structured into the fabric of the city, built brick-by-brick by those who have sought profit in segregation and comfort in social distance. Its racialized patterns of disadvantage are the result of decades of conscious choices by actors at every level of government, aided and abetted by private industries like banking, insurance, and real estate, to name but a few. St. Louis's history of imposed black deprivation is both unique to it and reflective of the broader patterns that have made COVID-19 a charnel house for black Americans nationwide. (Gordon et al., 2020)

White citizens in St. Louis have practiced residential and social segregation for over a century. A racial zoning law was passed by a popular vote in 1916, which was overturned on equal protections ground. Nevertheless, the cities realtors, developers, and homeowners found other ways to impose racial restrictions into property deeds and covenants that created new, White-only neighborhoods. The "uniform restriction agreement" by 1930 had a specific language that mentioned that White people have the right to "preserve the character of said neighborhood as a desirable place of residence for persons of the Caucasian Race," and further stating that homeowners could not "erect, maintain, operate, or permit to be erected, maintained or operated any slaughterhouse, junk shop or rag-picking establishment" or "sell, convey, lease, or rent to a negro or negroes" (Gordon et al., 2020).

Cornell Gordon and his co-authors further highlight in their essay that White developers in St Louis could demand more money by promising White renters and new homeowners that Black people will not be in their neighborhoods. On the other side of the tracks, where a majority of Black people lived, developers and landlords could extract premium rents because the African-American population was expanding through the great migration. Even after the courts deemed restricting racial covenants as illegal, segregation continued. Racial inequality as a form of social

distancing had been going for centuries and has been instituted through federal preference:

Increasingly, it took the form of federal, state, and local subsidies that were in reality available almost exclusively to whites—for example, G.I. Bill housing benefits available only to white veterans and Federal Housing Association loan guarantees distributed according to racist protocols in a pattern that has come to be known as “redlining.” (Gordon et al., 2020)

Even today, the authors note that the city is largely segregated by White and Black neighborhoods. They point out that the combination of federal partiality and municipal collusion was state-sanctioned by Missouri’s different governments. As a confederate and slaveholding state, Missouri resisted taxes on property, and the result was the state’s inability to provide viable public goods and services to its vulnerable citizens. Moreover, as a result, Gordon et al. (2020) argue that Missouri has a bare-bones social safety net that has underfunded education, reduced unemployment and federal benefits such as cash assistance programs, and recently refused to expand Medicaid coverage under the Affordable Care Act.

I have summarized the key terms and phrases that reveal the narrative and language of structural racism. This is the language that tells us why the crisis of COVID-19 has been so devastating on Black communities. Paying attention to this language helps us in understanding how the psychology of the COVID-19 Crisis is connected to colorblind racism, structural racism, and any understanding of the psychology of the COVID crisis is connected to the psychology of racism. Without an awareness of this language of racism, we cannot engage in deracializing and decolonizing the field of psychology and the structures that create these conditions of inequality:

- Foundations of Structural Racism
- Four Centuries of Racist Policies and Practice
- Whiteness as a creed and domination
- State subsidies of Whiteness
- Federalized subsidies of White flight

- African Americans as 12 times more likely than Whites to live in concentrated poverty
- Slavery, Jim crow, and continued Black vulnerability
- Tax policy skewed toward White gain
- Living with environmental toxins in Black communities
- Crumbling sanitary infrastructure and redlining in Black residential neighborhoods
- Racial disparities and higher incarceration rates for Black men
- A Climate of abuse and impunity as expressed through police brutality
- Laws posed a mortal danger to young Black men
- Lack of social services, decent schools, and nutritious food for Black communities
- African Americans having low wages, long commutes, and fewer benefits
- Zipcodes and crushed dreams and social mobility
- Large racial disparities in any index of social well-being
- Delivered to the COVID-19 disease by the U.S. history.

Cornell Gordon and his co-authors conclude that structural racism during times of the COVID-19 pandemic means that people of color have been offered up by history to this disease. Rewriting the racial contract means abolishing White supremacy and creating equality in the social, economic, and political spheres. Decolonizing psychology means engaging in a productive and poetic recreating of psychological knowledge. It means recentering Black, Brown, and Indigenous bodies, communities, ecologies, knowledge, and voices of other marginalized people who have been silenced and erased. It means reimagining the discipline through redistribution of power, and material resources, reclaiming historical memory, practicing epistemic freedom, revitalizing alternative indigenous methods, epistemologies, ontologies, positionality, practicing democratic solidarity, and enacting a praxis of agency, radical care, justice, and love.

Concluding Thoughts

I believe that for a very long time, an unbridgeable cleavage has existed between psychology and principles of social justice because of psychology's embrace of a colorblind ideology. Psychology has not yet developed a meaningful theoretical vocabulary or a willingness to explore questions of social justice that are wrapped around internalized racism and racial dominance. One way of understanding the psychology of this global crisis is to find ways to imagine alternative psychologies. We can begin to form an alternative, decolonized psychology by delinking/decentering from the knowledge that gave rise to structures of colonialism, including decentering modes of inquiry, storytelling, thinking, feeling that have shaped questions of who is a human being and what it means to be a human being and whose psychology is considered as universal.

Over the last century, psychology has played a pivotal role in creating and validating Orientalist ideas about racial and cultural "Others" as primitive, lazy, and backward (Bhatia, 2002). The calls from postcolonial and decolonial theorists to decolonize Eurocentric knowledge do not involve a rejection of the so-called advances of modernity but draw attention to how modernity and Western concepts of progress and development emerged out of colonialism, coloniality, slavery, genocide and are reinforced in contemporary times through control of knowledge, globalization, and neoliberalism. Psychology—focused on individualism—is borne out of modernity's preoccupation with progress and the unfolding of self as contained, atomic, and separate from community and history. The physical period of colonialism may be over, but coloniality is still alive in the knowledge production process and the asymmetrical living conditions of the global north and south (Bulhan, 2015). There may be epistemological differences in indigenous, decolonial, and postcolonial approaches. However, there are some threads common to all three frameworks, and they provide us with radical possibilities in unsettling and undoing the effects of colonization and specifically undoing the coloniality of psychological sciences. Decolonizing psychology connects the COVID-19 crisis to history and modernity's emphasis on colonialism

and Western ideas of progress and development that have failed much of our humanity.

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5

The Sense of a Pandemic: Test, Trials, and Turbulence in the Indian Subcontinent

Nandita Chaudhary

Background

Julian Barnes reminds us that ‘History is that certainty produced at the point where the imperfections of memory meet the inadequacies of documentation. ... What you end up remembering isn’t always the same as what you have witnessed’ (Barnes, 2012). The spread of the pandemic has had profound consequences on our lives, worldwide. International relations have been impacted, and arrangements between nations: north–south, rich–poor, developed–underdeveloped, have been shaken up as scientists and scholars attempt to make sense from the available but incomplete information. Countries that seemed to be at the top of the pyramid in terms of technology, progress, and wealth are faced with huge losses related to life and livelihood. Organizations that emerged from twentieth-century structures like the WHO, began to look imbalanced and ineffective in dealing with the spreading of disease. Other

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Switzerland AG 2021

I. Strasser and M. Dege (eds.), *The Psychology of Global Crises and Crisis Politics*, Palgrave Studies in the Theory and History of Psychology,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76939-0_5

international aid agencies have also failed to cope with the demands of the current situation (DeYoung & Sly, 2020). During these times, it is the moderately paid, largely overworked local administrative and health personnel who have been dealing with the crisis in their respective countries. Few such events have overtaken our lives in living memory. Yet, it is not without significance that the fastest moving places have been the hardest hit, and slower paced lives of people living in remote areas, living in close connection with natural elements have remained protected from the largely urban phenomenon. As the spread progresses, the worry about these remote and unprotected spaces will persist as we watch the curves go down and up again.

The pandemic resulted in exposing several fractures in the system at all levels of interface: between and within countries, between and among groups, as well as within and among people. The fundamental structures of our lives, and the foundations on which livelihoods and institutions depended, seem to have come apart. Apart from the differential rates of infection, the handling of the crisis has also resulted in variation in the spread of the infection, and the loss of life above and beyond endemic factors. The COVID puzzle is complex. From policy and governance, delivery of health care, natural resources, biological vulnerability, demographic features, and uneven wealth distribution to personal health and hygiene, very few spaces have been left unexamined.

India has experienced several epidemics. Given the climatic, demographic, and social conditions, infectious diseases still count for a large percentage of deaths, unlike wealthier nations. Among these are Tuberculosis, GI tract infections, Dengue, Malaria, and other infectious diseases. Yet, in the past, viruses like AIDS, EBOLA, and SARS have seen fewer cases than predicted by mathematical modeling. There was a time when it was estimated that the AIDS crisis would be uncontrollable, but this did not happen. Yet, during the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918, there was a massive loss of life in India. Given this scenario, many questions about the current crisis emerge. With its population density, the inadequacy of health infrastructure, relatively low levels of education, and poverty, COVID-19 should have wreaked havoc in the country. Deriving my data from available sources, I will attempt to make sense of India's figures and also discuss how dealing with one crisis effectively resulted

in other emergencies. How effective each government has been, is something only hindsight will reveal. For now, we can only attempt to make sense of the ongoing analysis of incomplete data.

News: Good and Bad

Our daily encounter with the media is based largely on the consumption of news on a 24-hour basis. Media houses, newspapers, and magazines feed their consumers with a doomsday scenario about how precarious our lives and situations are. In 'Enlightenment Now,' Pinker (2018) argues that despite the very bleak portrayal of life circumstances by the media, the world is safer than ever before, and health and nutritional status of people is better than ever before as measured by longevity. Despite pockets of poverty and even hunger, discoveries of immunization, insulin, and other treatments, as well as the green revolution that made high productivity per acre of land use, have been some of the key reasons for human progress. Yet, the way in which news operates is that favorable events seem to take longer to be realized, whereas catastrophes can happen in a matter of minutes. Furthermore, the efficiency and coverage of news live have had a greater impact on how we view the world. Thus, Pinker (2020) narrates that the world tends to seem far more dangerous, unstable, insecure, and unsafe than it actually is, despite the pandemic!

However, the spread of the coronavirus has been, scientists tell us, an accident waiting to happen. As human habitation and wildlife come under increasing proximity, the risk of viral infections 'jumping' onto human populations increases.

Crises and Consequences

The year 2020 has seen a series of crises in different parts of the world. This is ironic since the expression Vision 2020 has been used as a mark of perfection, in sight and vision, and the year 2020 was adopted as a time for arriving at many of the solutions for the challenges we face as a

global society. However, this year has proved to be the most challenging in terms of our vulnerability and survival as a species as the virus hit at a time when climate change and other environmental crises seemed to be coming to a head.

As the number of infected cases and fatalities continues to experience an all-time high, the end of the pandemic is eluding us the world over, with threats of second and third waves and news of possibilities of reinfection emerge. Projections that indicated that numbers would rise with falling temperatures have proved to be accurate, and the virus moves freely along the pathways of trade and international capital, as its movement has locked people down in their countries, their cities, and their homes. Unlike the flow of capital, this virus seeks proliferation, not profit, and has halted and even reversed progress. Even the most progressive countries are facing significant slow down. Lockdowns may be temporary, but they have provided people the opportunity to stop and think about the direction and flow of our choices. The people who manage the crisis speak of 'facing the crisis' and the 'war against the virus,' and in this war, even the most wealthy nations have been brought to their knees. Crises expose cracks and gaps in social systems on account of heightened vulnerability, and these insecurities were amply expressed during the pandemic.

Moments of crisis can unleash a range of unprecedented outcomes. When the crisis persists over an extended time period, people's vulnerabilities, social, physical, and psychological, can become heightened. An important observation during the pandemic and the history of pandemics has been that such an event tends to expose the weaknesses of social and economic order. Frailties become exposed, and vulnerabilities become exacerbated (Valsiner, 2020). We see many instances of this having happened around the world, whether it was the inadequacies of the health system or the distribution of goods during the pandemic. The collective anxiety of people emerging from fear and uncertainty led to a large-scale collapse of the system. During this time, the main institution standing was the family. University students returned home, people working in cities undertook arduous journeys to reach their native places, workplaces, schools, and playgrounds shut down, and family members became the main source of support to each other.

Fear and Uncertainty

Belongingness is a fundamental human need, one that is heightened in times of crisis. Despite the unsettling of personal, social, and collective relationships, COVID-19 has also helped us realize the extent to which the world's people are connected, both in terms of vulnerability and resilience. Diversification, diversity, and collaborations are likely to help us through this and future crises yet to enter our imagination. Disasters reveal our human capacity for connection and care, and the pandemic underscored this message. People who lived alone were isolated from those around them in unanticipated ways and for long durations. Physical contact between people outside the family has been curtailed, and even within the family, a close vigil is kept on children and the elderly. These are times when the support of a large multigenerational family is accompanied by the high risk of the spread of COVID. The consequences led to widespread fear and uncertainty. As Kumar (2020) writes,

A common enemy can be a powerful galvanising and unifying force. There has never been a comparable struggle in human memory that has united the whole world against a singular adversary. Covid-19 has underscored the need for us to collectively prepare for future events, from disease outbreaks to climate change, that could take an even greater humanitarian and economic toll if left unaddressed... The unfolding crisis has also triggered introspection and debate around the theme of global versus local – and about the dialectics of self-reliance versus global interdependence. These need not be perceived or pursued as the false dichotomies they seem to suggest at first glance: this is not a zero-sum game. Regional supply chains can enhance the resilience and competitiveness of global supply chains. (p. 12)

Crises generate fear and uncertainty. Although it is the poor who are most affected on account of purchasing power, this pandemic has demonstrated that everyone is vulnerable, but the load taken by the elderly, the frontline staff, and people with co-morbidities has been exceptional. In fact, one could say that the selective impact on health and survival will cause a review of health-related policies around the world.

Hopefully, attention to and investment in public health will receive a boost. The sections of our population that have shown relative resistance to the virus are our youngest members. Unlike many other respiratory illnesses, the coronavirus targets the elderly rather than young children who seem to be resistant to getting severely ill from COVID-19, but we do not fully understand why. Despite this statistic, the lockdown policy around the world kept everyone at home, and governance had to choose between the loss of life and the loss of livelihood.

At moments of humiliation and confusion, when people need to rebuild their understanding of the world, they are willing to rethink assumptions that go unchallenged in normal times. (Kirsch, 2020, p. xx)

Crises expose fractures and gaps. In moments of emergency, there is an accidental exposure of cultural patterns that may be obscured during ordinary times. People panic, politicians bumble, and systems break down. In a detailed analysis of the period of lockdown in different countries, Caduff (2020) highlighted the ways in which gaps and fractures in different countries became evident as the crisis spread. Also, harsh lockdowns obviated the need for placing and explaining differential instructions for different populations. Everyone was treated with the same blow, so it was hard to argue against. Despite this uniform emergency code, there is no denying that the suspension of all public facilities and private enterprises other than emergency care and essential goods impacted different clusters differently. The wealthy had access to large homes with open areas, the middle class to their privately owned homes and their personal means of transport to get around, but the poor were locked into their single rooms, and the homeless were left without any option and stern police action to contend with if they were found outside.

In addition to the lockdown, there has also been a corresponding crisis, one of information overload. Locked down in their spaces, people reached out to numerous sources to relieve their panic. Unfortunately, available sources in the media were hard to verify, both for the scientific information about the outbreak and spread, as well as the administrative arrangements for household security and survival. It was as if the world

had stopped moving, perhaps the first time, in recent times, shutters were down on schools, neighborhoods fell silent, and an eerie gloom hung in the air. People rushed to fill this space by reaching out to information, leading to what Prasanna (2020) labeled as an ‘infodemic.’

Self-Other Dynamics

Regarding the relationship between different sections of society, it became quite evident that even though the spread of the pandemic had been introduced through international travelers, the poor have been the hardest. Although the phrase ‘the personal is political’ was initiated in early feminist discourse, this has become highlighted during the pandemic. The consequences of individual conduct on the collective have become highlighted (Hanisch, 1970, 2006). Modern power operates on social control, normalizing judgments through incitement to perpetually evaluate and police ourselves. Power is everywhere (Foucault, 1991). Among the indigenous communities of Brazil, there is a widespread belief that the pandemic is a consequence of modernity, a view that is shared by many scholars. In many respects, the environmental degradation as a consequence of modern industrialization, and the shrinking environmental spaces have been responsible for the speed of the pandemic as heightened connectivity resulted in a global spread. What we also observe is that various identities intersect as we make sense of the spread of the pandemic (Crenshaw, 1989) gender, ethnicity, income, region, occupation, caste. The speed with which news spreads has also led to the parallel spread of fake news. Self and identity are outcomes of the human proclivity for creating binaries of proximity and familiarity with distancing and otherness (Tripathi, 2019), a reality that has become heightened during the pandemic as our boundaries of safe spaces have become reconfigured. Existential nature-self, self-other dialogues become altered with the unsettling impact of a crisis (Rhodes, 2020). Looking at the crisis and its consequences, the landscape of self-other dynamics has been altered, both between individuals and between groups. Crises are thus breeding grounds for chaos, rumors, and mixed messages, unleashing tendencies for power and domination (Caduff,

2020) and 'patriarchal authoritarianism' (Fincher, 2018). Posturing as benevolent on the one hand and bullying on the other. Benevolence lasts only as long as there is compliance. Domination was (initially) invisible (Foucault, 1991). The expectation for the powerless to look up with awe and gratitude to the benefactor is a tendency that becomes underlined during such times. Where there is power, there is resistance. But it took days to build because of mixed messages from the State. Incredulity and indignity at resistance by the enforcers. Resistance is seen as a lack of trust and ungratefulness of 'difficult' individuals. Playground for power even in small groups, providing opportunities for power-hungry people to play out their domination with the expectation of compliance and gratitude.

The Situation in India

India's experience of the pandemic has been like the slow turning of a giant. With its large numbers, youthful demographic, and immense diversity, the pandemic story has played out quite differently from other countries. Although we will only understand the reasons in retrospect, some aspects have begun to gain clarity. The cases in the country are now behind only the US, although the fatality rate remains low. India now has the second-largest number of cases in the world, as finally, to the relief of everyone, the curve has slowly begun its downward journey. Whether this will stay, or spike again is anyone's guess. As the country eases the lockdown in phases, it will still be a while before things return to normal, if ever. Although initially testing, tracing, and isolation were rather slow to catch up, India is now testing rapidly, and facilities have been extended to citizens from neighborhood surveys to hospital testing and home-visits. The initial criticism of keeping testing selective and targeted, under State control was opened up. As of 9 a.m. on 24th October 2020, India had conducted a total of 101,382,564 tests; the results are openly available to the public. Thus, one could say that although initial testing was selective and low and controlled, India was quick to realize and implement the importance of the measure. Additionally, India has also been identified as

an important location for the mass production of vaccines in arrangement with selected companies that promise low-cost vaccines to its own citizens. Despite its size and situation, India's death toll has also remained relatively low, perhaps on account of several reasons like climate, demography, and health status. With total recoveries at 7,013,569, India's COVID related death toll measures at an absolute number of 118,007.¹ The death rate on account of coronavirus is estimated at a low 83 per million, but this figure could be different to account for unreported cases, the lowest among many other nations, especially given the number of cases in the country.²

Method, Measures, and the Media

With one of the harshest lockdowns imposed worldwide, many Indians were caught unawares, some in other countries, some in transit, and others in cities that turned their backs on them. One of the most difficult situations was experienced by manual labor attracted to cities because of the rapid growth in urban industry, housing, and other urban development projects. Cities like Mumbai, Delhi, and Bangalore are home to citizens from all over the country who reach these urban centers searching for employment. Whereas the educated class are protected by their personal wealth that permits them access to all sorts of services ranging from health to housing and the market, the poor also earn well, but they live in the underbelly of the urban centers where there is maximum work. On account of this reason, housing and other facilities may be hard to find, with people even having to take turns for sleeping space (Boo, 2012). Many of these men, skilled and unskilled artisans, domestic workers, tailors, washermen, and others live by themselves, taking annual trips to return to their families in villages of the North, whereas others who have lived here longer and accumulated some wealth have been able to find places to live. With the sudden lockdown,

¹ Source: <https://coronaclusters.in/#data>.

² Source: <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/data/mortality>.

it is this section of city dwellers who went unconsidered. With a breakdown of their work, they had few savings to sustain life in the megacities. With the shutting down of the main lifeline to the north, the railways and buses, they were left stranded, without work, without places to live, and without a means to return home. This was a huge humanitarian crisis, and one that could have been easily avoided had the administration anticipated this problem. For days, people walked to stations and bus stands every time some information about possibilities was spread. In the absence of any systematic support, people ventured to walk home on foot. An exodus of people left the cities to return to rural parts of India, and with that, they also carried the risk of spreading the virus to places that had been protected. People were unsure about when these workers would return, but with some exceptions, people have returned to cities and back to their jobs.

In a recent survey of 4835 households across 48 districts of 11 Indian States carried out in June and July, it was found that 29 percent of migrants who had left for villages had already returned to their jobs, some whose journeys were facilitated by the employers, and 45 percent of them want to return (Press Trust of India, 2020). With more people returning every day, it is likely that a majority of the return to cities might, in fact, happen. As these workers and their families return, several questions will remain: Why were these people forgotten when the lockdown plans were put in place? Why was the expression ‘migrants’ used for these skilled and unskilled workers and not for the educated white-collar workforce of executives, private sector employees, and others? Why were only the poor referred to as migrants? When many flights were put in place for the return of Indians stranded in airports abroad, a similar plan could have been made for these people; why did it take so long for the government to act? If these workers felt abandoned by the cities, their employers, and the State, why are they returning?

Turbulence

As the second-largest number of cases accumulates, India is balancing precariously between opening up public spaces, buildings, and transport.

Each step is being taken with great caution. Yet, with one of the world's severest lockdowns, the months of March, April, and May 2020, were challenging for everyone. 'A crude, extreme, and ultimately unsustainable version of the Chinese approach became the international norm. Shutting down society and the economy until a preventive medical treatment becomes available was advanced as an appropriate response and the only possible way of dealing with the crisis, despite the costs and consequences.' (Caduff, 2020, p. 470). As countries went into lockdown, several sections of the population were exposed to greater risk, the health workers to the risk of becoming infected and the urban poor to a loss of livelihood.

Indiasaw one of the severest lockdowns in the world. Perhaps the size and scale of the potential loss of life was instrumental in creating panic. The closure kept the spread of infections low and slow. However, as soon as things began to open up, the curve rose with speed, the peak reaching only recently, months after European countries, which now seem to be returning the second and sharper rise in cases as winter sets in. One important outcome of the fear was the desire people had to return home, whether that was a few miles away or a thousand miles. Young adults returned to their parents' homes, large joint families got together as young couples and their children moved back to their native place for economic and security reasons. With the 'work from home' option or a loss of a job, one was sure to find comfort in one's parents' home. The world over, there was a trend of returning home as a consequence of the pandemic. This also meant that the parent generation would be more at risk from the younger ones, but living in isolation did not seem like a better option.

In large cities in India, most of the work of supporting building, infrastructure, hospitality, and the service industries is sustained by migrants from smaller towns, tribal and rural areas. Often moving seasonally, and sometimes without families, this section of urban dwellers is the backbone of cities like Mumbai and Delhi. In one research, an estimated: If you add street vendors, another vulnerable community which is not captured by the worker data, that would mean that there are 12–18 million people who are residing in states other than that of their origin and have been placed at risk of losing their income. A study by

the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and Azim Premji University in 2019 estimates that 29 percent of the population in India's big cities is of daily wagers. This is the number of people who would be logically wanting to move back to their states (Singh, 2020). Yet, when the nation went under lockdown and people were ordered to stay home, there was no expectation that this would lead to the crisis of such a huge proportion. As the curve takes the first sustained downward turn in India as recently as the first week of October 2020, we find that many of these employees are returning to their jobs and small businesses. In a recent study done through a collaboration between several NGOs, it has emerged that almost 2/3rds of these workers have returned to cities by August 2020, even as numbers of cases were rising (Press Trust of India, 2020). They did not abandon the cities that abandoned them. Although not everyone will return, it is worth noting that their livelihoods in large cities must be lucrative enough for them to return to what must seem like a hostile environment. During the pandemic, the Indian subcontinent saw the gaps in the system related to social status and power, where plans and actions were directed far more toward the upper and middle classes. However, communities like Dharavirose to the challenge and took on the crisis at the community level, becoming an exemplary case of handling the pandemic despite the nature of the community.

In another important outcome of the pandemic, it emerged that despite the fact that the spread came initially from wealthier sections of society, those who had access to international travel and were returning home, the hardest impact of the stay home, stay safe campaign was on the poorest of the poor, the urban poor were the hardest hit as rural and tribal areas remained somewhat isolated from the mobility that characterizes urban settlements. Despite that, there were risks to remote areas when migrant labor returned from cities when they felt abandoned. However, it has been seen that rural settlements took adequate precautions under the local governance of the panchayat system to impose quarantine for those returning home. Local schools shut down during this period were used as quarantine facilities. Urban areas remain the hardest hit as the curve slowly begins to slow down. Now only the future will show how the virus behaves with the further opening up of internal travel.

Domestic workers in urban Indian homes are a significant number. As the lockdown happened, these people, mostly, but not only women, lost their jobs. The informal sector provides little job security, but in this instance, it was gathered that many people stepped up to assist with household expenses. Their return to work has been somewhat harder, as wealthy households remain skeptical about helpers coming in from more crowded settlements. As people return to work, age-old purity-pollution stereotypes have returned, and the distance between classes seems to have become hardened, even though Indians have expressed more charitable attitudes in giving. The return of domestic workers, dabbawallas (in Mumbai specifically), and other such work that entails entry into the households, will take some time to repair.

How does one physically distance from other people in a crowded settlement? When family members share a single room, this becomes an impossible expectation. In a city like Mumbai, the street and public spaces provide a welcome opportunity for people to walk around freely. The stay-home, work-from-home orders seem to have been targeted at those people who have a home and those who have a job that can be done remotely. It could be argued that the Indian government ‘copied’ the slogans and messages that were given out in Europe? This was seen among several countries that were found to repeat one government the messages of another in translated form, may be absent or weak. The belief is that the lockdown ‘works’—yet nobody knows quite how it works, but the impression that the government is taking some sort of action is perhaps the most expressive aspect of such actions. Private gatherings are blamed for the spread of the virus, yet even with a minimal understanding of data collection, we know that we remain in the dark about how and where exactly we can get infected.

For India’s massive informal sector, the lockdown was the most devastating as people whose work requires physical presence went largely unconsidered in this plan. Domestic work was also hit hard. Grover writes: ‘Will the employer class finally learn to value the hired help who sustain their lifestyles? Will men come to terms with the invisible (and fraught) gendered nature of housework? Will humility and respect

replace normative class and caste entitlements? And will the vast casualized and feminized workforce of Indian domestic workers be in a position to negotiate robust social protections for themselves?' (Grover, 2020).

India's health infrastructure is highly inadequate; when we look at the availability of doctors, nurses, hospital beds, and primary health care centers per unit of the population, there was a sense of panic. How on earth were we going to deal with the sorts of numbers that were being predicted. The government opened up quarantine facilities in school campuses, village-level governance decided to use schools to quarantine returning villagers, and several industrialists pledged their resorts as quarantine facilities. Still, there was a long way to go to reach the sort of predicted number of beds that would be required. Each life is precious, but one can safely say that India's numbers did not reach these predictions. Dharavi alone was considered a hotbed in early April, and the State and Central governments kept a close watch on the dense Mumbai neighborhood. Yet, as cases went from single digits into the hundreds, the local health and community welfare machinery managed to effectively limit the spread of the virus. More about this later.

Physical Distancing and Social Solidarity

Another common meaning that became associated with COVID management was 'social distancing,' an expression that should have been labeled physical distancing since social relationships can still be maintained despite physical distance. By the time this debate came up in some circles, the term had 'gone viral,' to use an apposite expression. Keeping people six feet or more apart, especially indoors, became known as another important strategy for keeping the infections from spreading. Yet, there is no doubt that this clause has impacted the social architecture and physical mobility. It also became apparent, quite quickly, that certain places were more conducive to physical distancing than others. In crowded areas in Mumbai city, for instance, where families live in single-room homes, the instruction for physical distancing is untenable. These so-called 'hot-spots' were the most feared for in the early days of the

pandemic. With the slow rise initially experienced by India, the government, as well as the citizens, waited with bated breath to see how life in these dense areas would hold up against the coronavirus. In a later section, I will cover the specific experience of one such area, Mumbai's Dharavi area.

In a recent declaration of the rural development ministry of the Government of India, a working paper was issued declaring that henceforth, poverty will be measured not by subsistence-level income, but taking living standards that encompass housing, education, and sanitation into consideration (Ghildiyal, 2020). The argument is that the pandemic has underscored the importance of having personal space in addition to health care facilities, water and sanitation, and adequate nutrition. The key point about space is that each person should have the possibility of staying physically distant from others in a pandemic.

Cultural Patterns and the Exposure During a Crisis

As people from other countries struggled with mask-wearing instructions, face-covering in Japan was already commonplace and fitted in well with Japanese culture,³ possibly a significant contributing factor to the low death rates in the country: '...[T]he country has a culture of cleanliness, including washing hands frequently, and people bow in formal situations instead of shaking hands and do not kiss cheeks to greet friends or family. Similarly, wearing a mask in public is a habit that has been widely practiced for over a century and appears to have its roots in religious festivals....' Furthermore, these practices are not new; they relate to ancient customs as depicted in ancient art. In present times, the wearing of masks is a social convention out of consideration for others. Whether or not masks protected the Japanese population from getting very sick during the pandemic or not, there is no doubt that social practices are likely to influence the spread of a virus.

³ <https://www.dw.com/en/how-japans-mask-culture-may-have-saved-lives-during-coronavirus/a-55321518>.

There are several practices in Indian households that level well with pandemic safety practices. As a tropical region where the vagaries of nature can play havoc, poor access to clean spaces, drinking water, and sanitation is further compounded by the inadequate health infrastructure and services per capita of the population, health crises on account of infectious diseases are not uncommon. Thus, one could argue that the country and its people are somewhat better prepared, psychologically, for crises. There are some practices in mobility and distancing that are part of cultural practices, the discussions about which re-emerged during the pandemic.

Over the past several months, one has seen how masking has become commonplace, and beyond that, even a symbol of responsible behavior, compliance, or concern. For people who are reluctant to wear the mask all the time because they find it annoying, or they find the conversations around the spread of the virus unconvincing, there is still largely compliance with the donning of a mask. Up until the pandemic, masks were associated with medical practice, people with compromised immunity, and East Asian travelers. Overnight, the covering of the face became transformed in meaning as an essential item to protect from aerosol transmission. Fashion houses were not far behind, and as the initial panic stabilized, online sales of stylish masks became popular. In India, where traditional fabrics have received a lot of support, designers began to use that as a theme to promote sales. As the months have gone by, the use of masks has been quite innovative, with most people, at least in India, choosing to dangle the fabric as an accessory, as a token of compliance. Here is a cartoon depicting the different ways in which masking has been used. In places of extreme weather, winds carrying dust or ice have necessitated the wrapping of the nose and mouth. For instance, in the cold desert of Ladakh, it was customary for people to wear masks to protect themselves from harsh winds (Fig. 5.1).

This transformation in meaning is unique, given the history of masking, and can be explained by the sudden abduction of meaning, only this time, by the global community and directed toward one's own and other people's safety. It took several months for scientists to figure out how the disease spread, and we are much better informed now than



Fig. 5.1 The art of wearing masks: Indian style (Source <https://www.facebook.com/sinha.soumyadip>)

we were before. For Indians, masking is not new and has been easily adopted, although not always followed out of carelessness.

Some other practices related to pandemic guidelines include some household activities imposed on members, although there are regional, ethnic, seasonal, ceremonial, and religious differences. The pandemic has led to renewed interest in the old ways, both of household activities as well as ayurvedic and other indigenous health-care practices. While reading through this list, it must not be assumed that these are followed strictly by everyone, on account of group and individual differences in beliefs, values, and practices.

In many parts of India, flooring was not traditionally concrete, and many communities, even today, have retained the practice of the separation of footwear and clothing inside and outside the home. Clothes worn for the outside are seen as impure, and there is a need to change the attire before resting or eating. Footwear is removed at the doorstep,

and it is common to move around the home barefoot. From an early age, children are taught to restrict the sharing of food and drink with others, even within the family. The practice of *jhuta* in Hindu households relates to the transfer of touch/spit/fluids between people and is practiced with different degrees of strictness in different ethnic groups. In the consumption of food and drink, it would mean using different utensils or the use of one's own hands or mouth alone for eating and drinking. In some families, this practice is taken to the extreme where some members can limit themselves to cooking utensils and eating dishes only for themselves, as is seen among the elderly in a family, who may have a restricted diet (vegetarian, or other restrictions). A utensil or substance is termed '*jhuta*' when it may be thus contaminated by the invisible touch of another person's mouth, and children learn this expression from an early age. There is also a clear separation of cooking area and bathing/toilet facilities, as in traditional Indian homes, the toilet was always at a distance from the residential area.

Another set of restrictions on physical mobility happen during periods of heightened sensitivity as constructed in the traditional frames of reasoning. *Sutak* or ritual distancing in times of perceived vulnerability or other events is something that is practiced in Hindu households for generations. This requires people to remain physically isolated from others for brief periods of time sanctioned primarily for a person's protection and rest in periods of transition. Each stage of life in the calendar of the Hindu lifespan is organized around certain obligatory principles and routines that traditional families follow even today. One such example is the isolation of a newborn child and mother. In local parlance, the restriction is imposed on neonate and mother who are believed to be easily impacted by the presence of others, another way of recognizing compromised immunity on account of the stress of childbirth. For this reason, a restriction of 40 days, broken by a ceremonial release of the child's world and the mother's return to social and cultural activity is marked by ceremony. Different communities have different periods of restriction and different ways of marking the end of the lockdown. For instance, the marking of a strict closure of ten days for a household after the birth of a newborn can happen in the form of a *havan* or prayer around a sacred purifying fire ceremony.

The *Namaste*, the Hindu form of greeting, avoids any physical contact with the other person, instead focusing on a symbolic acknowledgment of the other person. With handshakes, hugs, and kisses being labeled as too close for comfort, the Indian *Namaste* has received attention worldwide. In the past, many Indians were ridiculed for their unwillingness to extend their hands or their bodies for handshakes or hugs, since there is a reluctance to exchange intimate touch with a stranger. Over the years, this hesitation was overcome, especially in corporate offices, where a handshake became a symbol of arrival on the global scene, and the youth wanted to increasingly become recognized as members of a worldwide community. Yet, in local social practice, *Namaste* remains a popular form of greeting.⁴

The *Namaste* is also practiced in other South Asian countries. For instance, *namaskar*, *namaste*, or 'Anjali Mudra' (gesture of greeting) becomes the *wai* in Thailand, the *sembah* in Indonesia, and the *sampeah* in Cambodia. *Namaste* has an interesting lexical origin. The term derives from Sanskrit words that translate as 'not I,' indicating an openness to the 'other.' The primary meaning of the gesture can be translated as recognizing and acknowledging the divine element in the other person. For now, the main reason for the attention to *Namaste* has come from the possibility to greet another person without touching.

Thus, among Indians, physical distancing from others is determined by context and person, and from an early age, children are sensitized to this aspect of social relationships. From the avoidance of physical contact with strangers and outside the immediate circle of family and friends, the attribution of purity and pollution to physical touch, sharing of utensils where saliva may be exchanged, or other bodily fluids from clothing and other sources, are scrutinized. Specific instances of maintaining distance can also be seen in the avoidance of utensils and cutlery:

While drinking water, cupping the palm or palms into a receptacle carefully and drinking from the receptacle thus created is a common practice. Both hands are used from a flowing water source like a tap, but if one needs to pour from a container, one hand is used for pouring

⁴ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/it-s-viral/namaste-world-leaders-politicians-embrace-indian-greeting-amid-coronavirus-outbreak/story-KHjCs9zOliIFz8nHqz4hK.html>.

while the other forms the receptacle. Practice was required to ensure that no liquid was spilled in the process of drinking. Efficiency is best reached when a person is able to pour with one hand and drink from the other. Another technique is to drink water by directly pouring it into the mouth. To prevent choking, this technique had to be practiced from an early age to learn how to regulate the different and simultaneous actions of pouring and swallowing. In earlier times, these were preferred ways of drinking water in public spaces, thereby avoiding all potential contact.

Similar proscriptions relate to the sharing of food, both in terms of what is shared and how. Without going into the complex dynamics around caste-related complexities, the degree of ritual distancing is determined by position and relationship between members. By and large, the rule of thumb dictates that except for the intimacy shared between a mother and child, eating from the same source is prohibited. Furthermore, the use of spoons and forks is a relatively recent introduction as the most traditional practices used the fingers to pick, wrap and ingest the food, the argument being that at least one is aware of how clean one's own hands are. Also, disposable plates made of sturdy, water-repellent leaves like *pattal* (leaves of the Palaash or Butea Monosperma plant) and banana leaves have been used as plates for serving food. Thus, in traditional meals, it was possible to consume a full meal without using any utensils that need to be washed and without sharing touch with anyone else. During religious functions, food would be dropped from a height onto the leaf plate so that there was no remote chance of sharing touch and even of spillage. Although the practice of untouchability between castes has come under a lot of criticism as a violation of personal dignity of the Dalit community, and several progressive leaders have actively worked against this interpretation of inter-caste purity and pollution, elements of these beliefs still linger both in interpersonal as well as social interactions. One can see some of these older ideas of 'social distancing' re-emerge as fear around contagion remains a concern.

Cultural Processes and Their Study

The study of cultural processes has been advanced under different disciplinary categories. In the field of Psychology, cultural processes have been mostly ignored, and the discipline suffers from the tendency to view life as primarily intramental (cognition, sensation, perception, memory, emotions). The influence of ‘others,’ whether these are viewed as ‘inter-subjective’ phenomena or ‘inter-objective’ (Moghaddam, 2010) ones and social and cultural processes have been largely muted. Furthermore, another feature has been to look at psychological processes from the position of the Western ideology since a majority of research has been conducted on a small group of subjects, namely, University students of WEIRD populations. Thus, even within Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic countries, it is a small section of the people who make it to the Psychology textbooks, the rest of the world, both within and outside the West, becomes relegated to text-boxes in textbooks, if at all they may find mention (Chaudhary & Sriram, 2020). The study of culture and its relation to Psychological phenomena has, therefore, been highly skewed.

A third trend has been to favor experimental methods and quantification. Let us take the example of the pandemic as a problem in epidemiology. Undeniably, the way in which the virus has behaved in its spread and the specific features of the coronavirus have been the subjects of study among many virologists, some of whom have even predicted the imminent spread of a deadly virus by looking at the history of viruses. Such studies have urged the world to look very carefully at the human–animal–environment interface to mark the increasing overlap of physical proximity and the risk of a jump between species. The words of warning were relegated to remote journals and epidemiology conferences, conversations that were recently reopened in the wake of the spread of COVID-19.

By and large, ‘following the science’ during the ongoing pandemic has been restricted to displaying and interpreting large data. Science has largely been interpreted as quantifiable information when we repeatedly learn that idiographic information, as a complementary perspective, is of immense importance. Regarding the case of COVID-19, Mukherjee

(2020) has highlighted the importance of looking at single cases to see how Das (2020) urges that subtle and nuanced perspectives should not be allowed to ‘disappear on the grounds of needs for the rough and the ready in an emergency.’ Big data send very powerful messages when they appear in the media, but these can also be powerfully wrong, as we have seen in some of the early rushes of information about the pandemic. Numbers are respected and suspected depending upon who is publishing them and who is reading them, making them a powerful tool for spreading messages, real, fake, or doubtful ones.

‘Asia Is Not Well Understood’

The outcome of the debate between different approaches to the policy for a lockdown, especially between Sweden and other European countries, received a lot of attention. In this regard, international media rarely look beyond the fence at events happening in other countries except if it relates to a doomsday scenario. When we look at the situation in several countries in Asia, we find different kinds of solutions that have been effective in keeping the numbers low. Examples can be seen from Vietnam to South Korea, but these cases are rarely quoted in the international news, which focuses most on Sweden, France, the UK, and the US. In fact, India has several times even been labeled among the rogue nations or ‘rotten apples’ (Hanke, 2020) with regard to numbers related to the pandemic. The other countries clubbed in this category by Prof. Hanke from Johns Hopkins were Turkey, Vietnam, and China. We also haven’t heard much about Nigeria’s successful implementation of testing and tracing or Rwanda’s cashless distribution system that worked well toward relieving the crisis of the lockdown. Conversely, the blatant fabrication of statistics in Egypt (for example) is not criticized in Western countries either. The disproportionate attention to wealthier nations remains part of the same syndrome of greater value placed on Western lives and livelihoods and a fundamental distrust and dismissal of other nations and cultures.

Assessing the ways in which media coverage has been handled, it is not wrong to argue that Asia is not well understood (Samarajiva, 2020), and

few attempts are made to try to understand the situation. This remains true for the pandemic as well. Reporting of ‘other countries’ in Western media has thus been guided by the same lens of imperialism that pervades other stories: Dismay and disbelief about statistics, with a focus on inadequacy, overcrowding, and chaos. In fact, a study by the CDDEP (*India Today*, 2020) predicted that millions would die in the subcontinent, an estimate that was also (incorrectly) made about the AIDS epidemic. As the news from India reached the international press, Johns Hopkins distanced themselves from this particular study by the CDDEP. Perhaps it is India’s ‘Slumdog’ image that has stuck in the imagination of the Western world. A case in point is an article in the *New York Times*, dated 5.14.2020:

It is India’s most densely populated city, *a scraggly peninsula* framed by the Arabian Sea and other waterways, a metropolis of towering apartment blocks and endless slums, a city of oversize dreams and desperate poverty, all sandwiched together. This is where Asia’s richest man, Mukesh Ambani, built a 27-story single-family home. This is where “*Slumdog Millionaire*” was filmed and set. Indians call it Maximum City..... In Dharavi, Mumbai’s biggest slum, *infections are exploding. Trying to trace contacts, health workers squeeze through tiny alleyways, some narrower than a pair of shoulders* — you have to turn sideways to pass through. The health workers put a heavy-duty ink stamp on the hands of people who have been exposed to the virus and order them to stay indoors for two weeks. Police officers prowl the main roads. Hundreds have tested positive for the coronavirus, and several have died. More than 70 Mumbai journalists have also tested positive. At night, after a long day on patrol, many officers withdraw. Dharavi’s narrow lanes then come alive.” [Emphasis added]

In the above piece, Gettleman (2020) makes several important observations that are enhanced by the pictures provided by Atul Loke, but more about the pictures later. In this extract, one can see how selective attention is. Firstly, the reference to Mumbai’s vitality that draws from the title of Suketu Mehta’s highly acclaimed story ‘Maximum City’ (Mehta, 2004), to the narrow lanes and narrower homes, where people crowd together in desperation as the business tycoon Mukesh Ambani is seen presiding over the city. The passage is tense with irony and sarcasm that

is fuelled by the pictures of people's homes, fancy high rises, and bright city lights, and one, in particular, that needs to be addressed. It is a small room with ten people, young men, children, women, some sitting, some lying, others on their cell phones, checking updates. This is probably the home of this 'family,' and during a lockdown, their afternoon rest is invaded by the photographer to feature in the news across the world. How can such an intrusion be justifiable in the name of news? Do people living with 'poverty' also lose their right to dignity and self-respect? How does it become acceptable to show a shot of women laying down for an afternoon rest? Such articles fit right into the imagination of chaos and confusion, overcrowding and distress, that survives in the Western imagination. The section on cultural patterns already counters this image, but to extend the argument, I will now present the success story of Dharavi where the spread of COVID-19 was not just contained and cleared, but this also became an area that had the maximum density of plasma donors for the treatment of the very ill.

Dharavi: From a Pandemic Hotspot to Plasma Donations

Located in the heart of Mumbai near the International airport, Dharavi is one of Asia's largest slums. Dharavi has an area of just over 2.1 square kilometers and a population of about a million people, with a density of around 300,000 per km, making it one of the most densely populated areas in the world. Dharavi was founded in 1884 during colonial times and grew when people living in the city center dismissed factory workers from the central region to live in what were then the margins of the urban area. Dharavi also became the place for rural migrants in search of jobs in Mumbai, making it also a very diverse and dynamic social collection of people. An active informal economy thrives in this area in which scores of household enterprises in leather, textiles, electronic repair, and several other trades thrive in the region. The total annual turnover is believed to be over a billion US Dollars. The area is crowded, and sanitation and water facilities are poor. Health care is provided by several private doctors who have been working in the region for years. With this introduction,

one can imagine how the region remained tense as news of the pandemic arrived. The country and the community were on edge, expecting the worst as the first few cases were reported.

The Additional Municipal Commissioner of the Ward in which Dharavi is located got into action, and a fast and effective plan to test, trace, and isolate people testing positive was put in place with the primary objective of saving lives (Rajagopal, 2020). Local private doctors who knew the community intimately were roped in to provide services, and by July 24th, Dharavi had become transformed from the highest risk area to the highest number of plasma donors (Pinto, 2020).

This occasional and skewed attention to the events in the East and Southern parts of the world is an old story and one that needs to be called out as in a situation like the pandemic, the fact that each country has its own story to tell, the solutions also have to be locally formulated, although international guidelines must be considered. A blind application of policy can result in huge consequences like what happened in India during the lockdown with mass movement of abandoned workers in major cities. In the desire to act fast, India followed the policy of a harsh lockdown, following the pattern of Western nations rather than looking carefully at the local situation. Had the administration looked closer, they would have been able to see that local solutions need to be carefully implemented to prevent major gaps in implementation. Yet, one could say that the situation has been unprecedented, and mistakes were likely, as was deliberate defiance, as we read about in the US, where people refused to wear masks as an infringement of freedom. This has resulted in a huge spike in cases. During this time, one has also seen the limited effectiveness and suspected bias among international NGOs.

