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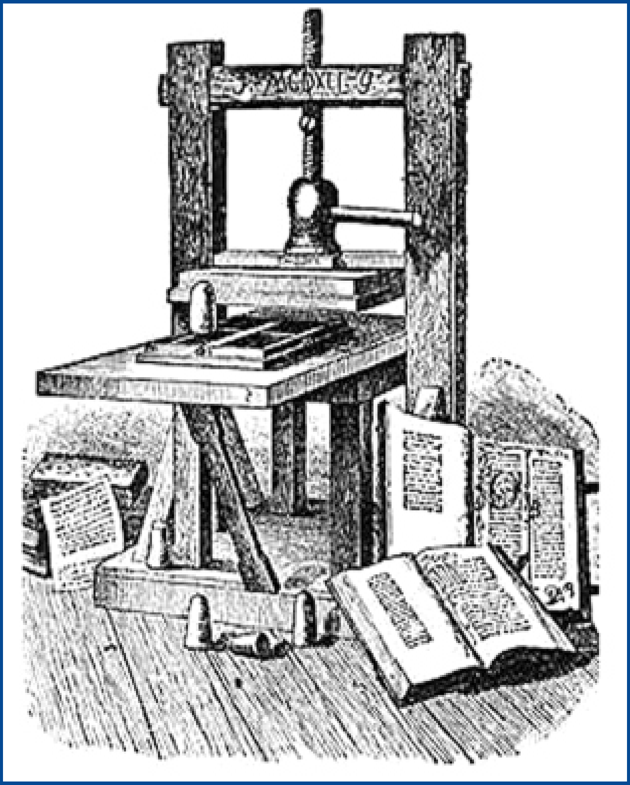

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Pandemic Education
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Pandemic Education

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Pandemic education refers not only to how we educate ourselves and others about the pandemic, but also – and more importantly – to how the pandemic educates us. And how does it do so? Firstly, it educates us by being a threat that we cannot ignore. Whereas we think that we can ignore the threat of climate change, we cannot ignore the pandemic because it strikes at our very bodies, thereby making its invisible threat very real. It warns us: *You are not immune.* Secondly, it educates us by being something that threatens all of us – as the origin of the term in the Greek *pandemos*, 'pertaining to all people; public, common,' suggests. While we are enculturated to see ourselves as individual agents, the pandemic demands that we act collectively to nurture what we have in common. It warns us: *You are not alone.* Thirdly, it educates us by being a threat to human life as we think of it. It brings home to us how we are hosts, for example, to viruses, including those that come from other species, but, more than that, how we are not only human but also more-than-human. Our 'we' extends into what we like to call 'nature' or 'matter,' and into the past and future. It warns us: *You are not who you think you are.* So if how we teachers educate has changed a lot as a result of the pandemic – for example, we have had to learn by ourselves how to teach online and just-in-time – the education that the pandemic offers us has the potential to change us immeasurably.

To put it in the terms of the question that the articles in these two special issues on pandemic education address: how can educators explore and enact a philosophy of education that speaks to the care, critique and collective responsibility demanded by the Covid-19 pandemic? Education in the time of COVID-19 signals not only the human significance of themes like collective responsibility in self-isolation and social distancing, or the ethic of the other in the sacrifice of health workers or others in essential services, both of which exhibit care in an age of care-less capitalism, but also the ecological significance of trans-species viruses like COVID-19 that mark the ‘intrusion of Gaia’ into the Anthropocene (Stengers, 2017). Such education demands that we address how people across the globe are responding to the pandemic by central planning and panic-buying; scientific research and conspiracy theories; self-care and care for others, human and more-than-human; fear, anxiety, hope and love; binge-watching and baking. But, more importantly, we editors would add, it enjoins us to attend to *virality* in all its ambiguity (Sampson, 2012).

Virality

The concept of virality, or bioinformational interconnectivity (Peters, Jandrić, & McLaren, 2020), alerts us to an alternate history of modernity (Peters, 2020a).

1. Evolutionary biology and the social history of viruses

1.1. In evolutionary biology, there is a strong hypothesis that viruses may have been free-living organisms that as parasites were the precursors of life. They exist in trillions of variants, and, unlike all other biological organisms, while some have RNA genomes, others have DNA genomes. Some have single-stranded and others, double-stranded genomes; they can only self-replicate within a host cell; and none contain ribosomes so they cannot make proteins. Among the three main theories of where they came from and whether they are alive, one recent account holds that viruses either predate bacteria, archaea or eukaryotes, or coevolved with host cells (Koonin & Martin, 2005). However, while they can evolve rapidly because of their short generation times and large populations, viruses cannot reproduce by themselves (*Nature*, 2020).

1.2. The social history of viruses and its impact on the human species began during our early evolution, and viral epidemics have been recorded as early as Neolithic times, when human beings began to lead sedentary lives in relatively densely settled agricultural communities with domesticated plants and animals some 12,000 years ago. Smallpox and measles are among the very earliest viruses that affected human beings. Influenza pandemics have been recorded as early as 1580 when Spanish colonial conquests began in South America decimating the indigenous peoples, and the 1918 influenza epidemic killed an estimated 50 million people worldwide. It was not until the 1930s, with the invention of the electron microscope, that the science of virology emerged and widespread vaccination against viruses developed.

2. Philosophy & literature of viruses, and an ethics of care

2.1. There is a literature and philosophy of viruses, and the plague, epidemic and pandemic. Albert Camus' *The Plague* is a classic existential philosophical novel that proposes that, in a world without meaning, the plague provides a moral opportunity for people to find themselves in the struggle of sacrifice for the greater good: 'What's true of all the evils in the world is true of plague as well. It helps men [sic] to rise above themselves' (Camus, 1948/1991, p. 113).

2.2. The philosophy of pandemic is truly a philosophy for all peoples. It reflects not only on the human significance of pestilence and plague, or the rise of modern viruses like COVID-19 that demonstrate the transition across species, but also on the compact of individual and community. Despite the fact that it addresses self-isolation and the problem of the 'free rider' and other breaches of community, it takes in self-interest and collective responsibility, the sacrifice of first-contact health workers, the ethics of care for the other.

3. 'Viral modernity' and post-truth

3.1. *Post-Truth, Fake News* (Peters et al., 2018) provided an examination of the 'post-truth' era in relation to the concept of 'viral modernity.' The concept has since been extended in two main ways: first, by reference to epidemics, infodemics and the bioinformational paradigm, arguing that 'viral modernity is a concept based upon the nature of viruses, the ancient and critical role they play in evolution and culture, and the basic application to understanding the role of information and forms of bioinformation in the social world' (Peters, Jandrić, & McLaren, 2020); second, through the development of 'A Theory of Post-Truth,' a concept of semiotic systems inspired by Bateson's (1972/2000) remark that 'There is an ecology of bad ideas, just as there is an ecology of weeds, and it is characteristic of the system that basic error propagates itself' (p. 492). The concept of viral modernity draws a parallel between viral biology and information science – the 'bioinformational' paradigm – that brings together two of the most powerful forces that drive cultural evolution today. A prime intellectual task of this paradigm is to understand the 'epistemology of conspiracy' because 'viral politics' has become 'government by conspiracy' (Peters, 2020b).

3.2. Viral forms of information – lies, misinformation, rumours, propaganda and conspiracies – do not meet the criteria of 'justified true belief' and they typically use fear and panic for political ends in ways that are highly damaging to the health of the public sphere. 'Viral politics' depends on viral media, where 'truth' is no longer a concern. The idea of truth is replaced by the strength of subjective conviction, of conspiracy that coincides with existing prejudices and is easily manipulated through digital networks and AI.

4. Bioinformational interconnectivity

4.1. One thing that COVID-19 pandemic brings home is just how connected we are at the microbiological level: how we can pass on bits of our biome, bacteria and viruses through sneezing, coughing and touch. (COVID-19 can remain on hard surfaces to be transferred between individuals for 72 hours or longer.) This connection is an expression of our biological interconnectivity, which plays out culturally, socially and politically in a digital and postdigital superstructure of connectivity. And, while the 'nets' are the dominant cultural form, the electronic media that predate the internet have provided us with a global interconnectivity – with lots of holes, darknets, and subterranean activity – that expresses itself in global markets and communication. But this global interconnectivity does not mean that we are becoming one. Interconnectivity means that a small change in starting conditions can lead to wildly different outcomes.

4.2. The interconnectivity implicit in pandemic education implies

- educational openness (Open Education, Open Science)
- moral interdependence and the concept of 'humanity'
- spiritual interconnectedness.

It also opens education to the algorithms and automation of intelligent systems of digital technologies that ape microbiology, and thus demands that education reckon with the cybernetic ethics that views the evolution of ethical systems in terms of the informational feedback that certain human actions generate (Bromberg, 1999)

Pandemic education

In the spirit of this bioinformational interactivity, *Pandemic Education* raises a range of questions about viral modernity:

Politics

- Which political system works best at quarantine and social isolation in the pandemic: American individualism or Chinese collectivism; democracy or one-party state; free-market or welfare state?
- What complexities of the compact between self-interest and community interest does the pandemic reveal? For example, what are the problems of the 'free-riders' of our community, or those who do not follow the newly established norm of self-isolation, in a pandemic?

Ecology

- How should human beings act towards existences that threaten theirs?
- What is the relation between viral pandemics and sustainability?

Science

- Can the freedom of information, including scientific communication and open science, outrun viral self-replication?

- How have governments interacted with science in the pandemic, in particular, to suppress information or disinformation?

Information

- What bioinformational cross-border flows that postdate the nation-state are signalled by the pandemic?
- To what extent can financialisation and finance capitalism, whether state-led or market-led, be seen as part of the bioinformational paradigm?
- To what extent have viral fake news, social media and conspiracy theory generated global damage in the public sphere and to what extent is this an aspect of contemporary biopolitics?
- In the innovation race to invent a COVID-19 vaccine, where do the major advances come from and what organisations are well placed to benefit from them economically and otherwise?

Economics

- What are the scale and stakes of the coming World Depression in the wake of the pandemic?
- How will mass unemployment of 15-20% affect education?
- What is the significance of the pandemic for the sustainability of mass consumerism?

Pandemic education is also an opportunity to raise questions about what happens after the pandemic. It ought not to be imagined that things could return to ‘normal.’ Unless the COVID-19 chain of transmission is broken, it may well become endemic like influenza. All industries that are based on global movement such as travel, tourism and international education will suffer in the short term, though local and national industries, especially those that source their materials locally, will enjoy a certain success, even if short-lived. Those societies that are digitally-based and -integrated will be more sustainable economically and educationally. The bioinformational interconnectivity that defines viral modernity must be recognised if humanity is to be ready for the next pandemic. It behoves human beings to remember the lessons of the pandemic: we are not immune; we are not alone; and we are not who we think we are.

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The Pragmatic Nature of the Virus and its Biopolitical Drive

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ABSTRACT. There are three expressions of the vital energies of the COVID-19 virus: from its idea, from the things and events in its ambit, and from its activity in establishing connections. Its pragmatic nature consists in its capacity for heterogeneous connections between ideas about it, the things and events that it causes (sickness and death), and the actions that can be implemented to address it (policies). Human beings' response to it is not about one social class being confronted with another; neither is it a matter of conscience, of a struggle between the North and the South of Capital. It is about biopolitics, about the exercise of power over the living. We who live must give and guarantee life at all costs, no matter what it takes.

Keywords: COVID-19; viruses; biopolitics; Foucault; rhizome

Introduction

The alteration of life has always been life's work. It is possible to look at it this way because of the pragmatic way in which life can be thought about. Its performance – its biopolitical drive – is one of the many undetermined practical and ethical outcomes through which subjects display themselves. How and to what end can one place oneself within a pragmatic horizon in order to recognise neither the effects nor the causes, but instead the possible heterogeneities and connections, as well as the multiple and infinite behaviours, of a virus, its vital energies?

Hence it becomes necessary to consider the virus based on its vital *practical* connections: the number of the deceased, diseases, biochemical behaviour, the number of infections, rules and standards, hospital resources, security, fear, geographical zones, political discourse, etc. Depending on how and in which specific circumstances connections between the virus and other multiplicities can be established, it is possible to have a practical idea of what a virus represents. But to what end is it important to know what a virus is in practical terms, to understand its biopolitical drive? It is important to know in order to be able to act accordingly in relation to something that is considered to affect one's own life and that of others. But, to be able to act, one must believe; one needs to have beliefs in order to guide one's actions towards a desired end and, accordingly, to shape one's behaviour regarding a given proposition. For example, the recognition, the experience of the existence, of a pandemic requires belief, which in turn allows for certain actions. One experiences a virus as an abstract idea, but also through the things and events that accompany it, and the actions that are taken as a result of the multiplicity of connections that it creates.

In short, there are three expressions of the COVID-19 experience: that from the idea, that from the things and events in its ambit, and, lastly, that from its activity in establishing connections. All the above produce habits, behavioural rules, that relate to it. Undoubtedly, the ideas, theories, scientific and experimental knowledge that exist about a virus are part of its reticular connection, as much as the events that it is currently causing, namely, sickness and death. However, what is most significant is its capacity to establish infinite connections for action. In sum, the pragmatic nature of the virus consists in its capacity for heterogeneous connections between ideas about it, the things and events that it causes (sickness and death), and the actions that can be implemented to address it (policies).

The biopolitical dispersal strength of the virus, its capacity to infect and catalyse the social body that faces the expansion and penetration of the virus as a rhizomatic excrescence in its field of the political and administrative management, is without a doubt one of the multiple pathways to relate what the virus carries in itself, its multiple connections, its history, its biochemical potential, its random nature, its unknown genealogy, its lack of beginning and end, its lethal drive and vital condition, its pedagogic and performative potential – in short, its chaotic energy and bewildering lack of identity. This tangled and poised power of life, of living nature, erupts and subsides violently into a social body that is disorganised, despite a multiple and heterogeneous demographic apparatus of health, medicine, hygiene, morbidity and mortality, longevity and natality. For there are no more deceased or living people, only mortality rates and birth rates; there is a people no more, only a population statistically countable and controllable according to infection and recovery rates. Life is a projection over a Cartesian chart with ascending and descending curves. Life becomes its connection with a Gross Domestic Product. Life is an unemployment rate. Life is not something that counts, but that can be counted statistically. Statistics, in this case, is the science of the state that connects with belief and truth based on a functional medical argument.

Thus, biopolitics is that type of power, practical and ethical, through which populations and individuals regulate themselves with or without the intervention of the state. It is not about one social class being confronted with another; neither is it a matter of conscience, of a struggle between the North and the South of Capital's crisis and decadence. Biopolitics is the exercise of power over the living, not only human beings, but also animals and plants – nature as a whole – and even the non-living, namely, the earth and its resources, with the purpose of reproducing, controlling, managing, and consuming life. It is only human to try to control everything for the benefit of the living, of life. But, oddly, as Foucault (2008) suggests, this political condition of life seems to cast serious doubts on the life of humans as living beings. This paradoxical condition that privileges life in exchange for life allows for a paralysis of the world, the economy, and daily life, slowing down life to manage the infection and thus guarantee less morbidity and mortality. We who live must give and guarantee life at all costs, no matter what it takes. It is about a will to life harnessed to willpower.

Virus

Paradoxically, that which threatens and intimidates the territory itself – the impending catastrophe – is life of a different form. It is not a different life; it is life itself manifesting in a different way. Oddly enough, a virus is that non-living entity that in specific circumstances acts as if alive. It is a good example of how the opposite of life is not death but the non-living. The virus is neither alive nor non-living. If anything, it is active or inactive; it is very pragmatic. It is a budding actor that follows the script of its genetic information. A virus is an undecided rhizome – a rhizome since it is not a root – meaning that it lacks a cause or an axis, a fixed place of birth, even if it was deliberately created in a laboratory. Its behaviour is undetermined. It constantly adapts, depending on its circumstances and connections. It is chaotic and random in its pragmatic life. It replicates in many ways. Its dispersion is implosive, explosive, expansive and intensive, vertical, horizontal and transversal. It at once contributes to the life of other beings and destroys them. Its origin is unknown; its genealogy and its destiny are equally uncertain. Viruses are consubstantial with life; life would be impossible without them. They are like weeds – sometimes bad, sometimes beautiful. They are multiform: spirals, crystals, and sometimes tuberous like ginger. A virus is indefinite, not because it does not fit the binary opposition between living and non-living, but due to its capacity for infinite, multiple, indecisive, and countless ways of connecting. It is a functional engine that works in adverse conditions and with almost no resistance. Its capacity to replicate is infinite, depending on the physical environment in which it exists.

Viruses are the most prevalent and oldest biological entities. They are vastly more diverse than any other form of life; there are more viruses than bacteria and many more than insects. But their role in the evolution of species and in life in general remains largely unknown. They do not represent a separate universe, but the multiple vital connections and diverse possibilities of life itself. They are life acting on life itself. Life, living organisms and cells defend themselves from viral invasions in four known ways:

1. By phagocytosis of the virus through white blood cells.
2. By creating a wall through the plasmatic protein system.
3. Through interferons, which are like protein locks or codes that inhibit the entrance of viruses into cells, which, when overridden, lead the infected cells to ‘commit suicide,’ i.e., undergo an *apoptosis*.
4. Through killer cells that destroy cells infected by any virus.

In the face of such defences, viruses have multiple and very sophisticated strategies and tactics that enable them to invade, modify, and even destroy cells. Perhaps the paths of action of viruses are currently more familiar to us because of their prevalence in the cybernetic world, showing striking similarities indeed. For example,

1. When invading a cell, they delay the activation of its ‘death mode,’ giving the virus time to replicate. We could say that viruses are like vampires, living off cells to stay alive and increase their numbers.
2. They have a formidable ability to mutate that prevents the programmed memory of cells from detecting and identifying them.
3. They can mix with the genetic content of their hosts, which in turn prevents the cell memory from discovering them.
4. They disguise or encapsulate within proteinaceous material that cells do not recognise or dismiss as non-hostile.
5. They use different pathways and shortcuts in the physiology of invaded organisms to deceive their defence mechanisms and go undetected until it is either too difficult or too late for defence.
6. Through the fusion of giant cells, a virus can go unnoticed.
7. Some viruses attack and destroy the cell defence mechanisms firstly and directly. And
8. They can produce decoys or empty boxes to deceive the immune system of an organism and thus enter the host at the most convenient point, evading attack from cell defences.

All this pragmatism from viruses generates multiple connections that teach us to act socially and politically. The performativity that results is not deterministic; it allows for heterogeneous connections that open up the system, rather than closing it.

Biopolitics

One of the fundamental mechanisms of biopolitics is the immunisation of the population – identifying, separating, and putting suspicious cases under observation – to deal with the attack of a virus or any other entity that poses a threat to the community. It specifies actions that need to be undertaken to counter the invader that is jeopardising the established order of peace and progress, from which we all benefit. But the pragmatic nature of viruses and their ability to invade countless bodies seem to signal a strange and peculiar threat.

In a document from the Mexican historical archive addressed to the people by the Health Office a little over a 100 years ago, specifically dated Puebla de Zaragoza City, October 19th 1918 and signed by the chairman of the board, Dr Luis Unda, the *Health Council of Mexico, and Some European Health Authorities*, the following actions were recommended in response to the so-called ‘Spanish flu’:

> In the best interest of the patient and all other people around, it is absolutely necessary that the patient remains entirely isolated and is only in contact with their caregivers. Caregivers *should clean their hands, mouth, and nose and change their clothes* before having contact with healthy people [after caring for their patient]. It is equally necessary *that rooms are disinfected once the disease has passed.*
>
> Since direct contact with a person that is carrying the germs that cause the disease is enough to produce infection, *shaking hands, kissing, and hugging* should be regarded as risky. *Therefore, it is important to refrain from doing such.*

The authorities prescribed several doses of quinine sulphate, aspirin and other physical cares to treat the 'disease, especially when it starts with a *strong cold, cough, and fever.'* The recommendations of governments today in response to COVID-19 are very similar in some ways: once a person is sick, there is not a lot to do but let the virus and the immune system act, while washing one's hands and refraining from shaking hands, kissing and hugging to prevent infection. Today, although there are sophisticated hospital systems all over the world and new technologies like ventilators and, above all, the internet, there is still no better way to respond to the virus than by following the age-old recommendations issued a hundred years ago to stay at home and observe social distancing.