Another important feature of the big data approach is that individual responses to any infection can get masked in the larger story. Mukherjee (2020) repeatedly pointed out how the infection spreads in each individual needs to be analyzed since different people are reacting differently, as are different countries. Six months later, we know a little more about the progression of the infection, but many questions about individual and group differences will only be answered in the future. For now, all eyes are on the impending winter in the Northern region and the early announcement of a vaccine to protect people.

Looking Ahead: Uncomfortable Questions in Post-Coronial Times

Reflecting on the COVID-19 crisis, Pico Iyer concludes: ‘What the lockdown teaches us is that we have much less control over the external world than we realise, but much more control over our internal world than we suspect’ (Iyer, 2020). Looking back at the events in recent times, it is quite evident that the pandemic has coincided with a surge in the number of ‘uncomfortable’ questions and conversations about political structures, international relations, and social systems. One could argue that heightened emotions during crises expose dominant structures as disadvantageous circumstances become increasingly evident. From systemic invisibility of countries, communities, and individuals, the impact of the pandemic becomes even more of an X-Ray of our societies (Sen, 2020).

Crisis Talk

Several observations can be made about crisis talk, by the State, media as well as interpersonal communication. There has been a collective agreement to ‘follow the science,’ but the primary source of information has come through big data and its interpretation with little coverage of smaller stories and nuanced analysis of incidence. Furthermore, there has also been a focus on the wealthy and their pro-occupations during the lockdown, while the poor, when featured, provide a doomsday scenario. Stories of remote places and their survival have been hard to find. International distance has been heightened, although accessibility through web connections has been a welcome relief for families, friends, and collaborators around the world. In fact, there has been a realization that we were undertaking many more trips than were required. Hopefully, one of the consequences of the pandemic and lockdown has been to slow down the pace at which we were running in different directions. In spite of that, the physical accessibility of travel has impacted the relationships between nations. Group dynamics have been impacted by physical distancing in greeting, sharing food and drink,

and simply meeting other people. Additionally, anxieties about cleanliness and hygiene, vulnerability, and illness have also become escalated, impacting social connections.

The pandemic has also provided opportunities for people to dominate over others, and hidden tendencies of oppression have emerged in small and large ways (Caduff, 2020). Regrading meanings, we have seen a resurgence of traditional discourse about purity, pollution, health care solutions, and social distance. New symbols have quickly gathered meaning. An important example is the masking of the face and eyes, a move that generated suspicion and censure in pre-pandemic times.

The pandemic plus lockdown crisis highlighted fractures, gaps, and injuries that had otherwise been obscured by business as usual. Suddenly, we became even more aware that people didn't have access to health care even in the most progressive nations, that families had no option for physical distancing because physical space was limited, and that a crisis that was initiated by the wealthy, world travelers, came home and hit the people who were most vulnerable. The crows, as the saying goes, came home to roost.

Another important realization of the pandemic was the central place of the family. Thus, it is those people who lived outside of the family framework; even when they were living in wealthy surroundings in the richest countries of their world, they were vulnerable to the virus. Students, young employees, and others chose the option of returning home to safety and traded their autonomy and independence for safety, security, and companionship. As schools shut down, learning was happening at home, and even when schools reopened online, the focus was on the family in trying to maintain close supervision of the children's learning. Regarding philanthropy and social assistance, it was families, neighborhoods, and local communities that came out to support people in need.

The existing divide between the digitally literate population and the rest also became further exaggerated, and a lot of people have to develop these skills quite quickly to adjust to the new format of learning, work, and marketing. Chaotic social conditions and collective anxiety also fueled the tendency to dominate over others as the police State loomed large in imposing rules and regulations. But this also brought the police

to the forefront of risk, as is indicated by the large loss of life among the police force who have lost their lives to COVID-19. There is still no consensus regarding family size and multiple generation households, although the fact that the most supportive group could also become a group that quickly infects each other has been a lurking fear. Despite that, there is no doubt that when the elderly live in institutional care in close proximity to each other, the likelihood of the spread has been tragically evident. For youth and young children, this pandemic would have created a major chasm in their young lives, one that is like to stay in the long-term memory for years to come.

Lessons Learned?

These are several lessons that were learned during the pandemic plus lockdown, lessons that we should retain in collective memory and incorporate in our social, political, and academic circles. Firstly, it was noted that local, innovative alternatives were far more sustainable than global solutions. When countries simply followed others by implementing policies without consideration to local practices, there was widespread chaos, as was seen in the case of India's informal sector. With the number of people living on the edge of poverty, many lives have been impacted, and it will take a long time to recover from the loss of livelihood. On the other hand, when solutions emerged from local bodies, they seemed to be effective, adaptive, and sustainable. Even in cases where they may not have worked, the impact on people was quickly noticed, and corrective action could be easily implemented. Small and large organizations in India launched several important experiments. The situation of each community is unique, and the intersection of factors needs to be considered in finding adaptable and sustainable solutions. Let me provide a few examples. In a village in Jharkhand, a state in Eastern India, a village leader decided that he would not let the digital divide limit children's opportunity to receive school lessons. He decided to install loudspeakers in all village streets through which daily lessons were announced to

village children.⁵ A much greater impact was reached by Pratham, the nationwide NGO working in the field of education, as they launched a successful endeavor to teach through TV channels to reach a large number of homes. In response to the migrant crisis, there was news of a highly effective and successful effort by local communities to provide food, shelter, and other support to the moving populations. The opening up of mass kitchens by religious organizations to feed people in need is another noteworthy effort, especially among the Sikh community.⁶ Although many supporters have commended the Indian Government for its handling of the pandemic, the situation would have been much darker without the concern and care of individuals and groups away from the limelight. Locally adapted and available solutions have been successful in dealing with the specific difficulties faced by families.

Another important outcome of the shutdown has been the opportunity that it has provided for pressing a pause on our manic lives. Such a halt could not have been imagined, but having happened, it has been effective in highlighting the danger in development. The environment showed some recovery; urban centers saw the evidence of birds and animals descended into spaces that human beings evacuated. The pandemic, Roy (2020) writes, is a portal, providing an opportunity to break with the past ‘dead ideas, dead rivers and smoky skies behind, imagine the world anew.’

Regarding difference, we have learned that diversity is an advantage, not an aberration, an expression of life itself. This also highlights the importance of difference in terms of survival, as the more diverse we are, the more likely we are to react differently to a pandemic. Thus the study of plurality has to receive a boost, where the objective is not uniformity toward a singular goal, but universality in coverage (Menon & Cassaniti, 2017), a universality that incorporates, understands, and supports diversity. Furthermore, standards established by a dominant (passed as global) voice cannot speak for everyone; human sciences must

⁵ <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/dumka-loudspeaker-classes-in-jharkhand-village-for-students-amid-coronavirus-2252944#:~:text=Shyam%20Kishore%20Singh%2C%20the%20headmaster,loudspeakers%20for%202%20hours%20daily>.

⁶ <https://swachhindia.ndtv.com/the-sikh-community-keeps-doing-what-it-does-right-serves-the-people-selflessly-even-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic-51161/>.

become genuinely inclusive. We also need to reexamine 'disadvantage' since remoteness, marginality, poverty, disability to focus on adaptability, vitality, resilience, and reality. To add to the allure of difference, there is some news emerging from recent studies that people living in relatively unsanitary conditions have been found to have greater immunity, but more robust research is required to reach a conclusive statement.

Another important lesson relates to our preparedness for crises. Despite warnings from epidemiologists, societies were completely taken by surprise when the pandemic spread like wildfire, and even the most advanced nations were unprepared. The global agency for peace and action, the United Nations, and its many branches too seemed ill-equipped to handle the situation worldwide. In fact, the WHO came under severe criticism for being unable to keep an objective stance on the initial spread of the pandemic. With these instruments of global social order being incapable of handling the crisis, the importance of training and preparation becomes even more significant. It is the responsibility of educational and social institutions to be aware of this gap. Keeping a focus on the possibility of a crisis keeps people alert to possibilities and thus helps us to stay alert. In order to be better prepared to address crisis management, these must become a part of basic education (Das, 2020). The community of parents, teachers, and mentors, we need to be held responsible for this gap, for which corrective action must be urgent.

As crisis after crisis emerged, our serial exposure to vulnerabilities. There are many other lessons we have learned as the pandemic led to crisis after crisis and serially exposed our collective and individual vulnerabilities.

Summing-Up: Lessons for 'Post-Coronial' Psychology

At the end of this chapter, I will address the relevance of the current crisis on the study of psychological phenomena and the teaching and practice of Psychology worldwide. More specifically, the lessons learned about diversity, disadvantage, opportunity, education, relevance, and cultural patterns, each one of these points can be related to the ways

in which mainstream psychology is understood, taught, and practiced. Reaffirming that the pandemic provides us with a portal to review theory, method, and application, the call for re-imagining Psychology becomes even more urgent.

The relevance of culture in psychology. The subject of Psychology assumes that the source of psychological experiences is initiated from birth onwards, paying little attention to intersubjectivity that is treated as a problem. The pandemic has highlighted the serious limitation in this view of an individual since people are not self-contained, influenced by shared beliefs (interobjectivity) and other's perspectives (intersubjectivity) (Moghaddam, 2010). It has become abundantly clear that the sources of our understanding are as much 'out there' as within, and there is a need to re-emphasize the cultural origins of psychology because without addressing and acknowledging culture, the full range of human experience remains beyond the scope of the study of human phenomena (Chaudhary & Sriram, 2020). There can be no psychology without culture, a fact that has been highlighted during the pandemic, calling for an urgent understanding of context and diversity and the vital importance of local, sustainable solutions. Furthermore, Psychology's base must be expanded to allow for the entry of other philosophical traditions, not as a token, but as an alternative way of understanding the human condition. This will prevent misunderstandings of other people, whether these may be simple or serious.

The importance of accepting, understanding, and sustaining diversity. The historical base of philosophical ideas that enter psychology must be broadened for a better understanding of people around the world (Guimarães, 2020). The 'seduction' of imagined dichotomies that have been used in a vertical arrangement between cultures (us-them, East-West, Occident-Orient, Individualistic-Collectivistic) are all related to viewing the world through the lens of imperialism, where vertical dialogues are mediated by the scholarship of Western civilization as the dominant voice, silencing both the heterogeneity between other cultures, as well as similarities among them and perpetuate false notions of cultural difference. Such a horizontal collaboration (between countries outside the West) has prohibited the establishment of other dominant voices

in the social sciences (Sinha, 1990). Cultural differences exist, but these cannot be studied in this way.

A balance of power. Perhaps it is also an opportune moment to discard old equations and face current inequalities, even though these are based on previous experiences between groups. In this regard, the spread of colonization across the world has been an important phenomenon, one that continues to be influential in the ways relationships between countries are understood. Yet, the persistent use of de-colonization as an important goal seems to, in my estimation, keep the narrative alive. Perhaps it is time to replace the terminology with contemporary labels that call out the injustice for what it is, unfavorable attitudes toward selected groups of people, whether these are the African American communities in the US, immigrants in Europe, Tibetan communities in China, especially the Uighurs, or the Dalits in India, to name a few. By focusing on nationalities and past injustice, labels related to colonialism keep the imagination tied to colonial influence, and I will argue, as a consequence, current group dynamics tend to be obscured in this larger, more powerful narrative that has been kept alive perhaps on account of the collective guilt of former colonial powers. I pose this as a question and not an assertion. Perhaps if we call out injustice for what it is today, maybe we will reach more effective, locally meaningful solutions. Most colonies have emerged transformed, and there is no doubt that the impact of history can be seen even today. Yet, keeping the discourse bound by labels related to colonization can conflate and obscure contemporary challenges. Psychology needs to be able to relate to social reality as it is experienced today, even though it may lean heavily on the past for insights. In the shadows and we fail to find adequate opportunity to address these. The study and practice of psychology is not about having been colonized in the past, but the persistent attitudes toward 'others' living outside of Western, developed, wealthy (WEIRD) nations (Henrich, 2020), and now toward how local power structures are supported by the dominant narratives of theory and method. Power struggles do not take place only between countries; there are very significant local power games at play that academic psychology has to be aware of while promoting a plural, inclusive and multicultural perspective on theory and method. Practicing Psychology that fails to recognize diversity

and difference is no longer acceptable on scientific and ethical grounds, and there is an urgent call for change. Furthermore, in the teaching of psychology courses around the world, such a change in positioning will facilitate the understanding of contemporary reality.

Practicing social justice. Alongside the shift to addressing contemporary inequalities, the discipline needs to actively work toward applied issues from the base of social justice. Policies in education, aid interventions, psychometrics, therapy, and other practical applications depend heavily on a relatively narrow range of studies where the specious quality of the ideas permit quick entry into public knowledge. These deceptively simple concepts become industries and cross international borders and bind university teaching, social practice, and public knowledge through the media in global trends that emerge from a very specific imagination of mainstream psychology.

Beyond big data. The pandemic has taught us the importance of listening to smaller stories and individual experiences. Meaning-making in mainstream psychology has tended to look for inspiration to the pure sciences, where quantification and random control trials are the gold standard. As a science of the human condition, Psychology needs to move out of the floodlit areas and into the shadows to advance 'courageous methods' (Watzlawik & Salden, 2020) to discover ways of better understanding how human beings interact with and make sense of their diverse worlds.

Psychology in a post-coronial world. The pandemic has resulted in a pause in our personal as well as public lives and provides us with a unique opportunity that must not be wasted. As institutions slowly came to a halt, it was quite clear that humanity needs to review the directions in which we are headed and imagine the world differently. In teaching, learning, and practice, moving away from dominant voices and looking courageously for new approaches for a meaningful understanding and application of psychological principles is the key to improving accountability, relevance, and sustainability. This is also true for Psychology. We now have sufficient reason and opportunity to reimagine psychology in a post-coronial world!

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6

Necropolitics, Epistemic Injustice, and the Recurring Crises of Psychology

Henderikus J. Stam

In this chapter, I focus on psychology and the kinds of problems raised by the current crisis, which in the first instance is not an internal crisis to psychology but is sufficiently transforming that it also lays bare the greater shortcomings and powers that psychology enacts and represents. For psychology does indeed enact a considerable degree of influence over the post-industrial world if only by virtue of the vast number of people who call themselves psychologists by dint of education (well over 1 million world-wide) and the number of institutions within which they are employed; educational, health care, business, or otherwise.

Interestingly, the primary reaction to the crisis by psychologists was a great deal of psychological speculation rushed out by psychologists that can be characterized as just more “business as usual.” I have called this

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elsewhere the *rush to expertise* (Stam, 2020). Based on flimsy foundations, expressed in non-professional jargon, and mostly commonsense observations disguised as psychological advice, it parades in public as psychological science. News stories such as “there is a looming mental health crisis,” “if you are working from home mastering one mental skill will keep you happy,” “pandemic straining some relationships, psychologists say,” “coronavirus-driven stockpiling a natural but unnecessary urge [on toilet paper hoarding],” “stressed about returning to work, that’s normal, says psychologist,” “how to heal your inner self in quarantine” and so on. And there are literally thousands more like it.¹

At the same time it is clear that some people are afraid, anxious, depressed, and suffer from various other kinds of distress, including material privations, that they might not have faced otherwise. Then there are those who have the virus and are ill or seriously ill or have lost a relative or friend to the virus. That psychologists do provide aid to those individuals in the form of counseling, psychotherapy, or consulting is evident and I in no way wish to deny this.²

Instead, I am responding to psychology’s public face, the willingness of its practitioners to pronounce quickly and authoritatively on the latest crisis in the absence of any kind of reflective considerations, science, or other knowledge foundations; psychology as a kind of palm reading.

Not that this is unusual, psychology’s public pronouncements are marked by a severe lack of reticence concerning its knowledge base. This lack of foundational certainty is partly due to another function that psychological pronouncements have, namely their role in the broader ideological landscape of contemporary life. In the neoliberal world in

¹ I have not provided references to these embarrassing media accounts but can provide them on request.

² I want neither to support the notion that clinical and counseling psychologists do what they say they do when they claim to provide science-based therapy, nor to deny that their work is valuable, that counseling online is stressful, and that their work has been negatively affected by the corona crisis. It remains important work, ironically, despite the limitations of the field’s epistemological and practical claims. When I presented an earlier version of this paper, I received a comment strongly defending the practice of clinical and counseling psychology and that I “should get out more.” But as someone who spent more than 30 years teaching in a clinical psychology program, I am more than cognizant of the ambiguities of what constitutes psychological practice and the ‘hidden curriculum’ of its training programs.

which we currently live, the meandering, soft science-like psychological tropes are useful reminders that we are expected to face the world individually and must cope as such. No surprise there. Furthermore, psychology works very diligently to represent itself as useful and essential. And of course, there are those who are busy telling us what life will be like, psychologically, that is, when the crisis subsides.

One psychologist argued recently that “different sectors and industries are particularly interested to know key signals in our collective behavior now, so as to predict how we will behave in the near (6–8 months) and far (2–5 years) future. From this, the idea is that it is possible to also forecast the impact on our health services, businesses, politics, and the national economy” (Osman, 2020). Moreover, this person trotted out laboratory studies on reactance theory (Brehm & Brehm, 2013) in which it was determined, based on the most trivial of laboratory tasks, that when faced with restrictions on our freedom, we may feel a need to resist and fight back to regain our freedom. Where is Jan Smedslund when we need him!³

For the psychologist and the social scientist in general, these should be difficult times. And since this volume’s theme is the “Psychology of Global Crises,” let me begin by stating that psychology is particularly poorly suited to evaluating, understanding, and most importantly, assisting in this kind of crisis.

There is currently a manuscript circulating on social media that has led to some rather virulent reactions. It is by a group of colleagues from Europe and America and is simply entitled “Psychological science is not yet a crisis-ready discipline” (Ijzerman et al., 2020). The authors use a 9-point “Technology Readiness Levels” checklist devised by NASA to see what psychology can bring to the current crisis. Of course, this checklist was developed to test aeronautic technologies, so one might consider the

³ For those who may not be familiar with the work of Jan Smedslund, he has argued over the course of more than 35 years that there is an implicit conceptual system embedded “in ordinary language and common sense thinking” (Smedslund, 2012, p. 295). Although controversial, the value of Smedslund’s notion of “psychologic” has been his ability to demonstrate that certain psychological theories are true by definition, and not because they have been subjected to careful empirical scrutiny.

comparison to be somewhat unfair. Psychology is, after all, not generally considered a developer of technologies. The checklist runs from “basic principles observed and reported” to “actual system ‘flight proven’ through successful mission operations.” The authors argue that “psychological scientists” do not even meet the basic criteria for satisfying the first level of developing usable skills, namely, “basic principles observed and reported.” Now whether psychology should match the criteria developed by NASA for applied science is a question I will not consider here, but the point is simply that intervening with suggestions that may have life or death consequences cannot be made by a science that is still not sure what its fundamental objects of investigation are. As the authors of this paper note in understatement, “a substantial, but unknown, number of phenomena identified in our discipline do not operate as consistently as we might like to believe” (p. 6).

Not wanting to rehearse the many authors who have addressed this, the critique of the individualist discipline that is psychology is now more than a half-century old. That psychology has done its part to mask the social foundations of our existence by abstracting individuals and then recontextualizing them by repudiating their social constitution is well enough known. There is a vast literature that has been generated attesting to this critique. Furthermore, most of our life is currently lived or concentrated inside a manifold or labyrinth of institutions. Psychology deinstitutionalizes this fully and deproblematizes this social world by constituting a single social order, a personified, flat notion of “society.” The entire discipline makes all of us ahistorical beings whose lives have never been part of a continuous developing history, itself also contested (Stam, 1987; Wexler, 1983). In short, we are asocial, functional entities if psychology were to be believed, equivalent to a kind of zombie available for assessment with the most straightforward of techniques and modifiable with the psychologists’ toolbox. No wonder psychology cannot make it past the criterion of “basic principles observed and reported.”

In this chapter, however I wish to move past a critique of psychology and to introduce Miranda Fricker’s notion of hermeneutical injustice to discuss the more severe problems of a psychology attending to the corona crisis. However, I will begin with a discussion of necropolitics

that predates the current pandemic, but has found a new relevance as the pandemic proceeds.

Necropolitics

After almost a year of living under a pandemic, we are subject to a form of necropolitics—see how governments must weigh the advantages of “opening up their economies” against the number of people who will die. Or, in some countries, weigh the social and psychological advantages for spending Thanksgiving/Christmas holidays together against the number of people who will die. In Achille Mbembe’s sense (2003), necropolitics is the “subjugation of life to the power of death” (p. 39). As an expansion of Foucault’s notion of biopower, which Mbembe saw as insufficient to account for contemporary forms of the subjugation of life to death, necropolitics attempts to account for the “destruction of persons and the creation of death-worlds,” “in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring on them the status of the living dead.” While Mbembe was concerned to describe the life of contemporary forms of colonialism, warfare, death camps, and the like, that is conditions where “the lines between resistance and suicide, sacrifice and redemption, martyrdom and freedom are blurred” (p. 40), it is possible to see necropolitics at work in our contemporary situation. I can expand Mbembe’s account of the state of late modern occupation and the experience of slavery through his descriptions of what it means to live under occupation: “death and freedom are irrevocably interwoven... terror is a defining feature of both slave and late-modern colonial regimes:

Both regimes are also specific instances and experiences of unfreedom. To live under late modern occupation is to experience a permanent condition of “being in pain”: fortified structures, military posts, and roadblocks everywhere; buildings that bring back painful memories of humiliation, interrogations, and beatings; curfews that imprison hundreds of thousands in their cramped homes every night from dusk to daybreak; soldiers patrolling the unlit streets, frightened by their own shadows... (pp. 38–39)

We can think here of the Palestinian territories, the many people who live in war zones, the Xinjiang re-education camps, migrants on borders such as the southern US or on Greek islands, or those awaiting deportation in ICE camps. As Mbembe argues, “In such circumstances, the discipline of life and the necessities of hardship (trial by death) are marked by excess. What connects terror, death, and freedom is an ecstatic notion of temporality and politics” (p. 39).

When the former governor of New Jersey, Chris Christie said, on May 5, in an argument for “opening up” the economy, “There are going to be deaths no matter what” (Kelly, 2020) or when a planning commissioner in Northern California proclaimed that “just as a forest fire clears dead brush, ‘the sick, the old, the injured’ should be left to meet their ‘natural course in nature’ during the coronavirus outbreak” (Ormseth, 2020), or when Trump claimed that “Nobody knew there would be a pandemic or epidemic of this proportion” (Blake, 2020), we are witness to an insidious form of necropolitics. It is not that of the plantation or the colony, but the “topography of cruelty” now derived from conditions of illness and disease, which create for us new “death-worlds” that we have conferred on the sick, the racialized, the poor, and the elderly the status of the living dead. Mbembe asks, “under what practical conditions is the right to kill, to allow to live, or to expose to death exercised?” (p. 12).

Through forms of necropower, we have inducted these segments of our society into a world made possible by technologies restricted for the wealthy, the white, and the privileged, now repurposed to ensuring inequalities not just in life but in death. We might ask, how is this different from the kinds of insecurities faced by millions already? “War is no longer waged between armies of two sovereign states. It is waged by armed groups acting behind the mask of the state against armed groups that have no state but control very distinct territories” where, Mbembe argues, “both sides having as their main targets civilian populations that are unarmed or organized into militias” (p. 35). This is as true in Syria as it is in Libya or Xinjiang. Although Mbembe wrote his necropolitics long before the arrival of the current COVID-19 crisis, we are witnessing what Mbembe might call a logic of survival against a logic of uncertainty. The survivor is the one who has stood in the face of death and is still alive (p. 35). “The death of the other, his or her physical presence

as a corpse, ...makes the survivor feel unique” (p. 36). In the current pandemic, we witness what people in countries that have faced the Ebola virus had to contend with since 1976. Families do not bury their dead in conventional ways; instead, they must do so at a distance, wearing masks covering their faces, standing at a distance, promising to have memorials later. Most cannot even comfort the dying in hospitals. This is a death without a face, a death that requires private mourning and invisible and sometimes mass burials. Meanwhile, we have leaders that steer the ship of state, providing cover for the rich to pile on ever more riches.

Our necropolitics are not invested or concerned with individuals; it is a politics of large numbers. In one sense, psychology has become less relevant in the era of big data. As Richard Poplak and Diana Neille recently showed in their documentary *Influence*, and then wrote about (Poplak & Neille, 2020), the disinformation tools used in the 2016 election and the Remain/Leave campaign of Brexit are no longer just about propaganda. Poplak and Neille interviewed Nigel Oakes, the founder of Strategic Communications Laboratories Group (parent company to Cambridge Analytica), and their takeaway was that “individual behaviour doesn’t matter, it’s what the herd does that counts.” The impact of 9/11 created conditions for vast amounts of surveillance and data capture in many western democracies, which gradually became the norm in most countries. Then came Google, Facebook, and other players who gather “behaviorial surplus,” which is “the name given to the precious raw material that is captured every time we use one of their services.” This is then grist for the mill of big data and can be sold to the highest bidder. It is the reason social media are “free.” Engagement is crucial for selling the products of social media. As a consequence, we are no longer identified by who we think we are, gender, nationality, ethnic group, etc., but by our consumption habits and political sensibilities. This not only makes it possible to monitor our preferences and habits but to steer them. It is a new kind of influence, not a passive form of advertisement but an active form of swaying the herd or “audiences” to a new reality. As Lord Bell, the subject of the documentary, indicated presciently: “the best way to win an election was to buy it.”

Contemporary necropolitics are thus the politics of the herd. Those infected or dying are just so many statistics, a reason why President

Trump's base does not seem to mind if he plays golf with the death rate passing 200,000 in the US. We worry about our access to health care, about ourselves, about our own spaces. As individuals, we are disposable, manipulated through what is called the rhythmmedia of organizations like Facebook. According to Elinor Carmi (2020), rhythmmedia refers to "the way media companies temporally and spatially (re)order different components in a way that orchestrates a desired rhythm (sociality), while filtering problematic rhythms (spam)" (p. 3). What Carmi (2020) calls the Facebook Immune System or its anti-spam algorithm allows Facebook to develop a dynamic database, which it can use to facilitate engagement. This, in turn, allows it to auction ads to influence people in "real-time." Facebook, for example, measures how long you watch a video, how much time you spend on a story relative to other content, and so on. "When the duration and tempo of actions are higher compared to other actions, this is an indication for a preference which can then be commodified and traded in the ad auction" (Carmi, p. 15).

Where does this leave psychology? Focused on the disembodied individual, most psychological theories merely play catch-up to the much larger data collection enterprises with the means and the resources to predict our actions. Psychology is unnecessary to this enterprise, and so becomes a project for the human resources manager, the clinician in her office, and the teacher. It is not a science to which one would turn to influence the world or its people for good. Instead, one turns to social media, to nudgers, to data analysts. Psychologists have spent 150 years studying human minds and behavior to turn up very little, either useful or theoretically profound. In the meantime, we are immobilized by psychological jargon.

Hermeneutical Injustice

We are thus subject to a form of hermeneutical injustice. This occurs "when a gap in collective interpretive resources puts someone at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences" (Fricker, 2007, p. 1). Miranda Fricker developed this as an element of

her account of epistemic injustice—the latter is composed of testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice. I will refer to hermeneutical injustice only, which can be easily gleaned from Fricker's example. "[A] woman who suffers sexual harassment prior to the time when we had this critical concept, so that she cannot properly comprehend her own experience, let alone render it communicatively intelligible to others" (p. 6) is said to suffer a hermeneutical injustice. This is a kind of injustice that stems from a gap in collective hermeneutical resources. Furthermore, this disadvantage "impinges unequally on different social groups," particularly those who are "hermeneutically marginalized" because "they participate unequally in the practices through which social meanings are generated." Whenever we are confronted in a democracy by the kind of manipulation inherent in rhythmmedia, we face a hermeneutic injustice. We do not know that we are being manipulated, we have a vague sense that something is wrong when we use social media, but we do not have the resources—yet—to understand and characterize what we sense and feel. One might argue that contemporary politics runs on hermeneutical injustice.

I want to return now to the question of just how psychology participates in a form of hermeneutic injustice. Fricker tuned in to this question because of how relations of power, particularly patriarchal power, had constrained women's ability to understand their own experience. Being outside forms of understanding creates a kind of hermeneutical inequality. It is "the injustice of having some significant area of one's social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to persistent and wide-ranging hermeneutical marginalization" (p. 154). Interestingly, this form of epistemic injustice is not the work of an agent; it is a structural condition. Unlike Fricker's other arm of the notion of epistemic injustice, that of testimonial injustice, the realization of hermeneutical injustice "comes only when the background condition is realized in a more or less doomed attempt on the part of the subject to render an experience intelligible, either to herself or to an interlocutor" (p. 159).

I am particularly interested in what happens when a discipline, and a professional like a psychologist, reframe experience. On what grounds can this happen? Psychology as a relatively young discipline has wedded

itself to, and then perfected, a language that allows itself to replicate, mutate and metamorphose quite rapidly. This is because it is a strictly functional language that can be used flexibly but nevertheless constitutes categories of explanation. (I have referred to this as *indeterminate functionalism* elsewhere, e.g., Stam, 2010.) Think of terms such as personality disorder, cognitive deficit, passive-aggressive, semantic memories, and so on. These are vocabularies that psychologists impose on others, created to provide normative trajectories that define us and, by exclusion, show us what is deviant. But our theoretical categories, including our variables are normative and historical. What psychological discourses do, once widely circulating, is enable as well as constrain the possibilities of an experiential discourse. At that moment, we create the conditions of a hermeneutic injustice.

There is far more to be mentioned here, and I have discussed some of this in an article in 2015 on what I call the “ethics of shared understanding,” where I lay out some of this argument but outside the framework of Fricker’s work. I think that her notion of epistemic injustice is an important corollary. By an ethics of shared understanding, I mean to take seriously that as psychologists, we trade in concepts that can have real consequences, effects, or repercussions. Therefore, our claims resonate in a world where professionals can dictate the way things are, and thus we have a responsibility to the other for our claims. “Psychologists’ claims circulate in a world that has taken psychology as one science of the mind among others, guarded by professional privilege and guaranteed a stake in the educational systems of the universities of the world” (Stam, 2015, p. 123). I argue that an ethics of shared understanding is an ethics that does not violate the norms and standards of communal existence. I ground this in Judith Butler’s (2005) notion of ethical violence “or the violence we perpetrate on others when we claim to know them or demand of them a knowledge that we have defined in the first instance” (p. 125). For Butler, the opaqueness of the self, our inability to see ourselves clearly, bounds us to relationships with others. So as psychologists, we have the power to “install” or “disinstall” the “I”—the strict imposition of a psychological understanding then is a kind of ethical violence.

I admit that the notion of violating the norms and standards of communal existence is vague. However, it has a clear connection to epistemic injustice. If my claims about myself must be made in a language that does not come from my immediate world, I must be able to reject such claims just as I can take up claims about a self that is prepared for me in an educational context. This is the obverse of epistemic injustice. One of the goals of an education is undoubtedly that the student becomes an adept shape-shifter. They can think about themselves as other than what they have up to that point considered their core experience. However, when these forms of knowing become laid down as a science of psychology, rather than one profession's take on what such a science might look like, and when these are bandied about as vehicles of universal personhood, we are confronted with a foundational hermeneutic injustice.

To place this in the context of a necropolitics, psychology is not a neutral bystander. It enables the regimes of truth that make our current politics possible. Psychology is engaged with the distractions and preoccupations of an internal and unique psyche. It continues the narrative of a sovereign subject, one that struggles for autonomy. It refuses, except in marginal ways, to consider alternative means of addressing what is most human about us. The world of "behavioral surpluses" will pass it by however, will make psychology in some ways redundant. Massive data will make little psychological studies seem irrelevant to the manipulations engaged in by large tech companies and government agencies capable of collecting population data—think China, but increasingly all wealthy nations engage in these activities. Psychology will survive because of its variegated subject matter and its contributions to the helping arts, if not the healing arts such as medicine and related health fields. But in understanding and promoting a science of mind, it has already yielded the playing field to many other players. In that way, it contributes to our necropolitics, that long continuous line in modernism that has mechanized and refined our ways of death. And this pandemic is merely the latest instance.

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7

Psychologies Otherwise & Earthwise: Pluriversal Approaches to the Crises of Climate, Equity, and Health

Wade E. Pickren

We are deep into a time of climate change, racial inequities, and health; crises that are existential threats currently and into the future. I use the term climate crisis here to include climate change and resultant geophysical changes of sea levels, dramatic atmospheric temperature fluctuations, as well as the haunting, critical losses of biodiversity. The crisis of racial inequities predates our current climate crisis by several hundred years with the rise and instantiation of modernity/coloniality and its making of the “Other,” especially the Other of non-White peoples. The crisis of health inequities is also not of recent origin but has become so visible over the last 60 years as to be undeniable. If we look for the distal origins of our present crises, our understanding will be enhanced by a comparison of two cosmovisions. One is the cosmovision of the Judeo-Christian tradition, on which so-called Western civilization has been built. The other is the cosmovision of many indigenous peoples. I cite here this

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Switzerland AG 2021

I. Strasser and M. Dege (eds.), *The Psychology of Global Crises and Crisis
Politics*, Palgrave Studies in the Theory and History of Psychology,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76939-0_7

comparison as articulated by Robin Wall Kimmerer, an enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation and a noted scientist of plant ecology:

On one side of the world were people whose relationship with the living world was shaped by Skywoman, who created a garden for the well-being of all. On the other side was another woman with a garden and a tree. But for tasting its fruit, she was banished from the garden and the gates clanged shut behind her. That mother of men was made to wander in the wilderness and earn her bread by the sweat of her brow, not by filling her mouth with the sweet juicy fruits that bend the branches low. Same species, same earth, different stories. Like Creation stories everywhere, cosmologies are a source of identity and orientation to the world. They tell us who we are. One story leads to the generous embrace of the living world, the other to banishment. One woman is our ancestral gardener, a cocreator of the good green world that would be the home of her descendants. The other was an exile, just passing through an alien world on a rough road to her real home in heaven. (Kimmerer, 2013, pp. 6–7)

The cosmovision of Kimmerer and other indigenous peoples offers opportunities to rethink and reshape the science and practice of psychology so that it is in harmony with the earth as a living ecosystem that includes human and other than human beings. In this spirit, I am offering a contribution to a body of emerging transition discourses with their origins in both the Global South and Global North. The transitions imagined and proposed concern how human and other than human beings can have lives and futures based on living in deep recognition of our mutual interdependence and the co-constitution of all on the Earth. They imagine a way to practice environmental, racial, and social justice and a way to live that does not depend on exploitation, whether of the geophysical earth or of the living ecosystem that is the earth. There are many such discourses, from Joanna Macy's Great Turning (Macy, 2007), to *Buen Vivir* (Walsh, 2018; with many other resources, as well) to visions of degrowth (e.g., Kallis et al., 2020; Nirmal & Rocheleau, 2019), multispecies kinship (Haraway, 2016), and numerous others. A fine

resource that includes these and others is *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary* (Kothari et al., 2019¹).

In this chapter, I lay out my desire for a new/old cosmology as a foundation for addressing these crises. One that is pluriversal, to use a Zapatista term, where many worlds are possible. In this cosmology, the register is marked by an ontology of radical relationality and a regenerative epistemology. Together, they will help create a new commons characterized by reciprocity and cooperation, with beings human and otherwise connected in ways both visible and invisible, mycelium-like. Such a cosmology can generate a corresponding earth-centered psychology; a *psychology otherwise* and Earthwise.

First, though, I introduce the idea of the Pluriverse and contrast it with the One-World World. When I use the term, Psychologies Otherwise, I am thinking of the Zapatista notion of the Pluriverse, where many worlds are possible, including those not predicated on the ontological basis of Eurocentric Enlightenment rationality. In the Pluriverse, other realities, other worlds, other ways of knowing and acting are possible. That is, there are Worlds and Knowledges Otherwise (Escobar, 2007). I contrast this with what the STS scholar, John Law, terms the One World World (OWW). By this, he means the Euro-US centric hegemonic view that reason is what is defined/articulated in one intellectual/social tradition or imaginary. The world can only be what the One World World says it is (Law, 2011). The Euro-US centric, masculinist, capitalist patriarchy defines modernity (including pre-modern and post-modern), rationality, and epistemology. Its ontological ensemble consists of the autonomous individual, objective reality that is prior to and independent of the practices that produce it, a belief in its approach to science that makes alternatives, such as indigenous and local knowledges/sciences, appear illegitimate (Escobar, 2017; Smith, 2012), and the market as the definer of value—for human and other than human lives (Preston, 2013).

My pluriversal approach of *Psychologies Otherwise* is based on an ontology of deep relationality, a radical relationality, that does not divide

¹ It is also available as a free download: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334051449_Pluriverse_A_Post-Development_Dictionary_AUF_2019_NEW_BOOK_edited_by_Ashish_Kothari_Ariel_Salleh_Arturo_Escobar_Federico_Demaria_and_Alberto_Acosta_Download_full_ebook_for_free_PDF_License_Creative_Co.

human beings from the Earth or other than human beings; that does not divorce emotion from reason, nor thinking from feeling, and does not rely on dualisms that privilege masculinist hegemony. My proposal for a *Psychologies Otherwise* is not an argument for a new totalizing psychology intended to replace or supplant institutional—hegemonic psychology. Rather, a pluriversal approach suggests that multiple psychologies are possible and already exist.

I acknowledge that in writing about a *Psychologies Otherwise* that is earth-centered, I am embracing an old/new cosmology that posits intersubjectivity and interdependence as the foundational character of the Earth as a living ecosystem that encompasses all that is here. We are members of the web of all that is, animate and inanimate. Our situation asks us to learn how to understand ourselves as situated in the web of life that is the living ecosystem of the Earth (Rose, 2008). We can then take the further step of embracing the radical relationality of the pluriverse with its implication “that all entities that make up the world are so deeply interrelated that they have no intrinsic, separate existence by themselves” (Escobar, 2020, p. xiii). My sense is that the most viable basis for a *Psychologies Otherwise* is that it is also Earthwise/Earth-centered in order to enable us to confront the crises we face head-on and make it possible for us to weave/re-weave our social life together.

I return to a fuller exposition and deployment of pluriversal psychologies otherwise in the Interventions section. Now, I turn to a brief delineation of the events that created our intertwined crises. Of course, our current crises are multiply determined, and one chapter will not suffice for a full exposition. I explore the emergence of coercive social hierarchies, the rise of modernity/coloniality, which was created and is maintained based on exploitation and enslavement of Others, including humans and beings other than humans. We will examine how capitalism was instantiated based on slavery, how what is called the Enlightenment created and sustains ontological dualisms—man/woman; nature/culture; etc., and how these dualisms were central to the separation of Euro-US (the West, in other words) from the sense of belonging to the earth. These threads/streams/prisons (of the imagination) came together and remain together to create and sustain the climate crisis that is connected to racial crisis/inequity and the crisis of health inequities. Tellingly,

the same threads wove the foundation of contemporary hegemonic psychology that sustains and reinforces the violence and exploitation necessary to maintain Eurocentric modernity.

The COVID-19 pandemic declared by the World Health Organization in early 2020 dominated our screen time, our thoughts and fears, and, as of this writing, we do not yet know how it will end or if it will end. It is our crisis of the moment. Yet, it is not the deepest of the crises we face and may well be only one symptom, even if a very frightening one, of the much deeper and broader array of the linked crises of climate change (e.g., human intrusion into animal habitats, Johnson et al., 2020), historic racial inequities, and health, especially in minoritized communities (Karaye & Horney, 2020). A growing body of evidence tells us that climate change exacerbates existing social and health inequities (Watts et al., 2019). These interlocking crises are running constantly and ominously, with variable and increasing visibility, but always there. I liken them to the creepy aura generated by Area X in Jeff Vandermeer's *Southern Reach Trilogy: Annihilation, Authority, and Acceptance* (2014a, 2014b, 2014c).

By late 2020, the time of this writing, these three crises were not just imbricated but nearly completely entangled. For example, the processes driving carbon emissions and mass extinction are related to the vast accumulation of wealth by an increasingly powerful global elite and the pollution of air and water have their most powerful and insidious effects on those who have historically experienced the greatest racial and income inequities and whose health is most at risk from these crises. The knowledge of these connections is not new. Over the last 30 years, historians have offered convincing examples of such links over several hundred years (e.g., Bullard, 1990; Egan, 2002; Green, 2020; Washington, 2004).² A close examination shows that each of our current crises is rooted in the limitations and failures of the intellectual bases of Euro-US (Western) civilization. Given that the ontological and epistemological bases of our behavioral, social, political, and economic sciences are the same as what

² See *Centaurus*, (2020), vol. 62(2) for special issue: *Histories of epidemics in the time of COVID-19*.

has led to these crises, how can we understand and shape a cogent and compelling response?

After an overview of these crises, I offer interventions based on the decolonial option of a *Psychologies Otherwise* intended to help us create a *pluriversal* approach to finding/creating viable futures (Escobar, 2017, 2020). This work is part of my larger project of searching for knowledge and praxes otherwise, that is, in addition to the Western Enlightenment model of rationality (Pickren, 2018a, 2018b, 2020a, 2020b; Pickren & Teo, 2020). *Psychologies Otherwise* is intended to be a contribution to such a pluriverse.

How did we arrive at this particular moment of these particular interlocking crises? A full history is likely beyond the scope of any one scholar and certainly not possible in this chapter. Briefly, we can look to the history of the last 500 plus years, which saw the rise and eventual hegemony of Eurocentrism and its offspring in several settler-colonialist societies. The hegemony and its social imaginary depend on dualisms, as noted, that speak to the critical roles of patriarchy and reductionism in science and especially to ecological catastrophe.

The Climate Crisis

The Australian feminist and philosopher Val Plumwood argues that our ecological crisis is a result of how Enlightenment rationality has been deployed. Such rationality privileges the masculine, identifies nature as female to be exploited and subordinated, reifies the autonomous individual, and makes invisible those who are of non-dominant groups, as well as other than human animals (Escobar, 2017; Plumwood, 2002). In this, Plumwood echoes the arguments of Carolyn Merchant (1980, 2005) in regard to the separation of humans from a feminized Nature and the masculinist ideology of domination of Nature, often expressed in languages of violence and torture. As anthropologist Anna Tsing has argued, “‘Man’ does not mean humans, but a particular kind of being invented by Enlightenment thought” (Haraway et al., 2016, p. 541). In the current moment, we see this masculinist rationality seeking “to contest every assertion of the co-dependence between humankind and

the world” (Danowski et al., 2014), thus maintaining the singularity of humans. At the heart of such a rationality, if it has a heart, is complete blindness to our ecological embeddedness and a caesura in human subjectivity that create the conditions of possibility for the ecological crisis and its maintenance.

Coercive Social Hierarchies

Anthropologists and scholars in cognate fields have long noted that permanent inequalities were likely non-existent in hunter-gatherer societies (e.g., Bowles et al., 2010; Dow & Reed, 2013; Malešević, 2016). As human settlements oriented to agriculture emerged over a long period (Scott, 2017), coercive social, political, and economic hierarchies became normative for much, but not all, human populations (Flannery & Marcus, 2012; Suzman, 2017). By the time of the early modern period, coercive hierarchies were institutionalized in the emergent nation-states. These were the settings in which ontological and epistemological bases of what came to be called Enlightenment rationality were established. Inequities, legitimized by their ontological framework, marked such societies. At the same time, they were patriarchies, fostered by the dominance of patriarchal monotheistic religions, and the accompanying diminishment of matriarchal or egalitarian cultures (Eisler, 1987; Flannery & Marcus, 2012). These cultural, political, religious, and social contexts created the intellectual and economic infrastructure for the emergence and dominance of extractivist and exploitative practices regarding human and other than human populations.

But it was not only social hierarchies and attendant inequalities; it was the divorce of humans from the Earth facilitated by monotheistic religions, especially Judaism and Christianity. “Man” was the crown of creation and given the task of having dominion over the Earth. This interpretation of Biblical scriptures justified exploiting the Earth and all that was on it in the service of “man.” Bible verses such as Genesis 1:26 (King James Version): “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness and let them have dominion over fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and

over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth” was the justification for exploitive practices. Scholars of Biblical languages indicate, however, that the word “dominion” is a mistranslation of the Hebrew. The Hebrew word actually means “to lower oneself,” that is, to understand that humans are part of nature and animals are our equals.³ How different Earth’s history would be if that understanding had become the normative guide for human behavior.

Early modern science was built on a foundational understanding of the Earth as “Other,” not of the same substance as Man. It was here that the philosophical tradition that is still with us began its reign. Progenitors of modern science, such as Francis Bacon, depicted the earth as a female who was to be exploited and made to yield her truths through force, even torture. This is the argument made so forcefully and clearly by Carolyn Merchant in *The Death of Nature* (1980) and which created an intense backlash among Anglo-American historians of science who were predominantly male. The ontological basis of Western thought and Western science is dualistic. It is a large and plastic set: nature/culture, man/woman, us/them, etc. Not surprisingly, the ontological dualisms that have been historically and currently employed to justify the hegemon of Enlightenment rationality all depend upon the earth being something other, not us.

Walter Mignolo, in his work over the last twenty years, such as *Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (2011) and his volume with Catherine Walsh, *On Decoloniality* (2018), has argued that modernity began with the Spanish and Portuguese voyages of exploration and subsequent colonization. He and others in the modernity/coloniality research coalition have argued that without coloniality, there would be no modernity. As European states created overseas empires and colonies, they brought new horrors of domination and exploitation. The reach of European modernity/coloniality grew for approximately 500 years beginning around 1500 CE, so that rather than a pluricentric, non-capitalist world of multiple civilizations and cultures, European states came to define modernity on the basis of their own provincial rationality (Chakrabarty, 2008; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018;

³ <https://www.chaimbentorah.com/2015/06/hebrew-word-study-dominion/>.

Quijano, 2007). Colonialism was key to this, as was the emergence of capitalism at almost the same time. While it spread unevenly across European states and their colonies, capitalism solidified the commitment to androcentrism, exploitative and extractive practices, and the othering of non-male, non-White, and non-European or European descent populations that began with colonialism.

I will not digress into questions of whether the era that began during this time should be referred to as the Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, or Chthulucene. Each of these terms has merit given that our current crises are multiply determined. I will emphasize here that the history of the climate crisis, past, present, and future, is inextricably linked to the success of capitalism, its plantation systems, and slaves as the labor force. As anthropologist Anna Tsing has pointed out,

What thinking through capital means for knowing the Anthropocene might be to consider the importance of long-distance investors in creating an abstract relationship between investment and property. This new relationship makes it possible to turn ecologies into something completely different, even if their sites are very far away. This move, which I think of as alienation, changes the plants, the animals, and the organisms that become part of the plantation. (Haraway et al., 2016, p. 556)

Both colonialism and capitalism depended on turning material and immaterial entities—people, ideas, sugar, cotton, gold, etc.—into commodities that could then be objects of investment. Capitalism, Sven Beckert argues in his remarkable book, *Empire of Cotton* (2014), began in the colonized fields of the sixteenth century. The creation and building of empires, with the use of enslavement, the expropriation of land inhabited by indigenous peoples and often their extermination, along with armed trade, and the claim by entrepreneurs of sovereignty over people and land, e.g., establishing colonies for profit, marked capitalism's beginning in what Beckert terms *war capitalism*. The parameters of what it means to be human, who gets counted as fully human, were laid down in their modern form here. Those who were not white, not European, not male (especially non-White females) to use the European gender binary that was unknown in many parts of the world, were all valued

only for their labor, that is, their production value; most of that value was founded in slavery, not wages, at least not initially. Capitalism, in all its forms, was built on the foundation of slavery and genocide, which means it is a foundation of extreme violence in the service of profit. As Afro-Colombian activist Carlos Rosero noted, “We are the descendants of the slave trade. Our papers say: ‘Afro-descendants: descendants of the Africans brought to America with the transatlantic slave trade.’ What do I personally think? If the slave trade is at the basis of capital accumulation, then inequality and racism are at the basis of the same process. I can make headway on the problem of territory, of ethno-education, up to a certain point, but if I do not solve the fundamental problem I do not solve anything” (cited in Escobar, 2020, p. xxvi).

What industrial or manufactory capitalism has done and continues to do is employ extreme violence on the earth itself in a mode of extraction and exploitation. We should not fool ourselves that capitalism does not employ brutal physical violence on exploitable peoples and exploitable species. It has, it does, and plans to continue to do so. Those species that cannot yet be exploited are of no current use and thus utterly expendable. This has been documented in multiple books, oral histories, articles, and other sites. Edward Baptist, in his 2014 book, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*, lays out these truths in stark terms.

The assumption of predatory capitalism is limitless growth. This assumption is deeply embedded within Western settler-colonial societies. Concepts of “freedom” in what are called liberal societies are tethered to notions of choice, unfettered consumption, and exploitation of natural resources. To use US examples: After World War II, then-President Truman envisioned US society as becoming more oriented to consumption than ever before and laid the groundwork for so-called “development” of those parts of the world depicted as mired in poverty and as backward, non-modern states. This is not the place to explore the history of post-WWII development policies and their environmental impact, but those policies have been a disaster for the earth and billions of people. They have been and are examples of colonialism

by another name. I refer you to Arturo Escobar's *Encountering Development* (1995/2012), as well as the exhaustive history by Gilbert Rist (1997).

In the last third of the twentieth century and continuing until the current moment (now with a decidedly fascist, nationalist bent), much of the world's political economy underwent a shift from a state-centered regulatory framework to a neoliberal orientation. Neoliberalism has impacted our politics, policy, and sociality and profoundly contributed to our ecological crisis. Its solutions for the climate crisis, such as a Green New Deal, are rooted in a neoliberal focus on the responsabilized self and narrow forms of environmental action centered on individual behavior changes and "greener" consumption choices. It is worth noting a concrete example of how the predatory, extractive nature of capitalism has contributed and continues to contribute to the ecological catastrophe/crisis we are in. In 1750 CE, CO₂ parts per million (PPM) was estimated at 277 PPM. On May 19, 2020, Daily CO₂ was 416.85 PPM. On that date in 2019, it was 414.75 PPM. If we do nothing, in the year 2100, we will have 800 + CO₂ PPM in the atmosphere and a temperature rise of 4.0 °C compared to 2011. If that happens, then human life on Earth will be dramatically diminished.

Capitalism and its accompanying emphasis on the autonomous individual with the private psychological self has not only been an economic model but the infrastructure for a social and political imaginary that, as the term implies, forms the default for what is normal and expected. Thus, activities that advance the economic and political goals of capitalism are deemed acceptable and normal, regardless of the impact on climate, health, and equitable human societies.

Biodiversity

A critical sequelae of the climate crisis is the overwhelmingly negative impact on biodiversity. Human activity has already had a major impact on biodiversity. The possible and probable increase in pollution and human intrusion on wildlife habitats will mean that it is not tenable for the survival of thousands, if not millions, of individuals and species,

with negative implications for human health. A recent report in *Science* showed that more than 3 billion birds have been lost in North America alone since 1970 (Rosenberg et al., 2019).

One million species are threatened with extinction over the next few decades, if not sooner. The implications of this for food security alone are sobering and frightening. Some nation-states have taken action, such as Germany, to protect insects in order to protect their food supply,⁴ while in others, those who defend threatened species are murdered, as happened recently in Mexico.⁵

The 2019 report and recommendations of The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) state clearly that current policies and practices will not mitigate or lessen the negative impact on biodiversity and all the implications that it has for human societies, including food security and health.⁶ As with other governmental and intergovernmental bodies, IPBES is very careful and somewhat conservative in its conclusions and recommendations. Such conservatism is normal praxes for most national and international bodies (Oppenheimer et al., 2019). Oppenheimer and colleagues documented how scientists tend to underestimate the impact of such complex events as climate change and biodiversity loss; the rate of change and loss is actually much greater. The most recent Global Biodiversity Report (2020) indicated that modest progress had been made on several of the goals. However, the overarching message is that the rate of success in protecting biodiversity will not be enough to stave off massive species loss with attendant negative impact on the food supply and human health. (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2020. <https://www.cbd.int/gbo/gbo5/publication/gbo-5-en.pdf>, Global Biodiversity Outlook 5. Downloaded October 30, 2020.)

⁴ https://www.bmu.de/fileadmin/Daten_BMU/Pool/Broschueren/aktionsprogramm_insektenschutz_kabinettversion_bf.pdf.

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/03/mexico-second-monarch-butterfly-sanctuary-worker-found-murdered>.

⁶ <https://ipbes.net/global-assessment>.

Impact: Racial/Health Inequities

The causes of climate change, racial equity/inequity, and health/disease are so tightly linked as to be “fundamentally the same—social inequities, institutional power, and the need for broader systems changes in our health systems, transportation infrastructure, and the production and distribution of energy” (White-Newsome et al., 2018, p. S72).

Historically, there is substantial evidence of associations between climatic conditions and health, including infectious diseases (Wade, 2020). Moreover, historically, marginalized populations have suffered the most from pandemics and other disease outbreaks (Curtis & van Besouw, 2020; Green, 2020; Kreslake, 2019). Another facet of the inequitable impacts of the climate crisis is that marginalized populations have contributed the least to the crisis yet are already suffering the most. As Markkanen and Anger-Kraavi put it, “The poorest and marginalized populations (such as indigenous peoples) are least responsible for past greenhouse gas emissions (benefits), most vulnerable to climate change (costs), and possess least resources to adapt to extreme climate events and rising temperatures” (2019, p. 829).

Thus, our present emergencies. Our crises are multiple, intersecting, and overlapping: climate, race, health. Each of our crises and their incipient linkages were inherent in the onset of modernity/coloniality more than 500 years ago. The arrogation of Man’s dominance over the (feminized) Earth with the mandate to exploit and extract was coincident to the beginning of the dark side of modernity, that is, coloniality. In the new European defined modernity, the inequities in health and disease already present in societies characterized by coercive social hierarchies were naturalized. Perhaps the linkages were not perceived until relatively recently, but each was certainly known by the 1960s at the latest, and yet they were either debated or blame was shifted, as in the depiction of the poor as culturally deprived (Lewis, 1966; Pickren, 2018a), so that the status quo was maintained. Strangely, the reality and/or threat of these crises are still being debated. All of the social and behavioral sciences are implicated in these crises, but hegemonic psychology has played a significant role in supporting and sustaining the business as usual stance that threatens life on the earth.

Transitions, Alternatives, Interventions: Psychologies Otherwise, a Pluriversal Approach

When we consider our present crises, what do we hope for? Is our thought or hope that we will “overcome” these crises and return to normalcy? Do we hope to return to the neoliberal imaginary or some new variant of it, such as the fascism we see around the world now? Where the 1 or 0.05% have more and more, including greater protection from the threat of viral pandemics? If so, I refer you to William Gibson’s two recent novels, *The Peripheral* (2014) and its sequel, *Legacy* (2020), for fictional but sobering insights into possible futures. What are we in the social sciences and in psychology to do? What are our alternatives? Shall it be business as usual? Shall we continue to focus on critique and hope that somehow the next generation will find a way to deal with the crises we have helped create? Surely not; there are alternatives.

Let me begin with the problematic stance of hegemonic psychology: its ontological foundation in the creation of modernity/coloniality and the resultant heteropatriarchal ordering of knowledge and being, its reliance on the One World World, the type of human being it valorizes, the violence it engenders, and its blinkered grasp on what matters. Glen Adams and his colleagues have shown in a series of publications that what they refer to as modern individualist mentalities/independent self ways are a product of coloniality and exhibit coloniality of being and knowledge (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). That is, the coloniality matrix of power (CMP) (Mignolo, 2011) and the violence it employed and employs creates the “conditions of possibility for modern individualism” (Adams et al., 2018, pp. 13–14). These modern mentalities were and are made possible by the ongoing coloniality that continues to exploit, extract, and plunder the resources of Others to ensure the continuing material abundance and freedom of choice considered the right of those who are White, male, and modern. The emphasis on constant economic growth, which is necessary to sustain capitalism, is echoed in the emphasis on personal growth and the market as ultimate valuator of the self that

marks our current neoliberal form of capitalism (Adams et al., 2017, 2019; Adams & Kurtiş, 2018; Estrada-Villalta & Adams, 2018). It is shocking to see what hegemonic psychology portrays as the optimal human psychological characteristics that have their origins in the same matrix as capitalism, racism, sexism, and health inequities. Even more disturbing is that these have all come together now in creating a climate crisis that threatens the entire ecosystem of life on earth.

Thus, my desire for a *Psychologies Otherwise & Earthwise*. It requires the deployment of a decoloniality perspective if we are to find alternatives to the dominance of contemporary hegemonic psychology. Doing so will help us literally re-ground psychology in the power of place, of the local, help us create a new commons, and move us toward a much-needed sense of communality.

Let me briefly articulate what I mean by decolonial perspectives. It is often confused with decolonization. Decolonization is aimed at states, institutions of the state, land, place, or what is instantiated or material, thus Tuck's and Yang's argument that decolonization is not a metaphor (2012). For academics, materiality means universities, journals, disciplines, societies, etc. To decolonize is to seek to replace or supplant the governance of those institutions or at least gain recognition from them. Common examples found in psychology are efforts to generate and/or gain recognition for indigenous psychologies.

Decoloniality, on the other hand, to borrow from Mignolo and Walsh, "means to change the terms of the (assumptions, rules, principles) conversation," even dispensing with the academic disciplinary framework of modernity, if necessary (2018, p. 113). It is a stance of ontological and epistemic disobedience that is critical for the thinking otherwise that I am suggesting is necessary for a psychologies otherwise (for a brief example, see Pickren, 2020a).

Briefly, a decolonization approach to psychology is predicated upon working within established institutional and academic frameworks to make psychology more inclusive as a discipline (see Bhatia, 2018, this volume). By contrast, a decolonial strategy makes it possible to de-link from the dominant academic/institutional frame to think otherwise about what psychology means in terms not constrained by Global North

sensibilities or embedded in the violences—epistemological, geophysical, interpersonal, intercultural—of modernity. Decoloniality opens up possibilities of other rationalities, other reals, other worlds, that is, the pluriverse (Escobar, 2020; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

Paradoxically, a passage written on indigenous psychologies—typically a decolonizing effort—by Sunil Bhatia offers a way into a decolonial practice of thinking otherwise about psychology while indicating how the provincial rationality of EuroUSian modernity seeks to suppress challenges to its hegemony.

One reason why we do not have detailed intellectual and social histories of indigenous psychology is because it has often been considered as *deeply rooted in local practices and relegated to the realm of the mythological, collective, religious, traditional, philosophical, irrational, primitive, imaginative, and cultural*.

Against this narrative of marginalization, the Euro American narrative of psychology is seen as having a teleological arc that goes from the cultural, to the scientific, to the universal, and the unit of analysis simultaneously moves from the community to the individual and eventually to psychological processes as localized in the brain. The latter narrative of psychology has become our stock story, from which we have extracted our canonical stories of identity, personhood, emotions, cognition, and *methods about how psychological knowledge ought to be created*. (Bhatia, 2019, pp. 111–112, emphasis added)

From a decolonial perspective, can we think otherwise about these local practices and explore the so-called irrationality of the mythological, collective, etc.? What might they tell us if we incorporate them into our analyses? Why is hegemonic psychology so dismissive of local knowledge? Perhaps it is because such knowledges threaten the hegemon. Ashis Nandy, Indian psychologist and prominent intellectual, posited that many in Eurocentric modernity are afraid that giving any credence or place to local, traditional, indigenous knowledges would destabilize the bases of Eurocentric rationality and epistemology (cited in Rose, 2008, p. 166).

Psychologies Otherwise

As I noted in the introduction, my proposal for a *Psychologies Otherwise* is aligned with the Zapatista notion of the Pluriverse, where many worlds, many reals are possible. Moreover, it is in contrast to the One World World (OWW) (Law, 2011) that ignores, suppresses, or seeks to delegitimize any alternative and perhaps especially indigenous or traditional knowledges. In the OWW, humans are separate from and take ontological priority over the earth, or nature, as is often the preferred term. It is the basis of modernity, and its dark side is coloniality. We can see it between the lines of reports from such national/international scientific bodies as the IPBES or the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), and indeed, many reports in the scientific literature. We see it in the dualistic assumption that nature is something out there, not us. When I read work by environmental psychologists or ecopsychologists, I find the same divide in 90% of the literature. Nor do we, as social scientists, critical or otherwise, typically consider the impact of our activities on the environment, and I include myself in this criticism. My point is not to simply find fault and excoriate ourselves over the bad faith we are exhibiting, but to argue for a new/old cosmology or, if that goes too far, a new ontology that begins with the recognition that *we are not separate from nature, not other, not stewards, not caretakers, not exempt*. Instead, we embrace a relational ontology that allows us to develop *psychologies otherwise* that are also Earthwise. We need *Psychologies Otherwise* that are Earth-centered, regenerative, embrace radical relationality, are characterized by reciprocity and cooperation, and help create communities of resilience.

When I use the term, *Psychologies Otherwise/Earthwise*, I mean a psychology that thinks and feels with the Earth (Escobar, 2016). A psychology that is regenerative that draws on a variety of sources based on relational ontologies, with epistemologies that are “fuzzy” to use Bernd Reiter’s term (2019), from movements such as Eco Materialism in the arts (Weintraub, 2012, 2018).

It is a psychology drawn from/based on a recognition of being part of the Earth, not separate from, not a steward of, but a learner being educated by the rhythms, cycles of the Earth. Symbiotic, like mycelium

with trees and plants, which is also the most promising model of how multiple species, including humans, can live symbiotically (Bonfante & Anca, 2009; Stamets, 2005). It is perhaps best articulated on the human scale in Donna Haraway's *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (2016). I suggest a psychology based on the cooperation modeled in such symbiosis, and not only on the competition model of evolution (Margulis & Sagan, 1997). The literature on cooperation is large, from Eric Smith's fine work on human cooperation in behavioral ecology (Smith, 2003) to work in developmental biology and ecology, such as *The Mermaid's Tale: Four Billion Years in the Making of Living Things* (Weiss & Buchanan, 2009). Weiss and Buchanan argue that cooperation and not competition is the key to understanding life. While competition is important on the distal level, on the proximate level, cooperation is fundamentally more the norm and more critical. The work of the primatologist, Charles Snowdon, on cooperative behavior among primates is supportive of this, as well (e.g., Snowdon & Ziegler, 2007). Nowak and Highfield (2011) have shown how cooperation and competition both shape evolution and argue that cooperation is essential for the survival of many species; they refer to humans as super-cooperators. These scientists and others suggest that it is extensive cooperation rather than competition that makes humans special. Of course, evolution occurs through complex, multifaceted processes. It is important to note, however, that even in an OWW science, the role of epigenetics casts doubt on the singular explanation of direct gene-behavior determinism. The microbiome of each one of us indicates that human beings could not exist apart from the presence within us of the microbiome. After all, microbes in our bodies outnumber our strictly human cells 10:1. We have never been individuals, as Scott Gilbert has shown in his research (Gilbert et al., 2012).

Cooperation, then, is one of the touchstones to a psychology that is not alienated from the earth, nor does it alienate us from the earth. It is one step toward de-linking from the narrowness of hegemonic psychology. But, let us explore further. I repeat here Bhatia's language about why indigenous psychology is considered problematic: It is because it is considered as *deeply rooted in local practices and relegated to the realm*

of the mythological, collective, religious, traditional, philosophical, irrational, primitive, imaginative, and cultural.

In other words, these labels mean it does not fit within the One World World of hegemonic psychology. It is other. It is not modern, and when the Euro-US hegemon arrogates to itself the right to label what is modern, premodern, and postmodern, we must remember that the use of the term primitive is an othering term to indicate that it is outside modernity, so disallowed.

Radical relationality forms the ontological basis of *Psychologies Otherwise*. By this, I include all the beings of the Earth, human and otherwise. It is a relationality that indicates interdependence and more than interdependence. All entities are mutually constituted on the earth. This is one of the arguments that Latour makes in *Facing Gaia* (2017), based on his close reading and interpretation of James Lovelock's and Lynn Margulis' work (e.g., Lovelock, 2006; Margulis, 1998; Margulis & Sagan, 1997). We are all members of the Earth as a living ecosystem.

This has implications for the psychology or mentality, if you will, of those usually counted as "Other," including those human beings denoted by Eurocentric modernity as indigenous, traditional, primitive, and/or underdeveloped. It also includes other than human beings. Radical relationality requires that we acknowledge the intelligence/sentience, for example, of all hominids and primates (De Waal, 2016). For many, that is not a big step. But, now that researchers are beginning to recognize that mind/intelligence/sentience appear in forms other than the primate line and other vertebrates, i.e., in cephalopods (squid, cuttlefish, octopi) (Godfrey-Smith, 2016), birds (Ackerman, 2016), and insects (e.g., wasps, bees) to give a short list, we realize that humans in Eurocentric modernity have employed the same strategies of diminishment toward other than human beings as we have toward the Other: indigenous peoples, those who are not male, not White, fill in the blank, all as a way to validate our claim to superiority. *A Psychologies Otherwise* reconfigures the historic ontological conflict not only between humans of modernity and those humans who are Othered but also between human and other than human beings. Doing so is required as the ontological conflicts figure in all the crises we have discussed here and have been in place for centuries, if not millennia. If we affirm that all on the earth

are mutually co-constituted, we are beginning to practice radical relationality. (For an example, see Marisol de la Cadena, 2015, *Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice Across Andean Worlds*.)

Conclusion

To choose the relational path is to opt for the historical project of being community. (Rita Segato, 2016, p. 106, cited in Escobar, 2020)

Can we make the decolonial move to de-link from a rather narrow embrace of what psychology is as defined in the canon we were educated in? Can we engage in ontological disobedience? Or perhaps, even onto-epistemic disobedience? To Think and Feel with the Earth, as part of the Earth, as one kind of being among many other than human beings? To embrace a *Psychologies Otherwise*, that is also Earthwise? It is a way for psychology to be part of the pluriverse. There are and will be other psychologies otherwise. This is not a call for inclusion in the canon of modernity/coloniality. It is a call for a new/old praxes grounded in a cosmology as new/old as the Earth itself. It is a path toward the transition to future being, in hope and promise, but without guarantee, that the Great Turning will succeed. A psychologies otherwise/Earthwise can play a vital role in creating not only a livable future, but a gentler, more fulfilling present, one that accords with the call expressed by well-known Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg writer and scholar, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson:

I don't want to imagine or dream futures. I want a better present. (Simpson, 2017, p. 246)

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Part II

Interventions



8

Eco-Anxiety and Psycho-Terratic Paradigms of Practice: A View From Australia

Paul Rhodes

The Australian bushfires of 2019/2020, known as the Black Summer, was one of our most significant, in relation to landscape burnt and wildlife killed. This event served as a tipping point for many Australians in terms of the acceptance of the climate crisis, given the direct role that hotter temperatures played in setting the conditions for fires. Many Australians experienced a collective distress, not simply because of the immediate risk to property and land, but also due to longer term ecological dread. Mainstream psychology is ill-equipped to respond to this type of distress, given it remains committed to modes of practice that focus on individualistic and pathologizing formulations, focused on thoughts, schemas, and personal history, rather than context. We need

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new paradigms of practice that ground the psyche in place, recasting our distress as pre-traumatic, solastalgic, and terratic.

This paper serves as both an auto-biographical, academic, and activist call for new paradigms, both in terms of clinical and research practice. I draw in my own experience living in the epicenter of the Black Summer bushfires and the effect it has had on my academic life. I discuss the relevance of a number of fields including eco-psychology, aboriginal psychology, and eco-existentialism in responding to these new affects. I also describe a number of innovative research projects I am conducting with my colleagues and students directly related to methodologies that capture psycho-terratic distress.

Australian Bushfires and Climate Change

We bought our home in Wentworth Falls, The Blue Mountains on October 9, 2019, one month before catastrophic fire danger was declared. The house was built on Henderson Road, a spine dividing two valleys, from where you could see both The Gaspers Mountain and the city of Sydney on either sides. You can see the mist rising in plumes every morning and the Cockatoos stealing seeds from the Rainbow Lorikeets outside our kitchen window. The house had a big backyard of around 1000 square metres and you could see a large Banksia from the bedroom window, all gnarled and ancient. The yard was overgrown with Agapanthus, which I knew we would have to dig up. They form an underground carpet that you can simply roll and place in the green bin.

On December 31 we drove 40 kms down the mountain to a New Year's Eve party. It was 43 Celcius at 6pm and we had our eyes on the FireApps all night. At its worst the fire came 3 kms from our home. I drove out in my car along Lurline Drive to take a close look at the valley and mountain and saw helicopters bombing the red fires with water from local swimming pools. We took the advice of our elderly neighbour who had lived in the mountains her whole life and tried to live life as normal.

Fire is a natural part of the Australian ecology with some plants evolving as a result, producing fire-resistant or fire-triggered seeds and others, such as our eucalyptus, developing flammable oil in its leaves as

a way of competing with more fire-prone species. Prior to colonization Aboriginals used fire-stick farming and other traditional burning practices, both to protect themselves through fire-breaks and generate more abundant grasses and animal populations (Flannery, 2002). European fire suppression, accompanied by extensive logging and the introduction of flammable pasture grasses meant for extensive devastating bushfires through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Head & Atchison, 2015; Ward et al., 2001; Wilson et al., 2018). These included Black Thursday of 1851, Red Tuesday of 1898, Black Friday of 1938–1939, and the 1994 Eastern Seaboard fires.

The Black Summer of 2019–2020, however, was one of the worst in our National history, with 18,983,588 hectares burned (Filkov et al., 2020) with over 1 billion animals killed including mammals, birds, and reptiles (Dickman & McDonald, 2020). Koalas were the hardest hit, due to the fact that they move slowly and tend to retreat to the tops of trees, curling into a ball for protection. Large populations of Koalas are kept on the sanctuary of Kangaroos Island in South Australia to protect them from diseases in protected habitat; half of the 50,000 population died in fires on this Island (Lynn, 2020).

While Australia is known as the most fire-prone continent, climate change is considered to have contributed to the unprecedented scale of the fires of the Black Summer. Australian summer temperatures had been increasing since the 1970s, with 2019–2020 serving as the second highest on record, nearly 2 degrees Celsius above the 1961–1990 baseline (Bureau of Meteorology, 2020; Hughes et al., 2020). That year was also the driest on record, with National rainfall 40% below average, on the back of one of the worst southeastern droughts commencing in 2017 (Bureau of Meteorology, 2020; Hughes et al., 2020). Paradoxically the bushfires, in turn, likely exacerbated further climate change, releasing up to 1.2 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide, double Australia's yearly rate (Australian Government, 2020).

A National Crisis

On 4 January, 2020 we drove down the mountain to the shopping Centre in Sydney's western suburb Penrith to buy some gardening tools. Penrith recorded its hottest day on record at 48.9 °C (120.0 °F), making it the hottest place on Earth at the time. The next day, January 5, I cancelled a holiday to Manyana, a beach community I had been going to at Christmas for ten years. My daughter and my ex-wife had travelled down there by car a week earlier, with fires on the South Coast still in their infancy. On January 4 they had escaped just in time, driving back 24 hours before the mega-fire hit the beach. Our friends sent us pictures of the bush burned right up to their backyard. The beach was filled with people, cars and horses waiting to be evacuated by the Navy. This was the beach where we had walked and surfed for years.

The Black Summer was arguably a watershed moment for the Australian population, with the bushfires causing unprecedented national distress. Exposure to bushfire events can have significant post-traumatic effects, including depression and anxiety (Newnham, Titov & McAvoy) and for the first time the majority of Australians experienced direct effects. Up to eighty percent of the population suffering smoke hazards, and ten million were enveloped intermittently in smoke for months (Walter et al., 2020). The major cities of Canberra and Sydney were surrounded by fire fronts. In Sydney the Gospers fire, the size of Singapore at 440,000 hectares, threatened to join the Green Wattle Creek fire at 280,000 hectares, only one hundred kilometers from the Central business district.

These bushfires signaled a “tipping point” for many who had held a passive attitude toward climate change, and perhaps even some with more active climate denialism. Smoke in major cities meant the emotional impact of climate change was no longer vicarious (Fritze et al., 2008), but felt directly by everyone. Links between bushfires and climate became critical source of national dialogue. Our newspaper headlines read “*The new dread of Australia's once-loved long, hot summer*” (O'Malley & Hannam, 2020). Ross Bradstock, head of the University of Wollongong's Centre of Environmental Risk Management of Bushfires stated

that we must abandon calling these summers “*the new normal*” in favour of the term “*the new extreme*” (O’Malley & Hannam, 2020).

In the middle of this crisis our Prime Minister, greenhouse gaslighter, and supporter of the coal industry served also as a denier of national distress, offering bizarre comfort through the metaphor of cricket.

Australians will be gathering, whether it’s at the SCG (Sydney Cricket Ground) or around television sets all around the country, and they’ll be inspired by the great feats of our cricketers from both sides of the Tasman and I think they’ll be encouraged by the spirit shown by Australians and the way that people have gone about remembering the terrible things that other Australians are dealing with at the moment. Scott Morrison. (Bedo, 2020)

Clinical Psychology Ill-Equipped

February 9, 2020 and I had finally finished clearing the backyard of leaves and other dry debris, just as the fire was declared over due to torrential rain. I’d spent the last four months frantically working and had just unloaded the last set of Hessian bags at the tip. I had been ripped off earlier in the year by a group of young men who offered to clean my gutters and still felt like a “flatlander.” It was satisfying to finally have it cleared and we began planting some small trees that we hoped would eventually bear fruit; figs, pomegranate and blueberries. We also dug up the veggie patch and I started the slow process of renewing the soil, which had become as hard as concrete over the past months. A total of 391.6mm of rain would fall in the next four days in Sydney, more than three times the average rainfall for February. After all the stillness and heat our dog briefly escaped because the storms blew the back gate open. We had to make a long line of fish fingers in the rain to coax him back inside.

Like our Prime Minister mainstream clinical psychology is ill-equipped to respond to emotional impact of the climate crisis. It stubbornly maintains an individualistic and intrapsychic view of distress while the world around us is in jeopardy. Practice focusses on a cognitive metaphor. Distress is diagnosed and quantified and constructed as a personal problem. Clinical formulations make connections between thoughts, emotions and behavior, and personal history. There is little

mention of temporal, cultural, or local contexts. The flight toward digital versions of these models, including in the form of App's means that therapy becomes, more, not less dissociated from place.

The American Psychological Association guidelines for climate-change-coping advocate for individuals to stay resilient and optimistic, cultivate emotional regulation, stay socially and culturally connected while boosting disaster preparedness (Clayton et al., 2017). The Australian Psychological Society guidelines tell individuals to acknowledge climate-related feelings, take personal and collective actions to address the problem, and cultivate hope for the future (APS, n.d.). These positions are tokenistic if they do not question our practice at a paradigm level. The climate crisis requires a radical rethinking of our personal and professional practices. We need to challenge the continued dominance of an intrapsychic model of distress and recognize place, nature, or the land as integral to our understanding of the mind.

Terra-Psychology as an Alternative Paradigm

It is early May, 2020 and now the bushfires have passed and the weather is shifting to Autumn. The birdlife in our backyard was off the charts given that so much of the landscape was burned. We could lie in bed and watch all the colourful parrots eat the new Banksia flowers and we put heaps of seeds out to keep them full. We went for a long drive down the Bell's line of road to look at the devastation and went for 2 hours seeing nothing but burned bush as far as the eye could see. We stopped off at Mt. Wilson and visited the home of Patrick White. We ate apple pie and ice cream in the town of Bilpin which has suffered badly.

On May 5th, 2020 I submitted a video abstract for The Psychology of Global Crises conference, the talk from which this paper has developed. I remember walking through the bush with my Labrador Oscar taking the video and still feeling anxious about being in the bush. This would be the first time I had spoken publicly about the climate crisis in my life, something that I never imagined being an academic interest. I wore my brown Santana hat during the video to try and look the part and had to do a couple of takes to come across relaxed.

In the mountains we started to collect firewood for the Winter.

Outside of mainstream psychology new lexicons of distress are emerging, grounding the psyche in place. They come from diverse fields including philosophy, theology, and human geography. Climate change threatens our endemic sense of place by altering the biophysical features that we associate with home, including weather patterns, ecosystems, and natural landscapes. This causes psychological distress, manifest in a variety of “psychoterratic” (earth related) mental health experiences (Albrecht, 2019). Cunsolo and Ellis (2018) have proposed the term “ecological grief” to describe the depressive emotions; grief and despair experienced by individuals in response to ecological losses, as well as consequent loss of place-based knowledge, culture, and identity. Ecological grief can be elicited in response to past ecological losses, but also to those losses anticipated in the future (Cunsolo & Ellis, 2018), an experience that Gifford and Gifford (2016) term pre-traumatic stress. Other terms include eco-anxiety (Pihkala, 2018) and eco-trauma (Woodbury, 2019), further psycho-terratic concepts that encapsulate the existential conditions related directly to the crisis of climate change and the disconnection of humans and nature.

Glenn Albrecht, previously Professor of Sustainability and now eco-philosopher is a National leader in this respect, notable in particular for his concept of solastalgia;

“Solastalgia has its origins in the concepts of ‘solace’ and ‘desolation.’” Solace has meanings connected to the alleviation of distress or to the provision of comfort or consolation in the face of distressing events. Desolation has meanings connected to abandonment and loneliness. The suffix -algia has connotations of pain or suffering. Hence, solastalgia is a form of “homesickness” like that experienced with traditionally defined nostalgia, except that the victim has not left their home or home environment. Solastalgia, simply put, is “the homesickness you have when you are still at home”. Glenn Albrecht (2012b)

While these terms are evocative Woodbury (2019) stresses that we do not need to replicate mainstream psychology with a new box of symptoms to be treated in the therapy room. For Woodbury Climate Trauma is not a psychological, but an ecological condition, of which we are but a small

part. Diagnosis must also transcend the Cartesian dualism that separates us from the earth in which we dwell.

Practice Hypotheses: Three Provocations

Aboriginal Social and Emotional Well-Being

In August 2019 I was invited to spend a week on Worimi country for a cultural immersion to learn more about aboriginal culture. It was run by their amazing Head of the Land Council, who met us personally, drove the bus, served the sandwiches and ran a multi-million-dollar tourism and cultural education company. I remember about fifty of us went along, academics, administrative staff and others from the University travelling in up the North Coast. The week was cleverly arranged, starting with fun activities, such as quad bike riding in the sand dunes and creative activities but gradually turned to more challenging themes. We sat in a large yarning circle to hear personal stories from elders and some younger community members. It was a reckoning for all of us, with our cruel past of genocide and the stolen generation.

Australia is ideally positioned to develop new paradigms of practice, not simply because of the immediacy of the climate crisis, but because of the indigenous knowledge systems that have been present for tens of thousands of years. Aboriginal psychologist Pat Dudgeon calls for the radical decolonization of psychology to close the gap in Aboriginal mental health. For Dudgeon (2017), mental health is a western construct best replaced with the idea of social and emotional well-being, one which reflects the family, kinship, culture, community, and place. Dislocation from country is directly implicated in this model. For Aboriginal Australians the word “country” is vastly different from our Western conception, in that it rejects the polarity between the psyche/identity and land. Country is alive, has history, consciousness.

Country is multi-dimensional – it consists of people, animals, plants, Dreamings; underground, earth, soils, minerals and waters, air... People talk about country in the same way that they would talk about a person: they speak

to country, sing to country, visit country, worry about country, feel sorry for country, and long for country. (Rose, 1996, p. 7)

Westerman (2004) states that the non-Indigenous construct of “depression,” might be recast as “*longing for, crying for, or being sick for country*” in Indigenous terms. This was proposed in reference to long-term removal from your birthplace, as is the case for many of the stolen generation and their children. The decolonization of psychology along these grounds, however, would seem to also offer hope for a more psycho-terratic model of practice in reference to the climate crisis.

Albrecht’s Eco-Existentialism

On February 5, 2020 I had organised a forum for our group Psychologists for Social Justice with guest speaker Glenn Albrecht on the psychology of climate change. He had travelled up from his home Wallaby Farm in the Hunter Region of New South Wales and called himself a ‘farm-osopher.’ The turnout was big for our group, about 60 students, psychologists and a few academics and I remember a roller-coaster of emotions. Glenn laid out his thesis of climate grief and the need for us to respond emotionally to the reality of the crisis. He surprised me half way through, however, with a message of hope, asking us to join generation Symbiocene, an alliance between old and young people who would develop a symbiotic relationship to nature. He seemed to speak this possibility into existence, that things could change as the generations turned. We went for a beer in the pub in Newtown with some students afterwards and I felt like I had made a new friend.

Albrecht (2019) describes eco-existentialism as a new form of inquiry which responds to the dread we experience in the era of climate change as we fear, not our own mortality, but the sustainability of all life on the planet. At its worst we experience pre-traumatic terror, in relation to the potential for eco-apocalypse. This despair is psycho-terratic, in that it no longer refers to an intrapsychic state, but rather one that relates to our relationship to the earth.

In the existentialist tradition Albrecht (2012a) describes both inauthentic and authentic forms of existence, one Anthropocene and the

other symbiocene. The former, similar to Sartre's bad faith, involves an attempt to cope based on climate denialism, planetary-death denial, and the maintenance of an anachronistic identity based on materialism. This form of defense involves the blind following of public denialists, numbing through digital forms of entertainment and even reactionary increases in consumerism. The latter involves self-denial and the reconfiguration of our identity as one that is inherently biophilic, or involving the love of nature, or sumbiophilic, involving a deeply ingrained love of living in harmony with other species (Albrecht, 2019). Distress is at its most pronounced when one becomes frozen in between, acutely aware of the reality of the climate crisis, but unable to shift from anxiety, to grief and then the reconfiguration to a Symbiocene identity. Like Arendt (1958) this state does not only involve the re-creation of an identity tied to place, but also of direct action in terms of sustainability and activism.

Nichterlein, Deleuze, and Psychology

My daughter is studying Fine Arts at University and is a member of generation Symbiocene. In the past three years we have spent many days discussing post-humanism or New Materialism and its relevance to the ecological crisis. These discussions have helped her define her works and develop an artistic voice. Her speciality is botanical drawings and I have tried to develop this skill myself. I brought a few books and sat on the lookout at our house, carefully trying to draw the Eucalyptus trees and capture the bark that peels off and falls to the ground. It makes great kindling for the fire. So do my drawings.

Clinical psychology, despite its assertions as an evidence-based practice, has always been an applied philosophy. CBT, for example, is applied Greek stoicism, amplified by the information-processing models of the 1980s, leading to a machine metaphor of distress. Freud drew on Nietzsche, Rogers of existential Humanism, Mindfulness on Buddhism, narrative therapy on Foucault. While he has discussed the potential of aboriginal knowledge systems and place-based existentialism, post-humanism or New Materialism is also an obvious candidate for appropriation. As Fox and Alldred (2020, p. 7) put it a “*posthuman perspective*

de-privileges human interests in relation to those of other animate and inanimate matter, while not denying continuing human involvement in the Earth's ecosystem. In this view, the environment is an assemblage or arrangement in which humans are an intrinsic element, rather than separate from or in opposition to it."

Although some attempts have been made to translate the Deleuzian framework into psychology (Nichterlein, 2013, 2015; Nichterlein & Morss, 2017), the discipline has yet to encounter the full force of these ideas. Nichterlein, an Australian, directly extends cybernetic family therapy to the wider landscape of things. Bateson's systemic theory was adapted in the 1960s toward the development of a family therapy that positioned the interpersonal as the source of healing, rather than simply the intrapsychic. It may be possible to develop a systemic psychotherapy that includes our engagement with the more-than-human world, replacing the notion of system with Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage. It may be possible to develop therapeutic practices that support the questioning of human exceptionalism through an engagement with body-affect-nature relations to foster greater eco-connection.

Adventures in Method

I remember when I went on sabbatical ten years ago and was accused by an esteemed Professor of being a 'methodolatrists'. We were walking down Broadway in Sydney together and he asked me why I didn't use theory. He asked me why I published papers with sections on rigour and trustworthiness and wrote my methods prospectively. I worked then, and still do, in a post-positivist School of Psychology.

Nowadays I write my methods retrospectively; they are an opportunity for provocation and creativity. Research methods should be the crystallisation of immediate interests, a bricolage of traditions, focussed on novelty and surprise.

If we are to witness a paradigm shift in response to climate change, this needs to occur in research methodology as well as clinical practice. Myself and my colleagues and students have been toying with a method for this purpose. Here are two examples.

Humboldt, Romantic Science and Ecocide: A Walk in the Woods (Degen et al., 2019)

Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859) was a geographer and explorer who sought to develop a botanical geography, centered on precise observation but including the Romantic sensibility of the time. Humboldt's inquiry led him to challenge the divide between science and sensibility, observation and aesthetics, naturalism and affect. In early 2020, at the tail-end of the bushfires, a small group commenced a study which aimed to explore the values of Romantic Science, a form of methodological experiment done as a tribute. We conducted it with the aim of capturing auto-ethnographic place-based distress.

We chose psychogeography, for our method, which is both a literary movement, a political strategy, and a set of avant-garde practices (Coverley, 2006). The method involves purposeless dawdling, and challenging official representations (Debord, 2008). The wanderer is open to taking unknown and unprescribed paths “*beating back at the beaten track*” (Smith, 2010, p. 108).

Our method went as follows

1. Read widely about Romantic science and Humboldt's nature descriptions.
2. Map a walk in the woods that will allow you to dawdle. They can be ex-woods or degraded woods.
3. Use your phone only for photographs and notes.
4. Stop at the entrance to this walk.
5. Shut down the frontal lobes entirely and stand in the place between knowing and not knowing (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992).
6. Begin your walk placing one foot in front of the other.
7. Become leisurely, a disinterested observer, who is tuned into both external and internal landscapes. Let the thoughts flow beyond the conventional.
8. Make short notes or marks whenever you feel like it.
9. Put together a multi-dimensional collage/bricolage-drawings, poems, or a pamphlet following the inner flow.

Needless to say the beauty of nature and wilderness was experienced solastalgically, yielding memories of what once was, and what is still to be lost. We memorialized. Emotions were rarely Humboldtian, but rather oscillating between nostalgic, trauma, and pre-trauma.

Climate Activists: Mapping Place-Based Biographies

Kelly, Albrecht, Rhodes

This is a study in development, just being considered by the University ethics committee, aiming to map the psychogeographic life-narratives of activists, to understand how they manage to work through eco-distress and develop praxis. Our aim is to elicit these biographies through the memorializing of places that first supported the development of their awareness of climate change.

Two methods of mapping are being used, both of which aim to sensitize participants to, and contextualize, place-based narrative inquiries. The first is photo-elicitation (Harper, 2002) where participants take or select photos that represent the role of emotional relationships to place across their life, in reference to the development of activism. The second uses satellite images (Wise, 2015), where participants screenshot specific images through Google Earth which they feel tied to emotionally in reference to the same life trajectory. Participants then use an affect key, consisting of different colored, sized, and shaped stickers (Gabb & Singh, 2014) to make more detailed links between emotion and place.

Conclusion: Hope

Nature

O Nature! I do not aspire, To be the highest in thy quire,—To be a meteor in the sky, Or comet that may range on high; Only a zephyr that may blow. Among the reeds by the river low; Give me thy most privy place. Where to run my airy race.

In some withdrawn, unpublic mead. Let me sigh upon a reed, Or in the woods, with leafy din, Whisper the still evening in: Some still work give me to do,—Only—be it near to you!

For I'd rather be thy child. And pupil, in the forest wild, Than be the king of men elsewhere, And most sovereign slave of care: To have one moment of thy dawn, Than share the city's year forlorn. Henry David Thoreau—1817–1862 (Thoreau, 1906).

Australia is highly suited to develop new approaches to support the development of practices for eco-anxiety, because of the direct impacts of climate change. We are also fortunate that aboriginal epistemologies, which have long considered country and culture as critical to social and emotional well-being, offer us an opening for new paradigms of practice for both therapeutic and research work. The aim of this paper has been to resist the hegemony of industrialized branded therapies which position distress intrapsychically, devoid of geographical biographies. Rather than allow for the exclusive dominance of these methods we need to support Generation Symbiocene (Albrecht, 2019) and develop new paradigms of practice which may include eco-existential models, New Materialist therapies, and research methods that allow for nature to be involved.

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9

Lockdown Vistas: Time, Space, Solidarity, Action

Erica Burman 

Pre-View

March 23, 2020 was when the lockdown began in the UK. Amazingly, early that morning I had a cataract removal and lens replacement in my right eye. Instead of a more conventional hello, the surgeon's greeting was "crazy times." He was a National Health Service surgeon, and I was a National Health Service (NHS) patient. But this was a private hospital, still functioning when the NHS had already stopped doing these non-urgent operations. The challenge to my bodily integrity, the enforced immobility or debility (I couldn't lift more than a cup for the first week), the dependence on my longsuffering partner for even the simplest household or personal tasks, the severe limitations on reading, all this coincided with the declaration of lockdown.

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At first, I didn't attend to it so much (after all, by now it was not so unexpected...), and perhaps it was a good moment for an enforced convalescence. But the not-seeing, anxiety about recovery, physical disruptions to vision and estrangements of visualization (my two eyes saw very different images...), exaggerated my sense of psychic as well as physical fragility, along with the apocalyptic news. While the situation of the pandemic is unprecedented (one of the many over-used words) even as it was also—as we now know—foreseen, words, procedures, activities, ways of being, and ways of seeing, have become unanchored from their usually stable positions.

Before and during the operation, the “theatre operations manager,” Jason, held my hand. Tears come to my eyes even now recalling just how reassuring that was, he was. How that confident, competent, but above all his human *touch* as well as his voice comforted me so much. That skin-to-skin animal connection of bodily warmth sustained me, it, literally and metaphorically, held me through that period of very high anxiety. Access to touch, is precisely what so many people have missed amid the lockdown. As we waited for a correction to an error about my date of birth on the hospital records (they had me down as 7 years younger than I am), I half joked about the recent news reports that ventilator treatment might be denied to the over 60s (a category that I was about to join in the corrected records). Jason told me that he had been in the military for 11 years doing this work (note how “theatre operations manager,” nicely conjoins military and health performance discourse). He said that hard decisions were made all the time as a routine part of the job. That was meant to be reassuring, which in a way it was, in that context. But I was waiting to have a cataract removed, not for ventilation....