We live in a functionally over-coded world, with multiple cybernetic systems that aim to regulate life and make of life a logarithm for consumption. However, an application or cybernetic system that is capable of becoming a phagocyte of reality does not exist yet; there are always leaks and escapes that are produced by the system itself in its constant brushes with reality, with a nature that is external to it or different to it. A virus is a rhizomatic multiplicity that does not allow its encoding, organisation, distribution, process, management, location, reduction, elimination, etc. We are seemingly reduced to counting on the pedagogical and performative strength of the virus, of life teaching life.

It is not new to site this matter on the threshold between the biological and the social. Since the last century, such a move has become especially important for political science, economy, sociology, history, philosophy, law and anthropology, among other disciplines. Maybe the historical research that Foucault did in his lectures *Society Must Be Defended* (2003) and *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2008) establishes a baseline to address the connection of the exercise of power with life known as 'biopolitics.' The first and most common definition of biopolitics assumes that the exercise of management, discipline, control and/or care of the population – from its procreation, dieting, reproduction, lifestyle, and way of eventually dying – is the objective of the political management of life. From the ancient Persians, Egyptians, Mayans and Aztecs to the modern states and nations, political bodies have exercised biopolitics, have sustained life through certain policies. Another definition understands biopolitics as a form of domination and exploitation, as the indiscriminate use of a social class for the private benefit of another, with biopower as the struggle to emancipate this working class from biopolitics. This way of understanding biopolitics views it as a sort of plot by the neoliberal capitalist state to subdue and exploit most of the population. Another definition again sees the exercise of biopolitics as a constant state of emergency, that, on the one hand, sacralises some human beings, making them untouchable, while, paradoxically, making them simultaneously disposable. Here biopolitics serves as a necro-politics to select and classify the population to determine that some people should live, while others should die.

But I would argue that biopolitics is born when the sovereign state dies, when disciplinary practices and knowledge such as medicine, economy and psychology take control of the organisation, distribution and use of power, in particular, when it comes to populations and their diet, diseases and reproduction. No longer is the sovereign state – in the person of the King – the leader, but a scientifically trained technical team that will decide not only for the population but also for their rulers. Biopolitics is not a conspiracy organised by the state or by medicine and its public servants. It is not a way to control life (something that has always existed anyway). It is not an ideology of the exploiters of the people; neither is it a permanent state of emergency to get rid of some and spare others (in which case, by the way, a state of emergency would cease to be of emergency). For biopolitics, Louis XIV’s 1655 saying ‘I am the State’ would be ‘I am not the state.’ The state does not disappear, but it is either allowed only to manage, do paperwork and conduct the political and police control of society (as in liberalism), or it is actively included, dissolving into the dynamics of the economy as another agent, an entrepreneur (as in neoliberalism). Currently, biopolitics is a network of connections that cooperates with neoliberalism. Government of its own, governance of the population and the current economic forms are intertwined under the sign of health, hygiene, and security, all in the name of life. Biopolitics is, in any case, not only the power over life but also the power of life.

Conclusion

The common good is above all an individual good. To look at a circumstance as the apocalypse, the end of the world, or at least the end of capitalism, or to consider an epidemiological situation as a great opportunity for redemption or to organise a new social order, is a matter of reasons and conscience – of causes, motives and aspirations, and also effects, results and political programs. What has been attempted here is to extract life from its scientific considerations and place it at the limits of its practice. A virus, as a connective discontinuity, is a microbiology that drives macro-biology, populations and their politics to act accordingly. History belongs to discontinuity, to disruptions. It would seem that life does not want to live – at least not always in the same way. It is in constant movement, and so, as Foucault would say, it is capable of errors, of being wrong. Thus, human beings as living beings never find their place; they are living beings condemned to err and be mistaken.

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Capital Immunodeficiency and the Viral Contagion of Capitalism

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ABSTRACT. As rates of COVID-19 continue to surge across North America, the 'immunocompromised' status of the West has come into plain view. The immunological deficiency of the West, we argue, is founded on and exacerbated by the conditions of 'capitalist realism,' as described in the work of Mark Fisher, wherein reality becomes annexed into the circuits of capitalist monetization and exchange value. Where life itself is born in forced equivalence to capitalism, COVID-19 emerges as an exception to this state of capitalist realism, circumventing the ubiquitous belief that the future will reflect in the 'business as usual' attitudes of Western culture and its vision of education. In contrast, we argue that COVID-19 introduces conditions that enable us to speculate on a future that does not simply reflect the ubiquity of capitalist thought. In consideration of capitalism's terminal state, we draw from the thinking of Jean Baudrillard, Mark Fisher, and Jason Moore in order to issue a challenge for educators to rethink education and its aims absent a singular capitalist futurity.

Keywords: COVID-19; Baudrillard; hyperrealism; Mark Fisher; capitalist realism; Bong Joon-ho; *Parasite*

Predating the current global pandemic, Jean Baudrillard (2002) diagnosed that the West was already infected by the viral contagion of capitalism.[1] By the onset of advanced global capitalism in the 1990s, Baudrillard (2003) speculated, the 'virtual' economic processes[2] of speculative finance, market modelling, and stock valuations had already triumphed over real markets and economies (p. 31). For Baudrillard (2002), the 'hyperreal' model of Capital[3] had perpetrated the 'disappearance'[4] of material economic formations through their forced equivalence to the abstract body of Capital itself (Baudrillard, 1993b). The virulent expansion of Capital into the fabric of social reality has produced what Mark Fisher (2009) calls ‘capitalist realism,’ where reality becomes reformatted in resemblance with capitalism as an incontrovertible model of socio-economic organization and relation ‘without alternative’ (p. 2).[5] ‘Over the past thirty years,’ Fisher argues, ‘capitalist realism has successfully installed a ‘business ontology’ in which it is simply obvious that everything in society, including healthcare and education, should be run as a business’ (p. 17). In oblique parallel to Baudrillard’s (2003) commentary on the disappearance of reality under the motors of economic hyperreality,[6] Fisher (2009) argues that even the image of social revolution is born from the generic possibilities afforded by capitalism. Director Bong Joon-ho’s 2020 Oscar-winning film *Parasite* (Sin-ae, Yang-kwon, Joon-ho, & Young-hwan, 2019) perfectly exemplifies this state of capitalist realism, in that its narrative turns on the desire for class mobility and status intimate to capitalist thought. Joon-ho’s film dramatizes the disappearance of an ‘outside thought’ in which the agon of capitalism becomes ‘the only game in town.’ Joon-ho’s characters not only figure as parasites living on the bloated body of capitalist accumulation, but also exemplify Capital’s virulent profusion into the circuits of social desiring-production.

Capital’s virulent expansion into the social field has mutated reality according to an image of ‘the Same’ (Baudrillard, 2002, p. 171). Here, ‘the Same’ refers to the process through which Capital annexes real relations into equivalence with monetary value, blurring reality and Capital into self-resemblance. The problem of ‘the Same’ figures in the materialist scholarship of Jason Moore (2015), whose term ‘Capitalocene’ aims to provide a more adequate generic name for the present era in which the virulence of capitalism is written upon the geological register in toxic waste, radiation, and animal bones.[7] While the so-called *Anthropocene* postulates the human as destroyer and saviour of life on Earth, the *Capitalocene* posits the role of advanced capitalism as the primary motor of climatological change and precarity, which are also directly linked to the rise of global pandemics of infectious disease (World Health Organization, 2003). As Moore (2015, 2017; see also Moore & Patel, 2017) develops, the acceleration of climate change is a direct effect of the world’s reformatting under the sign of Capital, whereby its real material relations have become subject to ontological cheapening and overconsumption at a near-global scale.

The annexation of reality under the sign of Capital is intimate to the function of the virus in that the very logic of the virus entails the transformation of its host according to the ‘genetic information’ it transports. The virus not only makes the host cell in its image but also accelerates the reproduction of its image throughout the infected system. The effects of such parasitism are intimate to capitalist realism and Fisher’s claim that the very horizon of thought has become fettered to capitalism as a seemingly inevitable state of being. Where life itself has become reformatted in resemblance to Capital, our adaptation to its genetic model has become a paramount ontological concern. This reality has long infected the idea of schooling, which has since its modern inception in the work of Frederick Taylor

(2014) allied curricular and pedagogical processes to the needs of the market – and so it goes today that the failure of education has become confused with a failure to produce students adapted to capitalist realism.[8]

For Baudrillard, the condition of ‘the Same’ reflects a systemic tautology in which difference becomes ‘overcoded’ by a genetic model. Such a process resembles the ‘logic’ of the virus, which both infects its host and co-opts its productive powers in service of viral replication. Baudrillard (2002) argues that the viral annexation of organic systems is redoubled in Western capitalism, which everywhere aspires to make reality identical with capitalism’s ‘hyperreal’ models of value and exchange (p. 31). On the ubiquity of this takeover, Fisher (2009) writes that capitalist realism today constitutes a ‘pervasive *atmosphere*, conditioning not only the production of culture but also the regulation of work and education, and acting as a kind of invisible barrier constraining thought and action’ (p. 16). However, where systems tend toward total tautology or perfect identity with themselves, they become increasingly susceptible to viral contagion (Baudrillard, 1993a). For Baudrillard, the outbreak of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in the 1990s exemplifies the risk of ‘the Same.’ Mad Cow disease, Baudrillard (2002) writes, emerged through hyperreal interventions in agriculture ‘aimed at maximum profitability of the animal as meat,’ creating the conditions of bovine ‘self-cannibalization’ and the transfer of infectious pathogens from sheep to cows to humans (p. 172). Outbreaks of BSE, as well as swine flu and avian flu, are emblematic of ‘the Same’ for the fact of the animals’ forced equivalence to the program of capitalism by which cows and pigs and chickens become delinked from their ecology as they are forced to become simulated ‘meat-machines,’ and further, for how these animals are remade in equivalence to the consumptive preferences of a single species that has doomed the rest to the hell of the abattoir (Davis, 2003; Samuel, 2020).

The spread of such diseases as BSE across species is for Baudrillard (2002) indicative of a ‘subterranean processes of revolt’ (p. 172) and a secret purpose of the pathogen. The great irony of Western civilization, Baudrillard (1975) speculates, arises from the fatal return of the object thought conquered and rallied to the side of man. Such sci-fi speculations have renewed import in the wake of COVID-19, which has catalyzed a microbial revolution against macro orders of global capitalism. However, the possibility that such microbial revolution will act as a fulcrum for the processual relaunch of society from under the machines of Capital is uncertain. As we today witness, the engines of ‘crisis capitalism’ aim to *parasite the parasite*, so-far thriving on the precariousness of the contemporary moment. As Toussaint (2020) reports, the net worth of the world’s richest has increased by $280 billion since the outset of the pandemic, while the stock market valuations of companies like *Citrix, Clorox, Amazon, Activision-Blizzard, Netflix* and a number of pharmaceutical giants like *Regeneron* have surged (Barro, 2020).

As systems move into greater degrees of self-resemblance, their lack of diversity renders them increasingly susceptible to viral contagion (Baudrillard, 2002). This genetic lesson is significant, for where ‘systems erase differences to facilitate operationality, and as they tend to assimilate towards one another by adopting common models,’ they develop a fatal ‘immunodeficiency’ and incapacity to respond to an unanticipated ‘outside’ (Baudrillard, 1993b, p. 5). As we know well, viruses flourish in sterile environments where lack of biodiversity functions as an accelerant to viral reproduction and transmission. In this vein, Baudrillard diagnoses that the pathology of the West is born from an excess of ‘the Same.’ Emblematic of this autoimmune disorder is the continuation of the curriculum-as-plan while the reality to which such curriculum refers undergoes radical transformation. The ‘hyperreal’[9] curriculum-as-plan labours to advance the state of capitalist realism that appears precarious and rife for collapse. However, it is not simply the virus that renders societies sick, but as Baudrillard (2002) writes, the emergence of the virus coextensive with ‘culture’s twilight of values’ (p. 47).

Baudrillard’s (1993b) ‘twilight of values’ entails the ways in which cultural signs have become delinked from ‘their...ideas, concepts, essences, values, points of reference, origins, and aims’ and reformatted according to the processes of self-reproduction and self-reference (p. 6). The sacred symbolic exchange that Baudrillard (1993b) identifies in such cultural practices as *potlatch* and *kula* are supplanted by the virulence of *meme* culture and its spectacular effects of self-reference. So it goes that the ‘business as usual’ approach to education reproduces a ‘hyperreality’ that is delinked from the socio-economic destabilizations of global pandemic and the opportunity to rethink education catalyzed therein. Here, the ‘business as usual’ model into which education disappears constitutes for the fact of its obsession with ‘the Same’ a form of cultural immunodeficiency.

The ‘twilight of values’ articulated by Baudrillard is accelerated through the derealization of education as it today collapses with the technological apparatus, the machinic violence of which erases difference through the optimization of sterility and self-similarity. The important multiplicity of the lived-curriculum theorized by such curricularists as Ted Aoki (2005) undergoes extermination as online teaching redoubles the antiseptic space of the internet, where we find in lieu of pedagogical singularity an interaction with pre-existent spaces, known codes, and anticipated responses (Baudrillard, 2002, p. 179). In the ‘online’ transformation of education according to the flexi-time and self-management models of neoliberal capitalism, COVID-19’s revelation of the ‘human component of our “technical regimes”’ is obfuscated, as is the material infrastructure upon which such technical regimes are both constructed and reliant (Clark & Szerszynski, 2020, p. 191).

If it might be said to have one, the revolutionary force of COVID-19 issues from the fact of its viral difference. For where the economic virus of advanced capitalism presumes the incontrovertibility of capitalist realism, the immunodeficiency that extends from its obsession for ‘the Same’ becomes a condition for viral infection. Where difference has everywhere become coordinated upon the common model of economic standardization and its attendant attitudes of compulsory happiness and conservative security, COVID-19 functions as a differential vector that renders transparent the Western obsession of ‘the Same’ and functions to short-circuit the modes of desiring-production that support the very ‘business ontology’ with which we are already infected. Reporters were quick to observe how the spread of COVID-19 amplified the precarity of food supply-chains (Dahir, 2020), inaccessibility of quality healthcare, and exploitation of cheap labour that were *always-already* prepared for by capitalism. The predominantly Western conceptualization of the virus as a ‘great equalizer’ somehow ambivalent to the unjust distribution of economic and political affordance was quickly routed as a socio-political fiction. As the world’s most vulnerable encounter the vast global insecurity systems prepared by capitalism, its benefactors escape to their private villas, Caribbean getaways, and *TikTok* diversions.

COVID-19 is a ‘superconductive’ event that ‘not only affects states, individuals or institutions, but entire structures running right across society’ (Baudrillard, 2002, p. 26). As a more-than-critical[10] event, the outbreak of COVID-19 marks a collapse of the status quo or ‘old normal’ that yet figures as a key referent for imagining post-pandemic futures. As the fantasy of capitalism has forestalled, there is no thinking but the thought of a continuous capitalist present (Fisher, 2009, 2014). Anti-quarantine protests across North America--with their calls to re-open shops, night clubs, nail salons, golf courses, and casinos--symptomize perfectly the immunocompromised status of the present economic order to contend with outside forces, where there seems no alternative but to stoke the engines of capitalism, ‘get back to work,’ and ‘get back to normal.’ Here, Jameson’s (2003, p. 76) rehearsal of the adage that ‘it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism’ undergoes a profound mutation. It has today become increasingly impossible to imagine the end of capitalism for the fact that we have confused the end of capitalism with the end of the world itself.

COVID-19 is undoubtedly a real catastrophe. It will be one of many as the mounting forces of civilizational change, including climate change and extinction encroach civilization from its unthought or unthinkable outside (see jagodzinski, 2019). For its virulent extension into all aspects of the Western civilizational order, COVID-19 has functioned as a probe for mapping the horrifying conditions prepared by advanced capitalism. What COVID-19 has mapped is precisely the fantasy that capitalism is interminable, and that the materiality of the Earth is merely a problem that can be solved through the intervention of the market (Fisher, 2009, p.18). If education might yet endure, it must recognize that it already suffers from a surfeit of standardization. Education needs more than ever to engage in an experiment with difference on behalf of transpiring an educational thought born from biodiversity and biodiverse relations. The current pandemic incites the need for speculative thinking that withdraws from ready-made categories of educational thought and the world it presumes. The virus is a schizoid catalyst for such withdrawal. Neither living nor dead, the virus exists *between* living things in a manner that gives reality to our material enmeshment with the ahuman. Educational thought requires more than ever homoeopathic doses of viral contagion[11] that might deflect the obsession of ‘the Same’ that seems everywhere rampant, and so too recommence the heterogeneity of rhizomatic[12] thinking that is monologically overcoded within advanced capitalism. The alien thinking of COVID-19 has forged an encounter with a world remote to the inevitability of capitalist futurism. It is in this way that we might more urgently attend to realisms out-of-synch with the spectacular simulacra of schooling, which across the West has maintained the ‘reality-principle’ of the current socio-political order. As the world presupposed by standardized educational curriculum fades into obsolescence, the project of education ought be rejoined to the task of creating a world-to-come that encounters the encroaching challenges of climatological change, resource scarcity and extinction that will, in retrospect, make COVID-19 seem like a soft rehearsal.

NOTES

1. The works of Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze, and Baudrillard are preoccupied with the idea of the virus and within their writing, the virus would come to function as an index of alterity and an expression of threat posed to the interiority of systems by both the ‘outside’ and ‘other.’ The virus would become a master trope of postmodernism, Bardini (2006) argues, providing an indispensable toolbox for theoretical provocation and mutation.

2. Here, Baudrillard’s use of the term ‘virtual’ aims to articulate Capital’s processes of derealization and the coordination of material economies within ‘hyperreal’ models of value and exchange. For Baudrillard (1993a, 1993b, 2002), the ‘hyperreal’ functions to ‘overcode’ material relations, which become infected by the model of Capital.

3. Throughout this essay, we use the upper-case ‘C’ in Capital to denote both the universal reach of capitalism and as a marker of its function as a model for reality and transcendent status to matter.

4. Baudrillard appears to use the term disappearance both hyperbolically, but also in regard for ‘primitive’ economies of value and exchange eradicated under the regime of Capital, which disposes matter to money.

5. The subtitle of Fisher’s book, ‘Is there no alternative?’ refers directly to Margaret Thatcher’s admonition that there was indeed no other viable socio-economic system to capitalism.

6. Here the ‘hyperreal’ refers to those derealized models of speculative finance that overcode real markets and economies.

7. Moore and Patel (2017) record, for instance, that the worldwide slaughter of poultry exceeds over 60 billion birds a year.

8. Where the Foucauldian ‘panopticon’ is brought to bear upon the strategies of enclosure and surveillance developed during the ‘archetypal’ bubonic plague (1331-1770) and the Deleuzian ‘synopticon’ upon the qualities of expansive consumption and mobility emblematized by cancer, the viral capitalism of the present era ushers forth a new regime of control that we propose calling the ‘*synapticon.’* For it is at the affective and wholly preconscious level of synaptic response that the contagion of capitalist hyperreality (the virulent ‘genetic’ model of Capital) takes hold.