Introduction

We all have our lockdown stories. I mobilize mine, albeit acutely conscious of its banality, insignificance, privilege. I was grateful to be pulled out of Covid-19 torpor and stupor (that is, both physical and mental stagnation) in part through consideration of the nature of this

very “paralysis.” At the very least it prompted reflection on the embodied character of mental life, via the ways thinking is affected by the conditions imposed on our bodily freedom and activity. The sense of being fixated, arrested, of being incapable of anything beyond the obvious, has seemed widespread; of being occupied or overwhelmed, intruded upon by unwelcome states of mind.

They key themes of vision, space, time, subjectivity form my themes below. Vision is central for Lacan of course, with the link between image and Imaginary, between what is seen and the generation of—through the inciting of fantasies of—self and other, exemplified by the mirror stage. These quasi logical, rather than developmental, stages map out the emergence and functioning of psychic life with the focus on misrecognition and how the subject strives to compensate for this. Frantz Fanon, of course, took this up in terms of the specific misrecognition of the skin and body, of racialization, exploring its psychoaffective and psychopolitical consequences. Fanon’s emphasis was on embodiment and (negro)phobia, with the skin as a constructed visual social signifier of racialization (what he called epidermalization). Even within an individualist, Eurocentric frame, the threatened/abjected conception of the individual body as container was extended by the psychoanalyst Esther Bick (Bick, 1968) to consider the protective role of the “second skin” provided by the care of others. It is this tangible, visible care of others that is notably absent under lockdown; the voice and touch that Jason gave me in a routine operation, all gone.

Moreover, the threat to individual bodies has extended to challenge the very nature of our social bond, the group, both as our collective presence (spatially), but also present and future (i.e., temporally). As Didier Anzieu (1999) (who had his first analysis with Lacan) might have put it, this is an attack on the group ego skin, since “The image of the body and its schema are two of the principal organizers of the group” (320). It is not too farfetched to consider what we are experiencing is an attack on our “narcissistic group envelope” (320), such that its “envelope of rules, surveillance and prohibitions” (321), the rules of lockdown and social isolation, are perhaps futile efforts to try and

reconstruct that damaged second (group) skin. Consider also, the willfully ambiguous and misleading, as also willfully victim-blaming, UK government message: “Stay alert!”).

‘Lockdown’

The term “lockdown” is a two-word contraction, thereby losing time and agent reference, so suppressing who is doing what, to whom, and when. It is in fact North American, rather than British, English. Unlike “furlough,” another erstwhile unfamiliar word, which apparently has Old English origins, lockdown is rather new. It comes from descriptions of hostage or hi-jack situations, where there is an imposed confinement or effort to contain. The question arises: what is being maintained or preserved?

The injunction to “stay at home” pins us into capitalist relations of spatial rights and entitlements that multiply the meanings of possessive individualism. But “staying” at home means very different things according to what kind of home you are in. This is not only about whether you have big rooms and a nice garden (although it is also this), as well as who does the housework, childcare, and cooking (which hopefully now gain more appreciation).¹ For many people, home is the least safe place to be, and in the UK alone the last month has seen the deaths of women at the hands of their partners triple the usual (if contested) claim that two women die a week from domestic abuse in the UK,² while elsewhere, for example, in Mexico femicides are escalating.³

But alongside the protective advice to “stay home, keep safe,” there is a threat. For “...the world and life itself” (as the publicity campaign puts it) really raises the stakes on the existential threat, to “you”/“us” “together,” in blue and white (medical) colors. Put so abstractly, “life itself” need not include us, as individuals or even collectivities, it just

¹ <https://spectrejournal.com/cross-border-feminist-manifesto/>.

² <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/apr/15/domestic-abuse-killings-more-than-double-amid-covid-19-lockdown>.

³ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/mexico-coronavirus-domestic-violence-women-murder-femicide-lockdown-a9488321.html>.

is what it is. Being confronted with one's insignificance in relation to "the world and life itself" is scarcely reassuring. Alongside the demand to "Stay" (stay at home) and the effort to ward off lockdown panic or paralysis (exemplified by the kitsch, exclusionary nationalism of jingoistic appeals to "Keep calm and carry on"—that never-used British World War Two propaganda which acquired cult status in 2005 and is apparently having a resurgence⁴—it has been difficult to stay thinking and stay thinking critically.

If it has been hard not to experience the lockdown as a form of occupation, or colonization, then, the association with being held hostage sets out some identificatory positions worth reflecting upon, while the fact that by whom or when we are locked down remains unspecified leaves ambiguous whether this is something *done to* us, or that *we do to* ourselves. Have we been interpellated into a kind of Stockholm syndrome where we learn to love, as well as obey, our captors—and potentially actively collude in our own possible demise? Or, as Kelly Oliver (2005, p. 93) put it, referring to the colonization of psychic life: "The colonized suffer from an obsession with gaining love and recognition from their harsh dominators." The question arises: what is the current pandemic state, and our nation states in particular, doing to our states of mind? What modes of nationalist, as well as global, collectivity are we being recruited into, and how might these be resisted? I am going to explore three different, albeit all psychoanalytically informed, frameworks to think these questions through: Fanon's psychoaffective discussions of colonialism, group analytic discussions, and Lacan's model of group constructed individual subjectivity. In all these, vision inflects and produces group and individual subjective possibilities, including of, and for solidarity.

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2020/apr/20/how-we-made-keep-calm-and-carry-on-poster>.

Beyond Occupation/Petrification

Douglas Ficek (2011) discusses Fanon's use of the term "petrification" in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Fanon mobilizes this term to refer not only to the mental and physical stagnation produced by settler colonialism but also to account for the "strong—if not fundamentalist" (in Ficek's gloss) adherence to traditions and customs this produces in the colonized, however bizarrely, suggesting these functions as an outlet for their anger. Such dynamics can be recognized in the rituals we may invent or try to maintain through this period of "captivity" (what Žižek designates as "enjoying one's symptom") to help us cope. The mental as well as political links between conservation and being conservative, of restraint and constraint, are resonant.

Being petrified suggests being rendered immobile, turned into stone by fear, a lockdown of mind as well as body. Anxiety and fear prevent thinking, or rather rational thinking, the vulnerability to wild fantasies and paranoid, and obsession with minor trivialities. No accident that sightings of UFOs have recently massively increased in the US. And such ways of thinking, Fanon points out, benefit the colonizers. It produces the internalized state of being colonized, and so renders the colonized more compliant: "Believe me," Fanon (1961/1963, p. 43) says, "the zombies are more terrifying than the settlers; and in consequence the problem is no longer that of keeping oneself right with the colonial world and its barbed-wire entanglements, but of considering three times before urinating, spitting or going out into the night."

Following Fanon's engagement with existentialist phenomenology (especially that of Sartre), Ficek (2011) notes the aptness of petrification as a metaphor in terms of how the colonized is rendered into a thing. Fanon of course writes extensively of thingification, the rendering into object (rather than subject) status, of the black person, of the colonized; of being forced into a "zone of nonbeing" (Fanon, 1952/1970, p. 7) by virtue of being deprived of human freedoms. This is an ontological as well as political state. Indeed, in one of his final (but only recently translated and published) talks, Fanon (1960/2018) discusses how colonialism seeks to maintain its power by making it appear timeless, eternal; that is, by eradicating its historical contingency. This not

only violently, epistemologically and psychically as well as politically and economically, displaces the memory of a precolonial time; it also forecloses the possibility of a future time without colonialism, or at least tries to do so.

From Ficek's analysis (of Fanon), we might say that the bad faith (as the existentialists would put it) of our governments is that this is portrayed as for our own good, and our compliance completes this circle of bad faith. (Except in our dreams, of course—for Fanon treats these as zones of resistance and recollection that “another world is possible.”⁵) Ficek (2011) writes: “What is petrification if not the presentation—and subsequent enforcement—of certain meanings as necessarily true, as ontologically divorced from humanity itself?” (p. 79). In the essay “Pitfalls of national consciousness” (Fanon, 1961/1963, Fanon was indeed remarkably prescient of the ways colonial dynamics would restructure themselves to reappear when the ruling and middle classes took power post-independence. The danger of racism is, as we know all too present, from the ways Modi's India and the RSS used the lockdown to intensify their anti-Muslim program, while the lockdown has not stopped the Israeli state demolishing houses in the West Bank (that thereby increase infection risks by the further concentration of living arrangements in more populated and ever smaller spaces) even as it also has further warranted supposed justification for the siege on Gaza. As the General Secretary of the World Health Organization, Antonio Guterres, commented, the health crisis of Covid-19 is a human rights crisis.⁶ And all this before the murder of George Floyd in the US and the stark devaluation of black bodies and black lives the world over, that highlight the crucial and continuing intersections between structures of power and racialization, and the continuities between colonial authority and neoliberal capital.

⁵ “The first thing which the native learns is to stay in his place, and not to go beyond certain limits. This is why the dreams of the native are always of muscular prowess; his dreams are of action and of aggression... During the period of colonization, the native never stops achieving his freedom from nine in the evening until six in the morning” (Fanon, 1961/1963, p. 40).

⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/23/coronavirus-pandemic-is-becoming-a-human-rights-crisis-un-warns>.

In relation to lockdown, another expression of lockdown inertia reminiscent of Fanon's analysis is (what he calls) forms of "mental pathology" associated with relatively calmer periods of colonization. This is the aggressive "boredom" (though boredom is far from a straightforward affect; Greenson, 1953; Phillips, 1994) wrought by enforced inactivity or suppression of activity, masking a seething resentment that sometimes erupts destructively and displaced in relation to those close by, rather than directed to the source of the oppression. (Fanon, 1961/1963, writes of neighbor being set against neighbor, or the exaggeratedly enraged response to a child's crying at night, not insignificantly drawing his next example from a concentration camp, 307.) The seeping of colonialism into the psyche produces diminished and disturbed forms of subjectivity, dismantling the sense of a joined, if not even joined up, connection to a broader social collectivity.

Fifteen years ago, in "The good infection," Kelly Oliver (2005) took up Fanon's account of phobia (which Fanon develops into his theory of negrophobia) alongside Kristeva's account of abjection as a defense against ambiguity of psychic borders, to discuss the "war on terror" and dynamics of terror and terrorization. The fear and aggression that seems to come from others, she suggested, is in fact the subject's own. Moreover, Oliver (2005) highlighted how this process relies on internalization of superego elements that in fact deplete, devalue, and subjugate the subject further. The "good infection" is the ways we, as ideological subjects, accept and "host," or identify with, noxious affects that produce racism and xenophobia out of the desire to be "good" and to feel better. Her analysis uncannily recalls the moral-political injunctions both encountered directly, but also exercised by the subject upon itself in dealing with the lockdown. Such analyses of colonial dynamics show that what is internalized evacuates further, rather than fills, the psychic gaps. Put simply, we dig ourselves into ever bigger psychic holes. As Oliver (2005, p. 96) puts it: "the logic of colonization is paradoxical because it requires the colonized to internalize the lack of an interior, soul or mind."

“We Are All Enemies Now”

“Social distancing” has generated a whole new grammar of everyday interaction.⁷ We trace wide loops around the next person as we pass them on the street. In the first days there was an apologetic shrug or wave and smile, sometimes a laugh—perhaps of relief or assertion of shared joy to be alive and able enough to be out and about. Later, the best one hoped for was an appreciative nod of recognition that one is doing the right thing. Proximity is now dangerous. If, as Žižek (2020) suggested, social distancing is the new solidarity, the Trump supporters’ suggestion that “social distancing = communism” appears to proscribe any sense of shared predicament. Individualism apparently runs so deep that even “for life itself” cannot be mobilized, and any infringement of private liberty is a threat. The panic buying in the US for ammunition makes the UK scramble for toilet rolls seem quaint by comparison.

“We are all enemies now” was said by an older woman, uttered aloud to me and others around us as we attempted to navigate newly elaborated trajectories of socially distancing outside a local grocery shop. It was during the first week of the lockdown, and the rhetorical force seemed to nicely combine a kind of rueful regret with recognition of a common condition. Far from denouncing *us* as *her* enemies, this statement offered a comment on the shared positioning of each person as a threat to everyone else. It maintained a “we” and “all” that spoke to the problematic status of “now” and included herself as part of the “all.” An effect of the social isolation, of the reduced opportunity for conversation with others, has been that words that exchanged in relatively public spaces carry a greater resonance. Indeed, sometimes I have experienced the exchange of pleasantries on the move as filled with an almost ecstatic yearning for connection, backlit with poignancy; a once commonplace reminder of a bygone era. I have appreciated this woman’s observation and insight; her skill in naming the violence of subjective separation as a collective experience.

⁷ As also have the semiotics of masks and mask-wearing, see <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/28/face-masks-coveted-commodity-coronavirus-pandemic>.

The Lost Middle

Vision, space, time and action are therefore crucial in psychoanalysis, of all kinds. After all, the rationale for the couch is that not seeing, the blank screen, fuels projective associations. The same thing happens in groups larger than the dyad.

The psychoanalyst and group analyst Pat de Maré (1990) argued that, between small groups and large groups, there is an intermediate size of group whose dynamics are of particular significance (de Maré et al., 1991). While the small group (of 7–10 people) can recapitulate family dynamics and is most often the forum for therapeutic groups, large groups are defined as those that cannot be encompassed in a glance. Obviously, this depends on physical layout (while, as my Pre-View suggests, literal visual capacities are relevant, but only indicative). Not being able to see everyone present in one glance, a single visual sweep, according to theorists of large group dynamics (Kreeger, 1975), is what makes them uncomfortable places. Large groups (which, taking as the paradigm how many chairs one can see in a circle at one go, obviously also depends on the physical layout and one's position) are typically understood as larger than around 25 and have no upper limit. They are held to incite paranoid fantasies either of merger or being singled out for violence, of disappearing, or alternatively of being picked out or picked upon (Turquet, 1975). Not being able to see who is seeing one, it seems, magnifies the anxieties generated by the sense of being one among many.

This invites further reflection on the notion of solidarity which, significantly, is defined in two ways according to whether it is countable or uncountable.⁸ The countable one is “a unifying bond between individuals with common goal or enemy”; the uncountable, a more abstract “psychological or material support.” The word comes from the Latin *solidum* (whole sum). What is posed is the relation between part and whole as both a quantitative and qualitative matter; and, outside conditions of vision, those distinctions become blurred.

The UK publicity campaign announcing the second period of “lock-down” for all (supposedly) non-essential workers and activities was

⁸ <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/solidarity>.

announced on April 17, 2020. In an unprecedented partnership the Government and all major national daily newspapers proclaimed “All in, all together. Stay @ [home] for the NHS, your family, your neighbors, your nation, the world and life itself.” Other than the NHS, positioned as the more benign of the various Big Others at play, affiliation was invoked on the basis of proximity and presumed intimacy: family, neighbors, nation, world. Neighbors appear as the only social unit mediating between family and nation. Subsequent versions of the ad (e.g. April 21, 2020) led with “Stay home for your family. Don’t put their lives in danger,” printed below images of two NHS staff who have died (“for us”), notably both from BAME backgrounds, reflecting not only the disproportionate BAME fatalities in the UK, but also the dependence of essential health, care, social, and service sectors—historical and recent—on migrant labor.

Lockdown dynamics tie us to the (very) small group (sometimes a group of merely one or two people), and—in the absence of any representations of public collectivity—render the large group subject to even wilder fantasies than usual. What usually mediates the small and the large group (spaces which can potentially be equally oppressive or, alternatively, emancipatory), is currently in short supply. What De Maré called the “median group” is a group of (say) 20–40 people; that is, neither small, nor large. This sized group, he suggests, proffers a distinctive kind of relationship: neither the intimacy (or antagonism, perhaps) of the (familial) small group, nor the alienation or seductive merger of the large group, but rather a kind of connection that does not rely on deep knowledge of or history with the other. He called this “koinonia”: the process of transforming hate through dialogue. As Geller (2017)⁹ puts it: “*Koinonia* is what the Greeks termed a capacity to rise to One-ness,” to achieve impersonal fellowship, sharing, participation, communion, and company (the latter deriving from “cum panis”: those who eat the same bread).

While the gendered designations of “fellowship” and what is meant by “personal” or “impersonal” merit qualification, as well as the Eurocentric recourse to “classical” Greek/Latin terms, I think there is value

⁹ <https://groupanalyticsociety.co.uk/the-median-group/>.

in thinking about a category of relationship that works at the level of some shared, common entitlement to be present alongside one another, outside or beyond claims of intimate or longstanding relationship. Or, as a columnist put it, beyond the enmeshed relations of her family under lockdown she longed for the “nearish and dearish.”¹⁰ Notably, these “ish” relations (nearish and dearish, rather than nearest and dearest) are built from casual, contingent encounters and engagements in and with the world and its obvious others (rather than the otherness within). While more intimate relations may in due course be built from these, they originate from a joint sense of mutual (mis)recognition, of joint (and separate) being in the world.

Geller (2017) summarizes:

The avowed purpose of the median group is to encourage members to learn to talk to each other, to learn to dialogue so as to humanize society, and to transform frustration and outrage into the positive energy required to *think* (de Maré, 1990). Thus, the median group as socio-therapy is a tool that fosters the societal and community life of the citizen, familiarizing its members with democratic principles, while serving as a platform to practice democracy in action.

Median groups are said, correspondingly, to bring sociocultural questions and dynamics to the fore: who we are, how we live, and our relations to other groups, subgroups, and cultures, including dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, privilege and hierarchy.

I suggest that occlusion or curtailment of these everyday life relationships of “impersonal fellowship” under lockdown has eroded an important relationship dynamic that sustains the everyday social bond outside that of control/subjectation. It is also (if we are not totally “socially isolating”), the kind of relationship precisely enacted when we do our dance of “social distancing.” As we think about how to walk around and pass the other, steering our body around another’s imaginary perimeter, set in play is one’s sense of embodied social self in relation to an other or others; it is an enactment of the practice of psychically, as well as

¹⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/may/15/it-is-not-just-loved-ones-i-miss-but-the-joy-of-hanging-out-with-casual-friends> (accessed 19 May 2020).

posturally, positioning oneself, in relation to (as much with, as against, navigating thresholds of acceptable proximity) an other or others that reaffirms the necessity of those relations, including their vitality and creativity. “We are all enemies now” did that work of acknowledging what the current restrictions threaten to do to the fabric of everyday life, and by saying so thereby dispelled this as a current dynamic between us.

Space, Time, and the Logic of Subjective Construction

Vision is also central in Marc de Kesel’s (2009) characterization of Lacanian ethics (epitomized by the figure of “radiant” Antigone) (see also Burman, 2021). De Kesel discusses anamorphosis, or how the subject is constellated by its viewing point, psychically composed by what it takes to make the physical image legible, sensible. This is a compelling way of accounting for how we become subject to, and subjects of, ideology. In the social distancing dance, we are constellated as—through our mere biological being—an enemy, a threat, to the other, as they are now invited to see us. Perhaps this is also why clapping on the doorstep for the NHS for a few minutes on Thursday nights in April and May offered some comfort, even as a Government cheap ploy to mobilize gratitude to our workers, cheaper than paying them a proper salary. This was the one time in each week where we legitimately looked at, saw, our neighbors, and engaged in a joint activity with them, clapping to confirm not only our support for our essential health workers but also affirming our presence, that we are here, at this moment, together. It was a brief moment of companionship, of shared subjectivity of, and engagement with, a common predicament.

Vision, lack of vision, action and its variable durations and suspensions are all central to Lacan’s parable of the social structuring of subjectivity, the “logical time sophism” (Lacan, 1988), in which confinement is very much at issue. Pitted against each other, the solution to the problem of identifying what disc (black or white) each prisoner bears on “his” (sic) back, so is unseeable to himself and which he must narrate in order to get his freedom, turns out to involve the escape or liberation of all of them.

Lacan describes a *relational logic* by which the subject discovers their own identity on the basis of inference from the actions or lack of action of the others. Paradoxically, reciprocity of positioning and joint emancipation emerges from what is posited as a competition, even a zero-sum problem.

Crucially, this arises from three distinct temporal stages, the instant of the glance, the time for comprehension, and the moment of concluding. The first (the “instant”) and last (the “moment”) are obviously brief, while the “time for comprehension,” the period of deliberation which is in fact based on the observation of mutual hesitation, or interruption of action by all parties, has a duration of *logical* significance. It is necessary for the conclusion to be drawn. It is this process of deliberation that also demonstrates the necessity of a subjective element to objectivity, so undoing that binary, since the temporal lag or suspension between the glance and the deliberation of the significance of what is (not) seen, is an objective, if perhaps fleeting, matter. This also is what makes social subjectivity necessarily reciprocal; that is, individual as well as collective, but necessarily *also* individual, even as this individual is created through that interpretive navigation that gives rise to the physical rush to the door.

Yet the moment of the glance connects De Maré’s group analytic perspective on median group dynamics with Lacanian logico-spatial analysis and highlights how size matters. The sophism relies on being able to encompass the entire scene and its protagonists in a “glance,” a single view. This is what links the countable and uncountable that, as I indicated above, are both central to the notion of solidarity (the solid unitary which is also multiple).

Action is the key here. It is through action that objectivity rapidly consolidates or renders solid (note the link with solidarity...), the subjective shifts of doubts, hesitations, and deliberations such that these logical moments appear synchronic to the observer, and so, as Lacan puts it, the “assertion of certitude is *desubjectified to the utmost*” (p. 14, emphasis original). So, truth, the truth of the subject, while irreducibly subjective in origin, becomes objective because it is temporal and not (or not only) spatial. It has to be played out in specific, logically distinct, temporal stages that take the assertion of social subjectivity from doubt to certitude, and so beyond a merely spatial configuration (of the prisoners, that

is, imprisoned). This happens through subjective assertion, constructed as an anticipated certainty via embodied action.

Becoming “Actional,” “Scaling Up,” and Solidarity

Perhaps this approaches what Fanon calls being “actional.” Albeit positioned in critical as well constructive friction with Lacan, Fanon’s radical humanism envisaged a postracialized world where personal and institutional histories have been transformed. But, like Lacan’s notion of anticipated certainty wrought through assertion, this process of transformation is an active one: Fanon writes many times in *Black Skin White Masks (BSWM)* of “effort.” The effort to transcend mere reaction is what is needed to “recapture the self and to scrutinize the self” (p. 165). It is the effort to be “actional” (p. 157), rather than “only reactionary” (ibid.), since “there is always resentment in a reaction” (ibid.). Similarly, Lacan claims there is no preformed subject, but one *produced by interaction played out in space and time*, arguing that the sophism both presupposes but also recomposes the shifting, relational subject “revealing itself at each moment as the subjective unfolding of a temporal instance, or more aptly stated, as the slipping away (*fuite*) of the subject within a formal exigency” (p. 10).

Elaborating the wider implications of this sophism, Lacan distinguishes between the notion of collectivity and generality, defining collectivity as “a group formed by the reciprocal relations of a definite number of individuals” (p. 18) which he contrasts with generality as “a class abstractly including an indefinite number of individuals” (ibid.). Yet both conceptual and political limits frame scaling up the logical time model. While in principle the problem could logically be extended to refer to larger numbers, he notes, however, that “temporal objectification is more difficult to conceptualize as the collectivity grows, seeming to pose an obstacle to a *collective logic* with which one could complete classical logic” (ibid.). Once again, the moment of the glance brings the embodied physico-material to the fore. Circumventing the scene to assess how each relates to the other presumes a stability and knowability of the

extent of that scene. That presumption is, of course, an affective relation; the time of deliberation that articulates the qualitative and quantitative, the distinguishable from the mass—even if one cannot qualify or characterize what the distinctions are—that are both central to solidarity.

Yet if political progressives are typically drawn to Lacan because of the potential for a sociohistorical analysis and critique, his practice was of course notoriously individualist, and the largest group in the *Ecole Freudienne*, as with the logical time sophism, is four; a cartel. Moreover, Lacan frames the sophism with some significant caveats—emphasizing its fictive status as a logical problem rather than something to put to empirical test but also acknowledging the limitations imposed by (what he euphemistically describes as) “our epoch’s antinomian progress” such that “although only winners are anticipated or foreseen here, the facts diverge greatly from the theory” (pp. 4–5). The social contract might be forged from a claim, an assertion that, in its performance, becomes a truth or certainty, but of course the conditions for that performance, of being able to be recognized as a “man”/human subject are frequently not met, are “contingent” (as Lacan puts it) and discretionary, typically in relation to such “arbitrary” characteristics as the allocation of “black” or “white” discs. Lacan hints at the wider resonances of designating black and white discs as involuntarily ascribed markers of identity, and it is well known that Lacan was well aware of and engaged with the Algerian liberation struggle.¹¹ Moreover it is important to ward off the superficial, reactionary reading of the fact that everyone emerges as a winner, by virtue of recognizing their similar characteristics. This would be a very reduced—individualist, ethnocentric, and exclusionary—model of solidarity.

There is clearly a lot at stake in considering what kind of other we are mobilized as, and galvanized by, when we walk by, approximate or reciprocally social distance another. Yet Lacan’s reference to the potential for “barbarism” in collectivity also insists on the residual preservation of the individual subject. Indeed he concludes by echoing but subverting Descartes’ famous syllogism, affirming the basis of doubt but

¹¹ Lacan’s stepdaughter, Laurence Bataille, was imprisoned for her political activities in support of the Algerian Liberation Movement (Roudinesco, 1999).

also negation, which he then claims “provides the logical form of all ‘human’ assimilation, precisely insofar as it posits itself as assimilative of a barbarism, but which nevertheless reserves the essential determination of the ‘I...’” (pp. 18–19).

For Lacan, as also Fanon and Sartre, there is no escape from the “I” of individual responsibility (or what more recent new materialist accounts might rename “response-ability”) even in the recruitment to ‘barbarism’. Where group analysts and Lacanians would agree, therefore, is that there is no group mind, but rather it is *the fear of losing* one’s individual mind—whether by merger or disappearance—that paradoxically creates such effects.

Anticipating Lockdown Nostalgia

Drafting this, I had imagined that the lockdown might soon be over, social distancing a distant matter of the past, and the virus a bad dream. Sadly, there is little sign of that. Instead, I can foresee that—just as we look back at *the time before* being isolated in our houses—we might equally look back on lockdown as a space of possibility, of creative potential wrought by the enforced retreat or cocooning (as my writer friend prefers to call it). Is failing to do all the wonderful, creative, exploratory, or practical projects that one fantasizes about an act of solidarity, a connection with a world that is so out of joint? (In the same way that Georges Perec’s (2014) account in *A Man Asleep* of obsessing about washing socks in his bedroom sink can be read as a sideways response to the torpor of French colonialism).¹² Or is it a symptom of being flooded by the cruel superegoic functions warranted by “the good infection” (Oliver, 2005). Either way, this has been a period of suspension (to use another Perec concept), a brief period when new imaginary collectivities generated from the crisis are incited to cherish our health services and essential workers, and even right-wing national governments, briefly, forced into paying for health, welfare, and unemployment support that could be seen as socialist (or alternatively as merely “spraying money at

¹² Perec lived in Tunisia for some time.

the meltdown”¹³). It seems it is a time before, before the imposition of a “new normal” far surpassing the old one in its cruelty, its disregard for the care and sacrifices made by those who continued to work for us, and some who died for us. Already we hear about bankruptcies, lay-offs, cuts, that make the previous decade of “austerity” pale into insignificance.

“The time before” recalls Laurie Anderson’s track on *Strange Angels*, the album dedicated to Walter Benjamin, where she imagines Hansel and Gretel drinking schnapps and gin and Hansel says “I wasted my life on a stupid legend,” before Gretel utters Benjamin’s angel’s famous lines.... But Benjamin’s message is also, of course, critical of the angel who looks back, even as it cares about the debris but is blown unwillingly away from rectifying the damage it sees into the future. It is the “stupid legend,” the storm of progress, that has to be stopped...

The demand was, and periodically remains, to “Stay in.” In fact, it’s quite an achievement to make *not* doing something (not going out) active, an act of solidarity. Even the word “stay” has its origins in stopping doing something, in deferring or delaying, rather than occupying. It is a temporary or time-limited state, rather than a dwelling. In origin the term is temporal, therefore, rather than spatial. “Stay” is as much about desisting or stopping as it is about doing something, and this remains in legal discourse (as in “stay of execution”). Are we waiting for Godot, to get back to “normal,” or for the revolution?

Many of us have been waiting, in lockdown; whether physically or else mentally, by being called into frantic emergency action to help others or, what might feel like equally frantic but invisible mental activity, to manage our anxieties and “stay put.” But capital marches on. For the “bare life” of “life itself” (as the British Government campaign put it) makes profit. The mask profiteers and government withholding provision are a case in point, revealing the toxic, tragic occlusions and overlaps between oligarchies, national government policies, and transnational capital¹⁴). Here it’s worth recalling the third danger Fanon identifies: how liberating leaders betray their promises and try to put the activated

¹³ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/may/18/britain-trust-coronavirus-govern-ment-pandemic-public> (accessed 19 May 2020).

¹⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/28/face-masks-coveted-commodity-corona-virus-pandemic>.

population to sleep again. I first wrote this paragraph as the tabloids were loyally celebrating Boris Johnson's return to resume his Prime Ministerial duties after his bout of Covid-19...We must recall, and maintain, the self-organization, the revival of civil society mobilization, the mutual aid organizations, the wellspring of generous support people initially showed to other, the solidarity forged across differences and, in the face of massive incitements to psychic and socio-political retreat, to "stay in." All this must not be bought off or dispersed post-virus.

It's not just a question of what we are learning during the lockdown—about ourselves, about global capitalism and the international economy and the political economy and biopolitics of health and illness. For some people this perhaps truly has been an "educational" moment, in the sense of epiphanic revelation of the determining axes of power governing our lives, as well as important lessons on how to interpret graphs and statistics. But what will we find we have learnt, after? (If there is an individual "after"; that is, for those of us who "survive").

The current context of selective lockdown is an intensification of pre-existing inequalities. Or, rather, it highlights how, after Mezzadra and Neilson's (2013) analysis, these are multiplied and unequally distributed in complex globalized, but still nationally organized, economies—albeit that specific national locations and policy contexts are highlighted to make significant differences right now. Has Covid-19 produced or merely magnified these disparities? We know it will do more than this—in the sense that the global economy is "bust" in ways that go beyond the crash of 2008 (Tooze, 2020). In 2008 capitalism was denaturalized, with "the markets" shown to be the fragile, emotionally unstable fictional collective subjects that they are, and subject to collective error and meltdown. And in that comparison, other thoughts emerge (as with the term emergency—a shared etymology also implying light arising...). While the core global financial blocs (China, the US, and the Eurozone) acted to prevent total economic freefall, the stark choices being made between economic well-being for the few and possible death for many are evident. Trump said so. And UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson (before he himself needed to avail himself of NHS intensive care) almost said as much in designating the effort to source and produce ventilators "Operation Last Gasp."

I have been discussing the political significance and dangers of vision, both metaphorical and literal, in the project to interrogate and to reclaim models of collective subjectivity. From De Maré and Group Analysis, I considered the foreclosure of the relatable social that is vital to participatory democratic mobilization, and how, in current conditions of restricted mobility, we are in danger of being subject to wilder mental states that render us mindless. From Lacan, what is highlighted is that this is a temporal as well as spatial question, that also produces the subject as unique and general, and that topicalizes the role of action. What we can envisage (note the visual metaphor) not only depends on what visual scene we are placed in, but this changes as we move and as we act (this was the problem with the early AI efforts on analyzing visual arrays—significantly oriented around vision because of military applications—they failed to realize that seers have bodies that move and change the available scene/seen). It is also, as Lacan notes, not only a question of time, of teleology, or how knowing where we're going may well change the destination (the social distancing dance demands continuous reciprocal reorientation—imagine a two-meter apart tango...). It's not just what order we are in the supermarket queue, going around on already laid out one-way routes, but how we move around each other in our specific trajectories. Put most simply, claiming who we are, and what we know, is a relational process, constructed with others, and bodily enacted in materially specific (historical, geopolitical) conditions. Obviously, we don't need Lacan to know that, but the reminder about the importance of *anticipated* certainty in subjective *assertion*, the kind of assertion that will get us out of lockdown stupor, and that the assertion has to be both individual even as it is also socially and materially produced—that is, the inextricability of subjective and objective wrought through vision (space) and time (duration as well as physical movement)—is helpful. It offers a new “take” on notions of extimacy that also takes us out of the loop (so to speak) of the moebius strip, between interior and exterior subjectivities, to pose other questions.

These questions include: Will we have learnt to be obedient, compliant national subjects, obeying science as it is mobilized by our governments who are variably informed in their practice by the WHO? Will we have learnt to be questioning? When politicians rush to claim

they are “following the science” that they ignored for months, will we understand how they are also misrepresenting what science is and how it works in significant ways that suppress critical debate and uncertainty in favor of bolstering their own authority (Butler, 2020). Doing politics in the name of science is of course dangerous as well as—in this case highly—disingenuous. Even as we are all getting a speedy public education in the interpretation of graphs and statistics, and their uncertainties, the major policy reversals of politicians are being retrofitted precisely via appealing to the very science they willfully ignored. “Herd immunity” (a term that was first used by the British government’s Behavioural Insights Team “Nudge Unit” (Butler, 2020), and “social distancing” are diametric opposites, but how we will make our politicians accountable for their inconsistencies pales into insignificance in the context of the thousands of avoidable deaths they have already caused in the UK alone, and the US looking likely for even worse fatalities owing to Trump’s vacillations and delusions (see Butler, 2020).

The columnists and talking heads all concur that the “new normal” can’t simply be a return or intensification of previous decades of austerity, of profit, and exploitation of people and the planet. There are dire predictions for the global economy (Tooze, 2020), while the health crisis could well have been predicted, and prepared for (consider, e.g., how the UK has halved the number of hospital beds since 1990 (Spawls, 2020, p. 31)). How to harness and sustain positive transformative possibilities amid the catastrophe? From disaster capitalism can we have (as Žižek suggests) disaster communism? Do we really want a strong state? Or no state at all?

Beyond Waiting

This discussion of psychic spatiotemporality differs from, but is connected to, recent discussions of acceleration, attention to different velocities of governance, which have featured recently in critical psychology. Alongside the political ambiguities of vision—who and what we see, and don’t see—I have also been discussing subjective temporalities: of stagnation, suspension, staying, waiting. The psychoanalytic

literature on waiting explores this as a fruitful time. On hospital waiting lists, people usually get better (or else die). Lacan portrays waiting as a logical necessity—the hesitation that enables, or gives rise to, the certainty of subjective assertion. It is that hesitation, that moment of glancing and absorbing, drawing conclusions from that glance about who and what one is, and is not, that creates both subject and the conditions for its assertion.

We have been waiting to act. Feminists align waiting with care, invoking an alternative to capitalist exploitative clock time that lies beyond the social/material production binary that recent analyses extend to the domain of the non-reproductive: the waiting of just being there, accompanying and tolerating alongside the suffering of another (Baraitser, 2017; Baraitser & Brook, n.d.). Julia Kristeva (1981) identifies as “women’s time” the struggle to reconfigure the “sociosymbolic contract” beyond the “sacrificial” (25). This time is, as Alice Jardine (1981) puts it, cast in the future perfect which is “a modality that implies we are neither helpless before some inevitable destiny, nor that we can somehow, given enough time and thought, engineer an ultimately perfect future” (5). Indeed, the future perfect is evoked by Kristeva to “characterize a new social formation now in the process of rediscovering what part of it has forgotten” (ibid.). Jardine’s question, “what will have to have happened?” (p. 5), is addressed to political conditions that demand both individual and collective subjects. What has been revealed via the virus, state, and transnational responses to it, including the lockdown of bodies and minds alongside the freefloating of neoliberal racial capital, must not be forgotten.

If Lacan was equivocal around *what* kind of subject was being asserted according to *which* political conditions, others have been clearer. Fanon’s radical humanism may seem at odds with Lacan’s resolute antihumanism, but both were critiquing dominant versions. And Fanon, as is well known, was a close—if also critical—reader of Lacan. Fanon envisaged a postracialized world where personal and institutional histories have been transformed, and where alienation, the separation of psyche from itself and others, and the sense of shared projects, can be reclaimed and forged anew. Common to both Lacan and Fanon is a notion of “action” that traverses the intrapsychic, interpersonal, and the political, while Fanon

foregrounds questions of education: “To educate man to be *actional*, preserving in all his relations his respect for the basic values that constitute a human world, is the prime task of him who, having taken thought, prepares to act” (Fanon 1952/1970, p. 158).

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10

Pandemic, Fatalism, and Psychology's Paralysis: How to Promote the Strengthening of People and Groups in Brazil

Raquel Souza Lobo Guzzo 

We live under extreme conditions of threats to physical and psychological health, with the pandemic of COVID-19, which means a radical change for many social groups in different countries, affecting the global economy in an overwhelming way. In addition to the large number of deaths worldwide, the pandemic context is particularly violent in countries like Brazil and others in Latin America, with high levels of social inequality and a large number of unemployed people living in adverse conditions.

This health crisis, added to the economic and social crisis, makes the scenario of everyday life a show of horrors and opens up the legacy that capitalism leaves for the most impoverished and most oppressed population with the absence of public policies on housing, health, basic sanitation, security, work, and income. However, it is not only the

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pandemic responsible for the serious social condition experienced in Brazil by the majority of the population. Indicators of social inequalities already pointed to an extreme condition before the pandemic. Data on the social indicators provided by IBGE—Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, in 2020, on work and income, indicate an average monthly income of 313.3 reais (about US 58) in the general population and a Gini coefficient in the country of 0.567.¹

In view of this reality, the pandemic has aggravated the social issue, leaving the future more uncertain, increasing unemployment in Brazil at high rates. The crisis has become even more complex considering the distance of children from schools in the most impoverished social class, preventing those responsible from seeking ways of survival. Additionally, living under precarious conditions, they were unable to follow the activities remotely, even given the efforts teachers made contacting children and their families through virtual platforms. In a recent report, UNICEF indicates that 137 million students missed the school year away from school in Latin American countries, which materializes social inequality since childhood (Ingram, 2020).

For Žižek (2020), the virus of COVID-19 will break the foundations of everyday life, causing suffering and economic devastation. According to this author, people's lives must be rebuilt and, even if the virus can be eliminated or controlled, there are signs, more than evident, that barbarism is in place—this way of living in capitalism will not sustain humanity for a long time. Žižek also points out that this pandemic adds a characteristic to the virus—an ideological virus because it highlights social inequalities and has a major impact on the economy and the most impoverished social groups. An ideological epidemic, which was latent, was unveiled through false news, conspiracy theories, outbreaks of racism, and other forms of prejudice, which, according to the author, requires the establishment of quarantine procedures regarding to what threaten our condition human beings, in addition to viral contamination. This condition created an explosion of false news and negative attitudes toward the disease, causing people to take a fatalistic position

¹ <https://www.ibge.gov.br/estatisticas/multidominio/condicoes-de-vida-desigualdade-e-pobreza/17374-indicadores-sociais-minimos.html?=&t=resultados>.

in the face of reality, making it even more difficult for health guidelines to have a positive impact on disease control.

At the same time, this rapid proliferation of the pandemic throughout the world has given prominence to scientific productions, especially from the Human and Social Sciences, favoring the appearance of several publications from different disciplines, especially those of psychology, on how to deal with emotional difficulties resulting from social isolation. In this scenario, hegemonic psychology has gained visibility and strength for a practice colonized and distant from the reality of the impoverished majorities, who, in addition to not having access to the usual services of psychology, feel unable to effect changes, in reality, responding to this condition in a fatalistic. Simultaneously, the critical perspective based on concrete psychology that responds to the needs of oppressed, excluded, abused, and marginalized people strives to get closer to people and organize groups capable of reversing this process of alienation in the face of hegemonic psychological knowledge. The professional practices resulting from this model of psychology do not respond to people's real needs and feed fatalism before which the feeling of weakness and fatalism, in the face of reality, are consolidated.

Fatalism—A Challenge for Latin American Psychology

Facing the hegemony of psychology by reviewing its practices and knowledge produced requires a movement through the critical perspective that necessarily passes through channels of visibility and recognition with collective commitments. It is necessary to involve research, teaching, and community activities as a privileged locus to face psychology's paralysis and strengthen its commitment as a science and profession to the poor and oppressed. Understanding fatalism is of fundamental importance to understand the difficulty that psychology has in dealing with social issues present in the majority of the Brazilian population's daily lives.

Fatalism competes with the advance of class consciousness about understanding reality and acting to effect social changes. Martín-Baró's Liberation Psychology and Klaus Holzkamp's Critical Psychology offer

the possibility of responding to the difficulties of subjects in adverse situations without considering them as responsible for their suffering, in a decolonizing perspective of dominant psychology. Oliveira (2020) argued that fatalism and the capacity for action, concepts coined by Martín-Baró and Klaus Holzkamp, respectively, consist of a dialectical unit of opposition-negation and overcoming, through a triad of action, formed by fatalism, by the capacity for restrictive and generalized action. From this perspective, fatalism is understood as a process in which the subjects are paralyzed by the possibilities of change in daily life, mainly due to the internalization of social domination, the ideological character, and the apparent impossibility of changes in the time expected by the subject. Fatalism is a psychosocial phenomenon of the subject's relation to their own life in the face of a certain objective life situation, which can be understood as a way of acting from an alienated conscience. The subjects reproduce the social order acting as spectators of reality and hoping for an external solution to the central problems of everyday life. Moreover, in this dialectical movement, strengthening people and groups to face reality becomes a possible practice.

In 1987, in the text "*The indolent Latin*," Martín-Baró argues that fatalism represents the way that the Latin American people face their reality: "without historical memory and life project, it would be said that Latin American people have no more perspectives than the fatal acceptance of their destinies" (p. 136). He introduced in his reflection, the fatalistic understanding of existence, becoming a fundamental attitude of "standing in front of one's own life," expressing a relationship of meaning that people establish with themselves and with the facts of their existence. This way of reacting to life, according to Martín-Baró, can be translated into three tendencies of action: conformism and submission to the demands of one's own destiny; passivity due to adapting in the face of nothing that can be done to change the course of events; and the reduction of a vital horizon to the present—the only thing that counts is what's here and now for both good and bad—the knowledge of the past, as well as the planning of the future only serve to confirm the inevitability of destiny, so it is necessary to respond to the immediate demands of life. This response to the immediate demands of life is related to the subjects'

ability to act under certain circumstances in the face of the possibilities and limits imposed by the specific conditions.

In this scenario, the capacity for action developed from the perspective of the subject himself, explained by Klaus Holzkamp (2016), provides elements for the practice of critical psychology and maintains a dialectical relationship with fatalism. Even living in a capitalist society, as Holzkamp problematizes, actions to confront this condition of existence occur within limits established by the very situation of life and position in social classes. The daily life imposed on the poorest is an obstacle to any effectively transformative political action, and it is in this condition that fatalism is installed. The subject's capacity for action is intrinsically related to the concrete social, political, and economic conditions of the world. It tends to confront itself with the dynamics and context of daily life in a contradictory way—on the one hand seeking to expand the possibilities of life, on the other hand running the risk of losing the same conditions of life by the instances of domination, which can make the subjects return, or go back, in the processes of organizing their forces to face situations of oppression and domination. In order to understand the subject's capacity for action, it is necessary to understand it as a process with comings and goings, marked by profound and often unnoticed contradictions. The restrictive capacity for action² recognizes established limits and the relationships of domination present in the context, and this condition can provide fatalism as a response to the concrete situation. Expanding the apprehension of the reality to the maximum understanding possible for those behaviors that transcend the individual, such as prejudices and different structural violence, is the task of psychology professionals guided by the critical perspective.

That being said, psychology is challenged to answer what are its commitments to change this fatalistic condition of people in dealing with the concrete life they aspire to. Therefore, the antidote to fatalism is the development of a critical conscience capable of mobilizing people

² Holzkamp's critical perspective establishes a relationship between the social condition of everyday life and the action of the subject in the world, that means, to identify the subjective dimension of the experience and its possibilities of action. The restrictive action refers to the immediate satisfaction of their own living conditions without a comprehension of social and political reasons for the life condition (Tolman, 2009).

and groups for organized, participatory action, and with a liberating horizon. Paulo Freire (1999) calls attention to the importance of participation in the decisions that imply people's daily lives. For him, as democratic processes are present, even in general terms, it is a big problem to leave people in a state of ignorance (understood here as the inexperience of participation) and fatalists in the face of life. Democracy, therefore, presupposes the participation of critical people. This awareness-raising process involves learning to read reality and its causal links. Still, for Freire, the understanding resulting from reading reality will be all the more critical when it is more possible for people to choose and decide. The awareness-raising process, therefore, involves learning to read reality and its causal links. It characterizes three main conditions of consciousness: critical consciousness, naive consciousness, and magical consciousness. Critical awareness is the representation of things and facts as they appear in empirical existence, in their causal and circumstantial relationships. The naive conscience believes that it is superior to the facts, dominating them from the outside, and therefore, it feels free to understand them as it pleases. Moreover, the magical conscience understands the facts by lending them a higher power that dominates them from outside. Fatalism, which leads to crossing arms, delegates the change of facts to a higher dimension. For this understanding, the process of becoming aware becomes an essential means of people's reaction to the oppressive and threatening reality and a concrete possibility of strengthening for the collective confrontation and the achievement of rights and the achievement of social changes.

Upon becoming aware, people take possession of the reality that is revealed in its concreteness, contributing to the knowledge of myths that deceive and help to maintain the dominant structure, the ideology of the dominant classes. This process, Martín-Baró (1985) calls *deideologization*, that is, the unmasking of "common sense" that justifies and subjectively maintains oppression. This common sense is supported by religious schemes, false news, and other dominant ideas spread daily by the media, building gradually and constantly, under another form of colonization, the subjective conditions for maintaining the "status quo." The objective conditions characterized by economic structures, domination, and authoritarianism in political and social structures, which

remain in capitalism, are the main impediments to advancing critical consciousness and participatory and democratic regimes. The underdeveloped, dependent, unequal, and unjust economic structure, concentrates income and reveals high indicators of social inequality, misery, and marginality. Accordingly, the political regimes underpinned by this structure are authoritarian and repressive, sustaining a false democracy where the most oppressed population is not represented.

Faced with this scenario, subjective conditions represent an immediate obstacle to facing oppression and possible movements for social change. Culture and the collective consciousness of social groups play an essential role in the historical processes of confronting the conditions of oppression and segregation, violence and marginalization.

Considering that psychology can do little or nothing against the objective elements of this reality, it is its responsibility to deal with subjective and intersubjective factors—to evaluate what is ideological in the behavior of people and groups and how they understand or justify their actions and thinking, bringing awareness class forces and interests that make up a social formation. Its task is to unmask all the dominant ideology that operates and justifies an exploitative and oppressive social system, to reveal the contradictions and assumptions that take root in everyday life and underlie passivity, submission, subordination, and fatalism.

Latin American societies are marked by the culture of silence, by the fatalism resulting from the long and still present process of Spanish and Portuguese colonization. Therefore, they are societies structured under authoritarian rigidity, although they present themselves as democratic, hierarchical in social classes, and with great social inequality.

Strengthen, Face, and Overcome—The Proposals for Psychology

When considering a critical perspective for psychology that commits it to radical changes in the structure of society, we face the difficulties that are present, especially when considering the consequences of the process of colonization of knowledge (Quijano, 2005), of the cultural practices that

affect the everyday life and people's way of thinking. Universities have a relevant part in this process when they train professionals without having the opportunity to critically read the real world, psychological science, and their practice in different fields of activity. Thus, a circle of conservatism is formed in the area unable to contribute to the social change necessary to face the ethical–political suffering (Sawaia, 1999; Sawaia & Silva, 2019) caused, especially, by the social inequality and injustice present in life majority of the population. For the author, inequality is the source of the chronicity of sad affections, and chronic humiliation that the poor have long suffered, a condition coupled with the feeling that social changes are beyond the possibilities of action and the desire for change is understood as a fantasy; an unrealized utopia.

For the change in reality to occur, it is necessary to have people with critical conscience and strengthened to face adversity, in addition to being organized into collectives with common purposes. Thus, awareness and strengthening processes assume fundamental importance in the face of demands for social change, and psychology has a lot to contribute to the liberation of colonial and exploratory models of the production of life. However, it is necessary to seek, through liberating and dialogical education, the development of critical awareness in the perspective of the subjects for its strengthening. Critical awareness is more than a simple awareness—it presupposes an action—a critical insertion of the conscious person in a demystified reality. There are differences between problematizing and producing discourses, especially when proposing scientific clarification of reality and mediation in the production of an increase in the level of criticality. Seeking the maximum possible conscience is not an easy task because it causes people a feeling of helplessness, of incapacity, operating a fatalistic way of thinking. They are dependencies of various orders, which forge subjectivities.

For Pavón-Cuéllar (2020), the economic dependence of the former colonies, the migratory crises, the misery in the lives of Latin American peoples, the use of domestic services in the classes with the highest purchasing power, the references in the geographical representations of the world with respect to the northern hemisphere and structural racism are some examples of the colonialism that has been operating for

centuries associated with the mercantilist movement. This combination of capitalism and colonialism impacts people's way of life—a structural way of domination. The colonial experience is an experience of violence with impacts on subjectivity (Pavón-Cuéllar, 2020). Furthermore, for this author, this violence takes on traumatic configurations producing fear, feelings of helplessness, devaluation, inferiority, and blame in relation to the life lived, which hinders the process of raising awareness and collective organization in the direction of producing changes. Weakening people in the possibilities they have to act without any individual or collective resistance, the daily life of the oppressed majority remains subordinate to the violence imposed by the systems in force.

In this circumstance, strengthening has an important place in the awareness process. Silva and Martinez (2004) discuss the importance of this process at different levels and contexts (individual and collective or community), considering the difficulty of evaluating its results. Strengthening is a process that begins with the analysis of elements of forces present in the context closest to the subjects, in the competencies for coping with the conditions of reality, and in the identification of a social support system from which actions for planning are planned. For changing from individual strengthening to community strengthening, it is necessary to implement a praxis that supports the critical perspective of psychology. For Zimmerman and Rappaport (1988), this strengthening praxis links individual strengths and skills, natural aid systems, and proactive behaviors to political issues and social change. It is a process by which people gain dominance or control over their own lives and democratic participation in the life of their community. Participation becomes an important mechanism for the development of psychological empowerment, because participants can gain experience by organizing people, identifying resources, and developing strategies to achieve more relevant social goals for the community, which Holzkamp defines as a capacity for generalized action (Holzkamp, 2016). However, it is necessary to provide collective spaces for advancing levels of consciousness, always reflecting the meaning of the action and its consequences.

This effort to deideologize requires that psychology consider the perspective of the oppressed majorities and, for that, get involved in

knowing, mapping these people's reality using this knowledge to produce popular liberation.

The studies by Zimmerman and Rappaport (1988) on the psychological dimension of strengthening show that this process can be described as the connection between a sense of personal competence, a desire, and a desire to act in the public domain. Their analyzes show that psychological strengthening correlated positively with leadership and negatively with alienation, which highlights the importance of participation in these processes and also of collective and emancipatory actions. Psychological empowerment can develop more easily from activities designed to influence political decision-making, involvement with others, increased responsibility and the resolution of community problems, spaces for councils or community groups, social and organized movements around a common goal. By establishing a link between participation in community organizations and strengthening, it is clear what it means to decolonize psychology through the participation of people in different collective spaces. The greater the participation in community activities and organization, the more the development of psychological strengthening (Serrano-García, 1984).

Final Considerations

Therefore, in order to strengthen people and groups in Brazil, in such a way that a revolutionary praxis is possible, capable of changing social structures and ensuring the right to a dignified life for the majority, it is necessary to train students with the capacity to get involved with social issues, with critical awareness and political training. It is necessary to disseminate the critical perspective of knowledge and professional practices in a necessary aspect of decolonizing knowledge and living.

Psychology must, therefore, take the perspective of the oppressed groups (that means people who live in poverty, black people, woman), develop systematic investigations about the reality experienced by them, it must be together with people in their spaces of development, it must use dialectically the knowledge produced committing itself to the historical processes of liberation popular. Psychology must assume its role as

a mediator in the growth, strengthening, and confrontation of people against all forms of oppression.

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11

Preparing for the Wrong Emergency: Visions of Generation Changing Events

Langdon Winner 

The worldwide socio-technical disruptions brought by the Covid-19 pandemic call to mind an academic exercise I have occasionally employed in my teaching over the years—the Luddism experiment. Of course, the term “luddism” here derives from the name of the bands of English machine smashing factory workers, the Luddites (1811–1816), who sabotaged new varieties of industrial equipment to express their outrage at the emerging unjust economic order. Epistemological luddism is a name for experiences of disconnection or disruption that reveal the extent of our shared dependency upon technological devices and systems (Winner, 1977).

Over the years I’ve asked students in classes to do short-term versions of the epistemological luddism experiment. I ask them to think about various technological devices and systems that they strongly depend upon in their everyday lives and to select just one and thoughtfully disconnect

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from it for just one week. “Notice what happens to you,” I ask. “It might be mechanical transportation, artificial lighting, electricity overall, industrially processed food, electronic communication, the use of anything predicated upon burning of fossil fuels.” Of course, I ask that they avoid doing anything obviously dangerous or health-threatening. “Don’t go off your meds,” I usually warn. “Instead, just disconnect temporarily from a piece of apparatus crucial in your everyday life. Focus upon the changes you experience.” Results of the epistemological luddism experiment have been consistent. Most students are just not able to complete it after the first two or three days. They soon feel disoriented and express a strong need to reconnect with the particular system of technology they’d abandoned. Otherwise, their patterns of everyday life in their college studies begin to fall apart.

What students often learn and report back on an individual level is an awareness of extreme dependency in their relationships to technological devices and systems. My hope is that they will begin to see such matters as open to renegotiation and perhaps creative reinvention. “Don’t take these devices and technological systems for granted,” I explain. “Beyond the standard expectations and habits that accompany their presence, ask yourself: What would I like my relationship to the world’s technosphere to be?”

Within much larger settings, there have been historical episodes of serious technological disruption that have affected large populations. What kinds of collective experiences and memories did they involve? For example, in November 1965, there was an extended regional power outage that shut off electricity to New York City. Reports at the time generally noted how people came together in friendly mutual support and helpfulness. It seemed that most of the populace responded to the temporary loss of electricity in positive ways.

In stark contrast was another New York blackout, one in July 1977 that lasted two days. In that case, there were reports of widespread looting, arson, and other kinds of criminal behavior. As Mayor Abraham D. Beam observed at the time, “We’ve seen our citizens subjected to violence, vandalism, theft, and discomfort. The Blackout has threatened our safety and has seriously impacted our economy” (Lescaze & Egan,

1977). Speculation at the time focused upon a serious ongoing economic downturn, one that seems to have exacerbated frazzled nerves in the urban populace, leading to more hostile patterns of response to the power failure.

As the emergencies brought by the Covid-19 pandemic spread during winter and spring of 2020, I followed the news from around the US and other nations, taking note not only of the rising toll of illness and death from the disease but also tracking the kinds of wide-ranging disconnections and emergencies it has brought to technology-centered societies worldwide. What do these powerful interruptions in everyday patterns reveal? Are there strategies of inquiry that might illuminate to such experiences of disconnection from essential life supports as well as a socio-technical disorder?

Following news reports in the electronic media, I noticed an eerie but revealing contrast evident within much of American television. News reports focused upon steading rising statistics on the millions of people infected, tens of thousands of deaths around the globe, as well as the dreary statistics on job loss—more than 35 million people unemployed in the U.S. as well tens of millions that would face bankruptcy and eviction from their houses and apartments because they could not pay amounts due on their rent or mortgages. Both the local and national reports emphasized the extent to which the American populace had embraced social measures to avoid Covid-19 infection—lockdowns, organized quarantines, staying at home, social distancing, masking, frequent hand washing, avoidance of offices, bars, restaurants, and other places of social gathering—steps strongly advised during a period in which no vaccines or effective pharmaceuticals were yet available as medical treatments.

Often accompanying the grim news reports about the early stages of the pandemic, American commercial television persisted in broadcasting bizarre displays of happy consumerism, advertisements showing ecstatic consumers, usually in small groups of friends and family, enjoying their speedy new automobiles, delicious comfort foods, wonderful Caribbean vacations, as well marvelous medications that promised healthy, joyous ways of living. Hence there was a jarring contrast between news reports

about illness, death, crowded hospitals, closing schools, shrinking business firms, the imposition of quarantines, and the like posed side by side with depiction in the video advertisements that show the happy world of consumerism and its colorful celebrations, conditions prevalent just a month earlier. The term often used to describe such images and the world they depict eventually emerged as “normalcy.”

Obviously, these beguiling TV commercials had been produced long before the pandemic hit. After a while, some of the advertisements began to change, pointing to the severe challenges, society was facing and the need for individuals, families, and communities to adapt to patterns of change needed to constrain or stop the spread of the virus. The wearing of masks became common in advertisements and news stories. But the basic contrast remained: social disasters of the pandemic portrayed side by side with visions of a much happier, even frivolous world from recent times.

As the weeks and months moved along, it became clear that a substantial portion of the American populace had adopted a position that amounted to open revolt against the prevailing, health-seeking, sensible requirements of lockdown, social distancing, wearing of masks and the like. Leading this politically right-wing rebellion was President Donald J. Trump, who routinely dismissed the virus as “hoax” and cast doubt on the reports about the disease offered by scientists and public health professionals. Calling attention to a pandemic emergency that would require the best scientific advice and the creation of a coherent nationwide plan to address the crisis never achieved even modest emphasis in Donald Trump’s list of governmental priorities. Far more important for the President and his close advisors was the economic decline brought by the closing of businesses and the loss of tens of millions of jobs and the incomes they provided to working families. Thus, by the middle months of spring and throughout the summer of 2020, the key goal for the President was to “reopen” the industries and their facilities in ways that might boost economic vitality even though such steps were widely recognized to be opportunities for Covid-19 to spread more broadly across the land as people relaxed the practical social measures—wearing masks, social

distancing, and stay at home practices—steps that public health professionals argued were—for the time being—the only way to curtail the virus in the absence of any new vaccines or effective pharmaceuticals.

In much of President Trump’s messaging, it was perfectly clear that responding with a coherent plan to address the Covid-19 pandemic was entirely secondary to his desire to emphasize any and all positive economic news—especially rises on the Dow Jones stock exchange—that might contribute to his 2020 re-election campaign. His unwillingness to draw upon reliable scientific and policy proposals from his advisors in key government agencies grew more obvious as the months dragged on. Indeed, a memorable feature in Trump’s public presentations became open advocacy of a variety of supposed magic bullet remedies—injecting Clorox, taking Hydroxychloroquine (an anti-malarial drug), drinking the botanical extract Oleandrin, and other quirky nostrums—none of which offered any effective relief for those taken ill (Karni & Thomas, 2020). In one astonishing display of his ignorance of public health measures, Trump proposed shining a bright light upon or within the body. “Suppose we hit the body with a tremendous, whether it’s ultraviolet or just very powerful light,” Trump observed at a White House coronavirus press briefing. “Supposing you brought the light inside the body, which you can do either through the skin or in some other way...” (Clark, 2020).

During the full year Trump held office during the pandemic outbreak, the United States earned recognition as clearly the worst prepared and least effective of the world’s larger nations in containing the spread and lethal consequences of the Covid-19, eventually reaching nearly 24,000,00 cases and 400,000 deaths (and rising) by the end of January 2021.

While not exactly the circumstances envisioned my epistemological luddism experiment, the widespread effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have challenged and drastically reconfigured traditional social structures and practices in much of everyday life. In the United States, for example, just about the whole range of everyday activities of involved obtaining and processing items in daily use—foods, household goods, and materials—have been replaced by online ordering and direct delivery to one’s door by a network of delivery vehicles, services necessary for

persons living in “stay home” confinement and able to pay for such help. Alas, persons and families of low income and those living in low-income neighborhoods were faced with even great predicaments as the new categories of service and supply were not available to them. Meanwhile, literally thousands of formerly large offices, factories, hotels, gyms, restaurants, small shops, places offering “hospitality” services either close altogether or shrink to a fraction of their former size as people work and conduct countless everyday activities from home.

While disruptions brought by the coronavirus affected almost every domain of social life, the setting for such extraordinary changes that I watched most closely was in college education, especially in arrangements of teaching and learning. As the spring 2020 disasters unfolded and my university shut down as a place of in-person social interaction, many of the students took off to their family homes in distant locations. They began to communicate with me and each other in “virtual/digital” space, using often highly award “digital platforms”—Zoom, WebEx and the like.

In one class, I asked the group to form teams and then explore and think about how these Covid-19 conditions might alter their future. In particular, I pointed to the kinds of calamities and emergencies that prove to be “generation-changing events.” What happens to a whole generation of young people when “Everything suddenly changes”? This was not an abstract question for them. College students’ expectations about where they would be living and what they would be doing - during at least the following two years or so had been abruptly repealed. Their visions of college education, of career paths, summer internships, about international travels had been suspended, and there were no clear alternative, reliable paths yet in view. Colleges and universities around the globe were rapidly adapting to a variety of educational formats, including exclusively online teaching platforms and so-called “hybrid” models in which a combination of in-person educational activity between carefully screened professors and students emerged as ways to retain conventional campus patterns while limiting exposure to the coronavirus.

In historical writings, one finds elaborate descriptions of earlier periods in which whole generations have been confronted with calamities that drastically alter the conventional patterns and trajectories of everyday life.

On the list of highly disruptive emergencies, one finds: the effects of war, epidemic, famine, economic collapse, political revolution, and natural catastrophe. How have individuals, small groups, and whole nations experienced and adapted to these disruptions over extended periods of time? How do such periods of radical disorder become the source of long-term memories and important lessons? Which ones typically fade away within collective consciousness?

There are no uniform answers to such questions. Crucial impressions vary according to a person's, small group's or whole nation's character and situation in time. During my parent's generation, for example, there were two generation-changing ruptures—the Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II. But for a variety of reasons, it was only the Depression that my parents ever talked about in the home—how they left the failing farms and bankrupt shops in Montana and moved west to settle in the promised land of California. However, their experience of World War II was never a focus of stories or significant lessons in family history. The primary reason was that my father was a college teacher hired to administer a program for Naval officers at California Polytechnic College and did not himself go off to fight in the battles of Europe or the Pacific. Thus, a direct experience of war did not become part of the family narrative about emergencies of that decade or a key feature in enduring memory. In contrast, a number of my teachers at U.C. Berkeley during the 1960s had vivid memories of personal experiences during WWII and would often reflect upon them as pivotal moments within discussions of their life experiences.

Looking at disruptive emergencies earlier in the twentieth century, it's relevant that two parallel calamities —World War I and the “Spanish flu” pandemic of 1918–1919—left distinctly different impressions upon historical memory. What in the USA came to be called “the war to end all wars,” was vividly remembered, even celebrated decades after its conclusion. By comparison, the flu outbreak and its consequences seem to have produced only modest impacts in public memory. My speculation would be that rallying the populace to support a military campaign often holds a powerful, lasting fascination in collective national experience. For World War I, it was the widely shared challenge of threat,

mobilization, battle, hardship, and victory that obviously affected memories and visions that were later called into play at the onset of World War II. In contrast, even though the influenza pandemic of 1918 actually claimed far greater numbers of total casualties than World War I itself, the disaster seems to have left little decisive impression upon the long-term collective national memory in the USA. Yes, the pandemic was depicted in a good number of literary reflections—poems and novels were written during the decades that followed. But over several decades, the pandemic itself and its human toll was usually mentioned only in passing with books of general American history and seldom upheld as an illustrative episode within the nation's public rhetoric. It's almost as if the hundreds of thousands of lives lost to the flu did not matter much in framing the experience of later generations.

Indeed, the stark contrast between the experience of war and of a pandemic may be echoed in our current situation the, era of Covid-19. It may be the case that the experiences and memories of pandemic tend to be highly personal, largely isolated sources of tragedy among families, friends, and local communities rather than centers for tense feelings of national solidarity and common purpose of a kind that wars often inspire. Yes, families and friends strongly grieve the suffering and death of those affected by the disease and cherish the memories of those who've passed. But there seems to be no need for strongly magnified vocal or symbolic social remembrance of the vast collectivities who perished in waves of disease and illness. As I look at today's social landscape in the U.S.A., the experience of illness and death within families and local communities seems largely confined to those directly affected and not a matter for focused, organized, collective, long-term community awareness. Even that astonishing statistic—400,000 deaths by the end of January 2021—remained remarkably absent in media and political references to the ongoing calamity.

In contrast, there is strong evidence that the combined experience of World War I and World War II set the stage for a deeply seated generational mindset of collective purpose and experience of collective organization in a war that has endured for now 75 years in the USA. Thus, the country continues to spend \$1 trillion a year on the Pentagon and its various subdivisions if you count all of the costs involved. By

the same token, following the terrorist attacks of 9/11 2001, the US was mobilized by President G.W. Bush and compliant (largely unquestioning) members of both political parties to launch a “Global War on Terror,” realized in a vast military campaign in Afghanistan and, somewhat later, an all-out war against Iraq, even though neither of those nations had been directly involved in the planning or execution of the 9/11 assault.

Faced with what was experienced as a national crisis the urgent post 9/11 2001 global war on terror, America has spent \$6.4 trillion on conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other regional battles in the Middle East during the first two decades of the twenty-first century (Macias, 2019). As reflected in the “The Afghanistan Papers” published in late 2020, revelations from military brass much like those of the Pentagon Papers of the early 1970s—the rationale for these extended, futile conflicts is largely based upon illusions and misrepresentations (Cofman Wittes & Huggard, 2020). Thus, the USA remains locked into a pattern of highly costly arrangements for the next big battle—as the country endlessly prepares for the wrong emergencies as identified within the always popular narrative template of warfare.

Indeed, a derangement of this kind surfaced strongly in the imaginaries prompted by the Covid-19 crisis. During most of 2020, a distinctive feature of the American response was a perverse, even aggressive kind of patriotism, especially as evident in the rhetoric and gestures of President Trump. At a moment in which there was an urgent need for an organized international approach to finding ways to address what was clearly a shared global crisis, Trump often spoke in very narrow, nationalistic ways, describing international inquiries and remedies for public health—including the development of effective vaccines—as steps contrary to patriotic US initiatives. In that light, Trump described those suffering and dying from Covid-19 as “warriors” fighting an “invisible enemy,” language that reflects the common view that warfare is the only cause that reliably brings Americans together in a mood of strong solidarity. Eventually, Trump carried this military imagery completely over the top, saying, “they are warriors aren’t they, when you see them going into those hospitals... I see that with the doctors and the nurses and so

many of the people that go into those hospitals, it's incredible to see, it's a beautiful thing to see" (Perez, 2020).

As one looks beyond the emergencies of war, economic crisis, and even of a pandemic that has engaged public attention in recent times, there is another possible "generation changing" event that beckons us all. During the past 50 years, there has been a slowly dawning awareness about what is truly an existential crisis for humanity and life on Earth as a whole, something of far greater magnitude than even the Covid-19 pandemic. Of course, I refer to the crisis of climate crash (sometimes modestly labeled "climate change") and its implications for Earth's biosphere as a place suitable for habitation by human beings and countless other species. In sheer magnitude and world-altering significance, this could well be the most momentous generation-changing event in all of modern human history. Alas, so far, however, worldwide recognition of and response to this grave crisis has been slow to emerge. One reason may be that the evidence of emergency has taken shape rather gradually over several decades. Even what seem to be undeniably significant events—heat waves, floods, monster storms, rising seas, rising levels of extinction of species, and the like—often fade in people's awareness as their impressions come and go.

It also seems to be the case that the rigor and disciplinary complexities of scientific studies on relevant dimensions of the crisis may pose a barrier to public understanding. Climate scientists in multiple disciplines must, of course, rely upon the critical evaluation and support of their audience of their peers. Yet experts in "climate change" have been very slow to adopt modes of communication that convey the tremendous urgency that emerges from their research. Too often, attitude often seems to be that the numbers from scientific research speak for themselves. When strong data and supporting theories are published, it is assumed that the evidence should be sufficient to impel the world community to take action. But so far, the broader mobilization has been slow and inadequate.

Is it possible that the Covid-19 pandemic could be the catalyst that propels that crisis emerging in Earth's biosphere into much sharper focus and with a stronger sense of urgency? Indeed, some key features in the worldwide response to the coronavirus suggest some potentially

fruitful connections. A glance at social statistics during the early months of 2020 reveals that as regards automobile, truck, and airline traffic, there occurred substantial reductions in the number of trips taken and distances traveled. According to a report published by the International Civil Aviation (ICAO), in 2020, there was an “Overall reduction of 50% of seats offered by airlines ... Overall reduction 2,690 million passengers (60%)...[and] USD 370 billion loss of gross passenger operating revenues” worldwide with corresponding declines in air miles flown (ICAO, 2021). Perhaps even more significant is the fact that overall, “Global carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from the fossil fuel and industry are expected to drop by 7% in 2020” (Global Carbon Project, 2020). This is roughly the yearly level of reductions specified for world nations by the 2015 Paris Agreement, within the key goal of holding the long-term increase warming to 1.5 degrees Centigrade.

It is probably too much to hope that world populations and governments might come to regard the response to Covid-19 as an illuminating trial run that points to the urgent need for sweeping reforms that could address not only climate crash but numerous long-term structural problems in the world societies as well, especially current levels of inequality, social injustice, and grotesque concentrations of wealth in the hands of billionaires and corporations at the top of the economic heap.

A favorable sign is that a great many people in world societies have shown they are ready to change their basic patterns of living and to do that very rapidly—at least for the time being—in the attempt to bring the Covid-19 pandemic under control.

It’s also worth noting that some world societies are prepared to spend huge amounts of public moneys, even trillions of dollars—in attempts to repair and restore the social and economic institutions affected by the disease. Alas, this stands in stark contrast to moves by the USA during the years of the Trump administration during which the climate crisis was depicted as just another left-wing hoax, a view that justified drastic reductions in the nation’s Obama era funding for initiatives to address “climate change.”

Yet in thoughtful publications that track the relationship between high-quality science and shrewd business thinking, one now finds thoughtful contrasts between strategies that pursue conventional pump

up the economy approaches to economic recovery after the Covid-19 crisis as compared to strategies based upon greening and cutting carbon emissions. Thus, in the publication *Climate Action Tracker*, one finds “A government roadmap for addressing the climate and post COVID-19 economic crises.” Its list of particulars includes: “incentives for zero-emission vehicles; direct investments in low-carbon public transport; support for accelerated construction of low and zero-energy buildings; large scale landscape restoration and reforestation efforts” and a long list of other measures (*Climate Action Tracker*, 2020). Thus, within the overall goal of economic recovery, one sometimes finds elaborate proposals for policies and investments that combine post Covid-19 economic stimulus plans with key goals and policies of the Paris Agreement.

In sum, for better or worse, as modern societies conform a range of dire emergencies, the strongest generation-changing experiences appear to be, first and foremost, those of war—especially in response to a military attack on one’s nation. In second place as a generation-changing crises are typically those of extended periods of deep, grinding economic crisis. Other candidate crises—including pandemic and today’s emergencies linked to “climate change” may at first seem to be of a magnitude and emotional severity to galvanize whole societies, inspiring them to organize programs of a forceful response. Alas, regarding their appeal to political leaders and national populations as a whole, such crises may ultimately diminish in general awareness, too weak in their collective narrative appeal to galvanize an organized, sustained response. Thus, as the Covid-19 era fades, its memory and public priorities will likely fade as well. Unfortunately, the same fate now appears to await the climate crash—clearly humanity’s greatest threat and ultimate challenge moving forward. For most of the planet’s nearly 8 billion people, the emergency still seems too general, vague, and distant in its unfolding consequences to merit forceful, immediate action. If only climate “change” were more like an attack on Pearl Harbor.

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Part III

Science and Politics



12

Pseudo-Science and 'Fake' News: 'Inventing' Epidemics and the Police State

Babette Babich

Pseudo-Science and Its Shadows

The term 'pseudo-science' is embroiled in the politically fraught rhetoric of science and science discounting, presupposing a tradition of science and science theory scandals (Babich, 2003, 2015, 2021). Philosophically, a critical orientation may be attempted, but it is daunting, beginning from the traditional question of demarcation, as this also has complexities of its own as a kind of science signaling, flagging what 'science,' so defined,¹ is worth hearing and what 'science'

¹ See Prelli (1989) but see too the contributions to Babich (ed.) (2017b).

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to discount.² The discounting in question can be near-oblivion, to recall just one example of the genetics of algae, witnessed by the scientific fortunes of Franz Moewus (1908–1959). Moewus was so very effectively jettisoned from the literature in his own field and the history of science that even the literature on his jettisoning is limited to one author (Sapp, 1990).³ In the era of the current coronavirus health crisis, usually designated as ‘Covid-19,’ the most telling linguistic move might be the reference to ‘the science.’ By using the definite article, it is implied not only that there is a ‘received view’ in science, just as Thomas Kuhn would tell us, but more crucially that science is a singular, monolithic affair.

As for distinguishing between science ‘good’ and science ‘bad,’ distinctions of this sort are made all the time in university science by scholars vetting applications submitted by scientists for research support as well as by editors and reviewers of scientific journals. In addition, the designation of ‘pseudo-science’ can be retroactively deployed. Thus, we speak of phrenology and race ‘science’ of by-gone years, we discount science, formerly long standing, on intelligence and genetics, and more recently, articles with respected research outcomes can be retracted, sometimes owing to fraud but also for political and other reasons.⁴

As the current pandemic crisis dramatizes, what is wanted is a monolithic, ‘finished’ and certain science: an absolute, unchanging affair, quite like conventional religions. This same desire for the absolute clashes with scientific progress and ongoing research and exploration. Science changes. Indeed: even the issued health recommendations of the World Health Organization, increasingly the source for governmentally mandated health restrictions, undergo changes.

² This is a social affair, but it is current and often the stakes are only known to the participants; one such of these concerns the mechanism of the cell as such. See, from the side of the ignored cytologist, Gilbert Ling (2007a and 2007b). For discussion of cold fusion, AIDS, homeopathy, etc., see Babich (2015). Per contra see the contributions to Pigliucci and Boudry (2013). For science resistance and suppression, see Campanario (1993, 2009), Nissani (1995).

³ See for a discussion, Schwarz (2001).

⁴ There is a related mediatic question, inasmuch as the internet—always a minefield of virtual pitfalls—has become (invisibly) yet more labile: posts are removed/‘shadowed’ by social media firms, websites and PDFs vanish (see Blackman, 2019) along with YouTube videos. There will in future be a need for a shadow media archaeology.

The notion of 'fake' news may be extended to social media posts deemed unreliable. Increasingly this is a matter not only of flagging but blocked access. If 'the internet' seems to offer a diversity of sources, this diversity is increasingly illusory. Thus, propaganda storms as designed by Google (and whoever pays) ensures that content is headlined by various social media platforms such as Facebook, or Twitter or Instagram, or even random blogs, such that 'fake' news is pretty much all there is.⁵ But even before the internet, mainstream news—*London Times* style, *Le Monde* style, *Die Welt* style—was always what the *New York Times* blazoned on its masthead: only the news deemed 'fit to print.'⁶

Today's news gatekeepers impose a seemingly volatile variant on Max Weber's iron cage, thus YouTube videos vanish, and Facebook and Twitter silently muzzle (shadow ban) users. Freelance human and AI 'Fact checkers' tracking and blocking internet activity on social media, often without liability, and typically unaccredited, invisible, seemingly Wikipedia style (see on Wikipedia, Bateman, 2016; Farda-Sarbas & Müller-Birn, 2019, and, on 'fact checking' the fact-checkers, Leetaru, 2016), have taken on such tasks of ensuring conformity, by which is meant 'what is fit' to view/download.

Lockdown

The psychological effects of isolation and loneliness are well known.⁷ 'Lockdown,' deployed at intervals as is now the political tactic, announced in advance and duly, if unpredictably carried out, thus maximizing its social effects, has become the 'new normal,' be it tacitly

⁵ The term has its own baggage: see Tandoc et al. (2018) and Tsfati et al. (2020).

⁶ Thus mainstream media reported a student's protest of Mark Crispin Miller on masks (Holt & Pasquarella, 2020).

⁷ Thus, Kirsten Weir turns to neurobiology, citing a textbook study to explain that 'the sustained stress of extreme isolation leads to a loss of hippocampal plasticity, a decrease in the formation of new neurons, and the eventual failure in hippocampal function. On the other hand, the amygdala increases its activity in response to isolation. This area mediates fear and anxiety, symptoms enhanced in prisoners in solitary confinement' Weir (2012, p. 54). Weir cites Haney (2006): 'Deprived of normal human interaction, many segregated prisoners reportedly suffer from mental health problems including anxiety, panic, insomnia, paranoia, aggression and depression.' Cf. more generally Horwitz (1990) and Haney (1993).

induced by ‘mask mandates’ or via curfew and ‘quarantine,’ an explicit and extended legal restriction to the home—derives from its application as a disciplinary measure in correctional institutions or prisons. It includes the features of solitary confinement, along with prohibitions against social contact, recently extended to specify eye contact, requiring that one keep one’s distance when approaching others, along with limiting the amount of time one is permitted to be outside the home, limited to a specific distance around the home, also as specified in the case of a criminal sentence of house arrest.

The point of these restrictions is, as we are repeatedly informed, for our own good: social isolation is meant to limit the spread of the novel virus, Covid-19. News reports are contrary, at times suggesting this has not worked, at times implying that the virus, apparently more infectious and certainly far less lethal than initially modeled, has already ‘silently’ spread to more individuals (‘asymptotically’)⁸ than expected.

Since the spring and summer of 2020 and ongoing into 2021, assessments of Covid-19 ‘infections’ are reports not of illnesses or deaths and not of hospitalization, but simply tested ‘cases.’ ‘Cases’ of Covid-19 are defined as corresponding to positive test results, using a PCR test disputed on a number of levels (Engelbrecht & Demeter, 2020), but mandated by institutions for their employees, especially in the case of universities and schools, to permit access for teachers and students and increasingly more generally and by law. Yet ‘cases’ ascertained in this fashion do not correspond to illness as such. The imaginary prospect of contagion is similarly invisible.

Recent governmental medical recommendations, ranging from ‘lock-down,’ mandatory masks, even social distancing, arguably run counter to standard or received understanding (including long-standing debates, this being a research subject after all)⁹ regarding both infectious diseases *and* immunology quite as public health officers, medical doctors, and

⁸ Sample (2020) cites studies between April and June 2020.

⁹ Cf., with regard to a past ‘pandemic,’ Kolata (2007), Tomes (2000), and Rudolph (2004) and for military application, Eickhoff (1996), and, with a historical review, Lederberg (2000) and Koopman (2004) as well as Johnson (2016) and Roberge et al. (2010). On a certain ‘mediocrity,’ about which Fleck himself would also complain at the end of his life, see Klein (1985).

clinical researchers protested from the start. But Sucharit Bhakdi, Wolfgang Wodarg, Luc Montaigner, and other names, such as Didier Raoult, would promptly be vilified as 'conspiracy theorists,' drawing them into the above maw of exclusion. Thus despite the many differences between them, all of them would be branded as 'Covid Denialists,' to match other sundry denialists, to such an extent that no level or degree of scientific expertise could stand against mandated regulations.¹⁰

As the October 2020 WHO 'reversal' might seem to underline: quite apart from the obvious damage to individuals on an economic level, day to day—how can a public lockdown be undertaken for the sake of good health?¹¹ How can health authorities claim that avoiding contact with other human beings, i.e., staying indoors and 'social distancing,' that avoiding fresh air and sunlight is beneficial for health? Nevertheless this is asserted.

To be sure: the psychological 'point' of requiring that one wear a mask—indeed the imperative slogan, 'wear a mask,' often spiced with vulgarity, plastered on street signs, and public transport, and all over social media—functions to remind the public that they themselves are themselves the cause of viral infection and thus a danger to others. To wear a mask works to flag yourself—and others—that it is *you*—and, concomitantly, that is those others—who are the problem. Anthrophobia follows.

Contagion

It is notable that the narrative of infection and contamination (and containment) is as dated (and that also means as debated inasmuch as there is no consensus that is not also a consequence of pharmaceutical politics) as it is. Thus, much is made of previous pandemics dating back to the era of Victorian medicine, literally a nineteenth century paradigm.

¹⁰ For a report on current protests by physicians and medical professionals, and in addition to other global medical alliances, often associated with political protests this past August and September in Berlin and London, see 'The Great Barrington Declaration' (see Andrews, 2020).

¹¹ As of October 2020 the WHO reversed its recommendations, suggesting that governmental lockdown restrictions are not advised. Reversals and flipflops continue. See Richardson (2020) but see also for immediate spin: Lee (2020).

But there is also a twentieth century history of retrospective reflection and writing from the scientific and medical vantage of 1935, Ludwik Fleck, a medical serologist and immunologist, argued that the problem with virtuous flags and picturesque imaginings of contagion is that these obscure a scientific understanding of disease propagation:

As an example of such grossly popular science, consider an illustration representing the hygienic fact of droplet infection. A man emaciated to a skeleton and with greyish purple face is sitting on a chair and coughing. With one hand he is supporting himself wearily on the arm of the chair, with the other he presses his aching chest. The evil bacilli in the shape of little devils are flying from his open mouth An unsuspecting rosy-cheeked child is standing next to him. One devil bacillus is very, very close to the child's mouth The devil has been represented bodily in this illustration half symbolically and half as a matter of belief. But he also haunts the scientific speciality to its very depths, in the conceptions of immunological theory with its images of bacterial attack and defense. (Fleck, 1978, p. 116)

Medical authorities, recently seeking to make the authoritarian case for compliance (difficult enough as guidelines continue to shift) cite Fleck's use of the then-textbook science but manage to overlook Fleck's context and not less the point of his example (Jacob, 2020; cf. Brorson, 2006; Rietmann, 2018). Fleck challenged this image, *as if* a singular, malignant disease 'agency,' corresponded to an absolute etiology of disease, and *as if* medical science had not advanced since the last decades of the 19th and the first decades of the 20th century.¹² Today, beginning from February and March of 2020, research publications themselves have become part of the problem of fake news—flooding the internet, faking results even in leading journals, for the sake of political impact. The tactic is an old one: to combat rumors, secret societies of by-gone ages would publish counter accounts,¹³ sometimes regarded, a bit unkindly, under

¹² As in the case of Flügge (1896, 1897) and, drawing on Flügge, Wells (1934). See Fleck's (1986) 'The Problem of Epistemology,' as well as Belt and Gremmen (1990), Brorson (2006) and Mayer and Weingart (2004). See also Carter (2003).

¹³ Graw (2004). Thus Jacob (2020) deploys a deflationary rhetoric under the heading of the 'Elsevier Public Health Emergency Collection, but see too, earlier and by contrast Eyer' (2010).

the rubric of 'Jesuitism,' which has thus a certain counter-reformation legacy.¹⁴

To follow 'the science,' as we scholars would surely prefer, we require a certain foundation to begin with: all facts, like dogs, neatly chained up, quite as Nietzsche wrote toward the end of the nineteenth century. Nietzsche's metaphor is a 'subterranean' one, notably *physiological*: the body in all its recalcitrance is to be subordinated to the spiritually minded force of enlightenment or reason, no 'enemy barking or shaggy spite; no gnawing worm of wounded ambition; modest and submissive inner organs, busy as windmills but distant' (Nietzsche, 1980, p. 352; cf. Weiss, 2003 on Fleck). Once upon a time, our knowledge of the body, as of infectious diseases, might have been of this subterranean and hardly less hermetic variety. But today, we imagine ourselves enlightened, beyond such ideological constraints (Latour, 1992; Lewontin, 1991, and for an overview of 'contrasting' theories of life, including a section on models, Cornish-Bowden & Cárdenas, 2020).

It seems—and this must be a concern for (at least some) students of social studies of science/technology—that Coronavirus 2020 has ushered in a return to an ideal that had, to modify Latour's language but in keeping with his spirit, 'never been' modern, quite as Feyerabend (1993) argued, but which also always contained an implicit threat: science by dictate (cf. Babich, 2020b; Bauer, 2012; Latour, 1993). And today, in place of due diligence and individual medical guidance, the threat of fines and imprisonment.

But is this right? And what is 'the science'? Better yet, perhaps, we might ask *whose* science are we to follow? Thus Fleck's (1978), already cited *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, an intriguing whodunnit of the history of disease, venereal as it happens, the pox, i.e., syphilis, explores the development, very elusive in the case of it, of a test to determine whether one has or does not have a syphilitic infection. Along the way, Fleck also details the complexities of infection (and "pseudo-disease") (Fleck, 1986, p. 41) as it can turn out that not all,

¹⁴ See Walsham (2009).

or better said only a small percentage of positively infected individuals develop the disease in its most debilitating, tertiary manifestation. As Fleck reminds us: a contagious agent is only *part* of the story when it comes to the immune system and hence to the public health matter of the spread of disease, thus the need to ‘invent’ and thence to ‘establish’ a scientific fact, including both the identification of the disease entity itself and a test for it.

Being academics, scientists claim glory for themselves whenever they can, and at the low and middle, and highest levels, this can easily degenerate into denigrating others. This is the working dynamic of the inner circle of scientific cartels, and it is one of the risks of peer review. It also means that it is easy to find folk to ‘mob’—academic ‘mobbing’ is a technical term after all—again to name Bakhdi or Wodarg and in addition Stefan Lanka or Judy Mikovits or even the Nobel prizewinning Montagnier, one need hardly mention the names associated with an older viral crisis, HIV, even as these names recur, including Peter Duesberg and others (see Duesberg et al., 2003, and on mobbing Duffy & Sperry, 2012; on mockery and ‘models,’ Babich, 2017b; Leydesdorff, 2006; Pilkey & Pilkey-Jarvis, 2007, and, with a study of Duesberg, Bialy, 1998, 2004; cf. Babich, 2015). In letters more broadly, the mobbing was almost instantaneous after Giorgio Agamben (2020b) had published nothing more threatening, on the face of it, than ‘questions’ as of Easter Monday, 13 April 2020. In reaction to this, Agamben’s peers immediately spoke out against him, with next to no exceptions, save gingerly, months later and only for some (on the challenge of reading Agamben’s questions, see Babich, 2020b).

Science is bedeviled by its reigning paradigms as Kuhn put it (1962), led by its convictions or *prejudices* as Nietzsche supposed: an array of *idee fixe*, which, this is no pedagogical accident, also happens to be the name of the little dog carried about by the great figure in Asterix, Obelix.¹⁵ And for all their restrictions, just such ‘fixed ideas’ tend to remain in handbooks and journals and thus garner grants, get recognition, drive

¹⁵ See Babich (2015) for discussion and references. See also with specific reference to the current crisis, Gapova (2020).

laboratories (Latour & Woolgar, 1979; Pilkey & Pilkey-Jarvis, 2007; for other references: Babich, 2018a and 2017b; Resnik & Smith, 2020).

Ivan Illich, in a prescient analysis (1995), described 'medical nemesis' as the practice of an institution more dedicated to domination, especially dedicated to the control of death, than to health as such (Babich, 2018a; Conrad, 2007 as well as with respect to seeming immunity from ethics and consequently liability, Skrabanek, 1990). Compounding questions of ethics and political domination, the cartel system of peer review seems to mirror the clumping support of only certain research trends. Thus, when it comes to support for research science, funds are devoted, exclusively, to whatever single answer (yet another way to parse 'the' science) happens to be received/privileged. Peer review ensures this: this is the buddy system (among other studies, see, including gender issues, Larivière et al., 2013; Resnik & Smith, 2020). This same 'buddy system' is one of the reasons Michael Moore's *Planet of the Humans* (2020), directed by Jeff Gibbs and released for free Earth Day 2020, is neither fake news nor false in its claims but inconvenient for those who wish to imagine that one can simply shift one's investment portfolio, and marry an old energy industry to a 'green' new energy industry.

Still, if you as a research scholar 'dare to know,' as Kant wrote, but especially if you 'think outside the box,' your work will languish unfunded and ultimately 'unreceived' by either academia or industry. Seeking, as Nietzsche argued, as Heidegger argued, as I argue, a science that is truth unchanging, we install a 'science' to 'believe' in or to 'follow,' in place of religion, a repository of truth unchanging. Denigrating theories we dislike, classifying scientific approaches that shake our prejudices as 'pseudo-science' is a long-standing tactic: it is how one writes scripture, and it is a recipe for dogma.

Inventing 'Pseudo-Science': On Science and Its Discontents

What is at stake concerns what Kuhn silently borrowed from Fleck, the same Polish physician already mentioned, a blood pathologist, who invented his own paradigm for the immune system, what he called 'leukergy' (cf. Grzybowski, 2007), an immunological theory focused on white blood cells, leukocytes. In an age of coronavirus—Covid-19—historical discussions of the immune system are increasingly important as is the fraught reference to 'terrain' (Ayoade, 2017; Barnes, 1995; in addition to Latour, 1993; Carter, 2003; Mendelsohn, 2012).

Above, I quoted from Fleck's 1986 study of syphilis, a complex disease entity in its historical context. But *what* disease are we talking about, *where* does it come from (apparently every historical and geographic locus has been proffered as a candidate for the 'French pox, the carnal scourge' as it has been called),¹⁶ and *who* had it: did Shakespeare have it? Did Nietzsche have it, and in any case, to what *kind* of disease does it refer? Qua disease, syphilis morphs from one manifestation to another in the body, first presenting as a skin disease to progress to a disease of the blood to proceed, after decades of 'incubation,' to colonize the brain and the meninges, and including polyarthritis.

The Lvov-born Fleck, a Jew, used both science and art to fight the Nazis (as only a serologist could do) by means of a vaccine Fleck and Weigl had prepared to be inert, not that the Nazi officers who ordered them to do so could ever have known what was in it. Fleck is the unnamed second scientist in Arthur Allen's, *The Fantastic Laboratory of Dr. Weigl: How Two Brave Scientists Battled Typhus and Sabotaged the Nazis* (2015).¹⁷ A component, just one, of the long-standing debates on vaccination, lurks in this and (numerous) other details.¹⁸

¹⁶ Thus John J. Ross remarks, in the vein many other authors also follow, that 'Syphilis has been called "the most disowned infection in history." The French called it the Neapolitan disease, and the English, Germans, and Italians called it the French disease. The Russians blamed it on the Poles; the Poles blamed the Germans; the Dutch, the Belgians, and the Portuguese blamed the Spanish; in India and Japan, the Portuguese were blamed' Ross (2005, p. 400).

¹⁷ See, too, Rietmann (2018).

¹⁸ See Babich (2003, 2015) as well as Offit (2005a, 2005b) and Moir (2020).