9. The curriculum-as-plan is emblematic of the 'hyperreal' for the way it coordinates the material life of the classroom upon its genetic model of how learning *ought to go.*

10. As Larsen (2010) argues, the battle against capitalism's seeming incontrovertibility is no longer being played out at the level of ideology, where ideological dogmatism was imagined to be challenged by some supplementary politics or classic political analysis. Rather, the terrain of capitalist expansion is today taking place at the neuronal level, where the 'brain and nervous system' become 'colonized' and reformatted in 'genetic relationship with restlessness' and 'self-cannibalization' of which the economic virus of capitalism is emblematic (Larsen, 2010, para. 23).

11. Adorno's (1983) challenge that one ought not write poetry in the aftermath of the events at Auschwitz emerges as a spectre here, and we wonder too what forms of educational thinking and research might be rendered inadequate relative to the unfolding events of global pandemic? Should we henceforth find those modes of anthropocentric and representational thinking still replete in educational research utterly reprehensible as difference now unfolds from the side of the inhuman and its alien realisms?

12. In Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) *A Thousand Plateaus,* the virus becomes an instantiation of the rhizome or heterogeneous transport of 'genetic information' across species, short-circuiting the arboreal schema of 'genealogical trees' and the discrete evolutionary processes they presuppose (p. 11).

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Will We Learn from COVID-19? Ecopedagogical Calling (Un)heard

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ABSTRACT. ‘(Un)heard’ in the title questions if we will learn from experiencing COVID-19 to counter unrestrained environmental devastation occurring, or will we remain largely untaught? I argue the need for transformative, Freirean-based ecopedagogy for praxis through, in part, problematizing and then countering dehumanizing, deplanetarizing pandemic responses to ‘wake’ us in recognizing the need of socio-environmental justice and sustainability.

Keywords: COVID-19; neoliberalism; ecopedagogy; ecopedagogical literacy; Freire

The COVID-19 pandemic provides a unique opportunity to witness the level, frequency, and global vastness of devastation when decision-making within the subjective *world* (i.e., anthropocentric sphere) ignores the rest of *Earth* (i.e., planetary sphere) over a short period. The pandemic’s differing infection rates and deaths due to opposing responses illustrate the failures of teaching through, and education emergent from, neoliberal ideologies rooted in sustaining/intensifying hegemony without humanism or planetarism. Worded differently, non/in/formal education that has prioritized economics above human lives and suppressed critical reading of the economic systems themselves, along with post-truth*ism* with ‘sciences’ guided by politics rather than towards understanding the laws of nature (see Misiaszek, 2020a, 2020b), has intensified COVID-19’s dreadful toll. I argue that lessons from this dreadful pandemic should guide us, locally-to-globally, to disrupt pedagogies grounded in dehumanizing and deplanetarizing ideologies to construct ecopedagogies to end environmental crises.

In this brief article, I will focus on how the pandemic has emphasized the need to teach for ecopedagogical literacy to disrupt learned ideologies that distance Nature, prioritizes neoliberal economics with endless acceleration, and touts a single, fatalistic future of dehumanization and deplanetarization. I conclude by arguing for Freirean reinvention of education rooted in biophilia to counter current ones grounded in necrophilia, as will be defined.

Ecopedagogy: De-distancing, planetarizing, humanizing

Environmental teaching often falsely *distances* (e.g., geographically, epistemologically, sociohistorical othering) ‘us’ humans from environmental devastation, as *deplanetarizing* pedagogies that misleadingly separates environmental violence and social violence, and the world as part of Earth (Misiaszek, 2011, 2018, 2020b). In many meaningful and tangible ways, experiencing the pandemic can help us de-distance the world as *within* Earth (world-Earth de-distancing) by recognizing the dire consequences of (sub)consciously teaching distancing. COVID-19 emerged from nature outside of the world’s politics; however, the differing infection rates are largely political, as our actions materialize from our ‘readings’ of the virus. Actions that have disregarded world-Earth connections, including hidden curricula leading towards such ignoring, have increased COVID-19 suffering.

Ecopedagogies, emergent from Freirean pedagogies, focus on deepening and widening students’ critical literacy about environmental issues (i.e., ecopedagogical literacies) for reading and rereading world-Earth connections, recognizing that our actions of environmental violence are inseparable from social violence (Gadotti, 2008a, 2008b; Gadotti & Torres, 2009; Kahn, 2010; Misiaszek, 2011, 2018, 2019, 2020b). Environmental pedagogies are frequently non-critical and narrow in discipline, theory, and epistemologically (especially epistemologies of the North) (Gadotti & Torres, 2009; Misiaszek, 2011, 2020b). Shallow environmental pedagogies step us towards environmental devastation rather than stepping back, its (un)intended goal. Utilizing Ivan Illich’s terminology in *Deschooling Society* (1983), these tragic consequences stem from becoming ‘modern m[e]n’ who sees themselves and ‘their’ world outside of nature’s control. Ecopedagogical literacy centres on reading the tensions between the subjective world created by humans through (in)just, empowering/oppressive, (un)sustainable ways *within* Earth’s objective, apolitical laws of nature (Misiaszek, 2018, 2020b). Societal systems and structures (e.g., education, research, economics) cannot be apolitical (Freire, 2000), which form/intensify tensions with nature’s outcomes that are not politically malleable (Misiaszek, 2020b; Misiaszek & Torres, 2019), including COVID-19 tolls. Distancing of socio-environmental issues is frequently easier to falsely portray (e.g., having longer, even ‘geographic,’ periods); however, the pandemic is opposite of this. If and how the experiences from the pandemic bring about world-Earth educational and epistemological transformation is the key question.

Planetarizing, humanizing ‘development’

Ecopedagogical reading that deepens (e.g., locally contextual) and widens (i.e., globally and planetarily holistic) understandings of ‘development,’ and corresponding ‘livelihood,’ leads to praxis towards ending unsustainable environmental violence (Misiaszek, 2019), as well as lessening impacts of COVID-19. Who benefits and who suffers from differing ‘development’ framings is essential to critically read (non-anthropocentric sphere included in the ‘who’). The economics of ‘development’ is essential to problematize, particularly as ‘recovery’ from COVID-19’s economic recessions/depressions are debated. Critical reading and dialogue to question and challenge if ‘recoveries’ are within economic justice or neoliberalism framings and within what sphere(s) (local-to-planetary, world-Earth) are essential, paralleling needed socio-environmental praxis and accompanying ecopedagogies.

World-Earth separations never existed, but economic framing often untruthfully counter this fact, as James Moore (2015) expressed below.

> The ‘ecological’ and the ‘economic’ are, we are told, converging. But such a view presupposes that these moments were once separated. Hence the underlying uncertainty at the core of the consensus: the ongoing, cascading and impending tipping points of capitalism and the biosphere interact with each other – somehow. (p. 11)

Dirk Postma (2006), among others, argued that neoliberalism’s sole focus on the self’s private sphere devalues public spheres (local-to-global *and* planetary). Decreasing the caring for/within public spheres aligned with neoliberalism has helped COVID-19 become a global pandemic as social distancing is seen as economically negative and thus calculated as erroneous actions. Neoliberal education normalizes ideologies of short-term economic profit as ‘development’ through systemically hiding the underlying goal of sustaining hegemony rather than benefiting ‘them’ (Apple, 2004; Freire, 1992). Over-prioritizing of one’s private sphere cannot lead to caring for Nature (Postma, 2006), nor fighting a pandemic that requires actions beyond one’s self-interests, especially for the most vulnerable populations, often coinciding with sociohistorical othering.

Moore (2017) discussed how commodifying nature falsely separates planetary wellbeing as foundational to economics, including capitalism.

> As historical process, however, capitalism confronts a reality that it cannot change as it pleases. In the dualist ontology of the capitalist project, those limits to remaking reality are narrated as ‘natural limits’ or ‘nature’s agency.’ The reality, however, is messier, more nuanced – and more hopeful. While capitalists and empires are busy making nature with a capital’ N’ – external, controllable, reducible – the web of life is busy shuffling about the biological and geological conditions of capitalism’s process. (p. 601)

As it has done for environmental crises, the pandemic has illustrated how societal structures, including economic systems, cannot isolate themselves from the rest of the World of Earth, especially due to intensifying globalizations (*from above* and *below*). Teaching to (de)reconstruct development within nature's limits/dangers (planetarizing) and holistic social justice (humanizing) is essential for sustainability, peace, and health, rather than untethered neoliberalist acceleration, as discussed next.

Oppressive/dominant acceleration

Harmut Rosa expressed that 'the modern concept of freedom as self-determination,' which defines the 'good life' as being 'autonomous' and 'free from external brakes, obstacles, shortages and hindrances' (Hsu & Elliott, 2015, p. 403; Rosa, 2010). Rosa connects acceleration, modernity and, I would add, development and livelihood. The world has many instances of necessary 'braking' (i.e., 'deceleration') for social justice, peace, and sustainability. Neoliberal modernity without brakes leads to intensified pandemics, environmental injustices, sociohistorical oppressions (e.g., racism, coloniality, xenophobia), and dominance of nature. Key examples have been during the COVID-19's initial stages, as some federal governments decided to remove the brakes (e.g., Brazil) and others insignificantly tap on the brakes (e.g., USA).

Brakeless acceleration constructs a single, fatalistic future in which neoliberal education, as Freire (Freire, 1992, 2000) discussed, is an essential tool in normalizing hopelessness and instilling non-transformable *finishedness* (à la Freire). Countering fatalistic neoliberal-based pedagogies without brakes calls for ecopedagogies which are inherently full of hope and possibilities for praxis towards ending environmental devastation (Misiaszek, 2020b), social suppression of pandemics, and connections between the two. Adding to Freire's (1998) metaphor of neoliberalism as getting on a train without knowing the destination, the train also has no brakes.

Rosa (2003, 2010) argued that acceleration is not holistic but accompanied by forced deceleration mostly from the majority. Degrees of unbalanced acceleration/deceleration can help locate, although politically hidden, worsening world-Earth unsustainability and socio-environmental injustices. 'Development' characterized by such out-of-control acceleration can only be fittingly called 'de-development' and lowering livelihood for the masses, accompanied by dehumanizing, deplanetarizing environmental affects and pandemic outcomes. Pedagogies epistemologically grounded in constant acceleration without world-Earth problematizing (e.g., epistemologies of the North) has led to a vast majority of the World de-developing in false notions of striving for structurally unachievable neoliberal 'development' accompanied with socio-environmental oppressions/domination (Misiaszek, 2019). Outcomes from the pandemic map how decisions guided by false world-Earth-separating epistemologies for the acceleration of neoliberal development have accelerated rates of infection, hospitalization, suffering, and deaths. Disrupting education that grounds such decision-making is essential, as environmental crises are currently on parallel paths.

Conclusion: Reinvention towards biophilia

I conclude with a call for the need of Freirean-based reinvention rooted in deconstructing the '*historical ontology of dehumanization-humanization* as a species-specific struggle (also a collective learning process) for freedom and autonomy within relations of solidarity' (Morrow & Torres, 2019, p. 258, emphasis given). Critically deconstructing dehumanizing, deplanetarizing education that resulted in worsening pandemic responses is essential for reinventions of humanizing teaching that is inseparable to biophilia – countering human and planetary necrophilia. Erich Fromm (1973) defined 'biophilia' as a primary innate human disposition relating to the love of life on the part of a dialogical species, despite its potential sociohistorical deformation as the destructive 'necrophilia' that underlies dehumanization' (Morrow & Torres, 2019). In a relatively short time span, COVID-19 has illustrated the devastating effects resulting from world-Earth distancing epistemologies, as actions from dehumanizing, deplanetarizing ideologies exponentially increased suffering. Reinventing education through deconstructing pedagogies grounded in necrophilia to be reconstructed from biophilic roots, as well as countering the former, is essential for praxis for containing pandemics and ending environmental crises.

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The Quiet Earth: Re-Functioning Socio-material Knowledge in the Crisis of the Pandemic

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ABSTRACT. With its lockdown and restrictions on movement, the Covid-19 pandemic has created a rapid change in the relationship we have with the material environment. The resulting social isolation and our increased reliance on the virtual of the internet have meant that our potential for material engagement has become limited. This article explores one response to these limitations that illustrates the potential for new forms of knowledge to emerge from re-functioning the objects around us and ultimately re-engineering the self to adapt creatively to the crisis of pandemic. Drawing on ideas of socio-material learning and the distributed self, the essay explores the 'pedagogy of pandemic': a learning space in which creativity is central to the negotiation of problems associated with limited material surroundings, forming a type of situated knowledge specific to the conditions, materials and practices of isolation.

Keywords: re-functioning; situated knowledge; socio-material; distributed self; pedagogy of pandemic

As 'The Quiet Earth' descended upon us (see Pillsbury et al., 1985), it seemed as if Gaia herself swept invisibly through the streets, emptying the cities. We heard stories of urban wildlife and saw views of lost mountains emerging from the smog of Himalayan cities. While this spectacular, viral-driven news, was a welcome distraction from the fear of disease the unusual socio-material learning opportunities offered to many by lockdown was less, not more; restricted to the day to day basics of our limited material surroundings. The idea of the socio-material, that the social is continuously entangled with the material, comes from Bruno Latour's Actor Network Theory (Latour, 2005; Fenwick, Edwards, & Sawchuk, 2011; Bruni & Teli, 2007) and has increasingly been applied in the context of education and the relationship between knowledge and learning materials. In educational philosophy, the socio-material is defined by Estrid Sørensen (2009, p. 92) as the way 'different materials contribute to constituting different forms of knowledge,' suggesting that severe changes of material interaction, such as in times of pandemic, offer the opportunity for ‘different forms of knowledge’ to emerge. Knowledge in the context of the ‘pedagogy of the pandemic’ is shaped by the material prospects of limited travel, reduced consumer options and increasingly virtual online learning situations: forcing us to adopt creative solutions to an enforced, prolonged period of what seems like existential self-reflection. For some, this may provide an excellent opportunity to read more fiction, make more art and quietly introspect in the learning-workspaces of the home. This is the background to what I propose, in this essay, as a ‘pedagogy of pandemic’ – the finding and/or creation of a learning space in which creativity is central to the negotiation of problems associated with limited material surroundings. In this context, the limited material environment of the pandemic forms a type of situated knowledge specific to the conditions, materials and practices of isolation: ‘developing a way of thinking about knowledge as situated in practice […] [and] how different materials contribute to constituting different forms of knowledge’ (Sørensen, 2009, pp. 89–92). In the pedagogy of the pandemic, our limited material environments are highly affected by our relationship to the available materials around us. In this essay, I will look at my response to this limitation through the re-functioning of materials and technologies in new situational contexts: to find something new and novel at the intersections of material (and existential) despair. Taking as inspiration Albert Camus’ quote from his novel *The Plague* (1948), ‘at the heart of all beauty lies something inhuman,’ I intend to explore the potentials of creativity unleashed by the non-human agencies of the pandemic: both the unexpected disruption of human routines by plague virus and the unexpected interventions of material agency: the unforeseen uses of materials operating beyond their human-design capacities. The novel, a work of creative fictional writing, has been described as ‘the art or craft of contriving, through the written word, representations of human life that instruct or divert or both’ (Burgess, 2019) and it is these two approaches to education, instruction and diversion, and the numerous ways in which they intersect, which interests me. In the ‘novel’ sense, my definition of diversion draws upon the connotation of ‘divertissement,’ translated from the French as ‘entertainment’ – and also, more importantly, entangled with the Letterist International’s concept of ‘détournement’: to divert or hijack a meaning or function, specifically in the context of this essay, to re-function.

During the Covid-19 lockdown, the threat of limited material resources gave heightened importance to basic materials like toilet paper, water, food and cooking facilities, but, as an artist, to be able to continue working on creative projects was also a matter of survival. I found that the re-functioning, or diverted functioning of materials and technologies, was a way to enhance material interaction, working with the limited resources found in the home. Under these limitations simple, everyday materials became precious commodities: I stopped throwing out my plastic bottles, tin cans and glass, as I sought ways to re-use them in different contexts, repairing items of technology and when all else failed, making new creative resources from what might previously have been considered rubbish.

Another factor of the pandemic was the shifting balance between material interaction and virtual, online, interaction - unable to interact face-to-face, there was a powerful shift towards the virtual, at least in terms of a single person, living alone, with the only contact to work, friends and family via internet, telephone or social media. As the background context to this research, this essay is situated in the lonely, existential aspects of individual isolation: heightening my awareness of objects and materials surrounding me. This has parallels with other writings in the existentialist genre, such as Jean-Paul Sartre's novel *Nausea*, particularly where long passages are devoted to the impressions and feelings evoked by objects, such as the heavy, atmospheres surrounding a chair in a sad café, or the cramped oppressive rooms of the protagonist's material environment (1964). This existential loneliness reminds us of the power of socio-material interaction, whereby: 'people are in a way defined in their (meaningful) relations to artefacts as well as other people' (Enquist, 2008, p. 125). This effect of social isolation has been documented in a recent psychology web series by the BBC, suggesting that social isolation results in an 'anthropomorphising of objects' around us and that we may start to see 'intentions in machines and other kinds of devices in our house' (John, 2020). These ideas are a context to understanding material agency and the socio-material entanglements that underpin this essay.

Rather than drown in the virtual world, under a boredom-enforced diet of Netflix binge series, it seemed more interesting to use the enforced isolation to try to continue my current filmmaking project about the ship graveyards of Suva. Refused access to the actual location, a stretch of harbour where more than twenty discarded ships lay rusting, I decided that I would construct, from imagination, the interior of a rusting iron ship in my lockdown home, filming sequences as if they were happening onboard the vessels. The project seemed driven by an inner need for coexistence with the material environment, to construct experience through the interaction between myself and the available materials. This need for a creative, materially constructive environment, as a response to the virtual biases of the pandemic, echoes the need for learning and knowledge to be situated in a context of surrounding materials, whereby: 'approaches to situated knowledge view knowledge not as essential but as constructed in action; not as individual but as placed in the "lived-in world"' (Sørensen, 2009, p. 89). Making my own media in the confines of my personal (over-)'lived-in world,' at this time, was vitally important as a countermeasure to the effects of isolation and what I felt was potential dependency and vulnerability to media and virtual communication overload. The sudden immersion into the virtual world of electronic communications, in working as an educator, personal, social and mass media, seemed unmitigatedly relentless in the absence of the grounding influence of material substance. Making media, rather than being consumed by it, was a way of balancing the dizzying vertigo of this new socio-virtual excess, with what seemed to be the more earthly response of working with and in the limitations of the material environment. In the pandemic loneliness, there was a feeling of losing oneself to the onslaught of pre-made media and an unbalanced dependency on news information. It became a battle for the self, whereby the self is distributed amongst the cultural artefacts of our immediate surroundings. This feeling of distributed self was heightened in the pandemic, as our contacts became scattered in the electronic data field and I was drawn to Henrik Enquist's idea that material 'artefacts [...] [had] to be considered when thinking of the socio-materiality of this distributed self' (2008, pp.123–124). From the perspective of DIY practices and maker-culture, the distributed self is situated in the material environment as an active engagement between human and non-human agents. It suggested an interesting way of exploring pedagogy as 'reverse engineering': learning about our distributed selves through the manipulation of artefacts; re-functioning objects and materials to re-create ourselves in the new material ecology of the pandemic where the 'creation of meaningful relations in an ecosystem is the result of an ongoing and dynamic interaction between people, artefacts, and the environment' (Enquist, 2008, p. 127). The aim was a pedagogical experiment in the creative potentials of the distributed self, a learning space defined by the limitations of a pandemic socio-materiality, concerned with limited access to materials requiring 'novel,' creative solutions of distraction and instruction.

In this quest for what seemed to be mental survival, my first problem was to find materials for the walls of the film set. Luckily lockdown in Suva, Fiji was less severe than many countries and could allow for daytime scavenging of materials close-by the house – as long as necessary precautions were taken to avoid the chances of infection by the virus. Discarded materials were abundant outside the compound of the house, in the piles of uncollected non-organic waste where roofing iron had been stacked for disposal. Next came the need for movie lights: LED downlights taken out of the ceiling for their new, more important immediate purpose. The light stands were made from refunctioned electric fan stands, again appropriated from the heap of uncollected rubbish on the nearby streets. Household items such as broomsticks were used to extend the lighting stands and metal from coat hangers used to bind the pieces together.

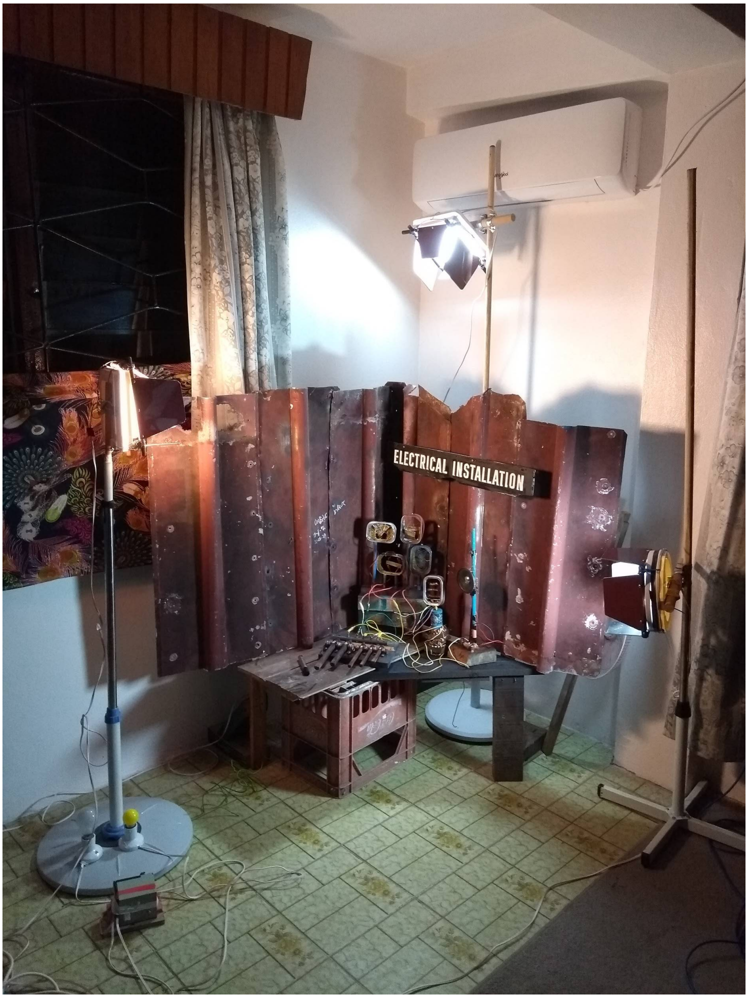

Figure 1. Pandemic DIY film set built from local discarded materials, roofing iron, re-functioned LED lighting, stands for electric fans, beer crate, broomsticks and sardine cans. Suva, 2020. (Author's collection)

The physical isolation of the pedagogy of the pandemic is particularly suited for the DIY ethos (Snake-Beings & Gibbons, 2018, 2019; Snake-Beings, 2016, 2017, 2018), for practices in which objects are appropriated and re-functioned and where knowledge is seen as emerging from a practice-led engagement with materials. The objects pictured above (figure 1) can be seen as emerging from a complex, highly localised material environment, a socio-material engagement in which knowledge is situated in the material context of learning through the improvised practices of construction. Through these complex interactions in the material environment, a form of knowledge emerges which resonates with David Byrne's description of complexity, as 'the interdisciplinary understanding of reality as composed of complex open systems with emergent properties and transformational potential [...] that knowledge is inherently local rather than universal [...] inherently dynamic. It is concerned with the description and explanation of change' (Byrne, 2005, p. 97). As a practice-led research project, my self-directed learning experiences through the pandemic have both expressed and explored ideas concerning the re-functioning of the material environment using themes connected with transport, communication, and the inherent need for creative interaction with the material environment. These themes and ideas can be seen in the following image:

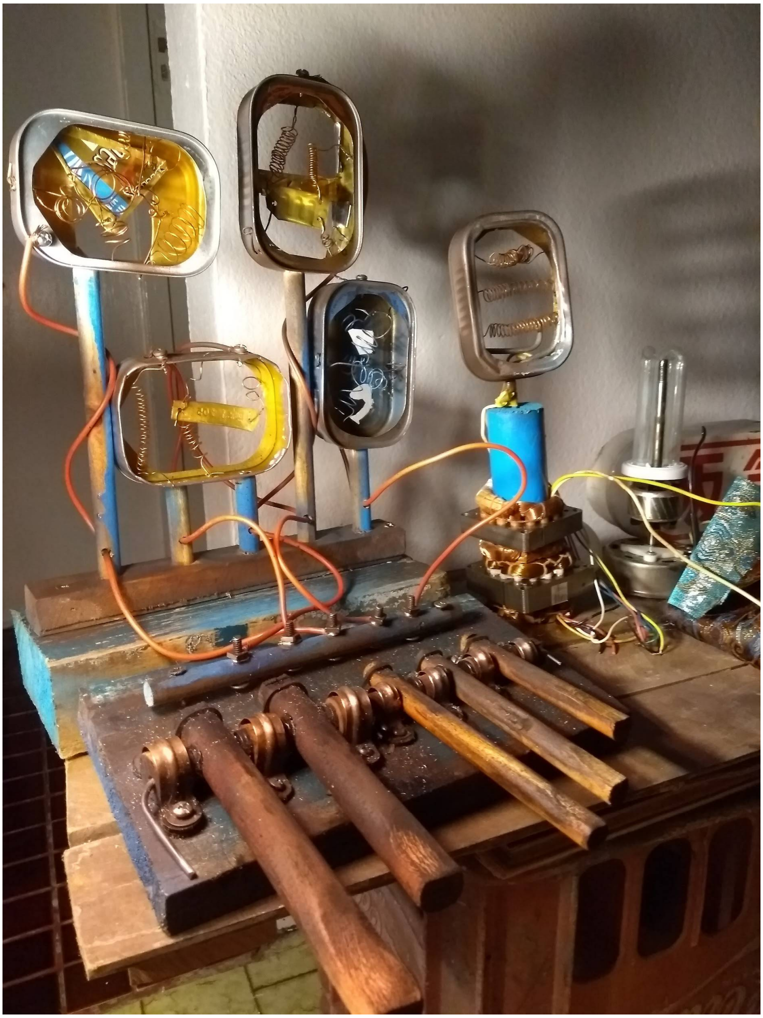

Figure 2. Speculative design: Prisoner of war Morse code radio transmitter using re-functioned sardine cans, broom handles, copper pipe fittings and recycled copper wire. (Author's collection)

Feeling somewhat under siege through the necessary restrictions of the pandemic, I found that my making was drawn towards an exploration of similar situations of limited material engagement: prisoners of war (POWs) and their quest for communication with the outside world. Through internet research, second-hand memories and pandemic enhanced imagination of what that situation would be like, I used these discarded materials to build a visual representation of a POW Morse code transmitter. I had heard stories of ‘cat whiskers’ and electronic components made from razor blades, a blunt pencil and a safety pin known as ‘canteen radios’ because of the methods used to conceal them from prison guards. In my own speculative designs, seen above, the radio transmitters were built from discarded sardine cans and recycled copper wire to imitate the fragility of both POW radio components and human-to-human communication. Designing and building these film props during the enforced leisure time of the lockdown was a way of reverse-engineering the learning-self through speculative engagement with materials and technologies: pursuing the idea that ‘by speculating more, at all levels of society, and exploring alternative scenarios, reality will become more malleable’ (Dunne & Raby, 2013, p. 6). The socio-material potentials of learning are, in this way, enacted through material engagement: ‘[speculative] designs need to be made physical. The physical presence can locate them in a world of meaning, embodied values, beliefs, ethics, dreams, hopes, and fears’ (Dunne & Raby, 2013, pp. 43–44). In this sense, the artefacts made during the lockdown express ideas of overcoming material scarcity, limited physical movement and restricted communication through a re-functioning of materials which express the malleability of objects, situations and the self. The form of pandemic-induced socio-material knowledge that is produced is contained in both human and the material substances of the artefact.

Exploring these ideas in more depth is limited by the scope of this short essay. Further research into DOY practices and material engagement, in the context of the pandemic, may reveal common strategies of coping, and thriving, in a limited material environment. Through the pandemic, we can learn much about the creativity and forms of knowledge that the majority of the world experiences on a day-to-day basis, and that suggests that a way forward, out of the crisis of pandemic, is for the so-called developed, materially rich nations to direct studies towards the resilience, creativity and socio-material engagements of those populations for which a limited material environment is an everyday occurrence. In the pedagogy of the pandemic, I believe that creativity and imaginative uses of materials are high priority skills to be developed, hopefully allowing us to find a way through unprecedented change. Perhaps a pedagogy of the pandemic will be focused on developing skills for re-imagining how our realities can be – with less material waste, less consumption, less inequality and unprecedented views of lofty mountain ranges through the smog-less skies.

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Plague, Pedagogy and Pleasure: Creative Interventions in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT. The present contribution addresses the complex interaction between creative and affective responses to the COVID-19 crises in higher educational practices. Looking authoethnographically at my teaching practice, I diffract my reading by means of an Italian novel, the plot of which occurs during an historical epidemic. I end up formulating questions about the relationship between creativity, technology and affects in the post-pandemic university. How universities decide to use the knowledge that they have gained during the COVID-19 disruption of academic life remains to be discovered.

Keywords: COVID-19; plague; Manzoni; teaching online; creativity

> *The pestilence, as the Tribunal of Health had feared,*
> *did enter the Milanese with the German troops.*
> *It is also known that it was not limited to that territory,*
> *but that it spread over and desolated a great part of Italy.*
> – Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed*

Plague in Milan

When it became clear that COVID-19 had generated a pandemic, Italian media (Di Stefano, 2020) promptly resuscitated one of the all-time school classics. Alessandro Manzoni's historical novel *I Promessi Sposi* (*The Betrothed*), first published in 1827, is the story of a couple of peasants whose love comes up against a rich landowner's lust and greed. Against the background of this simple plot, the author skilfully creates unforgettable characters and, most importantly, offers a window on the society of the time (XVII century) and of his own time (XIX century). In Manzoni's account of the plague, the reader can recognise contemporary responses to pandemic. Guilt is attributed to socially excluded individuals: the *untori* (the anointers) are suspected to spread the disease by 'anointing' buildings, roads and people with it. The atmosphere of distrust, then as today, brings about selfish attitudes, dangerous extremisms and an overall tendency to opt for violent, authoritarian responses to its advent. However, Manzoni, who can be considered the Italian version of Dickens, in his cultural upbringing, social class and approach to literature, was a diehard optimist. Behind an apparently rigid Catholicism, Manzoni unfolds a deep trust in the capacity of human beings for empathic fellowship. The plague that he recounts is a true historical event that took place in 1630 in the Milan area. It is well-documented in historical documents that Manzoni was aware of and explicitly refers to in his novel (Manzoni, 1974, p. 557). In the novel, the plague becomes a character in itself in its monstrous invisibility. Then, as today, though the sickness, the deaths, the desperation are visible, the workings of the illness remain enigmatic. It is this mystery that human beings try to make sense of by various means: those who have faith pray; those who have knowledge think; those who have loved ones hope, those who have none of these become angry, violent, prone to aggression. Scholars are challenged in their ontoepistemology (Barad, 2007): they can see no explanation, no appropriate medical strategy for COVID-19, as with the Milan-plague. What we all experience in the face of such an event is, first of all, a loss of our epistemological optimism: it seems that not everything can be explained, reacted to or fixed. We ask ourselves: What will happen to the innovation-excitement of the techno-industrial age? Will our loss of faith in the appropriateness of creative solutions that become (economically or socially) valuable for others influence knowledge production?

COVID-19 pedagogy in higher education

To investigate how higher education reacted to the pandemic, it is necessary to reframe the question. The massive – and currently being documented – pedagogical response to the pandemic has demonstrated the capacity of higher education teachers to act creatively (Besley & Peters, 2013). Colleagues around the world have speedily found digital ways of teaching that they had not used before. In my teaching on the Master of Creativity and Innovation, teachers have employed creative approaches that are aesthetic, sensory and arts-based (Chemi & Du, 2017). They have not excluded bodies (Cixous, 1999), affects/emotions (Chemi, Davy & Lund, 2017; Gorton, 2007; Lund & Chemi, 2015) and playful re-enactments (King, 2011). Such practice rests on the conviction that learning is relational and unfolds through entangled muddy relationships (Haraway, 2016) and diffractive perspectives (Barad, 2007). What happens when this complexity is ‘flattened out’ on screen, in distant conversations and digitalised forms? In what follows, I will convey my own experience with the process of bringing the body to the digital teaching in a crisis through autoethnography (Holman-Jones et al., 2016).

The pandemic threw up in the air all the cards neatly lined up by academic capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). It hit us in academia like a bombshell, demanding the immediate suspension of all activities.

Unexpected pleasures

Surprisingly, in this hasty, messy but necessary process, unexpected pleasures emerged. As Riddle, Harmes and Danaher (2017) have argued, in the neoliberal university, scholars are short on pleasures, which must be dug up, (re)invented or hunted. My first response, which echoed that of other colleagues worldwide, was relief. Ashamed as I felt for the death and suffering of so many, I was relieved because the academic world was brought to a halt. My academic body reacted with gratitude for the sudden void: no more teaching, conferences, travel, meetings, commuting. As anxiety gave way to reflection, the self-isolation felt like a blessing. Even though this feeling of pleasure was short-lived, due to the demand for us to translate our teaching into a digital mode, it intrigued me. How was it possible to feel anything other than sorrow in this moment of disgrace for the world and my organisation? It was because the pandemic made visible the hidden idiosyncrasies of contemporary universities. The loss of everyday routines, the suspension of business as usual, ushered in a healthy silence that contrasted with the fatiguing reality of neoliberalism. In private, often off-the-record conversations, many colleagues shared the same feeling of guilty gratitude for the suspension of academic life. The pandemic returned scholars to where they belong – the cave or the ivory tower, spaces of isolation from reality or society – or at least to where they *seem* to belong.

In reality, the pleasure derived from the forceful suspension of normality was tinged with regrets: I began missing my colleagues and the small joys of meeting in the copy room or at lunch. Again, others echoed these feelings. I started rethinking the teaching/research relationship and the distributed quality of my creativity (see Glăveanu, 2014). I see individuals as becoming with, for and against others in performative relationships (Chemi & Firing, 2020). Where were my kin, my tribe, my buddies?

The regret felt sweet because it was due to my feelings of love for and connection with my colleagues. I took a similar bitter-sweet pleasure in the sense that my translation of my teaching materials was not only possible but also successful, as the students' responses via email were overwhelmingly positive. I was most satisfied to learn that synchronous or asynchronous digital teaching could include creative teaching techniques, the involvement of bodies, sensory and arts-based experiences, playful or dramatised tasks. What would this experimentation come to? Would all be forgotten with the return to post-COVID-19 normality? Or would the neoliberal university reduce *all* teaching to digital delivery?

Jolly catastrophes

In anthropology, metaphors of death or destruction as purification are plentiful (Barba, 2009); likewise, in literature, as Manzoni's plague exemplifies. Religion is built on narratives of disaster, as in the ten plagues of Egypt in the *Old Testament*: water turning to blood, lice, frogs, locusts, darkness and so forth. Were we come to this? Was the catastrophe of the pandemic the only way to disrupt the academic routine?

Where creativity in education is concerned (Craft, Jeffrey, & Leibling, 2001; Harris, 2016), I am convinced that physical destruction and social crises are *not* the only way to disrupt a problematic situation. On the contrary, creativity can introduce appropriate levels and qualities of disruption in a destructive routine to foster generative change. Universities neglect this to their detriment. Their demands for ever-higher performance have not only invaded the core activities of universities – research and teaching – but are also inventing new compulsory tasks: fundraising, networking (for fundraising), administration (mostly for fundraising) and press/social media presence (definitely for fundraising). Such neoliberal makework disrupts the kind of open thinking that is necessary to address the wicked problems (Rittel & Webber, 1973) that should occupy academics today and are unsolvable without complex systemic approaches that are ethical. Such open and critical thinking requires an approach to teaching and learning that encourages individuals to engage creatively with complex problems by experimenting with possibilities in affirmative ways (Braidotti, 2019). It allows visions of the different ways of thinking and doing things to be explored safely and boldly (Chemi, 2017), and the relations between individuals to unfold their creative potential (Wyatt, 2018). The pandemic demanded that, as teachers, we respond creatively, which we did, and which students experienced as appropriate and useful. But what troubles me is that we will forget what we have learned in the seemingly inevitable return to academic normality. Now that we have creatively explored digital practices, will the flat, distant, highly structured digital space favoured by technocratic administrators erase the dialogical encounters of bodies, voices and senses? Will neoliberal economism reimpose itself on educational design, and dictate the replacement of physical classes by profitable online courses?

As Manzoni has written about the Milan plague, exceptional events can trigger extraordinary responses, both constructive and destructive:

> In seasons of public calamity, when confusion takes the place of order, we often behold a display of the sublimest virtue, but more frequently, alas! an increase of vice and crime. Instances of the latter were not wanting during the present unhappy period. (*The Betrothed*, ch. XXXI; *I Promessi Sposi*, ch. XXXII)

How universities decide to use the knowledge that they have gained during the COVID-19 disruption of normal academic life remains to be discovered. As a researcher and teacher, I wonder what I can offer, and how I can contribute to the ‘sublimest virtue’ of scholarship.

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Immunized Community and Biopolitics in Times of Pandemic

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ABSTRACT. A virus, as a vital power, by challenging human life, paradoxically provokes immunity by protecting as much as denying life. The vitality of the virus threatens the life of humanity; it imposes and controls world politics, so that biopolitics is not only about control over life but also about control of life. The life of the community is threatened by the life of a virus, and it is against this risk that the community must be immunized. When the pandemic endangers the way of governing the biological life of populations, questions arise as to how the pandemic positions immunity as the strategic epicentre of biopolitics, and in what sense the pandemic makes protection and denial of life the substantive focus of control and management of the biological life of populations.

Keywords: COVID-19; immunity; biopolitics; Foucault

Introduction

On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 epidemic, caused by COVID-19, a public health emergency of international concern. In a short amount of time, on March 11, the epidemic was declared a pandemic, having proliferated at an unimaginable speed throughout Asia, Europe, America and Africa. The virus was a biological danger that paralyzed China for three months and has stricken the United States since. The pandemic was less like a horseman of the apocalypse and more like a cavalry of conquest, war, famine and death, through which the virus suspended life as it was then being lived. Suspending life is not the same as eliminating it; on the contrary, the disease, as the possibility of overcoming one's decline, as Nietzsche might have said, is an affirmation of the will to live.

A virus, as a vital power, challenges human life, provoking immunity by, paradoxically, protecting life as much as it denies it. The virus's vitality threatens human life: it imposes on and controls world politics. Biopolitics is not just about control over life, but also control over how it is lived (Foucault, 2003). The life of the community is threatened by the life of the virus, and it is against this risk that the community must be immunized. When the pandemic endangers the way of governing over a population’s biological life, questions tend to arise, such as how does the pandemic locate immunity as the strategic epicentre of biopolitics? In what sense does the pandemic make the protection and denial of life the focus of how a population’s biological life is controlled and managed? To outline possible answers to these questions, this article is divided into three parts: the first represents characteristic features of immunity and community; the second identifies how a community is immunized through biopolitical practices during the pandemic; the third offers some parting thoughts on immunized community.