Our prejudices, Nietzsche reminds us, as Heidegger subsequently reminds us, get in the way of our thinking. Thus Karl Mannheim, influential for Fleck, distinguished between 'total ideology' and what he named 'particular ideology' (cf. Coombs, 1966), where total ideology patently bears on the psychology of global crises that is the concern of this volume overall. Yet as academics, we tend to be suspicious of words like 'ideology.' Thus, the late evolutionary biologist, Richard Lewontin, would be roundly attacked for having written *Biology as Ideology* (1991). It did not help Lewontin that he held the Louis Agassiz chair in Zoology at Harvard, no amount of scientific authority can help in this as Lewontin, perhaps, should have known. When one exposes certain ideologies, those who stand to profit from those ideologies will strike back. Lewontin, a mathematician by formation, wanted to look at the numbers and not less the role of public health measures in terms of clean water and clean air as well as overall improvements in the standard of living along with increased income for a given population. Others argued that the fall of infectious disease could be ascribed to the sole efficacy of modern medical interventions, like vaccines or like drugs of one sort or another. This is certainly the way the World Health Organization intervenes in poor communities in Asia and Africa: no food, unless it mandates imposing GMO crops for sale to farmers; no programs to bring clean water to people, just—and only—vaccination for all.¹⁹

These names, Fleck, and Kuhn, and Lewontin, are stock names, and although their questions remain unresolved, Facebook and Twitter fact-checkers are sure one can simply google the facts and there they will be, ready to hand for the advantage of the CDC, the WHO, the government in what seems to be nearly every country in the world, with the possible exception of Sweden. For many, this will be a push to remain on lockdown rather than to strengthen one's immune system via contact with others, with the world, with the earth itself.

The police state of which I speak is not merely the overeager punitive enforcement, leading to substantial fines and a certain amount of ill-disguised *Schadenfreude*, as citizens are urged to spy on and covertly

¹⁹ See Vandana Shiva (1989, 2000, 2011). For journalistic 'spin' reducing Shiva's research to 'activism,' see Specter (2014).

report on one another, as academics already outdo one another in social shaming. And violations of current Covid-measures also lead to incarceration in some cases. But even without police measures, we ourselves have become our own police, our own jailers. We, ourselves, the whistleblower on our neighbor, chiding him or her for failing to wear a mask or for walking too close to others in the open air in a park, on the street, or while shopping for food at the supermarket.

Here, to develop these reflections to go where they should go, namely to what we owe the living, both the healthy and the sick, the young and the old, elsewhere, I have already added Camus and Sophocles, and Milton in my reflections on what we owe the dead (Babich, 2020b; cf. Agamben, 2020b, cf. Agamben, 2020a). But it must be noted that it is one of the corporal works of mercy to visit the sick, even those who are ill who are strangers to us, regarding what we owe ourselves and those around us, family, colleagues, and strangers, as we are ourselves reciprocally, all of us, strangers one to another.

Necropolitics in an Injectable

Achille Mbembe's necropolitics explicates Carl Schmitt, with a twist yielding the power syndrome that currently dominates our lives, as Agamben also writes about this, here to cite Mbembe's words, in order to "dictate who may live and who must die" (Mbembe, 2003, 11). To speak of necropolitics 'in an injectable,' given the current corona crisis, is no metaphor and will not be limited to Africa or India.

But how has such necropolitics has come to dominate across the globe? Elsewhere, drawing on marketing psychology and propaganda techniques over the past former century (Ellul, 1973), I foreground the micro-thing that is 'feedback' in a digital era (Babich, 2016). Having input anything, all we need is a confirmation, click, or swipe. In the mid-1950s, the critical theorist, Günther Anders (1902–1992), son of the psychologist William Stern (1871–1938), analyzed this in terms of 'homeworking': we dedicate ourselves to radio, cinema, television, cable TV, our iPads, identifying references on demand, follow sports teams, politics, Twitter, what have you. It is the same, ontologically speaking,

to do the same via any device, cellphone, laptop, television, or YouTube. Given a connection with a screen, we *are*, visually-cum-haptically, *online*.

Our concern with online events, our fear-of-missing-out, as analyzed by psychologists, sociologists, political theorists, excuses both presence *and* absence: the feedback loops offer the simulacrum that is the illusion of 'talk of our own name.' As the Stoics already wrote some two thousand years ago, the itch for recognition is a destructive addiction, but today's social media has addicted all of us: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, it hardly matters. We are all 'celebrities' (Seymour, 2019), we are all 'royals,' as I argue (Babich, 2020a). In the same way, websites collect enough cookies to seem to know us, tracked AI style, individually, personally. It works for commercial links to Amazon, offering options for recently browsed or items casually mentioned and digitally 'overheard' in conversation. The efficacy seems universal quite along with the neural research to prove it.²⁰ Having set ourselves up to follow life online and to amass 'followers' online, we are poised for a pandemic brought to us in the 'sheltering in place' comfort of our own homes.

Today, we are willy-nilly, first in the stasis and now in the ongoing aftermath of Lockdown, equalized spectators: captivated by programs advertising the newest news along with the newest, latest gadget. So, we buy massively online, enriching internet purveyors in the process. Assuming our invisibility, behind our screens, focused on them as we are, we also manage to overlook what we 'technically' know to be a given. We are oblivious to ubiquitous surveillance.

As Ernst Schraube reminds us in an important essay titled with a phrase borrowed from Anders, 'Torturing Things Until They Confess,' we continue to have no idea *who* Anders was, an obscurity consequent upon Anders' own, as Schraube emphasizes, 'extensive critique of technology' (2005, p. 77). In the current crisis, however, Anders' critique is essential. Similarly, Jean Baudrillard's reflections are key as the current crisis is adumbrated by media transmission, including social media, i.e., the internet. Thus one 'participates' in academic symposia in 2020 as in

²⁰ See complete with images of brain activation maps, as well as further references to the literature, Carmody and Lewis (2006). See too, Wu (2016) and Zuboff (2019).

2021, although in-person meetings were banned, virtually, *synchronously* and then, archived on YouTube, *asynchronously*, as ‘instruction’ (one needs these scare quotes) continues, precariously uncertain, with masks mandated, on every level, preschool and primary school to university.

The ‘screen being’ of and for this mode of human interaction needs to be studied, although and of course, as I have argued: Illich and Anders were already there, along with other more mainline thinkers (see for further references Babich, 2016, 2018b).

The new tracking technology is part of our cell-phones, beyond that, it is inhaled ‘in smart dust’ (Haggerty, 2013, xxv) or injected as a dye to track vaccination and so on (Donnelley et al., 2018; Trafton, 2019). ‘People as sensors,’ by design, as the Australian sociologists M.G. Michael and Katrina Michael write (2013b, xxiv).

‘Cancel culture’ is a concomitant of screen being and its blinders: we see what we click, reinforced as a feed (echoing Adorno’s language of the ‘culinary,’ Anders’ ‘noodled’ or force-fed geese). Thus the whole of former life has been summarily ‘canceled,’²¹ on an academic level this includes conferences as well as commencement celebrations and standard school terms, ‘ghosting’ face to face. The name is new, but the social phenomenon is an old one: common practice on small town streets or in corporate or university hallways, the trick of not seeing folk as one passes them by. Ghosting is mobbing by negation or silence, as it is studied in sociology and psychology.²² But this is also done physically by means of our masks, blocking and obscuring one’s own face, one’s own proprioception/perceptive acuity, along with that of the other.

In philosophy, the mechanism drives the analytic-continental divide and accounts for validation, most obvious when withheld. We listen to certain experts and we dismiss others as doing ‘bad’ work or defending pseudo-science or, worse yet, whatever some of us dub ‘conspiracy.’

The sense in which we have to do with what underlies the interface, qua invisible, we simply take for granted, this passes beneath notice, like Nietzsche’s intestinal windmills. In the same way, we are hacked

²¹ See, for recent mainstream media discussions, Bromwich (2018) and McDermott (2018). See too Kinos-Goodin (2018).

²² See further Duffy and Sperry (2012), as well as Prevost and Hunt (2018).

without our knowledge, most digital viruses lurk as bacteria (et al.) in our bodies live: happily co-existing, nicely named 'cookies' sending back the data they track, without our leave but much more crucially: beneath our notice. And philosophically we can ask the Leibnizian question: is this a difference that makes any difference? Why should we care? Many of these cookies are embedded in legal ways, certainly we agree to them, an irrecusable part of the software 'packages' we ourselves install.²³

The notion of viral contamination is a mongrel between the living and the dead, between computer and medical science (with a certain amount of built-in cold war and sci-fi metaphoric: Mayer, 2004; cf. Alekseeva et al., 2013; Wassenaar & Blaser, 2002). We long ago persuaded ourselves of the importance of 'vaccination,' following a heroic narrative and a monocausal account contra the complex evidence of public health studies and the attenuation of disease morbidity (Douglas et al., 2020; Latour, 2000). When Lewontin reminded his readers of this history in *Biology as Ideology*, he experienced almost instant blowback. We 'believe' in vaccination—side-effects be damned. The metaphor follows the current computer model (Conrad, 2007; Illich, 1995; Leydesdorff, 2006), the ideal of 'virus protection:' always-on security that is also, of course, always-on tracking in our digital devices. If this can be injected into our bodies, so much the better, so some scholars argue. But the scale has changed in the interim, from microchips to nanochips and softer still as so-called quantum dots, 'delivered,' I am quoting *MIT News* from December 2019, 'along with a vaccine.'²⁴ The technology to do this is, of course, already several years old.

In today's age of what I above called 'screen being,' the ontological transformation is complete: we do not see the screen because, intent on whatever we seek, whatever we imagine ourselves to be doing, we see through the screen: we see past it. Screen cleaners and special microfiber wipes for screens are increasingly unnecessary not because today's screens no longer smudge but because we no longer notice the smudges: we disattend in the same way that a person afflicted with

²³ See for example, Berry's 'Softwarization of Society' in Berry (2014, pp. 53–87) but also Hall (2016) as well as Stingl (2015).

²⁴ See, again, Trafton (2019, cf. Donnelly et al., 2018).

‘floaters’ in the sclera (these are caused by a number of things, including viral infections but also Lyme disease as well as syphilis and tuberculosis, as well as a range of fungal infections, molds, and larger parasites) accommodates, and no longer sees the floaters that are, of course, still there (Williamson & Haynes, 2018).²⁵ If being-on-line increasingly encompasses the entirety of a person’s affective life, including porn, including masturbatory habits that have become mainstream but also including romance, dating apps, gambling apps, via little swipe screens, and the habits of the same, sub- or unconsciously adumbrated by what we *do not see*.

Baudrillard sought to map this for us in his own work on media and its digitalization, reminding us that media largely works as the *illusion* of communication (see Babich, 2018b). To this same extent, our *response* to so-called ‘Fake News’ (this is the click-factor) is itself a manufactured artifact of our unshakable belief that, given sufficient filters, blocking/censoring dangerous input, we can see the truth (Tandoc et al., 2018). Our responses to media, radio, television, film, internet feeds, are controlled, and again, we insist that this is not so (Bateman, 2016; Gapova, 2020).

Greg Milner (2016),²⁶ explores the ubiquitous presence of tracking technology, including a fair measure of global imperialism.²⁷ Now, GPS is nothing innocuous (Oxley, 2017). But, ‘distracted by distraction from distraction,’²⁸ we do not remember details from day to day, not to mention invoking past experience, which is how weather manipulation, chemtrails, an obvious thing, widely denied by mainstream media and the like, proceed in plain sight. And to the extent that use and familiarity breed complacency if not contempt, we tend to regard reports of

²⁵ Intriguingly there is little that can be done medically to cure this, so that we ‘live’ with it. Cf. Nussenblatt (2010) and Perez and Caspi (2015).

²⁶ Although earlier, see if only for reflections on the whereness of ‘whereness,’ Robin Mannings (2008), here 19f. See too, more conventionally, Michael P. Lynch (2015) and see too Lynch (2016).

²⁷ See here, to start, Frith (2015) as well as, because just such ‘data’—your sex life online—is what is and *can be* studied, Albury et al. (2017). See Babich (2019).

²⁸ Here I find Kurt Vonnegut’s ‘Harrison Bergeron’ disquieting and perfectly apt.

such dangers as hype, quite in the same way as we imagine that all wireless technologies are harmless, from microwaves to 5G.²⁹ If it doesn't kill us immediately, such that we fall over or 'vaporize,' as in a video game, we must be fine, healthwise, with it.

Tethered to our machines, we need plugs wherever we go (should we ever travel again), as we are the nursemaids of our devices: keeping our devices fully charged is added to the tasks of the everyday, to keep them handier than the Heideggerian 'ready to hand' at all times, we worry about the same devices.³⁰ Technology to this extent is more than an extension of our senses, as argued beginning in the nineteenth century. Much rather, technology extends our desires, crystallizing them: we know what it can bring us, and we are prepared to submit to its exigencies, solicitously attuned to our phones, attentive to the invisible Jinn's of WiFi/WLAN and cell phone towers, 4G, 5G—whatever, we do not care.

Postphenomenology and Conspiracy, or: Vaccination and National Security

The same rhetoric that can devalue a scientist or expert judgment can be used to counter claims (naming them 'conspiracy'), a counter-strategy sometimes deployed to confirm those same claims as casual facts.

If Mari Lilleslåtten writing online in *Science Norway* can remind us that 'The coronavirus pandemic strengthens state authority,' (2020) one of the things that should be underscored is that there is less debate on this theme than there is about wondering when mass vaccination will be ready. But as Latour, who writes about this at length two decades ago, in a book on vaccination, his subtly argued, *The Pasteurization of France*, where Latour not unlike Lewontin, points to the complex thing that it is to 'bring' vaccination to the country as it were, but not less to the showmanship required. It was not facts per se but it was good media

²⁹ See, representatively for references, Maregu (2016) as well as Sharma and Kumar (2010).

³⁰ Thus marketers/social psychologists study the separation anxiety that follows should we forget them at home or lose them. See Rosenberger (2014), and, invoking 'Gelassenheit,' Babich (2017b).

representation that made Pasteur a success. As Latour writes, ‘politics is made not with politics but with something else. Here was a new source of power with which to conquer the state’ (Latour, 2000, 56). The rest is propaganda. Thus, Latour describes Pettenkoffer’s casual quaffing of a beaker of cholera bacilli as drama subtending the vastly more efficacious improvements (this is ‘terrain’) to public health (clean water and the like). Latour has been making his points for a long time, Lewontin likewise, and so too Fleck on typhus, likewise in the Berkeley virologist Peter Duesberg’s arguments on AIDS and HIV causality (Babich, 2015 and see Babich, 2021, forthcoming).

Surveillance, as argued in *Überveillance*, (Michael & Michael, 2013a), has to be obvious, or it is pointless. To this end, in a digital age, people themselves are their own monitors: i.e., and again, ‘people as sensors.’³¹ If Kevin Haggerty’s reassuring conviction, circa 2006, that ‘there will be no 3 a.m. knock on the door by storm troopers’ (2013, xix) may seem naïve today, given a few YouTube videos showing what appear to be precisely such incursions, his larger claim seems correct: such tracking will be ‘couched in the unassailable language of progress and social betterment,’ (ibid.), i.e., we will be doing this, or the government will be doing it to us, for our health. The effect is pure Foucault: discipline and punish.

Thus if smart tagging can be effected, as one can count off the ways ‘omnipresent electronic surveillance might be implanted in the body,’ including ‘smart swallowable pills, nanotechnology patches, ... even smart dust’ (Michael & Michael, 2013a, xxiv) such means of delivery are already in the air, in the works, already deployed.

How to Write a Narrative for a Pandemic

So how does one ‘Invent an Epidemic?’ How does one go about inventing a pandemic?

³¹ Michael and Michael (2013a, xxiv). The same collection (fairly) includes Katherine Albrecht’s 2010 ‘Microchip Induced Tumors in Laboratory Rodents and Dogs’ (Albrecht, 2013).

My title mentions fake news, the sort of thing the Warwick sociologist Steve Fuller (2020) thinks through very carefully with respect to counseling DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency) on, as it were, how to do it, quite with respect to constructing a narrative. Narratives are important things. For Hollywood and Cannes oriented movie makers and YouTube product influencers, you need a story board, a story line, important for the mystery novelist as Umberto Eco knew and as Leo Tolstoy also understood this on a grand scale, Latour has recourse to this, citing Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, but not less Arthur Conan Doyle and his wonderfully pedantic invention, Sherlock contra a specific and often bumbling Doctor, who played straight man to his boy or sexagenarian genius (Basil Rathbone or Benedict Cumberbatch, it is the same): one must line up one's ducks well and truly to ensure that the even more bumbling Scotland Yard or that greatest of bumlbers, the reader of detective novels, will draw the right conclusions. Most recently, J.K. Rowling did this for us in her *Harry Potter*, wherein we learned to hate a careful and rigorous teacher, Severus Snape for being a careful and rigorous teacher. We like teachers who are buddies, teachers who make us learn, not so much. Thus for students, moving classes online can seem a dream come true. Here the point concerns narrative: by telling her tale as she told it, Rowling was able to ensure that her child wizard fantasy novels (and later the film series based on her books) would sell and continue to sell. *Game of Thrones*, *Harry Potter*, *Sherlock Holmes* video and filmic distractions that have ruled our minds for so long that a professor with a specialization in philosophy of science, critical epistemology, aesthetics, that would be me, includes such references in her teaching and research. We are soaking in the media that makes the 'invention' of an epidemic possible, and by saying this, I am not talking content, king for the media makers, precisely because it is 'content' that allows them to do what they need to do, namely, to sell their product or advance the cause of global pandemic, while keeping the world audience, this is a very huge move, otherwise distracted and yet fully focused.

Everything is channeled by way of the internet. What used once upon a time to be radio programming, Hollywood film programming, television programming (think Anders, think Williams, think Baudrillard), print media, standardized textbooks, now, thanks to Covid, the university

itself, its best (and worst) teachers, without debate on university senate floors, having, at no cost at all to their universities or to the government, put their courses online, in many cases *asynchronously*, meaning that it is now canned and packaged, calculable and reusable, rebrandable, quite as they were told to do so, in just this fashion—YouTube and Blackboard and Zoom, Moodle and Panopto must be breaking from the weight of all this content, except they are not (the claim that storage space is a thing in a virtual realm is a way to charge you more fees for more nowhere amounts of the same virtual drive), this is Langdon Winner's dark EduSham™ (1989), in his parody prediction of yesteryear or go and read Kittler, or Berry et al., and so on.

When one gets one's information from a single source or medium (I am talking about the screen) one is 'primed,' as the Yale psychologist John Bargh contends (1999, 2006), as I quote him in *The Hallelujah Effect* (2016). Lisa Blackman (2019) points out that 'haunting' effects include fellow psychologists and see Adam Curtis' *Century of the Self* (2005) on Bernays, *Crystallization of Public Opinion* (1923). But priming is only one part of a multi-stage process (Rodríguez, 2019), a process that works better if you are on 'Lockdown,' forbidden by decree to leave your home except for essential things. Certainly, Lockdown, as I began by noting, follows the model of solitary confinement, prison psychology and this works just as well if the incarceration is self-imposed, where the jailed are their own jailers, and, just as in the case of jail, prepare their own meals but, improving on the logistics of a jail, prisoners who also obtain their own provisions, paying for their jail (rent) and for their own food and everything else related to their upkeep in the process. In this concentrated setting, the narrative, which was, as it seems, already prepared, unfolds.

Covid-19, an astonishingly virulent and not less astonishingly vague or multifarious disease flagged as a foreign invasion (how often is the language of the foreigner, the outsider, the other, the exotic locale, key to the mythology of infectious invasion?), a microscopic terror communicated, first, according to the WHO, not as airborne but on surfaces: hence the images of hazmat teams spraying streets with bleach (although a certain politician's references to bleach were received with great hilarity, see for an overview of some longstanding, Rutala & Weber, 1997), which

has in the interim been extended to the oddly absurd and cruel to nature, that is littoral and seabird life, spraying of a Spanish beach, a deliberate spill of chemicals into nature for reasons not of cogency but panic fear.

The properties of this disease from Wuhan, where the US government participates in the administration of several laboratories set up to bypass a number of US restrictions (since lifted) on research then binding in the US regarding gain-of-function bioweapons but also GMO, experimenting with stem cells, with fetal tissue, with transhuman embryos, experiments not a problem in Wuhan and elsewhere, including the development as Paul Virilio (2003) wrote about animal-human mosaics (up to 80% human-pig chimeras, 90% -mouse) for the sake of DARPA funded medical research, for the sake, variously, of transplants, including vaccine development, where bioweapons are just the tip of the iceberg as such things are good for all sort of things.

In his *The Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, Fleck reminds us of the general theory of disease, permeating a certain view of disease etiology whereby it is assumed that a disease is 'caused' by one disease entity. What one asks, when one hears of the death of a colleague, a neighbor, a distant family member, a friend, did they die of? This is also how statistics are made today; one simply writes 'Covid-19' on a death certificate. The narrative for that was already prepared in exceptional emergency measures already passed into law, eliminating the need for two physicians, with a third physician as check, cut to one and eliminating any need to diagnose or even to examine the body. A perfect storm.

All these deaths and there are always all these deaths on any fine day, but now these can be ascribed to Covid-19, attesting to a pandemic and the need for health measures of whatever kind. Using the example of syphilis, as Fleck points out, the 'scientific fact' invented and developed as such in his case study, using typhus as parallel, the presence of the pathogen does not mean that one has the disease and may not even mean that one is a carrier of the disease because the disease in question is a matter not of the presence of a disease entity, do you have it or do you not, but of your immune system in general. No matter how often this might be repeated—it is standard immunology and standard public

health—we do not believe it. We are in search of a magic bullet because, like Fleck's little devils, we see diseases as malicious agents.

With reference to Peter Duesberg among other so-called AIDS denialists, I have argued (Babich, 2015) that science faces a considerable challenge when it or government imposes the playbook of the inquisition, decrying research as pseudo-science. The same holds, just to cite a recent article in *Le Monde*, for any scientist who fails to toe the party line (Monod, 2020). Where this is the case, to be a virologist or immunologist, emergency room physician or hospital head, will not help you unless you repeat the official, government-sanctioned view.

It is a piece of generic or casual mobbing to dismiss the science done by such scientists as 'pseudo-science,' as if it were not science at all. Hence what is at stake is just what Kuhn called the 'received view.' And what is interesting from this point of view is that there is no way to oppose the received view, this is the point of his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, not that Kuhn himself was happy about this conclusion as it followed from his argument, as a received view only ceases to be received when its proponents, with all their institutional power, fade from power and influence, in most cases, quite as Max Planck observed, only when they die.

And often not even then. The promise, and it is tenuous, of the scientists who recommend that we continue to do science, to the extent that they can be heard, is that we might still continue to 'do' science, virology, epidemiology, immunology (Latour, 2000; Lewontin, 1991, and see for a recent overview, via 'material hermeneutics' and what our portable laboratories tell us, in as much as testing kits count as such 'portable laboratories,' to use Heelan's and Rheinberger's language, Babich (2020). Philosophy of science, especially the hermeneutic, phenomenological kind, is part of that research promise.

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13

Crisis Within Crisis Within Crisis: Global Pandemic; Mass Unemployment; Anti-Capitalist Critique?

David Fryer

Introductory Remarks

In the context of both the contemporary global coronavirus pandemic, itself life-threatening for countless individuals, families, communities, and populations, and the context of the public health measures, labor market practices, and socio-economic policies deployed globally to tackle the pandemic while preserving neoliberal capitalism, involuntary unemployment and underemployment have become astronomical in scale, are still growing aggressively as I write in late 2020 and are likely to remain high for the foreseeable future.

This chapter draws upon work done with Rose Stambe and Charles Marley including Fryer, Marley and Stambe (2020).

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I. Strasser and M. Dege (eds.), *The Psychology of Global Crises and Crisis Politics*, Palgrave Studies in the Theory and History of Psychology,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76939-0_13

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Since capitalism requires the creation and maintenance of a reserve army of labor to discipline the employed, restrain wage demands, undermine calls for improved working conditions, and control inflation (Fryer, 1985), high levels of unemployment can be expected for the foreseeable future because they serve the interests of groups benefiting from capitalism. Unemployment in excess of the Non-Accelerating Inflation Rate of Unemployment (NAIRU), the level of unemployment deemed minimally necessary to control inflation by disciplining the employed, about 5–6%, is expensive, from the perspective of capitalist interest groups in countries which support unemployed people financially. However, it ensures unemployed workers remain active competitors for poorly paid jobs in poor working conditions which requires them to be continually (re)produced as the immiserated, compliant, human means of production. ‘Active labor market’ interventions can, therefore, be expected to persist for the foreseeable future. The rise of the precariat of involuntarily underemployed insecure temporary part-time poverty-stricken workers may soon obviate the neoliberal need for mass unemployment to discipline the employed workforce.

Mass unemployment has, since the early years of the twentieth century, been—and continues to be—discursively positioned within the psy-complex, defined by Rose (1999) as: ‘the heterogeneous knowledges, forms of authority and practical techniques that constitute psychological expertise... largely invented since the mid nineteenth century’ (Rose, 1999, p. vii), with unemployment positioned as responsible for untold misery, morbidity, and mortality for individuals, families, communities, and populations, in the publications, reports, and pronouncements of psychologists and others whose work and practices have inscribed and continue to inscribe the psy-complex. The widely acknowledged ‘demonstration’ by psychologists—and other ‘psy-complexifiers’—of the destructive individual, family, organizational, community, and population ‘consequences’ of neoliberal capitalist economic and social policies in relation to unemployment might appear, superficially, to be intrinsically ‘anti-capitalist.’ However, in this chapter, it is argued that it is not. Indeed, I argue that not only the specifics of what has been, and continues to be, accomplished through deployment of the psy-complex, but also the psy-complex itself, both serve the interests of neoliberal capitalism. It is not just the specific knowledges that happen to have been

given the status of ‘truth’ through the psy-complex, not just the objects of thought that happen to have been given the status of being ‘real’ through the psy-complex, not just the practical techniques that happen to have been given the status of ‘effective’ through the psy-complex, not just the specific moral economies within which the psy-complex has been given the status of ‘progressive,’ which serve the interests of capitalism but any and every possible inscription of the psy-complex.

It is important to note that in this chapter, it is not disputed that ‘unemployment’ is constituted to be and deployed as an offensive ‘weapon of mass destruction’ in an obscenely violent ‘war without bullets’ (Fryer & McCormack, 2012, 2019) waged against ‘working people’ in the interests of the neoliberal form of capitalism currently dominant. Rather, in this chapter, I claim that such violence cannot be unproblematically understood through, and resisted by, mobilization of the psy-complex because the psy-complex is key to neoliberal capitalism through its roles in the (re)constitution of ‘governable’ (Rose, 1999, p. vii) neoliberal labor market subjects. The masters’ psy-complex tools will never dismantle the master’s capitalist house (with acknowledgment of and apologies to Audre Lorde’s classic speech (Lorde, 1984/2007)). Ways to understand and resist capitalist violence which do not reinscribe the psy-complex are needed.

A Critical Frame of Reference

This chapter is written within a *critical* frame of reference, but since there are so many frames of reference which those using them claim to be critical, including many frames of reference which are critically problematic within the frame of reference of this chapter, it is important to clarify, at this stage, the approach taken to *critique* in this chapter.

Horkheimer positioned critical frames of reference as ones concerned with the liberation of ‘human beings from the circumstances that enslave them’ (Horkheimer, 1982, p. 244). So far so good, but since the psy-complex is central to the constitution of ‘governable subjects’ (Rose, 1999, p. vii), the psy-complex is key to enslavement. So, within this chapter, psychological approaches (including community psychological

approaches, critical psychological approaches, and even so-called ‘liberation’ psychological approaches) to liberation from enslavement are resisted as non-liberatory approaches central to the accomplishment of neoliberal governmentality. In this chapter, enslavement is discursively positioned as having multiple loci of accomplishment, including compliance achieved through subjection/re-subjection; power–knowledge systems which function both productively and restrictively; and the broader project of governmentality (Foucault, 2008).

Within the critical frame of reference adopted in this chapter: any body of psychological knowledges and practices, any inscription of the psy-complex, consists, at least, of: claims which have been constituted as ‘true’ within a particular regime of truth; ‘objects of thought’ which have been constituted as ‘real’ within a particular ontic regime; practices which have been constituted as effective within a particular ‘evidence-based’ regime; and values, principles, etc., which have been constituted as ‘good,’ ‘progressive,’ and so on within a particular ‘moral economy,’ a term used by Fassin (2018) ‘to grasp the social thinking and the relations of power underlying the production, circulation, appropriation, including the misappropriation, and contestation, even rejection, of values and affects’ (Fassin, 2018, p. 4).

This critical frame of reference will be deployed below, but first, we return to the global pandemic and the global tsunami of unemployment predicted to occur, indeed already occurring, in its wake.

Coronavirus Pandemic: Pre- and Post-Pandemic Unemployment

At the time of writing this chapter (30/12/2020), the Johns Hopkins coronavirus resource center confirmed: 1,780,710 coronavirus deaths globally and 81,586,011 cases of coronavirus globally, with no sign in most countries of the growth in new cases abating (<https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/>). Interventions, including the closing of international, State, and other internal borders, the introduction of quarantine, prohibition of ‘unnecessary’ travel, stay-at-home and work-at-home orders, closure of non-essential businesses, interventions intended to slow the

spread of the virus by flattening the curve or by eliminating the virus, have led to forced closures of businesses, reduced demand, and reduced consumption.

According to the International Labour Organization, reporting on 2019, 188 million people were already unemployed across the world in 2019, well before the COVID-19 pandemic began (ILO, 2020a). Another 120 million people were available for employment but for a variety of reasons were not actively looking for employment or were actively looking for employment, unavailable to take employment immediately but potentially available to do so in the near future. Another 165 million people were employed but involuntarily under-employed and seeking more paid hours of employment. Even if a person is involuntarily restricted by an employer to only one hour of employment per week, that person is positioned as employed rather than unemployed by the ILO criteria. All the ILO unemployment figures given above are gross underestimates (see below). Taking the pandemic and measures to contain it into account, by April 29, 2020, the ILO reported: ‘The latest ILO data on the labor market impact of the COVID-19 pandemic reveals the devastating effect on hundreds of millions of enterprises worldwide’ with the headline: ‘As job losses escalate, nearly half of global workforce at risk of losing livelihoods’ https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newroom/news/WCMS_743036/lang--en/index.htm.

In its ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work (6th edition briefing note). (ILO, 2020b), the ILO estimated total working-hour losses in the second quarter of 2020, relative to the fourth quarter of 2019, to have been equivalent to 495 million full-time jobs. Working-hour losses were predicted to be equivalent to 345 million full-time jobs in the third quarter of 2020 and the loss of the full-time equivalent of 245 million jobs was predicted by the ILO in the fourth quarter of 2020. In addition, the ILO anticipated: global increases in *underemployment*; a global increase in working poverty, and global widening of inequality with disproportionate consequences for younger people, older people, women, self-employed workers, casual and gig workers, and migrant workers (https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/impacts-and-responses/WCMS_755910/lang--en/index.htm).

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) predicts unemployment will increase to an average of 9.4% (according to the ILO criteria) across OECD member countries by the end of 2020 (from 5.3% at the end of 2019) but predicted an increase to 12.6% if further waves of the pandemic occurred in late 2020, which they are doing at the time of writing (<http://www.oecd.org/employment-outlook/2020/>). The IMF (*International Monetary Fund*) predicted 'global growth in 2020 to fall to minus 3%' due to the combination of a 'health crisis, a financial crisis, and a collapse in commodity prices, which interact in complex ways' leading to 'the worst recession since the Great Depression... far worse than the Global Financial Crisis' (<https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2020/04/14/tr041420-transcript-of-april-2020-world-economic-outlook-press-briefing>).

The Relationship Between Unemployment and Psychological Misery, Morbidity, and Mortality According to the Psy-Complex

Unemployment research since the 1930s has been dominated by a preoccupation with the question of whether 'unemployment' causes 'poor mental health' (so-called 'social causation') or whether 'poor mental health' predisposes a person to 'unemployment' (so-called 'individual drift'). Marie Jahoda was co-responsible, with Paul Lazarsfeld, for an extended sociographic study, now considered a classic, of an unemployed community, Marienthal, in Austria (Jahoda et al., 2002). The Marienthal researchers summarized: 'our basic insights into the effects of unemployment eventually emerged: a diminution of expectation and activity, a disrupted sense of time, and a steady decline into apathy through a variety of stages and attitudes' (Jahoda et al., 2002, p. 2) and claimed 70% of the families in Marienthal were 'resigned,' characterized by exhibiting 'no plans, no relation to the future, no hopes, extreme restriction of all needs beyond the bare necessities.' Marie Jahoda later discursively positioned the consequences of unemployment as the consequences of deprivation of employment. Jahoda

claimed that, although the ‘manifest,’ intended function of employment, is to earn a living, employment also has ‘latent,’ unintended, functions (an imposed time structure, engagement in regular social contact, participation in a collective purpose, receipt of a social identity, and required regular activity), the deprivation of which—by unemployment—is responsible for the ‘psychological consequences of unemployment’ (Jahoda, 1982). This is a hugely influential explanatory account of what it is about unemployment that is psychologically problematic, which has been echoed by countless psy-complex researchers and commentators and has led to interventions discursively positioned as able to prevent or reduce the ‘psychological impact of unemployment.’ These interventions have, fundamentally, taken three forms. Firstly, required participation in ‘programs’ or ‘schemes’ which mimic employment by imposing upon unemployed people a weekly and daily time structure, requiring them to engage in social contact regularly, forcing them to participate in organized activity with a collective purpose, bestowing upon them a social identity other than a stigmatizing unemployed identity, and requiring them to engage in an activity regularly, i.e., a substitute non-employed activity designed to fulfill Jahoda’s latent functions of employment. Secondly, provision of cognitive behavior therapy for unemployed people (<https://www.nice.org.uk/about/what-we-do/our-programmes/nice-advice/iapt>) underpinned by the rationale that it is an evidence-based intervention with demonstrated effectiveness in reducing depression and anxiety, which themselves reduce the likelihood of effective job search, making unemployed people less attractive to employers at selection events and less likely to become sustainably re-employed. Thirdly, active labor market policy interventions underpinned by a rationale that unemployed people are and/or become less proactive/more passive in relation to search for, and acceptance of, paid employment and need to be ‘activated’ and ‘incentivized’ to prioritize the search for and acceptance of paid employment.

Since the 1930s, unemployment and health research has been characterized by near unanimity, rare among social scientists, that unemployment ‘causes’ mental ill-health. Most researchers and commentators have been persuaded that a huge, diverse, high-quality body of unemployment research has demonstrated unemployment causes mental ill-health.

To illustrate the nature of that consensus within diversity: this consensual body of research was carried out in a wide variety of geographical settings, including Australia, Austria, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Sweden, the UK, and the USA. This consensual body of research was carried out across a wide variety of historical periods from the early 1900s to the current day, with surges in the 1930s, the 1970s, and the 1980s. This consensual body of research was carried out by researchers ranging from Austro-Marxists to Government civil servants via University academics competitively funded by Research Councils, members of 'independent' think tanks, and members of Quasi-Autonomous Non-Government Organizations (QUANGOs). This consensual body of research was carried out at a variety of 'levels' of investigation from individual unemployed people to populations of whole states or countries via families, cohorts of school-leavers, and workforces of organizations making some or all of their workers redundant. This consensual body of research was carried out by researchers using a wide variety of methods and research designs, including psychiatric assessment; qualitative interviewing; action research; sociographic, ethnographic, and epidemiological methods; and surveys (both cross-sectional and longitudinal) and reinforced by meta-review studies. While caveats, criticisms, and controversies were raised in relation to this huge body of research, they were mostly relatively minor and overwhelmingly raised within the mainstream psy-complex frame of reference of such research, rather than from outside that frame of reference. It became difficult to contest, within the dominant psy-complex frame of reference, the claim that there is a causal relationship between *unemployment* per se and diagnosable *mental ill-health*.

Critique of the Psy-Complexification of Neoliberal Capitalist Violence in Relation to Unemployment

What is it to be unemployed and who exactly are ‘the unemployed’? How unemployment is conceptualized, defined, and operationalized (translated into a measurement procedure) determines how many and which people were/are eligible to be participants in empirical unemployment research studies as well as who is included in (and excluded from) official counts of the unemployed. UK unemployment studies in the 1980s used to recruit research participants as they went into or emerged from Government offices where they had been required to go to sign in order to receive income support for unemployed people. However, eligibility criteria for unemployment financial support changed frequently and with it the status of being officially unemployed. From a political perspective, this had the advantage of ‘reducing’ the number of unemployed people without it being necessary for any formerly unemployed person to find employment. From a psy-complex research perspective, it meant the population from which unemployed samples were taken was continually changing so that studies of unemployed people over time, across Governments and across countries, were based on differently constituted samples from different populations. Nowadays, most countries use ILO survey criteria for positioning people as unemployed, and therefore, determining both the number of unemployed people and eligibility for participation in unemployment research studies. The ILO criteria position people as unemployed only if they are in the age range of people deemed ‘economically active’ (basically, above the minimum school leaving age but not of an age to officially retire), and (1) they did not undertake any paid employment during the survey reference period, (2) they were available for employment during the survey reference period, and (3) they were engaged in active search for employment, taking particular specified steps to find employment, during a specified time period. People without employment who want and are available for employment but have not actively searched for employment in specified

ways are *not* included in official ‘unemployment’ figures (<https://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/download/articles/2007-1.pdf>).

There are many reasons why a person may cease active job search without having found employment, including there being few or no jobs in that person’s labor market niche; that person’s chances of employment being extremely low due to discrimination by employers; the vast number of competitors so overwhelmingly exceeding the paltry number of vacancies (as during a pandemic) that objectively the likelihood of employment is near zero; reconstitution as a neoliberal unemployed subject characterized by ‘depression,’ ‘apathy,’ ‘resignation,’ and so on—being reconstituted as a neoliberal unemployed subject effectively ‘disappears’ that subject socially, economically, and politically. Unemployment is thus socially constituted in different ways over time in different places. This constitution involves a complex set of dynamic interconnections between dominant discourses, government policies, bureaucratic procedures, administrative technologies, psychological knowledges, forms of subjectification, and so on. It is essential not to reify/naturalize the dominant constituted version of ‘unemployment’ or take it for granted as ‘real’ but rather to emphasize that it is socially manufactured, historically and culturally contingent, has a genealogy that can be traced and functions to serve neoliberal capitalist interests.

‘Mental ill-health’ and psychiatric diagnostic practices are even more evidently social constructions. ‘Users of psychiatric services,’ survivors of psychiatry, emancipatory disability researchers, anti-psychiatry activists, and many others have critiqued the psycho-pathologization of diverse ways of being human, and there is a regular cacophony of criticism at the release of new editions of the DSM, the text which resets the criteria for ‘mental disorder’ diagnoses, and the ways of engaging and some would say constituting mental ill-health they imply. Within the critical frame of reference of this chapter, without denying the distress experienced, what acritical mainstream scientists discursively position as ‘depressed unemployed people’ only ‘exist’ in the sense that they are reconstituted as ‘depressed’ through apparatuses of dominant discourses, procedures, technologies, etc.

The notion of cause and effect has long been under fire in relation to human actions and subjectivity and the mainstream psy-complex claim

that there is a causal relationship between changing socially constituted versions of unemployment and between changing socially constituted mental health lived experiences is resisted within the critical frame of reference of this chapter. Rather, research by psychological and other psy-complexifiers, despite being widely discursively positioned as uncovering the causal relationship between independent phenomena, 'unemployment' and 'mental health,' is discursively positioned as contributing to the simultaneous interlinked constitution of unemployment and of 'mental ill-health,' obviating the need to invoke cause and effect relations. Because 'unemployment' and 'mental health' are discursively constituted does not, of course, mean they are 'imaginary' in a conventional sense and does not mean they have no material effects. The immiseration of people (including the auto-immiseration achieved through subjective reconstitution) is not illusory nor imagined but is contingent on the persistence of the apparatus of interconnected constructed and maintained social elements which produce and maintain it, the immiseration.

'Unemployment' and 'mental health' are 'real' only in the sense that they are constituted, legitimated, and deployed to material effect through an apparatus of interconnected politico-economic policies, 'active labor market' technologies, welfare bureaucracies, discursive systems, etc., as well, of course, as the knowledge-work of psy-complexifiers of unemployment and of mental health.

The alleged relationship between 'unemployment' and 'mental health' has, from this standpoint, nothing to do with 'natural' and inevitable psychological consequences of depriving a person of employment-related, psychologically necessary structures, as Marie Jahoda claimed, but a set of interconnected manifestations of social violence necessary to constitute neoliberal labor market subjects which function optimally in the interests of capital and those who benefit from it.

Within the critical frame of reference of this chapter, systems of truthed knowledge claims and evidentialized practices in relation to 'unemployment' and 'the unemployed subject' directly imply, and are implied by, power relations which produce neoliberal subjects in ways both enabling and simultaneously constraining what they are, and can be, in relation to the labor market. The neoliberal labor market subject

does not, within this frame of reference, exist prior to power/knowledge but rather is constituted by being 'power-knowledged,' including by unemployed people power-knowledging themselves through the discourses available to them, including those discourses whose constitution is accomplished, at least partly, through the knowledge work of psy-complex unemployment researchers.

Whereas classic neoliberalism is widely regarded as a political rationality inscribing deregulation and absolute non-intervention, as Foucault recognized, contemporary 'neo liberal governmental intervention is no less dense, frequent, active, and continuous than in any other system. It has to intervene on society as such, in its fabric and depth' (Foucault, 2008, p. 145). This neoliberal intervention includes the establishment and maintenance of apparatuses that re-subjectify the neoliberal labor market subject as 'unemployed,' 'employed,' etc., socially and historically produced identities, which are in-foldings of the social exteriority. A network of interconnected, socially constituted, social elements, including discourses of unemployment and mental health; a network whose primary function is to control inflation, reduce wage costs, discipline those in work, etc., simultaneously constitutes neoliberal subjects. This network constitutes immiserated neoliberal unemployed subjects in such ways as to (re)produce the compliant human means of production required by employers, shareholders, and government within the contemporary version of neoliberal capitalism.

Emphatically, to engage with 'what is known,' 'what is real,' 'what is effective,' what is 'ethical' etc., within the critical frame of reference deployed in this chapter, is to engage tactically, strategically, rhetorically, politically, and so on and so forth rather than epistemologically, ontologically, ethically, etc., in the senses traditionally characteristic of Western academic philosophy. Within the critical frame of reference adopted in this chapter, it is assumed that questions must be asked about which interest groups gain (in which ways, at which times, etc.) and which lose. If specific knowledge claims—for example, the causal relationship between psychological ill-health and the unemployment—discursively positioned as true by the psy-complex, are acted upon as if 'true,' if specific 'objects of thought' (for example, self-esteem, anxiety, activation, and so on) (discursively positioned as an inscription of 'naive realism'

by the psy-complex) are acted upon as if 'real' as opposed to being 'real' but only in the sense that they are socially manufactured, legitimated, and deployed to material effect within ontic regimes; if specific practices (for example, CBT, surrogate latent functions provision, and so on) (discursively positioned as evidence-based by the psy-complex) were acted upon as if 'effective' (interventions); if specific knowledges and practices (discursively positioned as 'good,' 'progressive,' ethical, and so on by the psy-complex) were acted upon as if 'moral' rather than constituted, circulated, and so on within a particular moral economy which serves the interests of particular groups. The dominant versions of what is true, real, evidence-based, moral, and so on tend to be the versions that serve the interests of the most powerful interest groups which have the most power to discredit, marginalize, and subjugate versions that are not in their interests and to position versions which are in their interests as inevitable, necessary, and without alternatives. Note that this critique applies to any set of claims to reach conclusions on the basis of empirical 'truthing,' 'knowledging,' 'realing,' 'efficacious-ing,' or 'righting' including social psychology, societal psychology, community psychology, and critical psychology.

Although, superficially, psy-complex unemployment knowledge-work appears to provide evidence and ways of thinking and conducting oneself consistent with Left criticisms of capitalism, psy-complex unemployment knowledge-work (truthing etc.) serves: the interests of groups which benefit from the dominance of the medical rather than social model: the interests of groups which benefit from the dominance of naïve realism rather than recognition that what is 'real' in relation to unemployment is socially manufactured, legitimated, and deployed to material effect through interconnected politico-economic policies, 'active labor market' technologies, welfare bureaucracies, discursive systems, and so on, as well—of course—as the knowledge-work of psy-complexifiers of unemployment and of mental health; the interests of groups which benefit from the positioning of the psy-complex as a progressive 'science' tackling 'social causes' of social injustice, misery, morbidity—rather than as an element in an apparatus of interconnected elements, whose primary function is to control inflation, reduce wage costs, discipline those in work, etc., while simultaneously constituting neoliberal unemployed

subjects, in such ways as to (re)produce the immiserated, compliant, human means of production required by capitalist employers, shareholders, and government; the interests of groups which benefit from the minimization of the material want, relative poverty, stigma, bureaucratic violence, and so on, actively constituted to be central to the lived experience of the neoliberal unemployed subject; the positioning of capitalist employment as salutogenic, health-promoting, not only necessary but ideal for well-being; the interests of groups which benefit from the positioning of the psychological problems of neoliberal capitalist unemployment as the psychological problems of deprivation of neoliberal capitalist employment: ‘natural,’ inevitable, psychological consequences of depriving a person of employment-related, psychologically benevolent structures rather than of interconnected manifestations of social violence necessary to constitute the neoliberal unemployed subject who functions optimally in the interests of capital; the interests of groups which benefit from the positioning of capitalist re-employment, even if precarious, insecure, temporary, part-time, unprotected, degrading, and toxic as the solution to the misery of capitalist unemployment; the interests of groups which benefit from the dominance of victim-blaming, individualistic, intrapsychic, psychologistic, materially decontextualized, depoliticized, therapeutic, and big-pharmaceutical interventions to ‘treat’ the preventable psychological consequences of capitalist unemployment; the interests of groups which benefit from the dominance of enlightenment, modernist knowledges, and practices central to governmentality deployed through Western/Northern/Metropolitan/colonizing knowledges-that and knowledges-how.

What is accomplished for which interest groups by the discursive positioning of the global pandemic or the tsunami of unemployment as crises, indeed as—interlinked—crises?

The severity of illness and death from COVID-19 is sometimes presented as the consequences of an apolitical, biomedical crisis: the consequence of a ‘natural’ new virus meeting a population without any resistance to it. However, almost all illnesses and causes of death are greater in more unequal societies, more common in people lower down the social hierarchy (however operationalized): poorer, more marginal,

less privileged, and less socially empowered people (Wilkinson, 1996; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). These coincide and double down in people disadvantaged in myriad ways by colonization. Moreover, people are likely to be more severely ill and more likely to die during pandemics in countries where health services have been chronically starved of vital resources, both staff and material resources, through neoliberal austerity policies. The severity of illness and death from COVID-19 could reasonably be positioned as at least as much a political matter as a biomedical one. If the pandemic is a crisis, it is—to a large extent—a crisis of politicians' making, especially politicians who have espoused and implemented neoliberal austerity policies.

Likewise, if there is a crisis of unemployment and mental health, it is also, largely, a crisis of 'our own' making and especially of those who espouse implement and reinscribe neoliberal policies whether as politicians, policymakers, or psy-complexifiers. The misery, morbidity, and mortality of unemployed people are socially constituted. The knowledges and practices through which we engage with subjectivity and social power could be detached from the theoretically, methodologically, and ideologically problematic modernist mainstream psy-complex. Unemployment could be addressed without reinscribing the psy-complex. Unemployment could be constituted to be other than it is.

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14

The Covid-19 Pandemic and the Crisis of Signification in Israel/Palestine: Biopolitics, Reinvented Communism, and Conspiracy Theories

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Towards the end of November 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic was raging out of control in Israel/ Palestine. The Palestinian Authority reinstated its weekend blanket lockdown in all of its governorates, in its effort to contain the resurgence in Covid-19 infection cases. Across the apartheid separation and annexation wall (the Green Line), the Coronavirus cabinet in the Israeli government has been imposing localized lockdowns in different towns and neighborhoods to control the new surge of the pandemic, after their attempt to impose a second round of national quarantine miserably failed. This pandemic has not only ravaged the populations in Israel/Palestine, but has also created a crisis of signification over its meaning. Much like the “pandemic of signification” that was generated around AIDS in the 1980s (Treichler, 1987), the traumatic Real of the Covid-19 pandemic quickly engendered contradictory

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narratives that competed to interpret the meaning of this global health crisis and frame its social reality in intelligible discourses, worldviews, and ideologies (Pleyers, 2020).

When I started researching for and writing this chapter, the controversy over the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben's reflections over the Italian government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic had already erupted (Agamben, 2020a, 2020b). Moreover, the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek's ruminations on the pandemic (Žižek, 2020) had come out—he rejected Agamben's critique of the instrumental role of state power in combatting the pandemic, but his own ideas about new forms of solidarity and “disaster Communism” had also become the subject of a vigorous debate (Peters, 2020). At the same time, Arabic popular culture during the month of Ramadan was robust in its effort to engage the Palestinian struggle for freedom and the Palestinian Ongoing Nakbah, or as it is commonly known in Arabic, Al-Nakbah Al-Mustamera (Khalidi, 2020). Many of the series this year were embroiled in debates about normalization, framing the Ongoing Nakbah in Palestine in conspiracy theories that repackaged common memes in extreme alt-right and populist conspiracy theories that ended up emplotting not only an end (apocalyptic, utopian or just normative), but a total closure to this Nakbah.

In this chapter, I interrogate this crisis of signification over the Covid-19 pandemic in Israel/Palestine in the context of these debates about philosophical theories and conspiracy theories. I argue that these philosophical reflections on the pandemic and the conspiracy ecosystem depoliticize the Palestinian struggle for freedom and obfuscate the class struggle, to which some inadvertently point, in the name of humanistic liberal discourses, egalitarian ideologies, theological apocalyptic discourses, and timeless Manichean moral cosmologies. I will show that the pandemic has functioned as a site for playing out the structural histories of settler-colonial violence, occupation, and apartheid politics in Israel/Palestine. I will thus map the pandemic onto the long history of political crises, disasters, and catastrophes that have constituted the scene of life in Israel/Palestine. I will also show that rather than overshadowing the political realities in the region, the pandemic has reproduced and

accentuated long-standing legacies of economic inequalities and socio-political pathologies along colonial, racial, class, and geographic lines that have affected other disposable, surplus communities around the world.

The Pandemic in Israel/Palestine: A Nakbah to end all Nakbahs?

To speak about Palestine in context of the crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic in May 2020 evokes another perennial crisis, the foundational disaster of the Nakbah, the Catastrophe of 1948, in Palestinian collective consciousness and historical memory (Masalha, 2012). This year marked the 72nd anniversary of the Ongoing Nakbah. In his introduction to Ghassan Kanafani's *Palestine's Children: Returning to Haifa and Other Stories*, Edward Said writes that "the disaster of 1948 [has posited] the scene . . . itself [as] the very problem of Arabic literature and writing" (Kanafani, 2000, p. ix). The Nakbah occupies an iconic and foundational position in the Palestinian and Arab psyche and culture, since it represents a traumatic rupture in Palestinian and Arabic consciousness, memory, and historical narrative. In his etymological analysis of the signifier Nakbha in Arabic, Hassan Khader (1998) traces the word to the same trilateral root (N-K-B) as "any of the four winds that shifts madly, wreaking havoc among the winds, so as to engulf the land and wreak great devastation." He also examines the various synonyms for the word in the *Lisan al-Arab* dictionary including, hadath (misfortune), naa'iba (vicissitude), nawba (evil turn of fate), riziya (heavy loss), aamma (cataclysmic disaster), ghaashiya (oppressive misery), jaa'iha (devastation), mulimma (tribulation), aariqa (sudden affliction), haaqa (infliction), and naaqira (grievous hardship). All these referents signify the magnitude of the violence and capriciousness of this life-shattering event on the Palestinian life world.

For Palestinians, the Nakbah is a rupture that engendered a long historical process of settler colonialism and apartheid, dispossession and displacement, ethnic cleansing and depopulation, the diaspora, the scattering of the Palestinians into refugee camps, and the winter of exile (Said, 2000). The Nakbah, as Ahmad Sa'di (2002) points out, represents

“among many other things, the loss of the homeland, the disintegration of society, the frustration of national aspirations, and the beginning of a hasty process of destruction of their culture” (p. 175). Indeed, the Nakbah has become a site of collective memory that “connects all Palestinians to a specific point in time that has become for them an ‘eternal present’” (p. 176).

This doubling of the crisis frames the Covid-19 pandemic in a long history of crises, disasters, and catastrophes against which Palestinians had to struggle. At this historical juncture, in particular, Trump’s “deal of the century” and their “Peace to Prosperity” workshop that was held in Manama, Bahrain, in 2019 endeavored not only to liquidate the legitimate Palestinian national aspirations, rights, and sovereignty, but also to continue subsidizing the Israeli government’s plan to colonize and annex more Palestinian land name the crisis/disaster itself. The “Peace to Prosperity” workshop, for example, was convened under the assumption that the Palestinians did not matter anymore in the new geopolitical map of the Middle East and the emergent struggles between the superpowers in the region. Indeed, the American gambit was that any permanent solution to the ethnocratic Zionist settler-colonial project in Palestine can be reached not only without the participation of the Palestinians, but also with their complete and willing surrender.

On their part, the Americans led by Kushner and his team have been reported to use opinion mining operations to pitch the deal of the century directly to the Arab people, sway Arab media on the administration’s diplomatic efforts in the Middle East peace process, and improve Arab peoples’ understanding of the administration’s policy (Wilner, 2019). They are upping the ante on the Foreign Broadcast Information Service by using data mining operations to target Arab public opinion and “connect with local populations as effectively as possible – to better understand ‘what’s driving the street’ across the Arab world.” According to Wilner’s report (2019), Kushner’s team analyzed anti-American and anti-Israel media outlets, the negative and positive terms used to characterize US foreign policy, and even analyzed cell phone penetration among Palestinians to understand news consumption at Israeli checkpoints. Part of the effort is to drive a wider wedge between the Palestinian street and Palestinian leadership. One senior official aid to Kushner was quoted in

the report to the effect that “we believe we can reach the [Palestinian] people this way. . . And the street has been abandoned by the leadership.”

The real intention of Kushner’s media project, however, is more pernicious. As we learned from the Cambridge Analytica scandal (Madrigal, 2018), the goal is more likely to construct psychological profiles for a vast number of Arabs and Palestinians and use these profiles to target these individuals with specific messages that appeal to their psychological profiles about peace, American foreign policy, the PA, the Zionist settler-colonial project, etc. Grounded in the principles of positive psychology and happiness studies, which developed in collaboration with the cognitive-military complex, the premise of Kushner’s plan is that “individuals are much better controlled and ‘nudged’ in the desired direction when they continue to experience themselves as the free and autonomous agents of their own life” (Žižek, 2018). Unsurprisingly, Kushner’s team wants us to believe that although “90% of Palestinians distrust the administration,” there was still a positive shift in the Palestinian public opinion regarding the economic portion of their “Peace to Prosperity” plan (Wilner, 2019). Kushner and his team truly believed that the Palestinians were going to fall for their promises of utopia without any limits—prosperity, happiness, no unemployment, and no poverty, even though the funds were not secured.

Nonetheless, Kushner’s attempt to manipulate Arabs and Palestinians into buying their narrative and shaping the choices they make with regard to their well-being and happiness to fit the interests of the American and the Israeli regimes simply did not work. His team realized soon enough that despite his marketing plan to sell rosy promises of prosperity and happiness, he could not buy the Palestinians off. The resounding message he got from the Palestinian street and Palestinian leadership was that “Palestine is not for sale.” Kushner does not get the paradox in his plan: The main problem here is that the new mechanisms of social control they are using contradict the anachronistic modes of oppression and domination of the Israeli military occupation and its apartheid politics.

On the one hand, the ethnocentric Zionist settler-colonial project and military occupation are so anachronistic in their modes of domination

and oppression that it has become an unacceptable anomaly in the structures of surveillance/disaster racial and its authoritarian regimes around the world. On the other, the absence of any real political solution in the embarrassing American plan hinted that the Israeli military occupation will more likely be the real beneficiary of more than half of the \$50 billion that was earmarked for the development funds in Palestine. Israel will probably have oversight of these funds and will likely funnel most of them to its coffers, the way that international funds are currently managed and controlled. Needless to mention, the Trump administration pledged no contributions to this scheme. The American government already provides billions of hard-earned tax dollars in aid to Israel that any additional aid funds may raise concerns about Trump's economic nationalist ideology among his alt-right and white supremacist supporters. In the words of various critics of the plan, prosperity cannot be achieved when the structural conditions (the Israeli military occupation, the apartheid regime, and the Zionist settler-colonial project) that inhibit prosperity are still in place.

Ultimately, through the deal of the century and the Manama workshop, the Trump administration was aiming at realigning authoritarian and reactionary powers in the region with the far-right populist and nationalist regimes around the world to serve the interests of the American empire in its prospective struggles with various superpowers in the region. At one level, critics are correct to point out that the Manama workshop was meant to distract from the ongoing Nakbah (Al-Nakbah Al-Mustamera) that continues to unfold violently under the radar in Palestine. Israel's recent demolition of 16 residential buildings in Wadi al-Hummus neighborhood in the Palestinian village of Sur Baher was condemned as another war crime and a "blatant act of ethnic cleansing." The critics also correctly noted that the visit of national security adviser John Bolton to Israel and his tour of the occupied Jordan Valley bodes ill for the Palestinians. Bolton's visit might spell another brazen act on the part of the United States toward recognizing Israel's illegal control over occupied Palestinian territory in defiance of international law.

However, there is more to it than this. The American empire is aiming to consolidate its power base in the region ahead of any prospective

confrontations with other world superpowers. As the philosopher Noam Chomsky (2019) remarks:

These objectives fall within a broader strategy of forming a global reactionary alliance under the U.S. aegis, including the “illiberal democracies” of Eastern Europe (Hungary’s Viktor Orbán, etc.) and Brazil’s grotesque Jair Bolsonaro ... That’s a natural strategy for today’s Trump-McConnell Republican party, well ensconced to the far right of the international spectrum, even beyond the European “populist” parties that were not long ago considered a contemptible fringe. (Chomsky, 2019)

Some critics have suggested that the United States no longer needs the Middle East and that the effectiveness of American foreign policy should be measured by how the United States engages with “China, India, Russia, the European Union, and other significant global nation-states” (Seay, 2019). These critics clearly underestimate the importance of the region for the US empire as the global capitalist system undergoes shifts toward structures of authoritarian capitalism that decouple capitalism from democratic structures of governance and usher a new wave of far-right, populist, and nationalist governments.

Biopolitics and New Forms of Solidarity in Israel/Palestine: The Necropolitical Turn

It is in this context that I engage both Agamben’s and Žižek’s reflections on the pandemic. Drawing on Carl Schmitt’s work, Agamben (2005) theorizes biopolitical power in terms of the decisive power of the sovereign ban not only to impose a state of exception and emergency power as a normal paradigm for the government that can lead to authoritarian and totalitarian governance structures. He also argues that biopower reduces the lives of the citizens to the status of bare or naked life. In the wake of the outbreak of the pandemic in Italy, Agamben (2020b) made two major points. He claimed that the “alleged pandemic,” which he dismissed as a form of influenza, constitutes another ruse or pretext for the state to crack down on civil liberties and

impose limitations on the freedom of the public in the name of safety and health. He states: “Faced with the frenetic, irrational and entirely unfounded emergency measures adopted against an alleged epidemic of coronavirus [...] why do the media and the authorities do their utmost to spread a state of panic, thus provoking an authentic state of exception with serious limitations on movement and a suspension of daily life in entire regions?” (Agamben, 2020b).

His second main point was that citizens of many countries around the world have internalized this state of exception and did not notice, let alone question, it anymore. He notes that people have adapted to living under “conditions of perennial crisis and perennial emergency,” to the extent that they have become simply oblivious to the ways in which their lives have been “reduced to a purely biological condition,” to bare and naked life (Agamben, 2020a). He thus states: “It is obvious that Italians are disposed to sacrifice practically everything—the normal conditions of life, social relationships, work, even friendships, affections, and religious and political convictions—to the danger of getting sick. Bare life—and the danger of losing it—is not something that unites people, but blinds and separates them” (Agamben, 2020a). He concludes that such a society, in which social relations are structured around a “perennial state of emergency,” can never be a free society.

On his part, Žižek rejected Agamben’s claims, foregrounding the important role of the state in managing public health and enforcing life-saving measures (Žižek, 2020, pp. 104–105). In a clear swipe at Agamben, Žižek argues that the state is still an instrumental actor in containing the pandemic. He writes that the state should “assume a much more active role, organizing the production of urgently needed things like masks, test kits and respirators, sequestering hotels and other resorts, guaranteeing the minimum of survival of all new unemployed, and so on, doing all of this by abandoning market mechanisms” (Žižek, 2020, p. 67). Moreover, the pandemic, he opines, ushers a new form of communism. He thus writes that his notion of “Communism,” is manifested not as an “obscure dream but simply as a name for what is already going on (or at least perceived by many as a necessity), measures which are already being considered and even partially enforced” (Žižek, 2020,

pp. 65–66). He thus concludes that “this is not a utopian Communist vision, it is a Communism imposed by the necessities of bare survival.” Invoking news about Trump’s plan to take over the private sector, Žižek doubles down on his use of the term communism, claiming that “many more measures of this sort will be needed, as well as local self-organization of communities if state-run health systems collapse under too much under stress. It is not enough just to isolate and survive—for this to be possible, basic public services will have to continue functioning: electricity and water, food and medicine will have to continue being available” (Žižek, 2020, p. 59). In short, he maintains, this vision is not “a vision of a bright future but more one of ‘disaster Communism’ as an antidote to disaster capitalism” (Žižek, 2020, p. 66).

Finally, Žižek also discusses new forms of solidarity. He notes two diametrically opposed tendencies prevalent under conditions of the pandemic: On the one hand, he refers to “the ideological pressure to establish clear borders and to quarantine enemies who pose a threat to our identity.” On the other, he notes the potential for “another and much more beneficent ideological virus” that might “spread and hopefully infect us: the virus of thinking of an alternate society, a society beyond nation-state, a society that actualizes itself in the forms of global solidarity and cooperation” (Žižek, 2020, p. 37). As an example of this new form of solidarity as a reaction to the threat posed by the coronavirus outbreak, Žižek mentions that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu immediately offered help and coordination to the Palestinian authority—actually, it was the Israeli President Rivlin who engaged in this “telephone diplomacy.” Žižek makes it clear that this move was “not out of goodness and human consideration, but for the simple fact that it is impossible to separate Jews and Palestinians there—if one group is affected, the other will inevitably also suffer” (Žižek, 2020, pp. 15–16). As such, Žižek states, “This is the reality which we should translate into politics—now is the time to drop the ‘America (or whoever else) First’ motto. As Martin Luther King put it more than half a century ago: ‘We may have all come on different ships, but we’re in the same boat now’” (Žižek, 2020, p. 16). Are we, though?

However, cooperation between the PA and Israel has merely reproduced Palestinian dependency on Israel in health services, the labor

market, and security protocols, a dependency that was embedded in the structures of the Oslo Accords. Moreover, the management of health in Palestine in the times of the pandemic is not subject to the logic of biopolitics only, but involves the calculus of disposability and elimination. In Palestine, we are dealing with the health of a population under occupation, apartheid regime, and settler colonialism, and any measures the occupier takes in this context are not meant to save more Palestinian lives, but to manage the health of its population more efficiently. What's more, as Song Niu and Nianci Li (2020) astutely point out, Israel's cooperation with the Palestinians is not intended to help the latter vanquish the pandemic, but to allow Israel to push "its own front line against Covid-19 into the Palestinian territory (sic)" (pp. 405–406). In such a context, that is, the modern biopolitical "power to 'make' live and 'let' die" takes on a different meaning. In order that the subject of the state may live, and perhaps "live well and live fully," some forms of bare and disposable lives must die. Biopolitics turns into thanatopolitics, or as Achille Mbembe (2003) says, necropolitics; following Bataille, he thus argues that life becomes subdued to the "power of death" within a paradigm that valorizes the absolute expenditure of death and the total destruction of the racialized body (p. 15). Such forms of death, moreover, become too easily obfuscated and removed from the national scene, but it remains constitutive of this necropolitical logic. Agamben's biopolitics underestimates the logic of disposability and elimination at the core of this necropolitical regime.

As such, it can be argued, the subject that the Israeli state protects is a *racialized* subject embedded in the new Israeli Jewish nation-state law. This basic law did not introduce anything new in the way things have been done in Israel. Rather, this law merely enshrines the de facto colonial and apartheid realities in the Israeli ethnocratic settler-colonial state into a de jure status (law). At one level, this new law makes it possible to put the last seventy years of Israel's history of ethnic cleansing and apartheid into their proper context (Pappé, 2006). It exposes the history of the Israeli settler-colonial regime in all its brutal realities, by revealing the suppressed ethno-nationalism that drives such regimes (Yiftachel, 2006). While ethnocratic regimes endeavor to cover up this ethno-nationalistic core in the name of democratic equality and governance,

Israel can no longer suppress the regressive political ideology that gave form to its racist structures. Literature on the Israeli version of ethnocracy (Israel is not an exceptional ethnocratic state) identifies the Zionist ethnocratic ideology as the source of the history of ethnic cleansing, colonial dispossession, “creeping” apartheid, and occupation (the ongoing Nakbah) throughout historic Palestine. It also lays bare the lie that an ethnocratic regime could truly be democratic: to talk about an ethnocratic democracy is an oxymoron. Oren Yiftachel (2006), a renowned scholar of Israeli ethnocracy, argues convincingly that Israel’s democratic charade covers up a deeper ethnocratic apartheid structure. Such a structure, he points out, requires the institutionalization of racial laws that can guarantee Zionist supremacy and hegemony. Equality (before the law) and the redistribution of resources and rights become an elusive dream that will always be undermined at both symbolic and legal levels.

When Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, therefore, states that “Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people, and respects the rights of all of its citizens,” he is obfuscating various incompatible ideas. The rights of all citizens in such an ethnocratic polity can be neither respected nor protected, since the “only democracy in the Middle East” is based on securing the privileges and rights of one particular ethno-religious identity only. The hierarchical and exclusivist principles of the Israeli ethnocratic settler-colonial state stand at the opposite end of the universal and egalitarian ideals of any polity that deems itself to be the state of all its citizens. Any dreams of multicultural relations and coexistence will come to an end. Indeed, activists have long dismissed the multicultural façade in this ethnocratic scene for what it really is: in a playful pun on the Hebrew word for coexistence (*doo-qiyum* in Hebrew), they sarcastically refer to it as “dookie.” However, the attitude toward this constitutive apartheid and colonial history and its multicultural fantasy has always been expressed in terms of a “fetishistic disavowal”—we all knew what was really going on, but all the same. Thus, when Palestinian Knesset member Ahmad Tibi announces the “death of democracy” in Israel as a result of this law, it must be pointed out that it has been dead all along.

It is in this necropolitical context, “make live and let die,” that we can examine how Israeli authorities have “weaponized” the coronavirus pandemic against Palestinians inside Israel per se and in the West Bank

and Gaza. Indeed, Israel's mishandling of the Covid-19 pandemic in Israel/Palestine has been aptly described as "medical apartheid" (Gold, 2021). For example, the Coronavirus cabinet has just placed the northern Palestinian Arab city of Shefa Amr (Shfaram) under lockdown, since it is considered the epicenter of infections in the Palestinian Arab community in Israel. This came after an attempt by public officials, including Israel's coronavirus czar, to blame Palestinian Arabs citizens of Israel for the spread of the pandemic in Israel, calling their behavior a "terror attack." These strategies of demonization often ignore the impact of ultra-Orthodox Jewish groups on the surge in infection cases in Israel (Niu & Li, 2020).

In the West Bank, Israel's military occupation and settler-colonial project have decimated the Palestinian public health system. Since the crisis began, G. N. Nithya (2020) reports, Israeli soldiers have actively obstructed the emergency response for Palestinians by shutting down multiple clinics and continuing their practice of arbitrary house demolitions. Bram Wispelwey and Amaya Al-Orztaa (2020) also discuss how the occupation and settler-colonial regime, supported by a neocolonial international aid regime, have fragmented and underfunded the Palestinian public health system, rendering Palestinians more susceptible to the pandemic. They write:

Israeli occupying forces have confiscated building materials for a Palestinian field clinic, shut down a Covid-19 testing facility in East Jerusalem, and intensified the military securitization of the West Bank, including the complete blockading of Bethlehem following a Covid-19 outbreak in early March. (Wispelwey & Al-Orztaa, 2020)

To this extent, Danya Qato (2020) correctly situates this health crisis under the Covid-19 pandemic in Palestine within global histories of "racism, racial capitalism, heteropatriarchy, settler colonialism, and white supremacy" (p. 11). These power structures, she adds, have played an instrumental role in preventing colonized disposable communities around the world from realizing their right to health and sustainable

health care services as well as the right to self-determination and popular sovereignty.

The inhumane treatment of Palestinian workers during this pandemic can also be directly linked to the logic of disposability and elimination at the core of this necropolitical regime and its economic system (Montag, 2005; Tyner, 2014). According to Akram Al-Waara (2020), in March 2020, Israeli soldiers dumped a Palestinian worker at a checkpoint on the border of the West Bank, shivering from fever and barely able to breathe. The report said that the man “had been showing signs of the coronavirus over the past four days, and was recently tested for the virus. But before the man, allegedly a resident of Nablus, could receive his test results, his Israeli employer reportedly called the authorities, who picked him up and dropped him on the other side of the Beit Sira checkpoint, which connects central Israel and the occupied West Bank” (Al-Waara, 2020). “It’s like we are slaves to them,” says a local Palestinian, “They use us when they need us, and when they are finished, they throw us away like trash.”

Sobhi Samour (2020) has correctly pointed out how the current pandemic amplified the disparities, under which Palestinian workers are employed in Israel. He thus writes that Palestinian workers experience perilous working conditions that have “turned the preservation of life enabled by such employment more firmly into the production of death” (Samour, 2020, p. 1). Furthermore, he points out the impasse in which the PA finds itself in the context of its existential dependency on Israel. While the PA tries to control the public health crisis in the West Bank and curb its spread, going as far as criminalizing and pathologizing transgressors, the PA indirectly encourages Palestinian workers to continue working in Israel, by denying them emergency income assistance like other “struggling families” in Palestine (Samour, 2020, p. 1). As such, the wages of Palestinian disposability clearly outweigh public health considerations.

Ironically, Žižek dedicates a chapter in his slim volume on the pandemic to the plight of workers, including Western self-employed workers, Third World assembly line workers, and health care providers, each of which represents “a mode of being tired and overworked” (Žižek, 2020, p. 21). Nonetheless, he underestimates how these new forms of

international solidarity between colonizer and colonized, occupier and occupied, might end up revamping not only antiquated colonial dreams of annexation, dispossession, and displacement, but also the exploitation of disposable, surplus workers in the structures of racial capitalism (Melamed, 2015). While there have been many examples of international scientific cooperation and collaboration in research about the pandemic, Covid-19 is not, as a recent dispatch put it eloquently, a “peacemaker.”

The End of Conspiracy Theories: Liberation for all

In this crisis of signification that the pandemic has generated, Agamben and Žižek fell back on their own default familiar narratives and theories to speculate about the pandemic and its consequences. In their responses, moreover, Agamben and Žižek position themselves in antagonistic ways in relation to conspiracy theories about the Covid-19 pandemic. In some of his rejoinders to the debate, Agamben goes as far as claiming that recent measures are not some sort of malevolent, top-down conspiracy, but examples of “objective conspiracies” that allow governments who want to introduce specific measures to take advantage of the realities on the ground. In this sense, Agamben’s ready-made paradigm plays into alt-right and populist conspiracy theories about government takeover and the extension of draconian and totalitarian state powers over the population. In contrast, Žižek rejects conspiracy theories of all sorts and any attempt to draw any hidden meaning from the pandemic. He discusses the Russian evening news program, *Vremya* (“Time”), which recycles popular conspiracy theories and repackages them as rumors, in a way that appears to “debunk the theories while leaving viewers with the impression that they contain a kernel of truth” (Žižek, 2020, p. 14). The symbolic efficiency of truth, he clarifies, remains intact, even if the truth itself is suspended. He thus lists paranoid conspiracy theories among “a vast epidemic of ideological viruses,” including fake news and explosions of racism (Žižek, 2020, p. 30).

This discussion of conspiracy theories has a direct bearing on the ways in which the Palestinian struggle for freedom is framed in Arab

popular culture, social media, and public discourse. Many conspiracy theories that circulated in the Arab world's conspiracy ecosystem about the pandemic merely recycled Western alt-right and populist memes, replete with subtitles that many times mistranslated the original source. Not to be left behind, this ecosystem generated its own endogenous conspiracies that mainly fabricated medieval prophecies of the coronavirus. The Arabic conspiracy ecosystem peddled a wide and bizarre range of conspiratorial explanations for the coronavirus as a cover for the Masonic-Zionist world domination plot, the 5G network scheme to transmit the virus through its mobile phone masts, Bill Gates's trackable microchip implants, or the Zionist plan to take over Al-Aqsa Mosque and Al-Haram Al-Sharif. As far as conspiracy theories go, it seems easier to demonize unknown actors and secret cabals and fall back onto vile anti-Semitic propaganda than trying to understand the genetic code by which the "stupid [corona] viruses [. . .] just blindly reproduce themselves—and mutate" (Žižek, 2020, p. 15). The pandemic erupted as a traumatic Real and the complex "genomic proofreading mechanism," which prevents the virus from "accumulating mutations that could weaken it" (Cyranoski, 2020), is difficult not only to understand, but also to reintegrate into our daily socio-symbolic order. Faced with the intractable necropolitical condition of the Ongoing Nakbah in Palestine, conspiracy theories substitute outlandish cabal theories for the scientific Real.

Some popular telenovelas that were aired during the month of Ramadan in 2020 fell back on some of these conspiracy theories and framed them in medieval theological millennial beliefs. In the case of Palestine, one of these telenovelas, *The End* (Al-Nehaya), an Egyptian dystopian science fiction thriller series, draws on anti-Semitic and Masonic conspiracy theories cum apocryphal Islamic apocalyptic myths about the anti-Christ (the False Messiah) and Zionist world domination (Al-Sherif, 2020). Such theories, as Jovan Byford writes (2011), "have their own seductive appeal, since they have taken the form of complex tales of secret identities, covert plans and arcane knowledge" (p. 71). They are also further mapped onto the classic Manichean morality tale about the battle between Good and Evil. The fight is therefore not simply between two groups with different ideological leanings; the cosmology of the conspiracy theorist is very often deeply morally and effectively

charged, seeing their work as a true battle between primal good versus primal evil (Byford, 2011, p. 71). By drawing on these conspiracy theories, this series used conspiracy theories to emplot not only an apocalyptic end, but a closure to this Nakbah. In this case, these conspiracy theories do not only displace rationality onto the irrational and mythical, but also depoliticize the Palestinian struggle for freedom.

The End is premised on the fictional idea that the Arab world would become a superpower and Israel would be destroyed less than a century to its establishment—that is, in less than thirty years. In its place Alquds (Jerusalem) conglomerate will be created and will be under total Arab control. It is not difficult to imagine why such a basic plot would capture the imagination of audiences throughout the Arab world this Ramadan TV season. It was ranked among the first three most popular programs this Ramadan season and has generated a lot of discussion in social media about its futuristic technology and debt to Hollywood science fiction and dystopian films. More importantly, *The End* was lumped into the debate over normalization in the Ramadan TV programming in 2020 and was attacked by the Israeli foreign ministry for its anti-normalization stance (Bar’el, 2020). Some contrasted the daring futuristic scenario with the utter impotence of the Arab world today to offer any viable solution to the Palestinian struggle for freedom and the Ongoing Nakbah. Others thought it was enough that the program managed to provoke and infuriate Israel.

However, these visceral reactions completely ignore the dystopian context in which these themes are developed. It is puzzling, for example, that some TV commentators and critics claimed that the series “contains futuristic themes replete with hope and optimism for the entire Arab region.” There is nothing redeeming about the post-liberation dystopia imagined in this series. As far as the theme of the liberation of Alquds conglomerate is concerned, the message of the series is even more depressing. The series does not only substitute one form of domination in Alquds conglomerate for another. More importantly, the Palestinians are completely erased from Alquds conglomerate itself.

Part of the excitement about *The End* in social media can be attributed to the total disconnect between the nostalgic celebration of past Arab

victory and the dystopian present of the Arab world in 2120. In a controversial scene that received wide accolades in Arab social media and drew the ire of the Israeli foreign ministry, a history teacher inculcates in his students the events that led to the destruction of Israel. By 2048, the teacher explains, “what was known as” the Arab countries became a political and economic power to reckon with. Moreover, the US empire had collapsed and was divided into three different warring blocs. Consequently, Arab countries were able to defeat their archenemy, “the Zionist state of Israel,” in the war of the “liberation of Alquds” less than a century to its establishment. Israel’s Jewish citizens, the teacher clarifies, were relocated (it is not clear whether it was forcibly or voluntarily) to their European countries of origin and other destinations around the world. However, the nostalgic celebration of Arab triumphalism is short-lived. The security forces of Energy Co., one of the corporations that rule over Alquds conglomerate, soon ambush the underground school for violating the selective education code of the jurisdictional administration of the Noble Alquds conglomerate. They arrive in a space shuttle, blast the school’s door, kill one of the children who was trying to escape, round up the others and ship them to a labor camp (factory) and the corporation headquarters, and banish the teacher to one of the nuclear wastelands in the southern part of West Africa.

The series is set in the dystopian reality of the Arab world in the post-liberation era. Arab countries as we know them today do not exist anymore in the geopolitical map of the dystopian world in 2120. They were dissolved and became a part of the Western bloc, which includes Europe and other countries, in a world controlled by corporations and technology. Ironically, the liquidation of Israel in *The End* did not bring an end to the oppression in Palestine or the Arab world in general. Around 2090, Alquds conglomerate became the main site for a robocide, the genocide in which humans eliminated all robots after one of them terminated its owner. Consequently, laws were passed to ban the production of robots and the development of AI. The series merely substitutes one form of domination and apartheid for another. After the elimination of the majority of the robots, moreover, the all-powerful Energy Co. was established in Alquds conglomerate. The corporation employs algorithmic governance, using surveillance technology, facial recognition

software, and military drones to track and control citizens. Its security forces, moreover, regularly attack and brutalize citizens. One form of oppression is gone, but Palestine and the Arab world do not live in liberty yet.

The most puzzling aspect about this triumphalist history of the liberation of Alquds conglomerate in the dystopian world of the series is the absence of any trace of the Palestinians or Palestinian culture. The obverse side of the obliteration of Israel seems to be the erasure of the Palestinians. Even in the region that metonymically refers to their ancestral homeland, the Palestinians are nowhere to be found. The people who live in Alquds conglomerate speak Egyptian colloquial Arabic and no one seems to be taking pride in their Arabic cultural heritage or Palestinian identity. Furthermore, the residents of Alquds conglomerate are represented in very negative terms. The global capitalist class and elites, who live in the Oasis megalopolis in an undisclosed location, look down upon them and refer to them as uncivilized and barbarians. The son of the president of Energy Co., who lives in the Oasis, also told the protagonist that “life in Alquds is not fit for human beings.” Indeed, one major plotline in the series deals with the protagonist’s task to invent an energy source that can power a dome that will protect “humanity” in the Oasis from the hordes and barbarians.

More disturbingly, in the last few episodes the series reverts to apocalyptic fabulation, religious mystification, and conspiratorial explanations. The narrative shifts completely to the story of a cult whose leader is modeled after the image of the anti-Christ in Islamic tradition. Commentators in social media picked up on this and even praised the series for “courageously taking on the ‘Zionist Masonic’ plot for world domination.” Some of these conspiracy theories are directly linked to conspiracy theories about the Covid-19 pandemic as well. One of the unfortunate things about this series is that it indulges only in a theologically induced fantasy about the end of the world and new millennial visions, without daring to challenge this entrenched thinking or its religious underpinning. In short, the “new and better future” that the series prophesizes merely reinscribes the Islamic beliefs of chosenness and eternal election that are grounded in ethnocentrism and religious exclusivism.

Until the last few episodes of the series, the most interesting aspect of the plot had been its unwavering identification of Alquds conglomerate with the struggles of the people who are excluded from the system that the Oasis elites and global capitalist class want to create for themselves. The dystopian format of this series thus links the condition of the “worst-off,” the disposable communities of surplus humanity, in Alquds conglomerate to the class struggle and other profound issues in the region and the world. *The End* thus manages to represent the radical changes sweeping the Arab world through the screen of fantasy. It filters Arab audiences’ unconscious fears and anxieties about the traumatic socio-political and cultural crises that are tearing the Arab world apart through traditional dystopian and science fiction tropes and novum (“Novum”, 2015). Moreover, the series illuminates and raises questions about these profound issues that have affected humanity in the last few decades. These issues include not only the polarization of wealth and the cupola created in the global apartheid, but also neoliberal algorithmic governance, the naturalization of AI (as both human surrogates and sex bots), the rise of megalopolis cities as corporations, renewable energy, and ecological sustainability (Žižek, 2018). By privileging conspiracy theories and theological apocalyptic discourses, *The End* misses a wonderful opportunity to engage the universal dimensions of the Palestinian struggle for freedom, which could be linked to other struggles around the world as the obverse sides of the same class struggle. This is the only way to rethink liberation for all in Israel/Palestine.

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15

Viral Resistance

Ian Parker 

Viral Crisis

The most detailed analysis of the current coronavirus outbreak is provided by Chuǎng (2020), which is available on the internet, called ‘Social Contagion: Microbiological Class War in China.’ Chuǎng is ‘*a collective of communists who consider the “China question” to be of central relevance to the contradictions of the world’s economic system and the potentials for its overcoming*’ (Chuǎng, 2016). The analysis includes a historical survey of pandemics and, although it does not actually name itself as such, the Chuǎng analysis is ‘ecosocialist’; that is, the analysis is in line with the argument that contemporary capitalism is indeed, as Joel Kovel (2007) put it in his book of the same name ‘the enemy of nature.’

The conditions of possibility for this current viral crisis include the concentration of human populations, industrialized farming in which huge populations of genetically similar animals are bred and contained

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Switzerland AG 2021

I. Strasser and M. Dege (eds.), *The Psychology of Global Crises and Crisis
Politics*, Palgrave Studies in the Theory and History of Psychology,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76939-0_15

in the same space, and the rapid destruction of natural habitats such that viruses in the 'wild' are released into food production networks. The rapid spread of a viral outbreak, including this one, then relies on a degree of calculated mismanagement, bureaucratic concern with secrecy, and control of populations combined with material incentives to keep production and consumption going for as long as possible.

Contemporary capitalism is configured as 'the enemy of nature' not only in the sense that the planet is treated as an inert matter to be exploited, a process driven by the search for profit but also in the sense that each one of us, subjects of capitalism, become alienated from nature. This is not a new idea, actually, and was noticed by Karl Marx (1844), who described alienation as proceeding through a fourfold separation. Alongside the separation of each human subject from the fruits of their labor, a toxic distortion of our creativity, and separation of us from each other as we compete to sell our labor power, a toxic distortion of our sociality, there is a separation of each of us from our own bodies, a fear of the body that must work for us without breaking down, and our separation from nature as such.

One can make a further conceptual link here with the distinction drawn by Lacanian psychoanalysis, between reality as that which we navigate in our day to day lives, the stuff of everyday life, and the 'real' as the sometimes traumatic eruption into our consciousness of brute matter, that which is impossible to fully represent to ourselves, comprehend and manage, still less for us to predict and control (Lacan, 2006). This aspect of Lacanian psychoanalysis is one of the conceptual frameworks, along with lite-touch Hegel and a sprinkle of Marxism that Slavoj Žižek (2020) brings to bear on the coronavirus crisis in his rapidly written and published recent book *PANDEMIC!: COVID-19 Shakes the World*. I will touch on arguments in this book here as I think it does raise some interesting issues but does not always do that in the right way. There are attempts to conceptualize the coronavirus crisis in the book, but we need some more concrete analysis of the political situation if we are to make use of some of its insights.

We have a difficult task here of navigating our way, first, between two far-right responses to this crisis. If we at least understand how these two far-right responses operate, we will be in a better position to work out

what we should do. This is especially important given that this crisis is very likely to trigger further crises as the coronavirus threat appears to recede, and the shape of those crises is already starting to appear.

Far-Right State-Oriented Response

A first far-right response is to call upon the full resources of the state and to demand total obedience to rules over social distancing and lockdown. We've seen in Britain, for example, calls for an increase in police powers, and those powers have already been augmented by restrictions on freedom of movement and the right of the police to detain people, so this a real threat.

Some on the left are tempted to take this kind of position. I have heard leftists argue along the lines that were we in control, we would be as tough, if not tougher on those who flout social distancing rules, tougher than our government. This is where we see, of course, an increase in state surveillance of everyday life. These calls for an increase of police powers, and such calls don't only come from the right, include a nationalist element. The fascist 'Tommy Robinson' who set up the English Defence League a while back, as a case in point, is sharing videos purportedly of Muslims gathering at a mosque, the message being that these gatherings are enabling contagion, with the sub-text that Islam itself is a threat. This is a time of viral signifiers, potent poisonous ones.

Note in this case that the real name for 'Tommy Robinson' is Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, and his chosen public name is a clever semiotic blend of 'Tommy' (the brave working-class soldier defending Britain during world wars) and Robinson (which, in the British imagination signifies a range of things, including Robinson Crusoe and a brand of jam for which the Robinson brand 'gollywog' functions as a still popular and supposedly humorous but racist image). All kinds of toxic ideological stuff are coming to the surface with this viral crisis.

This is a message and Islamophobic intervention that chimes with the activities of the Modi government in India, where far-right groups are claiming that Muslims are a source of the virus, even that they are thereby launching a 'Corona-Jihad.' Images of Indian police brutality against

Muslims outside a mosque are then being retweeted by other far-right figures in Britain, with the accompanying suggestion that police here could learn something from the Indian police. Here we see the chiming of nationalist response with nationalist response. There is an increasing globalization of right-wing nationalist movements, each pitting the population of their own nation against all the others. There is thus intensification during these times of virus crisis of already-existing alliances; of Johnson with Trump with Modi with Orbán with Netanyahu with Bolsonaro and so on. One only has to conjure up these names to realize how dangerous it is to simply call on the state to do its appointed task and hope for the best.

Here is a point where it is necessary to disagree with Žižek's hope that it would be possible, as he put it in his recent *Pandemic* book, that we could demand of the state 'show us what you can do' and thereby by some clever, subversive overidentification with the state hasten the transition from the 'disaster capitalism' Naomi Klein (2008) describes to what Žižek dubs 'disaster communism.'

Far-Right Libertarian Response

A second far-right response mirrors the first. This is to accuse the state of arrogating to itself increasing power, using the opportunity of the virus threat to increase surveillance, even, in the most extreme off-beam of these responses to claim that the virus threat is exaggerated, that it is merely a pretext for ramping up of state control.

One of the most poisonous vectors of this response lies at the heart of government itself; for example, in the case of Trump, who is keen to warrant his own denial of the scale of the problem by referring to the 'deep state.' This is the liberal 'deep state' that is, we are told, intent on sabotaging Trump's efforts to make America great again. As with the first far-right option, there are some on the left who have been, until a very late stage of the spread of coronavirus, arguing that this is not as serious as it is made out to be, even hinting at hidden agendas. And, as with collusion with the first far-right response, this is playing with fire. We have seen this already in the United States, where there has been

sympathetic reporting even in some of the far-left press of the libertarian survivalist militias who are refusing to obey state directives around coronavirus. Conspiracy theories thrive in times of coronavirus. There have, for example, been attacks on telephone masts in Britain, including some of those serving the emergency hospital building set up in Birmingham in the center of the country, by people who are convinced that 5G mobile network signals are responsible for spreading the virus. It is not clear whether these people are on the right or left.

Whatever their declared political allegiances, they effectively operate on the right, peddling conspiracy theories that begin with the spreading of memes that show hidden imagery on twenty-pound banknotes of the coronavirus and of telephone masts and end with the ramblings of David Icke, who believes that the British royal family is really alien lizard-beings. Icke is a one-time sports commentator, but not a joke. A clip of an interview with him was very recently shown on BBC television in which he was suggesting a mysterious connection between the spread of coronavirus and the Israeli state. This goes along with suggestions that we, the 'sheeple' who follow orders, are tranquilized by way of 'chemtrails' released by jet planes. If that theory was right, the absence of chemtrails now should surely lead to the sheeple waking up. The mystery is why the lizard-beings slip up so often, why they let clues slip out about their secret agenda. It is unclear that Icke really believes that the lizard-beings are Jews, the tragedy of his trajectory is probably more than he does actually believe they are lizards. I digress; it is too easy to mock these people.

The problem and the toxic political effect of all this, though, is that paranoid suspicion of any and every authority undermines rational debate. It intensifies the segregation of the population into groupings of people who already agree with each other about alien threats, as well as intensifying ethno-nationalist segregation as such. Alongside and in tension with these far-right responses to coronavirus are the attempts by the liberal and neoliberal states to themselves hold things together now so that there is a better, more realistic prospect of guiding us back to what they would like to see as business as usual. They operate on that premise, that capital accumulation must be allowed to resume as soon as possible, and that the kind of social relations that would enable that

must be restored sooner rather than later. In reality, the so-called 'lock-down' in Britain has many loopholes that are encouraging businesses to break it, and many precarious workers are being pressured to leave their homes and put themselves and their families at risk.

You do not have to be a raving Marxist to acknowledge that this is what the capitalist state agenda must be. That is, production must be restored, production under private ownership, and consumer demand be encouraged. You cannot have it any other way if you believe that capitalism is intrinsically a civilizing force. This agenda establishes the contours of the ideological responses of most of the existing authorities.

There are two versions of established dominant ideological responses which guide policy, and they entail and feed ideological motifs that we need to grapple with.

Neoliberal Response

The first, more brutal response was articulated very clearly by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson in the early days of the crisis. This line had it that we should allow the virus to sweep through the population, and here Johnson was pitching his theory at the British population, and this would then lead to 'herd immunity'; the 'herd' in this case being the British herd, so already semiotically speaking, a nationalist motif was being mobilized.

The rhetoric Johnson used would then come to haunt him when he ended up in hospital on oxygen, though not actually on a ventilator; this rhetoric included stating openly at press conferences that he 'shook everyone's hand' during his official visits to hospitals, and that we should 'take it on the chin,' and accept, as he put it himself, 'that you will lose loved ones.' So sanguine was he that he reportedly flippantly suggested that the plan to bring in emergency ventilators to hospitals be called 'operation last gasp.' The hopes among some were that Johnson's own stay in hospital with coronavirus would lead to a change of heart. The problem was that the 'herd immunity' motif already operated in the popular imagination as a version of quasi-Darwinian 'survival of the fittest' and was spun as such by the tabloid press, which has been

functioning throughout the crisis in Britain as propaganda sheets for the Conservative Party. They have been keen to ram home Johnson's victory over Labour in the election and to bury the threat from supporters of Jeremy Corbyn once and for all.