Immunity and Community

The word ‘immune’ refers to the negation of the *munus*, which is composed of *mei*, meaning ‘to change,’ and the suffix *-nus*, which implies the social. Immunity refers to the refusal to exchange something for the social. It is about being exempt from the gift that enforces exchanges and social bonds. Immunity denies every practice of hospitality, reciprocity and welcome. It breaks with the spirit of the *gift* in that it ruptures the connection established by giving, receiving and reciprocating. No matter the strength possessed by the thing given, immunity denies the obligation to reciprocate. Thus, to be immune is to be free of any charge or responsibility. It can be said that immunity erodes all social ties, insofar as it always refers to what is one’s own, to what is not communal. In this way, according to Esposito (2013), immunity opposes community: even though both refer to the *munus*, one of them negates it, while the other affirms it. Immunity refers to the particular: it does not bear any burden; there is no debt, no obligation or payment. Community deals with generality or that which is of concern to us all: there is a burden to give to others; there is a debt to the other that they are obliged to pay.

In biomedical terms, immunity is a process of rejection and neutralization by an organism when faced with the danger of contracting an infectious disease. For example, a virus penetrates the cell, like a parasite, to reproduce within until it infects it and produces more virus. The organism can only stand against the infection by battling against itself in a self-destructive war that, if the organism can survive its decline, will, in the end, enable it to produce antibodies capable of neutralizing the pathogen and, thus, to achieve immunity. In this way, the organisms that survive COVID-19 are immune to the virus because they negate it and neutralize it; they exclude the micro-organic pathogen, making it part of themselves. Immunity operates in a homeopathic manner; that is, it reproduces in a controlled manner that which it seeks to neutralize (Esposito, 2011).

There can be no immunity if there is no disease to face and, more importantly, neutralize. Immunity operates at the limit between life and death, health and sickness, good and evil. It is not about defeating evil but about neutralizing it, about assimilating it into the body as an antibody. In this sense, immunity affirms life by denying it or denies life to protect it, and therein lies its aporetic character, given that to live it is necessary to inhibit life, and life can only be lived through doses of death. In other words, the community lives thanks to immunity.

Where the COVID-19 pandemic is concerned, life is not only denied but also neutralized by protecting it. The pandemic reveals that immunity is constitutive and destructive of the global community. An immunized community is one that denies its *munus* to protect life, one that gives itself a dose of death to stay alive. This is why we are being asked to accept, as a dose of death, the collapse of the stock markets, of oil demand, of employment, the bankruptcy of small and medium-sized companies, the loss of the school year, etc. In a way, the decline of the economy drives economic life; life is extracted from life or, put it another way, death is included in life.

The pandemic activates humanity's immune system to prompt it to maintain the life of the global community. But it also limits the excess of community. It goes against the contiguity of communal life. It calls for taking distance, for a functional separation that applies both to the reciprocal relationship between individuals and of the individual with itself. In order to preserve communal life, we are asked to reduce it to a minimum: by social distancing, not touching anything or anyone, not even oneself, not speaking face to face without a face mask, staying at home. Everything external to oneself becomes a threat; one rejects all social bonds to activate immunity. But doing so unites us by separating us and brings us together by distancing us. Immunization practices are the only common behaviour, and keeping the community alive is their only objective.

In this way, immunity functions as the strategic epicentre of biopolitics. An immunized community activates or evidences its biopolitical constitution because there can be no immunized community without governance over a population's biological life. Every common and immune action is a practice that puts at risk the relation between politics and life. The community cannot live without politics, and politics is the antibody for a community's life.

Biopolitics

How is the immunized community presented in biopolitics as a denial of the *munus* to protect its own life? Through Foucault (2003; see Foucault, 2008), four access routes towards the notion of biopolitics can be identified: 1) noso-politics, 2) race war, 3) the power to make live and let die, 4) the political economy of the market. Below is a sketch of how the community is immunized through biopolitical practices.

The consideration of diseases as a political and economic problem can be referred to as noso-politics, that is to say, the development of a medical market and clinical medicine centred on examination, diagnosis and individual therapy. Both the medical market and clinical medicine are established as communities as long as they are considered social medicine that enforces reciprocity between the members of society. How is the noso-political community immunized? Maintaining disease within the population is vital for the existence of noso-politics because the medical market and clinical medicine interrupt the social circuit. Immunity is achieved by maintaining and producing the disease. If noso-politics operates in two areas, namely, 1) infancy and the medicating of families, and b) hygiene and the functioning of medicine as social control, then it will be there where the rejection of social exchange occurs. The immunity of noso-politics inheres in the diseases of children and family, as well as in infections and the breakdown of the medical system. The pandemic immunizes the noso-political community because the medical market and clinical medicine are not a matter of communal generality, but of the particularity of noso-politics. The production, distribution and consumption of resources to fight the pandemic, as well as all medical strategies, from the test to the diagnostic and to the establishing of therapy or treatment to fight COVID-19, are immunity practices for the noso-political community.

According to Foucault (2003), war starts not because there are differences among the population but because there is too much equality; in other words, egalitarianism drives the dominant race or social group to try to defend what they consider to be their society or institutions. It can be said that races are communities that, through war, seek to protect and expand their dominions and, by doing so, became immune. War is a way to immunize the community. Likewise, during the COVID-19 pandemic, war is established between business communities, international organizations like the OPEC or the WHO, scientific groups and national government agencies such as, in the case of Mexico, the *Consejo de Salubridad* (General Health Council) or the *Secretaría de Salud* (Secretariat of Health). Battles take place because races seek to differentiate themselves. Each race is a community that carries with it a social burden, and one way to become immune, that is, to deny the obligation of social payment, is to wage war. To reject social payment is to protect the community's life; for example, the community of doctors is immunized by cancelling the social debt to protect their way of life. Race warfare, as a biopolitics of the immunized community, is a form of dominion over a population's biological life. However, in times of pandemic, the virus wages its war and manages to dominate the biological life of everything, not just that of the population.

The formula 'make live and let die' is used by Foucault (2003) to indicate how, after sovereignty, comes death through life. There is power over death only through being forced to live it. It is no longer the power of the sword but the power of the vial, of the vaccine, of surgery, of medical health practices, of social security, of eating habits, of statistical data, of bioethical guidelines. The COVID-19 pandemic reaches death through life: there is power over death only through being forced to live life, death is reached through the populations' life which, as a community, lives mortified and dies vitalized. Its operative conditions the making of life and allowing of death, is what makes the population function. For example, the individuals that make up a population live and die in an operative and functional manner. The living do things and count as statistical data on birth, employment and schooling, and the dead are integrated into the productive machinery in the shape of organ donations, wakes, mortality and morbidity statistics, etc.

This operative condition of making live and letting die that characterizes the mortified life and the vitalized death is the *munus*, and it is what establishes the obligatory payment or social bond of the population as a community. In the operative character of making live and letting die, immunity, as a homeopathic dialectic, can be appreciated more clearly: immunity assumes that the negative is in the positive, and the positive can exist only through the negative. The pandemic makes it evident that how the population community through making live allows death, breaking the social bond of reciprocal donation. To be able to live, the population must reject all social contact to strengthen its ties. It must assume that distance protects closeness; it must take refuge in the particulars of home to maintain the generality of public life. Thus, during the pandemic, every statistic datum strengthens the breaking of social obligation, both of making live in the shape of employment, schooling, eating habits, hygiene, etc. and of letting die as an indicator of mortality, degrees of morbidity, areas of contagion, demographics of infection, etc.

The political economy of the market can be appreciated in neoliberalism: when states enter the game of the market, there is no need to limit the state, as happened with liberalism. Not only is liberty produced, managed and ensured, but also the plurality of freedoms that mobilizes competition, monopoly, social politics, human capital and crime. For example, during the pandemic, freedom of competition is established, not only among individuals to have what is required to protect themselves from contagion, but also among companies, especially those in the medical industry, to bring their products to market. This freedom of competition among companies is established based on the freedom that large monopolies must establish the rules of competition in the market. Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer, Bayer or Novartis no doubt compete on the basis that they establish mercantile rules for their products. There is freedom to establish various social policies that help inhibit the expansion of the virus. There is freedom to have various forms of preparation for human capital, particularly for nursing and medicine; there are conditions on freedom so that crime, through drug trafficking, is a participant of the market, not just through the sale and distribution of medical supplies, but also through the distribution of food supplies to the most vulnerable sectors of the population.

Thus, in the political economy of the market, it is the market itself which immunizes political economy: the individual respects the social contract, not because there is a contract but because it is in their interest that there be one. There is a particular economic interest that allows the establishing of a collective political bond. The management of the biological life of the individual is a function of the political economy of the market. The obligation of social payment lies in the economic exchange: as long as production, distribution and consumption of particular and individual life remain on the board of the mercantile game and in the stakes of the political economy market, the life of the community is possible. In the most radical selfishness lies the strength of the social bond. The neoliberal community is immunized when the bond of reciprocity, as the most original definition of community, is established as an individual and selfish matter. In other words, individuals take care of one another not because of an obligation to the community, but for immunity, for something particular, local and internal.

Thus, during the pandemic, the life of the community depends on the care that each person takes of themselves, as happens in ‘panic buying.’ It shows that 1) anyone who can participate in the market (be it through production, distribution or consumption of that which is in demand) can do so freely; 2) everyone buys for themselves, with the intention of taking care and protecting that which is theirs (body, family and house), and this self-care is in turn taking care of others; 3) this self-care is not born from compassion for the other but because the other represents a threat, a source of infection, an evil. The panic buying is caused by the danger implied by the slightest contact with the other. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it is evident that personal order protects the anomaly and collective anomie. The deepest economic selfishness is the antibody that protects by negating collective political life. Radical individualism immunizes the community.

Conclusion

1. The immunized community is that one that lives the dose of death that it gives itself. The pandemic is an exceptional moment in which biological and political death make human life possible.
2. Every common and immune action is a practice that risks the relation between politics and life because the community cannot live without politics and politics immunizes the community. Politics is an antibody for the community’s life.
3. Sickness and death immunize the community, made up of clinical medicine and medical markets. That is why medicine as a community sickens and kills to live. If there is a community that will live through the pandemic, it is the medical one.
4. Communities, like races, are immunized through war. Just as war immunizes the community, violence immunizes politics. Politics is not the continuation of war; neither is war the continuation of politics. Violence is politics’ production of antibodies, and politics can live thanks to the violence it produces. During the pandemic, health policies are constitutively violent.
5. The COVID-19 pandemic reaches death through life. There is power over death only through enforcing life. In making live and letting die, immunity, as a homeopathic dialectic, is evidenced. Both sickness and death are in health and life, and these are only possible through disease and death.
6. In the political economy of the market, selfishness establishes itself as the strength of the social bond. The neoliberal community becomes immunized when the bond of reciprocity, as the most original meaning of community, is construed as an individual and selfish matter. During the pandemic, self-care translates into the caring for others, not in order to strengthen the collective bond but to negate any obligation of social repayment.

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International Higher Education and Global Citizenship Education: The Rise of Critical Cosmopolitanism's 'Personhood' in the Age of COVID-19

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ABSTRACT. COVID-19 is the first truly global pandemic of the 21st century, and while it has claimed thousands of lives, it has also provided our current global risk society with opportunities to inhabit increasingly rare moments of transnational openness and collectivity. However, higher education institutions (HEIs) continue to be guided by hegemonic forces which reify the necessity of human capital-based norms, values and competencies as a means of securing national and individual competitive advantage. Challenging the dominant neoliberal orthodoxy of the knowledge economy, knowledge socialism aims to cement the bonds of collectivity through decentralised and non-hierarchical avenues of non-rivalrous, peer-to-peer, knowledge exchange for the collective good. This article argues that in order to foment this turn – from individuality/competitiveness to collectivity/non-rivalry – a shift from a methodologically nationalist form of global citizenship education, towards one which embraces cosmopolitan personhood must occur. Thus, cosmopolitan personhood should be understood as an educational project and an ethical imperative which promotes a notion of cosmopolitan citizenship based in openness and the collective struggle towards securing the greater good.

Keywords: global citizenship education; international higher education; cosmopolitan personhood; neoliberalism; risk society

Cosmopolitan personhood

Two emergent developments are currently shaping philosophy and the humanities: the ecological and technological turns, which together constitute an ontology of decentred interconnectivity, i.e., humanity as both decentred and part of larger living systems (Peters, Jandrić, & McLaren, 2020). From the perspective of critical cosmopolitan social theory, interconnectivity, communication and increasing moments of global openness – through a reframing of identities, loyalties and understandings – are increasingly redefining the notion of 'personhood' in a cultural horizon where new conceptualisations of self, other and world may take shape (Delanty, 2006). This notion of cosmopolitan personhood represents a relational understanding in which each person regards themselves as one amongst others, a person whose identity is not at risk when shifting between or giving up altogether their various identifying associations (Splitter, 2015). Furthermore, cosmopolitan personhood represents a desire to push past the bounds of first modernity – the close connection between individualisation and the state in both European and Chinese context – and second modernity, to which we all belong, in which global risks produce cosmopolitan responsibilities and imperatives which no one can escape (Beck & Grande, 2010). The reconstitutive framework of critical cosmopolitanism provides a rationale for a new form of global citizenship education project, one that escapes both the dichotomous boundaries of global vs. local, as well as the mercantilist concern for 'global competencies' (Birk, 2014) present in contemporary global citizenship education. Specifically, while informed by a normative and philosophical allegiance to humanistic cosmopolitanism, global citizenship education, in effect, tends to be outweighed by pragmatic, elitist and human capital-based approaches to cosmopolitanism (Caruana, 2014).

The neoliberal challenge of openness

In the global pandemic, the field of international higher education can be said to exhibit a biological model of information known as the 'ecology of good ideas' (Peters, Jandrić, & McLaren, 2020), as millions across the globe share open access knowledge about COVID-19, as well as global 'best practices' relating to online teaching and learning in the era of social distancing and quarantine international higher education. This instance of openness represents a type of knowledge economy, a form of knowledge socialism that often implies a measure of informal social learning and practice that connotes a freedom from, and challenge to, the regimes of human capital-based liberal international knowledge (Peters, 2019). The increasingly open challenge to neoliberal notions of what is good or bad, proper or criminal (open access publishing, shared databases, etc.) represent frameworks of discourse that have the potential to disrupt traditional nodes of power and control in state-centric 'regimes of truth' that have hitherto held sway over normative and rationalised notions of what it means to be human in international higher education (Besley & Peters, 2019). A striking example of decentred-interconnected openness, a requisite of critical cosmopolitanism's concern for a redefinition of personhood, can be seen in the current COVID-19-based climate of scholastic openness (Jandrić, 2020):

> In the context of research, the COVID-19 pandemic has initiated historically unprecedented levels of collaboration and openness, prompting some authors to suggest that '[w]hen the story of the coronavirus (2019-nCOV) is finally written, it might well become a template for the utopian dream of open science – where research data is

> shared freely, unrestrained by competition, paywalls and patents.' (Crowe, 2020)

The crisis of risk society

According to Foucault, the responsibilisation of the self has turned individuals into moral agents who promote new forms of relationships between government and self-government, creating individualised programs of social insurance and risk management (Besley & Peters, 2019). However, moments of extreme global risk such as climate change, financial crises and viral pandemics also present moments of openness that blur the lines and borders between state-centric identity and cosmopolitan notions of global citizenship. However, these moments of risk also lay bare the problems inherent to a methodologically nationalist conceptualisation of modernity that fails to address the rising tide of 'world risk society' (Beck & Grande, 2010). To be clear, methodological nationalism entails a continued Western-centric scholarship which reifies, perpetuates and naturalises western-centric theories based on liberal institutional values and ideals (Shajahan & Kezar, 2013). Due to the inability of liberal internationalism's mechanisms of power and control (characterised by incredibly complex intra-, supra-, trans- and national organisations, institutions, corporations and foundations) to mitigate increasingly frequent global risks, Beck and Grande highlight the need for a 'methodological cosmopolitanisation' of current Eurocentric social theory (2010). It may be said that a desire for alternative modernity and a concern for cosmopolitanism has been a staple of traditional sociological theory for centuries (Bielsa & Hermans, 2016). However, the critical cosmopolitanism necessary to a Delantian imaginary of cosmopolitan modernity requires self-problematisation and an acknowledgement of incompleteness; it inhabits Kant and Baudelaire's view of modernity not as doctrine, attitude or epoch, but as a mode of relating to contemporary reality: a spirit of permanent self-reflexive critique of our given historical era (Gaonkar, 1999).

The imperative of cosmopolitan personhood

The current neoliberal university model represents one such possibility for critical methodological self-reflection, a model that stands as if in testament to the inevitable and natural logic of neoliberal managerialism (Rizvi, 2007). The neoliberal discourse of human capital-based development present in the diffusion of hegemonic western ideals and values creates policy discourses in developing higher education institutions that reify institutional frameworks, disciplinary definitions and governance models that highlight an ideologically constituted 'global context' (Rizvi, 2007). Thus, in the sphere of international higher education, global citizenship education demands a Delantian critical cosmopolitanism aimed at global personhood education, rather than a methodologically nationalist form of global citizenship education that naturalises a notion of citizenship that binds human beings to a polity of humankind legislated by the rights and responsibilities of the state (Akhar & Gohsen-Chelala, 2015), i.e., governmentality, one that privileges the 'reason of state' (Besley & Peters, 2019) over the 'cosmopolitan modernities' (Beck & Grande, 2010) inherent in the notion of cosmopolitan personhood. Global citizenship education should be stripped of the trappings of citizenship and global competencies, and instead embrace the imperatives and responsibilities of cosmopolitan personhood. This time of crisis and openness is an ideal moment to re-evaluate both international higher education and its liberal international foundation. Moreover, if viewed through the lens of critical cosmopolitanism, it is clear that scholars in the humanities and social sciences must contribute to humanity's collective struggle against the COVID-19 pandemic by directing sociological research towards more sustainable futures (Jandrić, 2020).

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An Ethic of Care for People with Disabilities during the COVID-19 Pandemic in China: Towards Greater Social Justice

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ABSTRACT: The global COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in mass infections of the populations worldwide. During the pandemic, the prevailing value of social justice in the social public service system has been under threat by the conduct of herd immunity and resurgence of social Darwinism. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the most adverse impacts have been on the lives of people with disabilities, threatened by possible infection, and experiencing the suspension of rehabilitation, education, and unemployment. China has made great efforts to support its 85 million people with disabilities and drafted a few emergency response plans to deal with their concerns, after chaos in the initial stage of the outbreak. The paper argues that a social system concerning ethic of care should be improved for people with disabilities and thus move to a more just society.

Keywords: ethic of care; people with disabilities; COVID-19 pandemic; social justice

Introduction

COVID-19 is a global pandemic that has affected more than 4 million people in the world by May 2020 and has not been under total control yet (China News, 2020). COVID-19 has not only changed human lives significantly worldwide but tested the fundamental values that humankind has nurtured and cherished for recent centuries. The basic principles of social justice and humanitarianism toward those who are in the most disadvantaged positions, that have been mandated as national goals for many countries (Mugumbate, 2016; Goodlad & Riddell, 2005), turn out to be under threats as well. Under the political momentum of building a fair and equitable society for all, inclusion and social welfare for disadvantaged people have been carried out in most nations to varying degrees as one part of these policy goals.