The discourse about Johnson's hospitalization and recovery was anchored by claims that he has a 'zest for life,' that he has the strength to pull through, and that this was a victory, as one tabloid headline had it, for 'battling Boris.' This narrative is mirrored in other contexts; in India, for example, there is anxiety about heading to the hospital because, in some bizarre way, the representation of the virus as foreign to the Hindu body-politic means that to contract coronavirus is to show not only failure but to be tinged with treason, to be 'un-Indian.'

Poor people, people from minority groups, who are more often poor, will die in greater numbers as a result of this virus. This is already the case in Britain, and not only in Britain. And so, 'herd immunity' of one form or another is bound up with nationalism. There is another version of nationalism, however, that is also concerned with attempting to bind the community together, which I turn to next. Here it is not so much oriented to accepting that people will die, that you will lose your loved ones, but it relies on the fiction that all will survive, that we will come through this.

Liberal Response

The second established ideologically framed state response is more benign, and this is the kind of thing that the left usually has in mind when it calls on the state to show what it can do, but it is also problematic. This second response can be summed up in the claim that this natural crisis, this crisis caused by a virus that emerged unbidden from the natural world that no one could predict or control, has had the effect of giving us a common purpose as if we are all in the same boat. It is a response that can be summed up in the claim that 'we are all in it together.'

This claim, as always, is, at best, no more than a wish of liberal and social-democratic political leaders, and, at worst, a malicious attempt

to occlude the inequalities that structure capitalist society, inequalities that are intensified under these crisis conditions. We are patent, not 'all in it together.' This 'all together' is evoked time and time again during the crisis, for it is ideologically necessary, pragmatically necessary for the political leaders of each nation-state to try and hold people together, to encourage them to obey the rule of law in potentially chaotic times.

For example, Boris Johnson was admitted to a National Health Service, NHS, hospital, which was ideologically significant, not accidental. Given the popular knowledge of his own class background, immensely rich and immensely privileged, schooled at Eton and Oxford, it was politically unavoidable. This necessity cemented by the recent election campaign in which the Labour Party, knowing full well that the NHS was already being privatized, most likely ready to be sold off to US American companies upon the conclusion of the Brexit negotiations, put most of its campaign energy into supporting the NHS. Johnson's Conservative Party undercut that campaign with its own cynical and dishonest claim that the NHS would be safe in his hands, and more resources, insufficient but an impressive amount, were put into the NHS in the first budget after the election.

There has, during the crisis, been a significant manifestation of popular support for the NHS, gratitude to health workers. Each Thursday evening at 8 pm, people appear on their doorsteps or at windows clapping, sometimes banging on pans. Each week the turnout for loud public support has been greater. Some right-wing Conservatives, not far-right but connected with the 'Vote Leave' campaign, that is pro-Brexit, called for another manifestation on another evening while Johnson was in hospital, to clap for Boris. There was silence. It failed. And with that, the line that 'we are all in it together' was thrown into question.

Ecosocialist Response

We have a fundamental choice of political strategy here, we always had, but this choice is intensified under the coronavirus crisis. We could orientate ourselves to the state, demand action from the state, attempting to

hold the state to account, and this seems to be the line argued by Žižek in his recent book. Or we can organize ourselves separately from the state, build on the networks of mutual aid, and articulate these with already-existing organizations of what we can call, for shorthand, the 99% (that is working people, the excluded, marginalized, those who form the basis of the various different liberation movements around the world). This would be a form of viral resistance appropriate to this crisis, an ecosocialist response (Tanuro, 2013).

On the one side, in the hope that this crisis will tip the state over from being a defender of property rights, of the rights of those who hold very large property, to coming over to our side, is the shift that Žižek rather naively characterizes as the shift from disaster capitalism to disaster communism. On this side of the choice too are the old naïve liberals who always hoped to harness the energies of the state for the social good, and the social democrats of various kinds who earnestly hope that if we play cautiously we will win over everyone because, when it comes down to it, 'we are all in it together.' On the other side is a strategy of working from the base up, from the grassroots, and the crucial lesson we must draw from a critical analysis of the libertarians who are defying the state over the lockdown is that at the heart of our strategy must be an uncompromising internationalism.

There is an underlying conceptual and practical critique that we must take seriously here, a lesson we must draw from the nature of a political-economic system that has been despoiling the world since its inception and is now drawing us to the edge of destruction on this planet. Capital accumulation will not work unless it is driven by profit, and the profit motive underpins a double shift in human relations under capitalism, human relationships that are intimately tied to the ecology of the planet. Not to reinvent the wheel here, I acknowledge work by the Marxist geographer David Harvey (1991) on time-space compression as invaluable for understanding what has already been happening to us under classical and neoliberal capitalism.

Distance and Time

The first aspect of that double shift concerns distance, precisely involving the crisis of distance that the coronavirus faces us with. Capitalism entails globalization, which is not necessarily a bad thing, and the key question is what kind of globalization we are in favor of; globalization of capital which entails and intensifies colonial oppression and postcolonial cultural domination of different kinds, or internationalism in which we acknowledge the diversity of ways of being human in a consciously articulated global response?

With train travel, essential to industrialization, and then plane travel, and then with electronic communication, we have built a world, or a world has been built for us, which shrinks distance, as least for the sector of the population that controls and manages resources and for a significant layer of middle-class professionals, in which group we must include tenured academics.

One of the things we learn from strategies of social distancing to contain and slow the spread of coronavirus is that social distance is not necessarily segregation and alienation but betokens new forms of solidarity. This is a point made well by Žižek in his book that the very etiquette of respect for distance is a sign of respect and care for others. Here is the return of a notion of solidarity, which is not reduced to charitable help for those we know, but internationalist solidarity, solidarity, and care for those we have never met.

The second aspect of this double shift concerns time, the possibility of engaging in a quite different way with the acceleration of life under capitalism, acceleration which is always, of course, unevenly suffered or enjoyed. There has always, with the distinction between those who own the means of production and those who work to live, been a correlative distinction between those who are time-rich and those who are time-poor, a distinction that then mirrors its way down through social classes to manifest itself in relations between men and women, in which it is women who are expected to have more time, to wait in line, and to shop, and even to speak. Acceleration of the speed of life does not mean more time for all, but less.

That vector of time is radically challenged in times of lockdown, times in which there is enforced work for some, including for those neoliberal subjects that Byung-Chul Han describes where it is, indeed, as if the class struggle is internalized such that each individual subject becomes at war with itself. Again, Žižek has useful critical things to say about that analysis, pointing out that this description applies to a certain limited sector of the world population.

This brings us to the many who are thrown out of work during these times and who face time as something unstructured, empty. We are faced then with time, what to do with it when it is ours. It opens once again the question of how work could be redistributed so that there is also redistribution of time.

A crisis is a turning point, a political strategic choice points as to whether to continue and exacerbate the consequences of that double shift or to do something different. So, let's bear in mind those background issues for developing a strategy that is grassroots up, independent of the state, and that is international, and that aims to reconfigure our lives in such a way as to work with what the coronavirus crisis has opened up as possibilities, of a transformation of what we understand by 'distance' and what we understand by 'time.'

Four Elements of Viral Resistance

It is tempting to draw up a long and ever-expanding list of strategic responses that cover each and every aspect of our lives. I first read the title of the conference at which this paper was first given as 'The Psychology of Global Crises: State Surveillance, Solidarity and Everything Else,' which would have been a fairly good summary of what we are up against now, for the coronavirus crisis does basically demand a transformation of everything. So you can just add 'everything else' to this list of four strategic points I want to conclude with. We can formulate these four strategic points as demands, and, yes, these are demands on the state authorities but also, more importantly, demands on each other.

1. The first demand concerns work. There is already massively increasing unemployment and increasing poverty as a result of this crisis, and that will get worse. The millions of pounds that have been poured into keeping the infrastructure going during lockdown and into support payments will be followed by austerity as working people, those who can return to work, will be made to pay for this crisis. We need guarantees of work and distribution of work and pay, and forms of support that are collectively organized. It is interesting and not surprising that calls for Universal Basic Income have increased during the crisis, including among the left, but that is a trap. What that does is to, first, rely on the state to pay out to each individual—it is a top-down solution—and second, to rely on each individual to act as a consumer, still at the mercy of competing profit-driven goods and services offered by the parasites, the ruling class, who make money out of human need.
2. The second demand concerns health. We have learned something about the nature of health provision, that private health care is not only insufficient but damaging, and that there needs to be fully funded free health care at point of provision for everyone. In some local contexts, in the case of the National Health Service in Britain, for example, free public health care is a historic gain that we cannot let go, that needs to be defended and extended. In other contexts, there are more limited services, but coronavirus again shows that care work in its manifold forms is vital. Coronavirus, and the role of the state in utilizing existing health care provision, gives new impetus to this basic element of a left response, and the demand must be for an extension of care when the immediate threat recedes.
3. The third demand concerns communication. The coronavirus crisis opens up new possibilities for distributed work, education, and, of course, leisure, and for networks of solidarity to be formed in which there is sharing of information. The main social media companies are private companies that have benefitted from the crisis, and there should be a demand not only for these to be socialized, ensuring that information is not bought and sold for commercial gain, nor for surveillance of populations, but also that there be developed forms of internet technology that are autonomous of the state. That also means

developing technology that is not enclosed by the private companies running the 'online teaching' we are being press-ganged into now. We have seen that it is easy for state authorities to shut down the internet at times of crisis, and so it is vital that work is put into developing alternative networks that can survive such outages.

4. I like three-part lists but should add a fourth demand in the context of a broader discussion of the psychology of global crisis, which concerns mental health. This demand links with questions of work, for which distribution of time will be good for the mental health of all, it links with questions of health, free public health care which includes mental health, and it links with questions of communication and the autonomous functioning of networks of mental health system survivors. Surveillance today is not merely a material practice involving the collection of information about the population, but also, as Michel Foucault pointed out, a practice of self-monitoring that is connected to the sense of being watched, something that activists in the Paranoia Network in Britain (2020) have long been aware of.

The times of coronavirus are indeed times of paranoia, with regimes around the world feeding off the disorientation and uncertainty that fake news creates and sustains. Žižek includes an interesting discussion of the way the Putin regime peddles through its media networks bizarre theories before suggesting that not only do they emanate from the West and are therefore to be suspected but also that they may each contain a kernel of truth. The lockdown increases isolation, and official indicators already show an increase in distress, as well as other intensifications of the violence of everyday life in this wretched world that include incidences of domestic violence of femicide.

Time and time again, in times of crisis, and this coronavirus is no exception, those forms of everyday violence are exacerbated, and any political program has to attend to the 'personal-political' dimension that socialist-feminism drew attention to many years ago. Each of these four demands is interlinked with the others in the sense that they need to be made not only from the base up, directed up at the state rather than calling on the state to enact the necessary reforms, and thereby strengthen

itself in the process. What they have in common is an attention to the form of politics as well as, if not more than, the content. How we live is at stake now, and our response to the peculiar nature of this viral problem must be configured as an equally innovative creative form of viral response, viral resistance.

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16

Essay on Fascist Subjectivity

Thomas Teo

Conceptualizing fascist subjectivity (FS) is confronted with a significant theoretical problem: Is it possible to actualize a concept that has historical meanings and that is embedded in specific locations and times with important variations? Given that fascism has temporal and geographical particularities and is often used as a political-battle term, one can question whether it is legitimate to propose to rethink the term for current conditions without distorting, trivializing, and misrepresenting its meanings. Without relativizing the horrendous outcomes of German fascism (1933–1945), I submit that it is possible to do justice to psychosocial realities in rethinking fascism, and in so doing, showing that there are historical continuities as well as current specificities that connect the past and the present. In short, new FS is different from and similar to old FS. It is similar in terms of core elements, but it is different because the early

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twenty-first century is confronted with new social realities, and fascists have learned from the past.

A second question emerges, challenging this project: Can one do justice to the concept, as it relates to subjectivity, when fascism is primarily a political project? Although FS is different from fascist politics and fascist political action, which are not points of theorizing here, FS occupies the psychological terrain. In contrast to the reality of fascist politics and to the idea of a fascist individual as a potentiality (Adorno et al., 1950), I submit that FS is an *actuality* that can be found and is expressed in current societal circumstances. The continuation and exacerbation of political-economic circumstances afford FS in the present. Its societal form means that it is not an individual pathology of the past, but draws on historically engendered ideas and practices, embodied feelings, and social motivations. FS can be expressed on a continuum from implicit assumptions to an overt ideology with concrete actions. In the argument, I try to identify the core elements of FS in the past and, more importantly, in the present.

I have academic and biographical (and their entanglement) reasons for wanting to understand FS. First, FS has openly reemerged in liberal democracies as a significant form of subjectivity that has reached a level of acceptance in this culture (see also Teo, 2020); this actuality and the modernity of FS requires analysis. Second, FS has been part of critical-theoretical reflection since the inauguration of this project in the 1920s. It remains academically and politically important to understand why and how people turn to fascism as well as its relation to subjectivity. Third, my personal motives pertain to the fact that I grew up in an Austrian village very close to a facility where persons with mental disabilities, cared for by Catholic sisters, were removed in 1941 and sent to, among other places, Schloss Hartheim, the center of the Nazi T4 euthanasia program, where most were killed. I also had a grandfather who turned from being a socialist to becoming a member of the SA, where he was dismissed, and who after the war embodied social democracy. Finally, as a multiracial person, I also have personal experiences with FS in Austria, Germany, and Canada—the countries I have consciously resided in.

Fascist Subjectivity and Political Fascism

The distinction between fascist subjectivity and fascist politics, which targets laws and policies, the public, institutions, the economy, mass and individual behavior, needs to be kept in mind. Most authors talk about fascism as a political and social movement but also mention psychosocial dimensions (see also Kühnl, 1990). For instance, Eco (1995) discusses the following elements of fascism: Cult of tradition, rejection of modernism, irrationalism, action for action's sake, the notion that disagreement is treason, fear of difference, appeal to a frustrated middle class, obsession with a plot, humiliation by the ostentatious wealth and force of enemies, life as permanent warfare, contempt for the weak, heroism education, machismo, selective populism, and Orwellian Newspeak.

Paxton (1998) characterizes fascism as the primacy of the group, the belief that one's group is a victim, the group's decadence, the brotherhood (*fascio*) of unity and purity, an enhanced sense of identity through the grandeur of the group, the authority of natural male leaders, and the beauty of violence and will. Stanley (2018), in a more recent attempt, lists the mythical past, propaganda, anti-intellectualism, unreality, hierarchy, victimhood, law and order, life as a competition for power, the constructed moral inferiority of enemies and the laziness of the Other as dimensions of fascism. The author also includes explicit psychological dimensions such as sexual anxiety or envy as aspects of fascism. Overall, core to fascism is an "us versus them" mentality and politics. Giroux (2018), aware of the antidemocratic and authoritarian politics of fascisms, is particularly interested in "Trumpist fascism" (p. 24) that engenders a politics and culture of hate, violence, fear, a language of intolerance, demagoguery, paranoia, conspiracy theories, bigotry, falsehoods, militarism, nativism, racism, misogyny, ultra-nationalism, a dystopian view of the world, and the celebration of ignorance. Giroux emphasizes in his analysis of fascism corporate power, and more specifically, pro-corporate capitalism.

Specific psychosocial dimensions of fascism were discussed by critical theorists that emphasized authoritarian character or personality and were influenced by psychoanalytic theory (see Reich's, 1933/1946 emphasis on

sexual repression). Adorno's et al. (1950) studies on authoritarian personality are well known and have engendered a variety of empirical studies. Certainly, critical theorists understand the way that society and individuals are connected, as expressed in Fromm's (1941) concept of *social character* that connects the authoritarian character with society. I agree that personality needs to be understood in its relation to society, but also in its historically constituted *content*. Identification with leaders or sexual jealousy is not inherently fascist, and one can observe right-wing as well as left-wing authoritarianism (expressed for instance in Stalinism; already observed by Reich, 1933/1946). Authoritarianism, although it remains an important tool of analysis (Heitmayer, 2018), is theoretically insufficient for understanding FS. If characterizations of FS need to distinguish between accidental and essential properties, then concrete content needs to be identified: FS is engendered by political-economic ideas and/or practices of capitalism, while employing racism and/or subhumanism as cognitive, affective, or motivational ontologies. Such ideas, practices, and ontologies constitute essential properties of FS, at least in the German version of FS, which has been its most "successful" expression and is considered here its prototype.

I do not disagree with the political and diverse psychosocial descriptions of fascism in the past and present as they all have a family resemblance (see Eco, 1995). I am suggesting that it is theoretically problematic to detach FS from content and to locate it, in the end, internally. In my project, it is problematic to detach intra-subjectivity (often understood as subjectivity) from inter-subjectivity and socio-subjectivity and to give intra-subjectivity a kind of primacy. A theory of subjectivity that attempts to understand the first-person standpoint always needs to understand the nexus between the socio-, inter-, and intra-subjective (see also Holzkamp, 1983; Teo, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978). Subjectivity is more than personality, more than the internal, more than personal dynamics, and thus, intra-subjectivity is insufficient to capture FS. It is the content of FS, representing a dialectical moment, that makes political fascism a reality. For those reasons, a focus on subjectivity does not supersede studies on the social basis and social function of fascism (e.g., Kühnl & Rabinbach, 1975).

It should be historically evident that FS is primarily a socio-relational phenomenon that operates with historically constituted theories, affects, and practices. The rise and fall of FS cannot be explained through the rise and fall of internal personal attributes but rather through circumstances that afford FS. Currently, one can connect FS to the rise of existential and political crisis such as increasing income inequality, rising individual debt levels in many advanced countries, global warming, environmental destruction, voluntary and forced migration, and the pandemic, laying the groundwork for the receptibility of fascist ideas and practices. These are the conditions for the possibility that liberal Western democracies will see an increasing acceptance of FS, but they are not the content of FS. Equally, it would be theoretically unsatisfactory if one were to argue that fascist subjectivity is the individual dimension of fascist politics. Relying on the continuity of content from the past to the present, it is suggested that capitalist political-economic ideas and practices, combined with racism and/or *subhumanism* (see Stoddard, 1922; Teo, 2020), are at the core of FS. This is not to deny that one can find variations among individuals and varying susceptibilities of FS.

Fascist Subjectivity as a Socio-Relational Phenomenon

Fascist subjectivity is based on a socio-relational ontology that centers on the sources of *wealth* (in the meaning of having, producing, contributing, distributing something more than is needed for bare survival), the making and distribution of resources, goods, and services, and connected with that, power, in a community or society. From a socio-relational perspective, one should ask: How are wealth and “things of value” distributed in this world? Should wealth include or exclude the *Other*? The answer that there is not enough to go around for all human beings engenders the fascist philosophy of alterity. Exclusion of the Other involves thinking, feeling, and willing that guides possible actions. In this view, justifications are not irrational, as cogent and evaluative accounts can be found in racializing and subhumanizing discourses and practices

that may stretch from colonialism and war to a feeling that the Other is undeserving and can be neglected, exploited, or exterminated.

The *close Other*, in the process of fascistization, can be the racialized minority, the outsider, the person with disabilities, the communist, the prisoner, the poor, the lesbian; people who live in the community. For the close Other racialization can sometimes work, but subhumanization is often a better strategy in FS. For the *distant Other*, racialization has worked in the past and present, while subhumanization is an added emotional benefit. Neither the close nor the distant Other deserve, because the Other is constituted by a different culture, an inferior race, or is by nature—or other circumstances that do not require further reflection—“subhuman” (or a combination of both). The close or distant Other, who should not and cannot participate in wealth, can be humiliated and is disposable, which can be justified cognitively and/or emotionally (through disgust, fear, hatred, contempt, etc.), whereby individual differences come into effect. Racism and subhumanism work with affective cognitions based on discourses, images, imaginations, and practices. Individual action depends on whether *I* am a leader (*I* and *we* in Italics are meant here as expressing a possible first-person standpoint without referring specifically to the author), participant, or supporter, and on whether there is support of action in communities or governments, and can reach from speech to the actual killing of the Other.

When operating with an imagined *pure* collective, the idea that *we* should get more than them, that *we* are superior, that we can dominate, and even exterminate them, and extreme nationalism, can be the logical outcome. Yet, it should be historically evident that a particular form of nationalism coincides with fascism. A nationalism based, for instance, on the philosophy of multiculturalism (e.g., Taylor, 1994) that celebrates diversity and equality does not connect to a FS (but opposing it could). FS comprised of content, i.e., capitalism, racism, and subhumanism, can have a strong cognitive dimension, as expressed in educated minds through “science,” as well as a strong affective dimension that can be used in propaganda when it is felt (supposedly consistent with common sense) that certain humans are inferior or disgusting. It is indeed the content of racism (including anti-Semitism, scientific racism, cultural racism) and subhumanism that engenders FS’s socio-relational exclusions

in the political economy. For those reasons, sexual envy or a simple *us versus them* ideology is insufficient to understand the “logic” of FS that operates with economic, biological, political, and psychological ideas and practices regarding the disposability of the Other.

In historical fascism, in its German expression, the Jew could be racialized and subhumanized, constructed as inferior and as a parasite that could be killed, that even needed to be exterminated (Hitler, 1927/1999; SS-Hauptamt—Schulungsamt, 1942). The “Aryan” German communist and the German with disabilities could not be racialized but could be subhumanized and therefore disposed of (see also Weingart et al., 1988). In all cases, it was argued that these *Others* were enemies who damaged the German economy by not being productive, that they were a burden, or that they lived parasitically on the German nation. These subhumans hurt the German economy in times of peace, during the war, and when struggling for domination with other world economies (Hitler, 1927/1999). Indeed, Hitler’s main enemies in *Mein Kampf* were the Jews and the Marxists. In order to justify the extermination of people, one could and did use economic, racist, or subhuman arguments or appeals. In order to kill people with physical and mental disabilities, in the Nazi euthanasia program, economic appeals were made that included scientific tables, affect-inducing images, and appeals to the burden of costs that would impact German wealth.

A broad strategy can be used to reinforce FS. One can convince an audience through economic, scientific, biomedical, and seemingly common-sense, conspiratorial, and ideological discourses and practices, in concert with affective images and imaginations. One can turn the stream of fascist appeals “productively,” depending on the audience and circumstance. In academic contexts, fascists can use what are pseudo-scientific justifications and naïve empiricist research, whereas mass rallies can operate with propaganda using affective images, for instance, of the criminal ragged “migrant.” In public contexts, one can use the mantle of economic Darwinism and the instrumental logic of cost–benefit analyses. Indeed, fascist propaganda provides an entire ideological, practical-political, and affective apparatus to cement FS.

An essential element of fascist activity is *necropolitics*. The term denotes the power of death, coined by the philosopher Mbembe (2003),

suggesting that the modern sovereign power decides who can live, who can die, and who can be terrorized. It is not so much a right to kill but the ability to expose people to death. FS may comprise the sovereign's right to kill as well as "the capacity to define who matters and who does not, who is disposable and who is not" (p. 27). This can happen in the colonies but also at home in the center. Instead of life-worlds European colonialism has created "death-worlds" (p. 40). Necropolitics relies on a receptive fascist mentality and, as such, is not a moment of the past but a mentality to be found in liberal democracies.

On a subjective level, necropolitics translates into the question of who *I* think and feel is *dieable*? In FS, *we* believe that actions leading to the death of the economically unproductive, the racialized, and the subhumanized are necessary, justified, and even desirable. Political support and policies existing in a country aid not only in accepting dieability over time, but in addition, *we* actively suture ourselves into the idea, and *we* may even become agentic when participating. FS is the condition and outcome for the possibility of making certain people *killable* or *dieable* (there is no need to replace them). In classical fascism, they were the Jew, the Gypsy, the communist, gays, disabled persons, and whoever was perceived as an enemy of the state. Nowadays, in the context of migration, using combinations of racist, economic, and subhuman arguments, asylum seekers and their children crossing seas or borders are considered dieable; in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the elderly and other vulnerable people are adjudicated as dieable for the sake of the economy; in the United States and other countries, Blacks are rendered dieable in law enforcement; and indigenous peoples have been considered dieable as have other minorities, precarious workers, prisoners, and LGBTQ members.

Political Economy: Capitalism

In fascist subjectivity, racism and subhumanism are invoked in concert with the problem of the production, distribution, and accumulation of wealth (in the above sense). Capitalism is an economic system based on exploitation, theft, and the immense accumulation of means, assets, and

affluence in a few private hands (Harvey, 2005; Piketty, 2014). From a subjective perspective, *I* can ask myself: Why do *I* have wealth, and why does the Other not? An ideological apparatus, including the media, the law, and the social sciences, comes into play, justifying the status quo and explaining why there is not enough to go around for everybody, with discourses ranging from laziness/hard work, intelligence, and entrepreneurship in concert with racializing and subhumanizing accounts. Racialized accounts justify the exploitation of colonies, foreign countries, and peoples; subhumanizing accounts justify the disposability of the Other.

The argument that there is not enough to go around for everyone is based on historically constituted experiences of scarcity by individuals, groups, or communities. Once humanity reached the level of wealth accumulation, reasons were developed to explain why *we* (as a clan, group, nation, country) should and must have more than the Other: *We* deserve more than the Other (or *we* can take their wealth away) because they are not as good or not as competitive as we are. The Other is responsible for their lack of wealth because they belong to an inferior race or are subhuman. *We* can justify why the Other is not doing well through religion, philosophy, legal systems, biology, and other sciences. The idea that “there is not enough” applies to the Other outside of *our* borders, but equally to the economic Other within *our* borders, who, in contrast to the enemy from outside, is also invading *us* from inside. The Jewish Marxist has functioned as the perfect representative of the Other as an enemy who challenges the seemingly natural order of existing wealth.

The fear of stagnation or reduction of wealth in traditionally “successful” countries, the idea that “there is not enough to go around” may become—within the status quo—a real experience for large segments of society. Based on the idea that *we* work for the economy and not the other way around—and that the accumulation of wealth is in the hands of a few—economic and psychological instability has also emerged in the last decades. Neoliberal capitalism, the version of capitalism that has become dominant since the 1980s, puts enormous pressure on individuals and families. Objectively, this economic organization has benefitted the rich as many analyses have shown; and subjectively, there is the feeling that one is never up to the standards of an entrepreneurial self

(or one does not want to be a constant entrepreneur) (Teo, 2018). In FS, it is not the existing economic organization that is to blame, but the Jew in Nazi Germany, or the foreigner, the migrant, the lazy, unproductive, and poor, the socialist, or the anti-entrepreneurial self, whereby all these terms are laden with affects.

In neoliberal capitalism, generational upward mobility has become difficult, and meritocracy is reduced to an ideology but is not a reality, for the majority of people (Corak, 2013). Increasing wealth and income inequality have produced a stream of psychosocial difficulties (Wilkinson, 2005; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009), while economic justifications within traditional discourses have become less convincing. Still, if economic stagnation or decline is not attributed to a capitalist system and its unreasonable physical and psychological demands, then the Other is available as a target. The personal economic experiences in neoliberal capitalism and the historically available reality of blaming the racialized or subhumanized Other have led to a reemergence of FS that can attribute decline or failure to the close and distant Other.

Thus, even when *I* do not benefit from the production and distribution of wealth, even when *I* observe in my community that inequality is increasing, even when *I* see that the rich have outrageous access to goods and services, more so than they have had in the past, even when *I* notice that the poor are struggling, *I* do not blame neoliberal capitalism, but inferior human beings from outside and inside my context. Economic Darwinism can be used as an ideology to justify that there is not enough to go around, that different human groups struggle for their share, and that for those reasons, *we* do not need to share with them. It is effective as a spontaneous ideology, as seemingly common sense within the logic of capitalism, and as gut feelings that tell *us* so. Wealth, so the ideology in Western capitalist countries, using cognitive and affective elements as well as motivational strategies of action, does not need to be shared with constructed enemies, losers, or the inferior.

In FS, the logic of capitalism is combined with racism and/or subhumanism. According to this argument, a supporter of capitalism is not necessarily embodying a FS. Yet, the boundary remains permeable as recent necropolitical debates in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic show. Surely, there is a difference between the dieability of persons

with disabilities in Nazi Germany and not providing healthcare for poor people, or the practice of letting older people or people with medical preconditions die during a pandemic. Thus, *active dieability* (*killability*) in the context of Nazi Germany and *passive dieability* in the context of a pandemic for economic reasons need to be distinguished. However, attention needs to be paid to the point where the debates shifts, and racist and subhumanist arguments are added, or when systemic-racist outcomes contribute to the higher dieability of specific ethnicities or other groups.

I suggest that FS that combines economic, racist, and/or subhumanist ideas, affects, and actions exist in liberal democracies. As emphasized, I am not arguing that everyone who supports capitalism has a fascist mindset—that would be too imprecise an understanding of FS—but that a slippage into FS is possible, when combined with racism and subhumanism, and very much present, for instance, in American mental life. When ethnic groups, or traditionally perceived “enemies” of the capitalist economy (communists, socialists, labor unions, etc.), or new “enemies” (the sick, unproductive, elderly), are subhumanized, and instrument-rational, political-economic reasons take precedence in justifying dieability in order to overcome a stalled process of accumulation, FS is more or less emerging.

The unproductive and sick elderly, disposable in the capitalist economy, are more trans-humanized than subhumanized. In this context, discourses about senior citizens risking death for the sake of American capitalism or that the sick and elderly should let nature run its course, or that deaths are the price for reopening the economy, emerge (see e.g., Nguyen, 2020). A subjectivity that accepts and promotes the idea that the most vulnerable members of society are *dieable* (including precarious workers) for the sake of capitalism engages a FS when combined with ideas and feelings of subhumanism. When the elderly are seen as on the brink of no longer being human (meaning transhuman), they join a subhuman class, a historically new phenomenon in liberal democracies.

Racism

The violent treatment of the Other is not historically new. It can emerge from an *us versus them* mentality based on tribal, cultural, religious, or economic reasons or as a psychosocial activity. Although negative descriptions of the Other can be found throughout Western thinking (Aristotle, 2001 [1327b], believed that Western Europeans lack intelligence), scientific racism emerged in the eighteenth century providing the intellectual and affective rationale for the domination of the Other (Hannaford, 1996). Racism could be combined with subhumanism that considered the Other below the standards of humanity, closer to animals. For instance, Pieter Camper (1722–1789) devised, despite his religious-universalist worldview, the *facial angle*, which suggested “scientifically” that Africans were closer to apes (Bindman, 2002). Race theories justified slavery, colonialism, domination, exploitation, and the killing of the Other.

Racism provided a “logic” that existing and possible wealth could and should be distributed unequally, according to the power, character, and nature of a race. Racializations included the enlightened mind. To be more precise, it was the enlightenment thinker Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) who was instrumental in developing race theories and the concept of race (Bernasconi, 2001). Indeed, racism and imperialism, as ideologies and practices that allowed the exploitation of the Other, were not in contradiction but in alignment with a Euro-American self-understanding. The domination and abuse of other countries, cultures, peoples, and persons were possible because *we* are superior, and *they* are not only different but inferior, or not fully human but subhuman. Religious, liberal, and modern philosophies did not stand against but operated with those practices. Racism could be targeted when directed against specific groups such as Jews in German fascism or “Negroes” in American life.

After WWII and the results of German fascism, the term “race” has become more problematic in many contexts (e.g., Germany) while others have maintained it (the United States). On this background, a new phenomenon has emerged: The practice of racialization is no longer limited anymore to traditionally conceived races but has been

extended to culture and/or religion. For instance, in Western contexts, Muslim cultures/Muslim religions are treated as a racial category or as if membership were natural, unchangeable, or biological. When Muslims are constructed as a race or treated as a race, they are racialized. Muslims can be racialized as inferior because their religion or cultural practices are constructed as inferior or because of their appearances. They can even be subhumanized as debates and practices about Muslim migration show. In that sense, FS can target racialized Muslims without using the term race; thinking, feeling, and action can focus on this group as if it were a race; and they can be subhumanized in thought or actions, which seemingly justifies attacks on them.

Subjective racism is based on the cognitive-affective construction of differences, whether these differences are real or imagined, the naturalization of these differences (it is in their nature or essentialized culture to be that way), the evaluation of these differences resulting in beliefs that *we* are superior and they are inferior, invoking a sense of supremacy, and in suggesting actions against them (see also Memmi, 1982/2000). FS suggests that the Other is different by nature (or by an immutable culture) and/or outside the human norm, which demands action against the Other. Inequity and death of the Other are possible because there is not enough to go around. Subjective racism can draw on scientific racism that operates with research methods and ideas, as well as theoretical or empirical tools, to justify racism, for which a long history in academia exists (Jackson & Weidman, 2004; Winston, 2004).

Racism can be *systemic* when embedded in institutional and cultural practices with outcomes that disadvantage the Other. Systemic racism, as observed in law enforcement, education, health, and other institutions, may enter embodied subjectivity without persons being aware or conscious of the racism that they are perpetrating or participating in. Yet, not every participant in systemic racism has a FS, specifically when racism is not combined with a political economy. This means that the killing of a Black person may result from systemic racism in institutions in which actors participate and/or from a FS. Again, the boundary may be thin should *I* feel that a Black body is disposable, that the Black person is subhuman, or because they are poor and do not contribute to *our* nation's economic well-being. Such a killing may be based on FS

when considering economic benefits or may be the outcome of a plain racist subjectivity that focuses on the inferiority of the Other, their race or culture, or their subhuman status.

Subhumanism

Stoddard (1922) developed the concept of the under-man (equivalent to what is called in this article subhuman) because race was insufficient to understand American social order. He needed a concept that addressed sub-standard, sub-capable, and sub-adapted people in the United States—not only “primitives,” “degenerates,” non-European races, or “mongrelized” populations, but also the poor, the lower classes, the proletariat, and the Bolsheviks. The malleability of the concept can also be seen in the Nazi booklet on *Der Untermensch* [The subhuman] (SS-Hauptamt—Schulungsamt, 1942), which rendered, using images primarily, all enemies of Germany, not only Jews and Soviets but also Western leaders, into subhumans. In FS, racism can stand alone or be combined with subhumanism to justify cognitively, emotionally, and motivationally the domination and exclusion of the Other.

In fascist Germany, the Jews were considered a race and a subhuman class of people who should not participate in the economy and could be destroyed because they were deemed parasitic. German persons with disabilities, German gays and lesbians, political opponents such as German communists and socialists, the German poor and criminals, and Western war enemies could not always be racialized, but they could always be subhumanized. They could be portrayed as being below the standards of German civilization, below human civilization, below the standards of an imagined ideal of the human, defective or animal-like or insect-like (Soviets could be racialized or subhumanized). Subhumans can be dehumanized (actions), and the process of dehumanization makes them subhuman, or they already are considered subhuman and can be dehumanized (see Teo, 2020).

Subhumanism is a visual ontology operating with images or imaginations. For that reason, *subhumanism* as a cultural, affective-symbolic,

distributed, and normalized ontology has reemerged in these visual times in liberal democracies. Implicit and explicit discourses have recently emerged in the context of migration in many Western countries (Teo, 2020). Even former US President Obama addressed the usage of the concept in American culture while arguing that *we* should not invoke the idea that certain people are subhuman (Naylor, 2019). In the fascistization of the migration debate, it is evident that political-economic discourses about scarcity are combined with racist and subhumanist discourses: *We* cannot afford migrants, and thus, they are dieable—a current expression of FS.

Subhumanism is more malleable than racism. Everyone under the right conditions can be subhumanized. I suggest that racism has a mediate action imperative that includes discrimination, exclusion, exploitation, and dieability; subhumanism has an immediate action imperative that aims at dieability, eradication, or destruction. The subhumanization of Jews in German fascism aimed for their removal from the world; the subhumanization of migrants aims at removal from *our* nation. While racism can draw on scientific texts, subhumanism operates with images that “clearly” demonstrates the inferior being of the Other. While there can be ignorant racism, there can be no ignorant subhumanism.

Subhumanism has an action imperative, derived from the reality that if *we* have subhumans among or against us, then *we* need to do something, the same *we* need to do something if animals or parasites are threatening *us* and *our* political economy. The German justification for the euthanasia of people with disabilities was economic; the war against the East was justified with an economic imperative (“Living space in the East”); and the death of migrants in the Mediterranean Sea draws on economic rationality. In separating “migrant” children from parents, restricting access to asylum in violation of international law, firing tear gas on running “migrants” and young children, indefinitely detaining “migrant” families, allowing deaths due to inadequate medical care, denying sufficient food, limiting access to showers, clothes, and toothbrushes, forcing children to sleep on concrete floors, and putting children into cages (e.g., Human Rights Watch, 2019; Teo, 2020), economic,

racist, and subhumanist discourses and actions are combined. They are an expression of FS by actors who make these practices a reality.

Dieability means that migrants can die in the desert zones between Mexico and the United States or the Mediterranean Sea. Dieability means that elderly, or sick, or poor people can die from a virus by not enforcing distancing and mask-wearing rules. Dieability plays out when the killing of Black people is normalized or ignored. Once *we* accept the racialization and subhumanization of migrants and other groups, once *we* accept that the Other can be treated inhumanely, with contempt and violence, once *we* agree that they are dieable for *our* own economic reasons, then *we* participate in FS. Dieability can easily be extended to political groups, gays and lesbians, the homeless and mentally ill, persons with disabilities, precarious workers, and other marginalized groups. Acting as a foil for a subhumanizing hatred, affects justify that certain other human beings are not fully human and that they do not deserve the same access to goods and services as we do. Visual media tell *us* that the Other does not behave like us, which justifies practices of exclusion, discrimination, and annihilation.

Resisting Fascist Subjectivity

On the surface, FS appears as spontaneous. Scarcity is part of human knowledge, but the experience of scarcity and its ideological justifications are part of a historically constituted societal system that could provide for all. It is part of an economic system that produces enormous amounts of resources, goods, and services, but at the same time makes them unavailable for everybody. In many advanced capitalist countries, people still go hungry, and people are structurally unemployed. The experience or observation of scarcity, imaginations of having even less, and ideological discourses and practices, can turn subjectivity into a FS. It takes place under current constraints that seemingly make capitalist realities inevitable, justified, and even to be worshipped, and it blames the fear of economic scarcity not on an economic system that produces those enormous inequalities that have made scarcity a reality in rich countries, but

on the racialized and subhumanized Other as the source of economic injustice.

Fascist subjectivity needs to be understood as a seemingly “logical” philosophy within capitalism with all its intellectual, emotional, and behavioral consequences. Although FS may be based on “real” experiences, anxieties, or imaginations of scarcity, the first line of attack remains anti-ideological by pointing to the fact that *our* own survival is not in danger because of a lack of wealth or because of the Other, but because of an economic organization that manages goods and services in a way that benefits the few and even threatens the future of an ecologically damaged world. Antifascist activities need to be a struggle against capitalism, against the way resources are produced and distributed in this economy, and against the way it generates losers and winners, with the former not deserving a decent life or a life at all. Education will always have a place for addressing racism and subhumanism and can range from traditional seminars, workshops, and documentaries to art-based interventions (including music and film).

On an academic level, one might be inclined to emphasize the opposition of the instrumental sciences with the ethical-critical sciences (see also Habermas, 1968/1972). Antifascist education might begin with challenging those instrumental sciences that provide ideological support for the status quo, for power, for the existing political economy, and are crucial in the reproduction of neoliberal capitalism. They have advanced their status and benefit from financial rewards as long as they do not challenge existing structures and ideas. The reality is that those sciences will not be able to challenge FS. Yet, the ethical-critical sciences can challenge the status quo, current mentality, and existing practice. For that very reason and because they do not produce instrumental value, they have been on the retreat, and that includes the traditional humanities and social sciences. The ethical-critical sciences have accumulated knowledge about the critique of scientific racism, a critique of the current organization of society, and a critique of the normative role of humanism (e.g., Braidotti, 2013).

But education is not enough. Given the reemergence of fascist forms of subjectivity in these times, education must connect with concrete

actions that help the Other (as boat captains in the context of the migration debate show) and that confronts fascist activities (Bray, 2017). The reality of the Other experiencing violence by white supremacists, racists, and subhumanizers, the idea that nonviolence can overcome fascism with its violent action-impetus, needs action itself. I understand that academic subjectivity favors a “seminar antifascism” that abhors direct action and confrontation, and for those reasons, remains rather helpless. In the process of action, direct antifascist action needs to be aware of negative dialectics that might lead to action for the sake of action or to counter-violence for the sake of violence. In such cases, anti-FS needs to be aware that it can turn into a form of violent subjectivity itself.

Because FS is a socio-relational reality that includes the economic system and institutions as tools to maintain the status quo of systemic and personal racism, as well as cognitive-affective and motivational processes, engendered by neoliberal cost-benefit analyses, psychological solutions are insufficient by themselves. Empathy may represent one element for overcoming FS as it relates to the Other, but empathy is woefully insufficient for this task, as it does not address structural and systemic realities and it is not oblique to the concept of the subhuman. People can have empathy but may lack it for the unproductive, racialized, and subhumanized Other. Because FS and empathy can go hand in hand, a challenge must move beyond psychological competencies to involve understanding, action, a collective antifascist political and economic praxis with the commonwealth of all human beings in mind (see also Hardt & Negri, 2009). It requires standing up against FS wherever encountered, discursively, materially, or practically. But it also means targeting an economic system that produces and reproduces a form of subjectivity that is harmful to the Other and *myself*. If one takes the idea of a nexus of socio-, inter-, and intra-subjectivity seriously, it means to tackle all those dimensions simultaneously.

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17

Decolonize Psychology

Martin Dege  and Irene Strasser 

The contributions to this volume are united by a critical stance toward current reflections on the role of the human being in society. The Covid-19 crisis has not been the first crisis—in the form of a pandemic or otherwise—that has hit the globe. It will certainly not be the last one, nor is it the only crisis with global dimensions that humanity currently wrestles with. It seems clear that we cannot continue on beaten paths of Western (post-)Enlightenment thought; and this is true for the narrow borders of the field of psychology, as much as for any other discipline under the roof of the humanities and social sciences and human polity

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in general. Old borders have to be crossed, old vocabularies need to be questioned, new/old ontologies need to be written, and new/old epistemologies explored. The authors of this volume go beyond mere criticism of the current state of affairs. They offer concrete pathways to follow, concrete trajectories for the future of this planet, and tangible projects to engage with in order to renew our thought and action for a more viable and more just globe. At the end of this volume, we can distill the following list of projects, claims, demands, and needs:

- Eurocentric knowledge needs to be decolonized. The base of ideas for psychology needs to be radically broadened for a better understanding of people around the world.
- Psychology's embrace of a colorblind ideology, orientalism, colonialist concepts, ideas about racial and cultural *Others* need to be made visible by a rigorous analysis of psychological vocabulary.
- The idea of the individual as a self-contained entity needs to be rejected in favor of relational perspectives. Psychology cannot do justice to the plurality of human life without emphasizing culture, context, local, and sustainable solutions.
- We need to confront forms of epistemic and hermeneutic injustice and ethical violence to develop an ethics of shared understanding.
- The structural role of Western Modernity in colonialism, coloniality, slavery, genocide, climate change, globalization, asymmetric living conditions, control of knowledge, neoliberalism needs to be uncovered.
- Psychologists need to develop a meaningful theoretical vocabulary to address questions of social justice beyond long-established forms of racism, discrimination, and colonial thought.
- We need alternative psychologies. The discipline needs to be uncoupled from its current ontological and epistemological sources to embrace a *psychology otherwise*.
- Psychology needs to be able to respond to rapidly changing conditions in moments of crisis. This entails an understanding of multiple risks affecting different people. This entails the intersections of disadvantage

that inhabit the everyday lives of members of the precariat and how such insecurities mitigate social risks for the rest of us.

- Psychologists need to reflect on the historicity of their discipline and how it was and is shaped by political interests.
- Modes of inquiry need to be decentered and pluralized.
- Psychologists need to take into account the self-organization within civil society; the acts of mobilization and spontaneous emergence of mutual aid organizations, the generous support people can show to each other, and the general ability for solidarity across differences in moments of crisis and beyond.
- Epistemological differences in indigenous, decolonial, and postcolonial approaches must not overshadow threads common to all frameworks. Instead, the radical possibilities in unsettling and undoing the current world order need to be emphasized and imagined dichotomies that serve imperialist ideas need to be overcome.
- Practicing Psychology that fails to recognize diversity and difference is no longer acceptable on scientific and ethical grounds. Without a deep structural understanding of global and local dynamics, psychological research fails to be adequate.
- Local knowledge needs to be emphasized. Limits of translatability of meaning-making concepts need to be acknowledged. This is true for simple everyday concepts as much as for classificatory terms from within academic frameworks of thought.
- Forms of dialogicality need to be established that allow for the construction of reciprocity in self—other—world relationships.
- An analysis of the psy-complex in a capitalist and neoliberal world must always include the identification of the interest groups who benefit from specific procedures. This is particularly relevant wherever the medical model dominates over the social model and crises are rendered as apolitical.
- The institutional setup of education in psychology needs to be radically reenvisioned to face the ethical–political suffering caused by social injustice. Professional training needs to involve the opportunity to critically work with existing bodies of knowledge, psychological science, and practice in different fields of activity to generate a critical

awareness of the complexities of social life. This includes the systematic exploration and understanding of the realities of minorities and oppressed groups.

- The hegemony of industrialized approaches to therapies needs to be resisted and met with indigenous epistemologies, opening up for new paradigms of practice for both therapeutic and research work.
- Psychologists need to face the concrete living conditions of the precariat: unemployment, poverty, lack of health care, limited access to technology as a result of current global crises. Psychologists need to engage in the struggle for the distribution of work and pay, and forms of support that are collectively organized, universal health care, access to information beyond the established channels on the internet that are owned by large-scale tech companies. As such, psychologists need to envision strategies and methods to resist structures of oppression.

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