However, one cannot forget that, just one century ago, the prevailing Darwinism favouring ‘natural selection’ and ‘survival of the fittest’ was applied to social lives to form a widespread theory of social Darwinism, believing that progress of all kinds depends on struggle and competition based on the fundamental law of evolution. As a result, people with disabilities were sterilized, discriminated, and segregated in a range of different forms under the scientific theories of Eugenics and Intelligence Tests (Warner, 1894).

The world has been experiencing a historic period of great transition towards a more competitive global economy that has never been expected before, which puts pressure on nations in competition for new technologies and economic growth. The pursuit of economic competitiveness of nations has not reduced the efforts for better social equity. Nations have been striving for a better social equity by making education more accessible to all (Lee & Gopinathan, 2018), making quality of life better for citizens, etc. (Pastor, 2006). The social Darwinism and justice have been both highlighted and coexisting in many societies despite that they are conflicting when refers to resource allocations. The concept of social justice seems to win the tug-of-war in recent years since the concept of social justice is now used as a rationale for maintaining the status quo, promoting far-reaching social reforms, and justifying revolutionary actions (Reisch, 2002). It has been taken as the basic rationale for promoting far-reaching social reforms and justifying revolutionary action (Reisch, 2002). Under the guidance of social justice, the ethic of care has always been a common practice to treat those who are in disadvantaged. The caring ethics emphasizes the needs, conversation and mutual understanding of others from the perspective of emotional and benevolent ethical thinking, which provides a theoretical foundation for analyzing how our subjectivity is established in the ethical encounter with our neighbourhood or other people (Nordtug, 2015). In this way, a caring ethics could offer a possible solution for promoting social justice.

The COVID-19 pandemic sharply interrupts the existing social welfare system for people who are in disadvantaged positions, including those with disabilities. The conflict between social Darwinism and social justice rises again when the turmoil brought by the temporary collapse of medical and the whole social support system. The well-being and quality of life of individuals with disabilities and other disadvantaged people such as senior citizens and in poverty are challenged extensively globally. The proposal and conduct of a herd immunity policy that allows a large number of people to be infected with COVID-19 advocated by a few nations revealed the failure of government responsibility (FP News, 2020) with regards care for the most vulnerable in the interests of economic development (Tencent News, 2020). In its cruellest form, it is a new version of survival of the fittest, and trying herd immunity with a deadly, new, and untreatable disease is a massive risk of human lives.

China was the main epidemic area during December 2019 to March 2020, when Chinese government took lots of tough measures including ‘home quarantine’ and ‘combination of isolation treatment’ to contain the spread of the pandemic

(National Health Commission of the People’s Republic of China, 2020), which has been proved to be efficient and effective to protect human life. While mobilizing the whole social power to fight for epidemics, the most disadvantaged were not taken into account at the first stage of chaos, and their voices were not sent out efficiently thus their rights were neglected. The anti-Pandemic policy published in early January did not include people with disabilities explicitly. For example, the Ministry of education provided the online education resources for primary and secondary school students; however, students with disabilities were not taken into account (MOE, 2020a). This seems to verify again that the disadvantaged who are more easily to be vulnerable to any social crisis but more easily to be neglected. Thus, what are the challenges China face for supporting people with disabilities and how to provide efficient social care and support for them in COVID-19 pandemic in China remains a serious public issue and needs to be addressed carefully.

Social caring and challenges for people with disabilities

In the theory of social justice, the creation of societies that would maximize both individual and collective well-being (Roemer, 1996). This requires the priority of countries should be given to protect its vulnerable population from diseases and disasters. Disability is highly related to vulnerability and discrimination in the society, which means the high possibility of an individual or group being exposed to and harmed by a crisis. China has made great efforts to provide security for people with disabilities during COVID-19. China Disabled Persons’ Federation at various levels, community committees, and other social organizations at the grass-roots levels take the responsibilities to organize and deliver persons with disabilities with the epidemic prevention supplies, daily supplies, information and knowledge of the epidemics, and relevant medical and rehabilitation services. For example, local governments arranged regular delivery for people with mental disabilities to ensure their access to medicine during the epidemic. Volunteers are organized to provide indoor services of food supply, accompanying, and housework helps. Special education institutions and schools provide online teaching and consultation on family education and rehabilitation, and special teachers are then encouraged to provide homeschooling when the epidemic situation is getting under control. Humanitarianism has been advocated and practised even in the most difficult time, and this reflects the spirit of equity and social justice, which is the basis for reordering national priorities and support people’s valid claim for a share of the resources needed to ensure the provision of adequate food, clothing, and shelter (Van, 1994).

However, the situation has not always been so positive, and the vulnerability of people with disabilities was also in full display in the initial stage of the massive outbreak period. When the whole society was in a panic, people with disabilities were neglected and put one the last in the name list for support. They lacked effective ways, tools and methods to get help in the public emergency. Here is an extreme example. A 16-year-old teenage with cerebral palsy died due to his father was sent to the concentration of isolation in 29th January. The concentration was aimed to protect the healthy people and contain the spreading by separating those with the sign of COVID-19 from the healthy ones. Although the teenage who could not live independently was handed over to relatives, village cadres, village doctors to take care of by his father before leaving, he died six days later. This breaking news shocked the whole society, and the basic underlying values of humanity and justice were challenged and cannot be allowed to take place again.

A series of policy documents were released to protect the rights of people with disabilities, such as the fifth and sixth editions of COVID-19 prevention and control plans, which clearly requires welfare institutions should put the people listed above as the priority for prevention and control during late February to early March, the Notice on Further Ensuring the Bottom Line of People in Need during the Epidemic Prevention and Control defining the measures of basic care services for people with disabilities and those who could not take care of themselves affected by the epidemic and isolated at home in March. A social justice approach would acknowledge the connection in the design and delivery of social services between peoples' needs for economic assistance and the supports that agencies provide (Reisch, 2002). Besides, a social justice paradigm must incorporate various means to achieve a fair distribution of societal goods—tangible and intangible (Gibelman, 2000). Policies and services should include the most vulnerable populations in the distribution of societal resources.

Although the central government took quick strategies, the damage done to people with disabilities is irreversible. The emergency response failed to respond to the needs of people with disabilities in the initial pandemonium. Disability is an umbrella consisting of broad categories, such as physical, cognitive, sensory, mental health, and learning disabilities, etc. Specific types of disability were in company with different ableist stereotypes and intensities of discrimination. A series of policy announcements issued to protect the people with disabilities in February and March, which mainly mentioned them as one general group of people, and hardly differentiate specific measurements for them with various living conditions, types, and degree of disabilities. The invisible vulnerable people, including the ones with disabilities living in poverty, alone, remote areas, etc., are easily missed in the rescue system. The nursery and rehabilitation institution went into lock-down during the outbreak, leading to many people with disabilities being absent to the routine service of caring and rehabilitation.

The school closing brought about greater difficulties for students with disabilities since many special education services cannot be easily delivered at home by parents. The Ministry of Education introduced 'no suspension of learning despite suspension of schooling' to continue massive online teaching and learning for students. The data shows that there are 665,900 students with disabilities studying in schools in China, with 49.41% learning in general schools in 2019 (Ministry of Education, 2020b). The 'no suspension of learning despite suspension of schooling' challenged students with disabilities and their teachers to an extreme extent, by requiring complicated information technology equipment at home, parental support during online learning, and student capability to access the learning materials. Many families having children with disabilities were found to be in poverty and not accessible to the internet. Parents of students with disabilities were also more likely to be uneducated, and not able to accomplish home teaching required by schools. Even worse, one such situation is that many students with severe or multiple disabilities have higher needs for comprehensive rehabilitation and intervention programs that cannot be interrupted midway; otherwise there could be a negative effect on their learning and growth. The employment of people with disabilities is also under crisis. The enterprises have either been banned from opening or suspended production, and disabled staff were often among the first group to be laid-off. For example, almost all blind massage clinics were closed, and many people with visual disabilities were forced to struggle to make ends meet.

Implications of an ethic of care for people with disabilities

Social justice must be promoted at all levels of government, from local to national (Hagen, 2000), which must be put into practice. Human behaviour is a process 'patterned by a structure of relationships and is subject to changes in that structure' (McLaren & Hawe, 2005). Caring is a connection or encounter between human beings in its most fundamental form (Noddings, 1992). A caring relation requires two parties—not just a single agent who 'cares' or 'has cares' and figure out what characterizes the consciousness and behaviour of the career (or one caring) and that of the cared-for (person receiving care) (Noddings, 1992). In the case of an epidemic situation, the caring relation between the able-bodied person and the people with disabilities is precarious to some extent, especially when it comes to the allocation of medical and educational resources between them. The relationship needs to be further strengthened.

On the macro perspective, government and people with disabilities form the two parties of caring relation. When scarce resources make such choices of distribution necessary, social policies and services should emphasize prevention rather than correction, amelioration, or remediation (Katz, 2001). The government incorporating 'disability' as a variable into the emergency mechanism will greatly increase the complexity of the emergency system. When improving public health legislation and formulating emergency plans for public health emergencies, governments at all levels should give priority to the protection of persons with disabilities, children, and the elderly, and ensure that families with severely disabled persons, families with disabled persons, and units with concentrated disabled persons can receive timely support and assistance. Disability is a kind of representation, rather than an essential attribute of individuals and groups. Instead of focusing on 'how to provide appropriate services to people with disabilities', the government should focus on the vulnerability of people with disabilities in areas such as socioeconomic status and include them in the basic procedures for dealing with emergencies, including preparedness, response and recovery. The former is developed to provide remedies for the disabled, while the latter is to consider the disabled at the beginning of emergency system construction so that they would not be neglected even at the initial phase. Meanwhile, for people with disabilities, the government should promote their capacity by ensuring effective access to disability services. If necessary, people with disabilities should be able to be promptly transferred to professional facilities to withstand the impact of epidemics, floods and other emergencies. In addition, it is essential to set up a special hotline for people with disabilities, to extend services to local communities and to form mutual support groups for them. It is an important part of the development and improvement of disability service to try to maintain the ‘connection” between people with disabilities and the service when the disaster comes.

On the mezzo system, it’s pivotal to re-establish the relationship between organizations and individuals with disabilities. The construction of social services would embody the idea that such services are the expression of collective responsibility for people’s needs (Gil, 1998). It is a basic requirement of modern society that the barriers for people with disabilities’ participation should be eliminated, and that this requirement should not be interrupted by the outbreak of disasters, etc. (Alexander, 2015). Attention should be paid to the focus of work, gradually from the “prevention and control” as the guide, to restore the daily life of people with disabilities to withstand the physical and mental damage suffered during the epidemic, and give corresponding support and help. Relevant needs that were not met during the epidemic period, such as the medical needs of people with disabilities with chronic diseases, should be collected (Chen, 2020). It should be organized at the grass-roots level to consider the needs of people with disabilities and meet their needs in an orderly manner. Besides, we need to make sure that people with disabilities have unimpeded access to information in various ways, including sign language, voice, subtitle and other information messages.

On the microsystem, caring relationships need to be consciously built. The creation and establishment of caring relationships is one of the basic missions of education and family. On the one hand, role models are important in establishing caring relationships (Noddings, 1992). Educators and parents should show children how to care within society, such as establish a concern with the students to show how to care (Noddings, 1992). Schools should guide students set up the belief of the justification and necessary to support the disabled, find their role model of supporting people with disabilities, analyse what they can do in reality and put it into action.

On the other hand, practice is a basic approach to help develop caring relationships. If we want people to live a virtuous life and care for others, we should give them the opportunity to practice the skills of caring and to develop the necessary individual states (Noddings, 1992). All people should participate in social services, such as contacting with people with disabilities, practising to help them in community, schools, hospital and welfare. Meanwhile, popularize and publicize people with disabilities, their relatives and workers, and to enhance their capacity for self-protection and health management.

Concluding comments

The highly contagious COVID-19 pandemic caused the temporary collapse of social public service system and put the lives of people with disabilities in great danger. The distribution of limited medical, health, education resources rises the conflict between social Darwinism and social justice, which is given little attention in the emergency strategies. In its ambition to avoid treating people with disabilities according to the principle of survival of the fittest, and thus neglecting to care for them, this paper proposes to build a society toward greater social justice with care for the disadvantaged and initiates discussions from macro, mezzo and micro levels based on the analysis of the current system.

The year 2020 is the foundation year of the “14th five-year plan” and a critical period for China to move forward from building a well-off society in an all-round way to basically realizing socialist modernization. The value of social justice is one of the core values of (Chinese) socialism, which is highlighted in the 19th Communist Party of China National Congress Report. How to avoid the social Darwinian, especially the resources of conflict between people with and without disabilities, provide ethical care for them and pursue the social justice to maximize both individual and collective well-being should be a key and difficult part of the work in the next stage.

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COVID-19 and Disparities in Education: Collective Responsibility Can Address Inequities

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ABSTRACT. COVID-19 has exacerbated disparities in education and has further widened the achievement gap between economically advantaged and disadvantaged students. Without access to a computer or reliable broadband internet, minority students and students of colour are often challenged in participating in asynchronous learning platforms. Although school districts are taking innovative steps to address this concern, a significant number of students continue to be constrained in this regard.

Keywords: online learning; COVID-19; digital divide; collective responsibility; unequal resources; segregated schools

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has required many schools to transition to remote learning platforms, which has created a significant challenge for all students because they no longer benefit from a regular classroom routine. Remote learning is resource-intensive, in that it requires a working computer and reliable broadband internet. Therefore, challenges associated with remote learning are especially acute for those students who are resource-constrained. In turn, this has required educators to consider how they might better serve their students, especially those who belong to lower-income families.

A McKinsey study (Dorn, Hancock, Sarakatsannis, & Viruleg, 2020) concluded that school closures would cause a disproportionate loss in learning for disadvantaged students and may also increase dropout rates. Recent news stories have highlighted several examples of how educational disparities are being manifested. For example, a school district in Pennsylvania did not have sufficient computers for its underprivileged students and had to delay distance learning classes more than 40 days, several weeks after many suburban districts had moved to an asynchronous platform. Therefore, students from this school district were at risk of falling approximately seven weeks behind in mathematics and English lessons, as compared to those peers who had access to iPads and Chromebooks (Palochko, 2020). An Arizona news station (News 4, Tuscan 2020) shared how a student climbed a tree to connect to the public Wi-Fi to complete his assignments on time. The principal of a school in Arizona also found three students under a blanket trying to access school Wi-Fi so that they could complete a school assignment (Buono, 2020). In New York, a 10th grader shared that the only way he could complete school assignments was through his palm-sized phone (Maxouris, & Yu, 2020).

In this article, I will explore the challenges faced by underprivileged students who are unable to take advantage of distance learning forced by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the collective responsibility of educational institutions to promote more equitable learning opportunities.

Inequal Distribution of Resources: Separate but Equal?

As schools across the United States closed their physical campuses in response to the pandemic, teachers were instructed to teach online so that education was not disrupted. However, 25% of high school students in Los Angeles, primarily from low-income families, had not logged on to the computer as of two weeks after the shutdown (Blume & Kohli, 2020). This high absenteeism is disturbing because many students, who were already vulnerable, were missing out on learning concepts and further lagging their peers. While many students expressed that they were motivated to learn, they just did not have access to the internet or a computer. Even if they did have computer access, there faced challenges in sharing their computer with family members or struggled to attend online lectures in the same room where their siblings played or watched television. For example, Bloomberg (2020) shared a story about a student’s concerns regarding sharing one computer between her children, siblings and mother (Woolley, Sattiraju, & Moritz, 2020). Resource-driven challenges create additional burdens on students from underprivileged families who might have the best intentions and diligence but cannot keep up with schoolwork due to circumstances they have no control over.

This situation is exacerbated in the United States because schools are currently more segregated than at any time in the last 50 years (Rothstein, 2020). Current policies require most public-school students to attend schools within a defined area, close to where they live. Many African American and Latino students who belong to lower socio-economic backgrounds are therefore directed into schools where resources are more limited than they might be in schools with students from higher socio-economic backgrounds. Such de-facto segregation in educational institutions significantly affects student achievement across ethnic and economic lines due to differences in funding, educational resources, and parental and community support. The Chair of the U.S. Commission of Civil Rights, stated this succinctly when she stated, ‘low-income students and students of colour are often relegated to low-quality school facilities that lack equitable access to teachers, instructional materials, technology and technology support, critical facilities, and physical maintenance' (Jao & Associated Press, 2018). Lower funding and limited resources for African American and Hispanic students is one of the biggest cause of racial disparities in education and results in achievement gaps among Black and Latino students. The situation has only become worse when they are forced into online learning platforms that they can only access from their home.

Low-Income Parents: Willing but Unable to Help Their Children

Disparities are also evident in how social class and parental education impacts student learning and the resources that are available to them. A one-size-fits-all assumption of parental involvement often occurs in discussions related to school policies and debates and might create misunderstandings between certain parents and teachers (Reza, 2015). Parents from a high socio-economic background are often well educated and highly involved in their children's education. They are more likely to help their children adapt to the new normal, by creating dedicated areas for computer learning or by signing up their children for online classes that can assist their children in their homework. For example, Outschool.com, which offers small online classes for K–12 students, had to recruit 5,000 new teachers to cover the recent increase in demand for tutors (Moyer, 2020). In contrast, poor parents are often completely occupied with multiple jobs to merely feed and shelter their family and, therefore, do not have the time to help their children with their schoolwork. A study by the Economic Policy Institute demonstrates that less than 10% of the lowest wage quartile employees can telework, compared with 61.5% of employees from the highest quartile (Gould & Shierholz, 2020). Without mentorship from parents, the absence of direct contact with a teacher who imposes discipline and structure becomes even more relevant.

Lesser school involvement by resource-constrained parents cannot be interpreted to mean that they are lazy or uninterested in their children's education. The Pew Research Center conducted a study to understand how parents of K-12 students assess the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on their children's education. Lower-income parents express more concern than higher-income parents about their children potentially falling behind due to the school closure (Horowitz, 2020), which demonstrates that they are also interested and concerned about their children's education. Therefore, creating innovative strategies for such parents to help their children without the normal scaffolding from their teachers becomes more important. Simultaneously, educators should also be provided opportunities to develop sustained relationships with families to work effectively with them as they transition to distance learning platforms. This might be the first occasion where many teachers have observed students in the context of their homes and with their families. Developing cultural competence for our educators is pivotal to work effectively with diverse student populations.

Meeting the Challenges: A Collective Responsibility

Organizational transformations have been subject to much inquiry and interest by educators, policymakers and administrators. Given the unique challenges imposed by COVID-19, meaningful changes in learning outcomes cannot occur if educational institutions and the society do not assume a collective responsibility to create equitable resources for all students.

Our ability to overcome these challenges will determine the impact of school closures and the effect on student learning. Several encouraging initiatives in the United States suggest that some progress is being made in this regard. For example, many technological companies have announced funding for computers and software, which are donated directly to schools (see, for example, Elias, 2020). In turn, the schools configure them to their requirement and provide these resources to low-income students. Recognizing that internet access related constraints, schools are also developing partnerships with local telecommunication companies to provide reduced cost or free wireless internet access via mobile hotspots. For example, school districts in Alabama, New Jersey, and South Carolina have started to use Wi-Fi enabled buses as mobile hotspots that travel to designated locations for predetermined and publicized durations. The neighbourhoods where the buses are parked is based on the number of enrolled students who receive free or reduced-price meals (Princeton City Schools, 2020; Scott, 2020; Camera, 2020).

The Chairman of the United States Federal Communications Commission (FCC) recently announced the Keep Americans Connected Initiative, wherein broadband and telephone service providers agreed that they would not suspend broadband or telephone services to customers who were unable to pay their bills during the pandemic. More than 800 companies and associations have agreed to this request (Federal Communications Commission, 2020) and several have announced additional incentives for families that have K-12 or college students at home. For example, an internet service provider (Spectrum) has offered free internet service for 60 days, and other companies such as T-Mobile, Comcast and AT&T have waived data capacity limitations for students who utilize their smartphones for school assignments.

However, a significant number of students continue to be constrained because they do not have appropriate resources to take advantage of online education opportunities. There are increasing demands that the Federal Government should take systemic steps to reduce the negative impacts of school closures for those students who are most at risk. In the absence of a national strategy, some school districts are taking creative steps to ensure that all their students can receive an education. For example, the Los Angeles Union School District's superintendent requested PBS SoCal/KCET to use their public television channels to deliver educational programs and resources for students. The 'At Home Learning' program was launched with educational programs for Pre-K to 3rd Grade aired on PBS SoCal and from 4th to 8th grades on KLCS, and for 9th to 12th grades on KCET (Schneider, 2020). However, structural challenges persist for many students, which precludes them from attending virtual lectures, with real-time access to the instructors. These students are most at risk to lose motivation to learn, which will further widen inequalities.

Learning standards and policies related to accountability have directly impacted how educators traditionally teach and assess students. The assessment process is viewed as a fundamental feedback mechanism, which helps to understand and support development and formulate strategies on what to teach, and how to teach. Assessment results are also instrumental in university admissions and job placement. As COVID-19 has forced educators to transition to online platforms, changes to traditional approaches towards how assessments are conducted have become necessary, because ‘not all subjects and competencies can be assessed online or by phone’ (UNESCO, 2020). In response, many institutions have relaxed their timelines and grading criteria. For example, the University of Southern California now allows students a pass/no pass option in certain courses (Dikshit, & Navarro, 2020). However, certain graduate schools might not accept more lenient grades. For instance, the Harvard Medical School will only accept pass/fail grades if students do not have a choice regarding the method of assessment (Flaherty, 2020; Radsken, 2020).

Proper nutrition is important for the healthy development of students. Approximately 30 million students in the United States rely on subsidized breakfast and lunch under the National School Lunch Program. With school closures, low-income families became concerned about how they would replace these meals. The Federal Government elected to activate the United States Department of Agriculture’s summer meal program for these students, and waived the previous group seating requirements, given the COVID-19 constraints (Tran, 2020). Individual schools have also adopted different strategies to serve the nutrition-related needs of disadvantaged children. For example, the Grab and Go model allows parents to meet at a designated area to pick meals (Schwabish, Joo, Waxman, & Spievack, 2020). In other cases, school buses deliver food to students. As the pandemic continues, policymakers continue to consider alternate ways to support children and their families including, ‘expanding the Pandemic EBT program, increasing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, and utilizing other existing support programs’ (Schwabish et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 closures have disrupted the equilibrium and normal routine within all schools, and there is the risk that there will be significant inefficiencies in the first few weeks after reopening, as teachers attempt to address social and emotional concerns of their returning students. However, with proper planning, these factors can be minimized, such that learning can resume very quickly after reopening. In 2019, Hong Kong schools were forced to close suddenly due to violent protests against an extradition policy. When they reopened, school administrations benefited from a crisis management program that facilitated a smoother return for teachers and students (Jacobs & Zmuda, 2020). Investing in a similar initiative in response to the COVID-19 closures might allow schools to create more robust reopening strategies so that they can better serve all returning students.

COVID-19 has impacted everyone at some level or the other, but the most vulnerable and marginalized students have been most affected as systemic inequities in educational opportunities have become starkly exposed. Effectiveness of distance learning depends on several factors, including access to computers and digital technology, availability of high speed and high bandwidth internet connections, a home environment that is conducive to learning, alternate methods for conducting student assessments and evaluations, and productive parent-teacher interactions. The digital divide is especially acute for students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Some organizations have recognized specific challenges faced by low-income students and introduced tangible initiatives to ensure that students from low socio-economic backgrounds do not lag their peers. However, many low-income students are still disproportionately affected. Addressing the circumstances imposed by this virus is a collective responsibility for policymakers, administrators, and school superintendents, which cannot be resolved in just a few weeks. Nevertheless, the lockdown imposed by the virus has created a unique opportunity to make systemic and permanent changes, such that disparities in educational resources can be addressed permanently.

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Pandemic Education as an ‘Education-against-Thoughtlessness’: Creating Collective Responsibility against Self-Interest

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ABSTRACT. This paper proposes a pandemic education recognising the problem of thoughtlessness, according to Hannah Arendt. This thoughtlessness occurs if one is too absorbed with his or her self-interest than the collective responsibility. This paper expounds on the role of the school as the intersection of self-interest and collective responsibility. The connection of these two is the primary aim of the school. In this juncture, the role of rationality is important to balance both institutes. This paper argues that this rationality is an ‘education-against-thoughtlessness’ using the problem of thoughtlessness found in Hannah Arendt’s *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. With this, an application of the concepts is used to understand the nature of instruction as ‘education-against-thoughtlessness.’ In relation, one should combat against excessive self-interest that can go against collective responsibility. To achieve that, recommendations in prioritising the collective responsibility over self-interest should be underscored.

Keywords: school; self-interest; collective responsibility; thinking; thoughtlessness

Introduction

This paper is a proposal for an education in the time of pandemic that might be described as ‘education-against-thoughtlessness,’ a term that emphasises that self-interest must be purged to avoid thoughtlessness and to achieve collective responsibility. It introduces the role of the school as an intersection of public and private interests, using the ideas of Matthew Lipman and Hannah Arendt. It argues that to control one’s self-interest, one must employ rationality, rather than the thoughtlessness documented by Arendt during the trial of Adolf Eichmann.

Schools as Intersection of Self-Interest and Collective Responsibility

The school is a special institution in society. In his book, *Thinking in Education*, Matthew Lipman (2003) argues that the role of a school as 'an amalgam of private and public interests, the school is no less important than the distinctively private or the distinctively public' (p. 9). The family represents a private institution while the government represents a public institution. The role of a school is the intersection of the private and public interests. This paper extends the meaning of these private and public interests using the concept of the private and public realms defined by Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition*. She argues that 'The distinction between a private and a public sphere of life corresponds to the household and the political realms, which have existed as distinct, separate entities' (Arendt, 1958, p. 28). Christopher Long (1998) elaborates on this distinction with reference to the Ancient Greek distinction between two levels of human association: the political, formed for the sake of communal living, and the household, concerned primarily with the daily needs of life. The public realm is the locus of community, distinguished by the disposition to care for fellow citizens (Dossa, 1984). It is concerned with collective responsibility. The private realm is concerned with self-interest: 'The private realm is the domain of instinctual individualism marked by the disposition to advance self-interest' (Dossa, 1984, p. 166).

If one recontextualises the concept of the school in the dichotomy of private and public spheres in society, one can observe that it is not just an intersection of the collective responsibility and self-interest. Schools become places in which communal living challenges private lives, as Matthew Lipman emphasises:

> Were these the only considerations, the situation would be much more dismal than it actually is. The allegiances that keep the members of the family cemented together are kinship, child-rearing necessities, the economic division of labour, and sexual interdependence. The primary governmental allegiance is to consensus, in the name of which virtually any military or economic policy can be justified. (The courts represent a partial exception to this generalisation, since constitutionality and precedent must also be taken into account. But the laws followed by the courts are consensus-generated.) The schools, on the other hand, have a very different criterion to which they can appeal, and that is rationality. (Lipman, 2003, pp. 10-11)

In the struggle to live in community with others, the role of the school is to foster a rational balancing of self-interest and collective responsibility. Thus, 'More reasonable schools mean more reasonable future parents, more reasonable citizens, and more reasonable values all around' (Lipman, 2003, p. 11). School must enable learners to control their self-interest; it must create reasonable learners, otherwise, thoughtlessness will creep in. The struggle between self-interest and collective responsibility in school is thus a battle against thoughtlessness.

Against Thoughtlessness: The Eichmann Trial

The term ‘thoughtlessness’ appears in Hannah Arendt’s work, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963). In this work, she documents the trial of Adolf Eichmann, in particular, the issue of his thoughtlessness. She distinguishes intelligence and the capacity to think. Clearly, Eichmann was not stupid since he was able to answer the allegations against him, but he ‘wholly lacked the capacity to conceive of his situation as anything but one of his duty to follow commands and laws’ (Schupmann, 2014, p. 136). As Deirdre Lauren Mahony (2018) argues, Eichmann possessed an ‘inability to think … from the standpoint of somebody else’ (p. 94):

> No communication was possible with him, not because he lied but because he was surrounded by the most reliable of all safeguards against the words and the presence of others, and hence against reality as such.’ According to Arendt, Eichmann’s inability to think meant that, even when he committed acts of profound evil, he ‘never realised what he was doing.’ Furthermore, Eichmann’s thoughtlessness is morally relevant: Arendt implies that because of his thoughtlessness, Eichmann was predisposed to becoming a Nazi criminal. Arendt posits a relationship between thoughtlessness and wrongdoing – ‘the strange interdependence of thoughtlessness and evil,’ she calls it. Elsewhere she describes how thoughtlessness can wreak havoc. It is clear that, for Arendt, Eichmann’s inability to think was instrumental in his commitment of evil deeds. (Mahony, 2018, p. 94)

Firstly, Eichmann was not critical of the evil of Nazism. He was unable to think from the standpoint of others. Second, he was immoral. His ignorance of the human consequences of his actions did not excuse him. Third, he was evil. His inability to think led to the destruction of other human beings. To situate the three ideas in the dichotomy between the public and private interest, Dossa (1984) reasoned that Eichmann was a private man whose entry into the public realm was motivated entirely by his desire to be a social and financial success (p. 169). He was filled with self-interest at the expense of collective responsibility: ‘This thoughtlessness makes responding to the “zombie bureaucrat,” and addressing the moral and political threats he poses substantially more difficult’ (Schupmann, 2014, p. 128). And he was not untypical in the citizens of Nazi Germany: ‘In Nazi Germany, it was the triumph of this self-interested privacy which predisposed men to systematically and routinely perpetrate perhaps the most unspeakable crime in human history’ (Dossa, 1984, p. 170). Nazism allowed a system to thrive wherein many Eichmanns thrive. A society of little Eichmanns represents a profound danger to itself and those around it: ‘Individuals who abandon their will to structures of domination end up becoming powerful “tools” in the service of aims that they are unable to dissociate themselves from’ (Schupman, 2014, p. 140). It creates a society that enables people to be too absorbed in their own interests to recognise the collective needs of society.

Recommendations: Pandemic Education as 'Education-against-Thoughtlessness'

On April 23, 2020, *The Guardian* published an article about a report released by the United Nations that warned that 'the public health emergency was rapidly turning into a human rights crisis,' as thoughtless hate speech and violence toward minorities escalated (Wintour, 2020). While the UN argued that governments must address this issue, it is schools that are best placed to work against such thoughtlessness. Of course, individuals and families have a responsibility to protect themselves from the pandemic until the discovery of a vaccine. But, given that schools work at the intersection of self-interest and collective responsibility, they are crucial in a time of pandemic to address both domains. They can create a new form of rationality – of thoughtfulness – that will balance individual and collective well-being at this time of crisis. In a pandemic, it is not stupidity that is the problem but a failure to be accountable to other people. Schools should not become havens for 'zombie bureaucrats' who take refuge in neutrality by focusing on their problems at the expense of the lives of other people: 'The knowledge that the capacity to commit evil may find sanctuary in the abodes of self-interested privacy may enable us to temper its excesses if not to prevent it' (Dossa, 1984, p. 174). In a time of pandemic, schools must do the following:

1. Against thoughtlessness, schools must foster the balancing of self-interest and collective responsibility in society through reflection on how one's actions affect others because the virus shows how interconnected we are.
2. Against thoughtlessness, schools must foster the consideration of the moral implications of one's actions because the pandemic is not just a biological issue.
3. Against thoughtlessness, schools must foster the overcoming of ignorance about the collective plight of humanity because one's ignorance about the effects of the pandemic is no excuse for the destruction that one may accidentally cause.
4. Against thoughtlessness, schools must temper the private interests of learners, lest learners are blind to the needs of others in this time of pandemic.

Conclusion

With the worldwide pandemic, schools should step up in educating learners. They are on the front line in guarding the sensibilities of people as the struggle between self-interest and collective responsibility makes itself felt. Schools must foster the thoughtful balancing of self-interest with collective responsibility. This is only possible if schools adopt an 'education-against-thoughtlessness' that fosters the ability to think from the standpoint of others, and thus to avoid oppressing them. The acknowledgement of a collective responsibility to alleviate the suffering of others is what we most need – and need from education – in this moment of crisis.

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COVID-19: The Changing Face of Global Citizenship and the Rise of Pandemic Citizenship

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ABSTRACT. With the recent advent of COVID-19, more and more news has been spread throughout various media outlets of the negative behaviour stemming from citizens around the world. This behaviour has led to a new word being popularised on the internet: covidiot. With the arrival of such new words and new pathogens and viruses, further focus is being placed on globalisation and what a citizen must do or not do during the time of pandemics at the local, national and global level. As Bell (2005) explains, for the past few decades in academia, there has been a renewal of attention in citizenship theory, which has resulted in a variety of adjectival citizenships being formed. This paper, using the basis of global citizenship among others types of citizenships, such as environmental citizenship and caring citizenship, will look at how the recent focus on global health, has created a changing face of what is global citizenship, and how it must be more inclusive to reflect the changing times. As globalisation continues to spread, in conjunction with new viruses, the need to constantly adapt what a global citizen is, must also evolve alongside. This paper thus brings forth the new notion of pandemic citizenship: a citizenship inclusive of many other citizenships but unique in its focus on global health.

Keywords: pandemic; global citizenship; globalisation; pandemic citizen

Introduction

A quick Google search alert us to the numerous headlines of all sorts of abhorrent behaviour that has taken place across the world since the spread of COVID-19. Below is a selection of six such headlines:

1. A Chinese embassy in Paris tracked down a woman who gloated on social media about cheating airport detection with a medicine that lowered her fever[1]
2. Spring breakers say coronavirus pandemic won’t stop them from partying[2]
3. A group of young adults held a coronavirus party in Kentucky to defy orders to socially distance. Now one of them has coronavirus[3]
4. Women fight over toilet paper during coronavirus panic buying in Australia[4]

5. Brooklyn woman, 86, dies after she’s knocked to the ground by stranger for violating coronavirus social distancing: police sources[5]

6. As Coronavirus Spreads, So Does Xenophobia and Anti-Asian Racism[6]

These headlines showcase the many types of misdeeds done since the COVID-19 pandemic started spreading more proficiently in January 2020. We have the hoarders, the apathetic partiers and travellers, and the more dangerous violent, racists and xenophobes. Many incidents like these mentioned above have led to the coining of a new word – covidiot, or as defined by Urbandictionary.com, ‘Someone who ignores the warnings regarding public health or safety’ or ‘A person who hoards goods, denying them from their neighbours.’ As Peters (2020a) explains, ‘in any disaster, given societal norms, people are likely to act first in terms of self-preservation on the basis of fear, anxiety and panic.’ While some blame must be attributed to politicians, social media and the 24-hour news cycle, as they often politicise epidemics ‘transforming people’s rational concerns into irrational fears’ because as the adage goes, never let a crisis go to waste (Gronke, 2015, p. 4). Yet, only part of the blame can really be placed on the above-mentioned, as much of it should be an individual choice, or rational individualism, as this type of pandemic behaviour, unfortunately, is nothing new, as the history of negative human behaviour has shown. Peters (2020a) goes on to state that the response of group preservation may arise later depending on a change of behaviour, resulting in what can be called collective rationalism, based on characteristics such as empathy because empathy is thus a needed change and condition for the world to be healthy, but empathy is dependent on community (Peters, 2020a). Expanding on this idea of empathy and global health is Benatar (2005), who urges people to see global health, rather than in economic terms, in moral terms built on the values of solidarity, reciprocity and empathy.

Nonetheless, the question remains how we can support citizens to do something that they may see as beyond their self-interest during pandemics (Peters, 2020b)? How do we encourage people not to panic buy, to not have virus parties, to not travel and hide symptoms, or nameless other covidiot behaviour but instead to self-isolate, buy only what is necessary and to think of others before themselves, to be empathetic, and to show solidarity? It seems the only way to fight against the covidiots is to turn them into a community, remembering that community goes beyond just the local sense, or in other words global citizens- people, who can see beyond themselves as individuals and part of a local, national and also a global society, and the collective responsibility that comes with that. As these situations of pandemics continue to arise, there is a growing need to re-define or re-tool global citizenship, to what I will call a pandemic citizen- a facet of globalisation and global citizenship, that is inclusive of the ever-changing face of pandemics and its interplay with globalisation.

Globalisation and Pandemics

Held et al. (1999) loosely defined globalisation as, ‘the widening, deepening and speeding up of world-wide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life.’ Globalisation can be comprehended as forming new and complex interrelated relationships between the local, national and global (Pashby, 2009). Globalisation is responsible for many of the great things throughout the world. It has allowed for more people to encounter diverse languages, people, cultures and ideas, creating for most people an everyday life that is reflective of the global and the local (Myers, 2010). Yet, as people move throughout the world, they come into contact and bring home with them, more than just ideas and knowledge, but also potentially pathogens and viruses.

In many respects, globalisation does not care about national boundaries, race or class. The same could be said for viruses, as was brought up by Brock (2008) when discussing HIV as an ‘onerous citizenship,’ that has both the ability and capacity to bestow this citizenship upon all of the global society. Continuing with this analogy, we can see that viruses and globalisation, in its negative aspects, are very similar. Viruses are no respecters of national boundaries (Munro & Savel, 2015) and ‘germs know no borders’ (Ingram, 2005). Before the present pandemic, the world has seen the effects of globalisation on spreading outbreaks and pandemics of HIV, H1N1 influenza, Ebola, Zika, Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), among others, as they spread from country to country, affecting more than just people’s health but society as a whole. It is justified to think that viruses are not just health issues but international relations and economic issues (Ingram, 2005). Our health is increasing linked to the health of others throughout the world (Thompson et al., 2013) and problems faced in the arena of global health can be framed as challenges facing all of humanity (Ingram, 2005). Globalisation has created novel problems that challenge our thinking, are unpredictable, and often move beyond conventional wisdom, and as noted by Munro and Savel (2015) is not the same true of novel pathogens?

It has been stated that globalisation requires more from a person (Gardner-McTaggart, 2016), but cannot the same be said for a pandemic, as our daily activities suddenly have the potential not only to get ourselves sick but everyone that we encounter. As pandemics show, they do not care where you are from, whether you are the Crown Prince of Wales, or an award-winning Hollywood actor, or just a simple rural villager. Therefore, as globalisation and pandemics are intrinsically linked, so are people around the world by the spread of viruses. Still, we as people must come to see that link.

This link was explored by Thompson et al. (2013), who conducted three all-day town hall meetings in different major cities in Canada. The people participating were given a range of scenarios on ethics and global governance of an influenzas virus, one of the first being was whether Canada should hypnotically give aid to Indonesia during an influenzas epidemic, with the concession of Indonesia threatening to withhold samples of the virus and holding back from animal culls

(Thompson et al., 2013). In the beginning, ‘the dominant sentiment, however, was that if Indonesia were to share virus samples and comply with animal culling practices to curb contagion, then Canada would be able to come to its aid’ (Thompson et al., 2013). As scenarios were shifted, other stages of thoughts were brought up such as self-interest, cost-effectiveness, incentives, and finally empathy and reciprocity, as more and more people in the town hall began to note ‘that pandemics unite us in our vulnerability’ and more and more solidarity was developed throughout the day (Thompson et al., 2013, p. 122). It could be otherwise stated, that as these participants discussed in a deliberative process and began to think away from their immediate interests as Canadians, they increasingly saw from a global perspective and experienced a shift towards global citizenship (Thompson et al., 2013). Thus, pandemics can be seen as a catalyst for uniting people through shared vulnerability but also through solidarity, although that might take time as seen by the town hall meeting of Thompson et al. (2013) and a move away from the paradigm of self-preservation (Peters, 2020a) into the realm of global citizenship.

Global Citizenship

Global citizenship is multi-dimensional, incorporating numerous other ideologies and types of citizenship. Reysen and Katzarska-Miller’s (2016) research on global citizenship identity highlighted the connection between the world and peace. Their work was complemented by others work on global citizenship identity and its variables including ‘a sense of global community’ (Hackett et al., 2015), interest in human rights (McFarland, 2015), promotion of diplomacy (Vail & Motyl, 2010) and ‘endorsement of internationalism’ (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2016). Linklater (2002) put forth three components of global citizenship: a universal, cosmopolitan system of human rights, additional or conflicting set of duties to other nationals, and lastly a ‘global civil society.’ Anheier, Glasius, and Kaldor (2001) extend on the idea of a global civil society being ‘an aspiration to reach and include citizens everywhere and to enable to think and act as global citizens’ (p.1 7). Held and McGrew (2002) go further stating that each citizen of a nation will have the necessity to learn how to become a ‘cosmopolitan citizen,’ or a citizen that can go between national traditions and alternative ways of life (p. 107). Global citizens can be seen as a person who not only ‘understands others’ and interacts ‘responsibility’ but is also critical of their own position and understands the complexities of identities (Pashby 2011, p. 428). Armstrong (2006) even goes as far as comparing the result of global citizenship to the vision for universal citizenship.

Schultz (2007) put forth three views of global citizenship: the neoliberal, the radical, and the transformationalist, although only the first and last will be discussed here. While the neoliberal is ‘based upon a fundamental understanding that as individuals we should be able to move throughout the world freely, enjoying the rewards regardless of national or other boundaries’ (Schultz, 2007, p. 252) and ‘that the welfare of the world’s majority matters only inasmuch as it affects our well-being’ (O’Connor & Zeichner, 2011, p. 523). These views do not seem quite fitting for a time of a pandemic, where the collective responsibility needs to outweigh self-interest, and a virus, which has no sense of markets, seems to only benefit by the mobility of people throughout the world. The transformationalist view of global citizenship seems a bit more fitting, as it understands that globalisation has stemmed a dynamic and complex set of local, national, and international relationships and with that new patterns of exclusion and inclusion have arisen (Schultz, 2007). Building on this view, Noddings (2005) identifies some essentials for a global citizen including a concern for social and economic justice, protecting the earth, peace and diversity. Dill (2013) puts this idea in terms of global consciousness that is inclusive of seeing oneself as part of the global community, open to other’s perspectives and a moral conscience for good throughout the world. While Bates (2012) adds on that just as citizens of any given nation have obligations to the rest of the citizens of that state, a global citizen, therefore, can be concluded to have obligations to all citizens around the world

Therefore, global citizenship has three levels: the local, the national, and the international, each of great importance. Ikeda (2000) quotes the Buddhist leader, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, who underscores that global citizenship education should begin at the local level and in the local community, and then extend, with the basis that these contributions to the local and eventually national are essential for extending world peace. Fox (1985) expresses similar thoughts that in order to become a good international citizen, one must first become a good national citizen. Boundaries such as states, nationalities, race, sex, or class become crossed as the understanding of common humanity and shared planet become more and more realised (Schultz, 2007). Bringing this back to pandemic and viruses, they cannot be viewed as ‘geographically distinct problems that don’t concern us’ (Munro & Savel, 2015, p. 4). They are global problems for global citizens but yet seem strangely missing from most discussions on global citizenship and responsibilities of global citizens, thus highlighting the need for pandemic citizenship to enter into the conversation.

Pandemic Citizen

Before addressing what a pandemic citizen entails, a look at some other types of citizenships will be explored. With the renewal of attention to citizenship theory, there have been plenty of adjectival citizenships formed (Bell, 2005). There is growing literature on citizenships like those listed by MacGregor & Szerszynski (2003) such as ‘cyber citizenship,’ ‘scientific citizenship’ and ‘corporate citizenship’ (p. 1). Bell (2005) noting the various types of citizenships that have emerged within the realm of environmental literature, mentions ‘ecological citizenship,’ ‘sustainability citizenship,’ ‘environmental citizenship’ and ‘green citizenship’ (p. 181). While Bell (2005) focuses on environmental citizenship and how at its core, the main principal behind the idea is that ‘individuals are “citizens of the environment" where the environment is understood as "planet earth"' (p. 181). Bullen and Whitehead (2005) discuss sustainable citizenship and how a sustainable citizen entails, 'a keen awareness of the connections which exist between social actions, economic practices and environmental process' (p. 504). All of these seem to be in line with many already noted aspects of global citizenship.

Bio-citizenship is discussed in Pauwels' (2017) article, 'The New Bio-Citizen: How the Democratization of Genomics Will Transform Our Lives from Epidemics Management to the Internet of Living Things,' which discusses the characteristics of the 'new bio-citizen in the internet of Living Things' as made up of patients, scientists, congressmen, employees (everyone) who 'will be analysing the DNA of their own bodies and the living species surrounding them, by running algorithms through that data on shared cloud labs' (p. 16). One of the key components then of a bio-citizen is the belief in knowledge socialism and collective intelligence (Peters, 2019) over knowledge capitalism. One of the bright sides of the COVID-19 pandemic, maybe one of the only ones, is this turn to knowledge socialism as academic publishers like Springer Nature and Elsevier have made research on this outbreak free (Peters, Jandrić, & McLaren, 2020). This promotion of knowledge exchange and knowledge diffusion can only increase in importance in times of pandemics, when knowledge and the exchange of it can be the key to saving lives and finding out more timely information about the virus.

Pashby (2009) brings up 'caring citizens' or citizens who are compassionate about the 'sufferings of others,' intolerant of unfair situations, 'empathetic listeners' and above that are focused on the 'principles of solidarity,' putting their self-interests behind the common good and having an extensive consciousness of the environment and planet (p. 11). So, it seems that the caring citizen is much in line with what is required during a pandemic from an individual. Returning to global citizenship, we see that a caring citizen has much in common with the global citizen. The factors introduced in the section of global citizenship have highlighted three main categories associated with global citizenship:

1. the citizenship/community factor: a sense of global community (Hackett et al., 2015; & Dill, 2013) and global civil society (Linklater, 2002); it also could be related to knowledge socialism and scientific citizen
2. duties to others: obligations to all citizens around the world (Bates, 2002) or caring citizens (Pashby, 2009)
3. duties to the world: protecting the earth (Noddings, 2005), global consciousness (Dill, 2013), and moral conscience for good throughout the world (Dill, 2013), i.e. an environmental citizen and bio-citizen

The discussion of the various types of citizenships and categories highlighted from global citizenship, that when adding these ideas together, we can create something more aligned with a pandemic. So, what is a pandemic citizen? It is a combination of the above-mentioned adjectival citizenships and built on a new type of understanding. It is inclusive of three levels, the local, national, and international. Nationally and globally, it includes scientific citizenship as scientists and countries must see themselves as contributing to the overall global health. Cyber citizenship likewise plays an important role as news, some of it fake, and disinformation spreads all hours of the day, and not to mention the comment section of any website and what is said therein by netizens. The new bio-citizen of Pauwels (2017) also plays an important role as we come to see that we can all help in the fight. These three types of citizenship also relate to knowledge socialism and how knowledge is shared throughout the global community.

The environment and the world are not only an aspect of global citizenship and the numerous environmental citizenships but also the pandemic citizen. A virus is a natural phenomenon and reminds people of their responsibility to the world and to understand how viruses are spread. It is encompassing of the global consciousness of the global citizenship, and thus a pandemic citizen must have a moral concern for the earth, inclusive of viruses and the people and animals inhabiting the earth, fathoming that our actions are not made without consequences to others, who both know us and who do not.

At the individual level, a pandemic citizen understands the moral commitment in the ethics of social distancing and self-isolation (Peters, 2020b). It is understanding the social responsibility that your self-interest should be in protecting others. As Peters (2020b) explains, ‘a population is only as healthy as its weakest link’ and the understanding that ‘the virus exists as long as it can spread.’ Fighting a virus is not done in a vacuum; your efforts are only as good as the rest of the people in the community (global and local) doing the same (Illing, 2020). It requires a caring citizen, one who cares about the potential for others to get sick and understands that the only way to defeat the virus is through a collective effort dependent on solidarity and one understanding their duties to the world and other world citizens.

Citizenship studies have shifted towards the recognition that citizenship is both a flexible and personal construction (Held, 2002; Kennedy, 2007). In his research on 77 adolescents, Myers (2010) noted that 79% expressed that in their perspective, global citizenship was the moral commitment to improve and benefit the world. It is interesting to note that with that definition, for most pandemic citizens, that might mean that that the best way they can benefit the world is by staying home, quarantining, or at least practising social distancing when they do venture outside. As Arendt (1958/1999) asserts, words and deeds are how citizens insert themselves into the human world and in this case, inaction might be the best action for most people. We can continue to share our knowledge, we can continue to respect diversity, continue respecting the pandemic safety measures of our local and national governments, but mostly we should try and see how our actions impact others. Therefore, the best action of all is the action of solidarity at the local, national, and international level, understanding that a pandemic requires more of a citizen.

Conclusions

While this recent COVID-19 is not the pandemic that will end humanity (Illing, 2020), it is a reminder of why we need people to understand how to be a pandemic citizen and why pandemic citizenship needs to be taught alongside global citizenship as a vital facet of it, as they are linked. A pandemic citizen is not a separate entity from a global citizen, just as all the other adjectival citizenships are not separate from each other. They are deeply connected.

Being a pandemic citizen helps us appreciate how globalisation brings the world together for both the good and the bad. As globalisation and viruses evolve in tandem, so must the idea of citizenship, especially in terms of global health, it cannot be forgotten in the citizenship dialogue. They must continue to evolve and be constantly adapting to the new situations that arise in our quickly changing world, and part of that evolution is the rise of the pandemic citizens. Therefore, there will always be a pressing need to evolve how people understand their place in the world. A virus starts with one person and can quickly spread throughout the world, meaning our actions are no longer our own as they belong to the world.

As this pandemic has shown, many have not taken that threat seriously. Of course, there is a multitude of reasons for why that has happened. Seeing the covidiot behaviour makes one wonder what will happen if there is a massive outbreak of a more deadly virus like Ebola, or for those science fiction fans, if an alien invasion or a zombie outbreak happens. It seems inevitable that these situations will arise time and time again, thus highlighting the need for a more inclusive type of citizenship for times like these. I started out this paper with headlines of some behaviour of individuals not very much in line with that of a pandemic citizen and the coining of a new to describe many of those behaviours, so now I will end with a few headlines of some more pandemic citizen-esque behaviour, and with the idea that just as new creative words enter the vernacular of people, so must citizenship evolve to fit the times:

1. Retired doctors in Italy are heading back into the fray to treat coronavirus patients[7]
2. Balcony singing in solidarity spreads across Italy during lockdown[8]
3. Michigan man uses $900 savings to buy gas for nurses.[9]

NOTES

1. https://www.businessinsider.com/wuhan-coronavirus-woman-avoided-airport-tests-travel-france-2020-1
2. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/spring-break-party-coronavirus-pandemic-miami-beaches/
3. https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/24/health/kentucky-coronavirus-party-infection/index.html
4. https://nypost.com/2020/03/08/women-fight-over-toilet-paper-during-coronavirus-panic-buying-in-australia/

5. https://www.nydailynews.com/coronavirus/ny-coronavirus-elderly-woman-struck-hospital-social-distancing-20200329-54ffdqhx4jgcncf5l3exa3ybkm-story.html

6. https://time.com/5797836/coronavirus-racism-stereotypes-attacks/

7. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/italy-coronavirus-doctors-retired/2020/03/28/075dbda0-6f0f-11ea-a156-0048b62cdb51_story.html

8. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/14/solidarity-balcony-singing-spreads-across-italy-during-lockdown

9. https://www.msn.com/en-us/autos/enthusiasts/michigan-man-uses-dollar900-savings-to-buy-gas-for-nurses/vp-BB128lnp

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Individual Interests, Community Responsibility and Public Power

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ABSTRACT. Individual rights and social responsibility, individual rights and public power, public power and public responsibility are three pairs of contradictory communities. The occurrence of some social events – like the COVID-19 epidemic – simultaneously changes personal life and public life, which requires the three pairs of contradictory relations to find a new balance. In such a context, the question of how to limit public power and restore individual rights is not only a technical problem, but also an ethical problem.

Keywords: COVID-19; community responsibility

How to balance the relationship between individual interests and community responsibility is a problem that everyone needs to face. In order to prevent people from harming each other because of interest competition, individuals need to transfer part of their interests to public institutions, so that the latter has the public power to maintain the normal operation of public life. For the normal operation of public life, everyone should obey the public power and bear the corresponding social responsibility.

The fundamental purpose of public life is to protect individual life and private interests. If the price of building public life is to sacrifice personal life, public life will be meaningless. Public power corresponds to public responsibility. The public power cannot be expanded indefinitely. It should be controlled within the limit of maintaining social order, and the premise is not to damage the basic interests of citizens as human beings.

Individual rights and social responsibility, individual rights and public power, public power and public responsibility are three pairs of contradictory communities. When the two sides of the contradiction maintain a dynamic balance, the rules and hidden rules under the existing system are enough to support the normal operation of the society. However, life is not immutable. The occurrence of some social events – like COVID-19 – simultaneously changes personal life and public life, which requires the three pairs of contradictory relations to find a new balance. Among them, public power is the centre of adjustment to meet the needs of social management. When the sudden natural or human-made disasters make public life out of order, the existing public power in public life is obviously not enough to solve new contradictions and difficulties. In order to restore or even rebuild the order, the boundary between individual rights and social responsibility needs to incline to social responsibility. Individuals need to transfer more rights to public institutions. At the same time, individuals need to bear more social responsibilities.

In COVID-19, for example, the right of individuals to go out freely has become a potential route for the spread of the virus. In order to reduce the virus in public life, personal freedom is naturally compressed. Although from an individual's point of view, isolation at home limits individual freedom, but this is a social responsibility that everyone should consciously undertake when the whole society falls into a period of great infection. The government is also allowed to increase the restrictions on freedom of movement.

Public institutions should also bear public responsibilities when exercising their powers. The existence of public power is out of the need to maintain the normal operation of public life. The public power increased in special period is to deal with the public crisis, rather than increase the power of public institutions and damage the rights of individuals. Therefore, public power should be implemented in the way of minimizing the damage to personal interests. If someone is damaged by more personal rights, the public power is suspected of abusing power and corruption, and needs to be punished by law. Take COVID-19 as an example, some people are isolated at home, and the door is welded from the outside by staff, which greatly increases the personal risk of isolation personnel. The public power should have chosen a safer management mode.

Under the situation of normalization of the new epidemic situation, individuals and public institutions have adapted to the new social life, and the new public power and social responsibility have formed an effective mode to restore normal life. Next, how to restore the individual rights deprived by the public power is the primary issue related to personal life and public life. During the period of the epidemic, the infringement of public life on personal life has reached the greatest extent in history, and individual rights have been almost completely replaced by social responsibility. After the epidemic, we need to liberate individual rights from social responsibility and remove public power from personal life, so that individuals can enjoy freedom and privacy. In the current space of complete informatization, the question of how to limit public power and restore individual rights is not only a technical problem, but also an ethical problem.

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COVID Scholar-Activism in Miniature

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ABSTRACT. A peep-hole diorama letter plays on the role of scholarly activism in pandemics.

Keywords: COVID-19; publishing; scholarly activism

Act 1: Macro

[Translated from the Spanish by the author]

Body of email

Dear Editor, *Only remaining, increasingly sanctioned national newspaper,*

Could you advise me if/how I could share the attached open letter?

Thank you for your time during this very difficult global moment.

Author
City of residence/City of COVID displacement

Attachment
May 21, 2020

An open letter to t*he long-standing, contentious President of a hard-to-find-on-a-map country in the Global South*

Dear President,

A humble idea for your consideration:

Start an international solidarity campaign for the people *of the Country to* confront COVID-19. This idea could become an important model and global legacy, inspired by *similar historic successes in the Country* (like literacy campaigns), with professional expert socialists, former international residents of *the Country* like me who have learned so much from the social commitment of your country and who would like to do everything possible to return that knowledge and support the people in this unprecedented moment.

I have a 17-year relationship of work in the area of health and education in *the Country*, as well as having lived *in the mountain region, the day-tourist city, the capital, and the urban area to which people were displaced decades ago after floods and an earthquake.* I love *the Country* so much that I was even married in *the main colonial-era tourist city* eight years ago. *The Country's* people and the excellent public medical care there saved my life fifteen years ago when I was hospitalized for dengue as well as pneumonia. Due to these experiences, I know *the Country* doesn't need me, as it already has all of the necessary human resources. However, I think I could support the existing initiatives.

I'm a public university professor in *another socialist country*. I specialize in administering large international organizations and institutions in the areas of education (including health), and I work in five languages. Due to COVID-19, I haven't been able to go home, so I've experienced the crisis personally in *three different income-level countries that are doing more or less okay* and, at a distance, also seen the crisis in my *high-income home country, which is failing in its response*. I still don't know when I'll be able to return to *the other socialist country*, so, meanwhile, I would like to offer to return to *the Country* to be able to support the people however I could.

As we all know, COVID-19 requires inspired leadership and ideas, and, *to use the popular national expression,* I'm at your service to follow yours.

In solidarity,
Author
City of residence/City of COVID displacement

Update 5/29/20: my dearest friend in the Country *now has a serious presumed case of COVID-19. While I'm writing this, her daughter is sending me desperate, wailing WhatsApp messages. What will your government do for her?*

Act 2: Micro

Dear teacher,
I am on the other side of the screen,
also on the other side of the ocean.

If you scroll through our Zoom heads at the top of your screen, eventually you'll land on me. The virtual background shows palm trees, hiding my real space:

one I’m more comfortable in,
less comfortable in,
scared to be in,
relieved to be in,
with an internet connection and workspace that might not be there if the storm hits,
or my family’s local job ends.

We were ‘first wave,’
when the rest of the world didn’t quite think this could happen to them.
So we spoke of the struggles from wherever we became displaced,
but they didn’t resonate,
become global newspaper articles,
or special journal issues.
Now we’re fatigued but need to share our stories,
lest they be washed away by the louder crashing of the newer waves.

I erratically posted in group online spaces;
you did your best to navigate the situation.

I wasn’t able to comprehend that you were also displaced while on your side of the screen,
nor that your intellectual and emotional labour went from already nearly invisible to concave.

I heard there was a suicide in our academic community exactly a year ago this month.
No one’s spoken of mental health to us since.
Even before this, there weren’t mental health services in the languages that we foreigners spoke.
I vaguely recall you’ve been trying to get them for us for years.

How will you reach me now?

– Your displaced student

Act 3: Mixto

I wrote a *Letter to the Future* for a professional organization blog.

Dear future one, I love letter writing, and there is so much more I wish I was able to express right now, but, as the struggle we are facing during the pandemic is constant and evolving – physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual, personal and planetary – I will just say: I hope you are also able to love letter writing.

So, now I write to you:

Dear future one, I love playwriting, and there is so much more I wish I was able to express right now, but as the struggle we are facing during the pandemic is constant and evolving - physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual, personal and planetary, I will just say: I hope you are also able to love playwriting.

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