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Problematic Sexual Paradoxes of Pandemic Response

Denial and unconscious cover-up in the light of Jung, Freud, and Sabina Spielrein

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Introduction

There is a case for comparing the emergence of [psychoanalysis](#) a century ago -- in response to challenging individual experiential disorders -- with the current challenge to society faced with a variety of collective experiential "disorders". A century ago the individual manifestations typically evoked institutional internment -- mitigated to a degree by the efforts and insights of the psychosciences. The subtle complexities they evoked were necessarily controversial -- exemplified by the problematic dynamics among the founding icons of those disciplines. The current response to the pandemic by the more conventional disciplines -- whatever the subtleties they evoke -- could be explored as mirroring those earlier dynamics (*Tank Warfare Challenges for Global Governance: extending the "think tank" metaphor to include other cognitive modalities*, 2019).

The case for some such comparison is all the stronger in that psychoanalysis is now framed as a "pseudoscience" -- seemingly by "science" -- a criticism potentially extended selectively to the array of psychosciences. This pejorative assessment in the relevant *Wikipedia* profile is no doubt a feature of the well-known editorial wars in that context whereby presumably some psychosciences are able to successfully defend themselves as sciences (Robert Sumi, et al., *Edits wars in Wikipedia*, *arxiv.org*, 12 February 2012; Taha Yasserli, et al, *The most controversial topics in Wikipedia: A multilingual and geographical analysis*, *arxiv.org*, 2014).

Unfortunately, especially in the current pandemic context, indications of the questionable complicity of "science" in practices unworthy of its principles are exacerbated by its evident inability to disassociate itself methodologically from [scientism](#). Could "science" now be challenged in turn as being of "pseudo-relevance" to the response to global crises (*Knowledge, ignorance, pseudoscience and the unsayable*, 2021).

This challenge applies especially to the global pandemic with which civilization is purportedly faced. This is despite the vigorous claims by world leaders implementing strategies endorsed authoritatively by science -- ignoring the questionable nature of the supporting evidence.

The well-recognized elements of the strategic response to the pandemic, as advocated by the health experts of science, have taken the form of masking, social distancing, sanitisation, and universal vaccination (in quest of herd immunity). The evidence in support of the

efficacy of each has been variously and controversially challenged. Upheld as in accord with scientific methodology, this has been matched by systematic suppression of any opposing arguments -- whether framed as "misinformation" or deliberately conflated with it -- and accompanied by active measures against their advocates.

From a historical perspective, predating the emergence of psychoanalysis, the strategies endorsed by science are strangely reminiscent of those endorsed by religion, and especially by Christianity. Masking recalls the precautions recommended by institutional religions against "infection" by contact with those holding alternative beliefs -- framed as the "voice of the devil". Social distancing recalls efforts by such religions to avoid contact with those adhering to such beliefs -- exemplified in some cases by recognition of their dangerous impurity. Sanitising recalls the role of ritual washing in religion -- especially prior to entering places of worship. The greatest emphasis has of course been placed on indoctrination in anticipation of conversion -- curiously reminiscent of the inoculation now recommended so strongly by science.

These concerns with hygiene are now shared to a degree with respect to entry into scientific laboratories. Scientists of a given discipline remain cautious with regard to potentially misleading communication emerging from other disciplines claiming to be sciences in their own right. Religion has promoted the necessity of belief, irrespective of the absence of proof approved by science. Curiously science is now evoking a similar need for unquestionable belief, despite the questionable evidence for its recommendations -- as defined by the original principles of the scientific method.

It is in this context that there is a case for exploring the insights and influence of the icons of what is now deprecated as a pseudoscience. [Sigmund Freud](#), [Carl Jung](#) and [Sabina Spielrein](#) -- together with those influenced by their thinking -- are remarkable for addressing what is held to be "unthinkable" within the dominant worldview.

The question raised here is whether there are sexual paradoxes to be addressed with respect to the pandemic -- given the insights of Freud with respect to [psychosexual development](#). Is consideration of the [collective unconscious](#) of significance to the global pandemic -- as might well have been argued by Jung? As a feminist pioneer of psychoanalysis -- renowned for her insights into the death instinct -- is there relevance to the thinking of Spielrein, given the [fear of death](#) so strongly evoked by the pandemic?

The fact that Spielrein was incarcerated and shot by the Nazi regime (because of her racial impurity as a Jew) would indeed seem to be perversely symbolic of dangerously emerging "fascist" trends in the framing of requisite strategic response to the pandemic -- against those who refuse "the jab" to mitigate against their potential threat to the health of the wider community.

Pseudo-relevance: science, scientism and pseudo-science?

In a period of global crisis, with an apparently total dependency of governance on science, it is appropriate to explore the extent to which this may or may not be justified. This is all the more justified by the preoccupation with the fact that a significant portion of the population does not share that confidence to the degree desired by authorities -- an irony in that science has only a complicated statistical understanding of "confidence", "trust" and "belief".

As a particular cognitive modality, it is therefore questionable whether science has the capacity to explore the following factors in the light of its own methodology principles. The science worthy of admiration is indeed a particular mode of inquiry -- unconstrained by institutional conventions. The dilemma for institutionalised science is comparable with that of institutionalised religion in the face of spirituality.

It is questionable whether institutionalised science is capable of engaging appropriately with any other perspective which is not in total agreement with its own methodological perspective -- or respectful thereof. Whilst there is indeed extensive "[criticism of science](#)", it is noteworthy that this can be tolerated only to a limited degree when articulated from a philosophical perspective, as with the arguments of [Paul Feyerabend](#) (*The Tyranny of Science*, 2011; *Conquest of Abundance: a tale of abstraction versus the richness of being*, 1999; *For and Against Method*, 1999), or with the efforts of [metascience](#) to improve science "from within". Other than through its total rejection and condemnation, science has seemingly no methodological capacity to engage with [antiscience](#) and what it chooses to frame as pseudoscience. This contrasts curiously with the care with which the misguided insights of scientific precursors are evaluated and appreciated.

It is therefore appropriate to note an initiative from a perspective which would be readily be framed as pseudoscience. This is the report of the [Galileo Commission](#), produced in summary form by Harald Walach on behalf of the Scientific and Medical Network (*Beyond a Materialist Worldview: towards an expanded science*. 2020):

This, we propose, is only possible in an innovative way if we challenge, make explicit and discuss the background assumptions, and bring the discourse about Science 2 into an open debate. This is the purpose of this report. Our hope is that this might enable a transitional Science 1B to arise, with an enlarged set of background assumptions 2B that also will have impact on how we are doing science and thus will eventually result in a new kind of Science 3. The purpose of this report is to open up this debate by analysing Science 2, presenting arguments and data about why it is too narrow and to lay out a roadmap to an expanded Science 3...

We envisage a new form of science, with a new set of assumptions, forming what we have termed Science 3 or a trans-modern science. We can also call it spiritually informed or spiritually open science, as it will draw not only on traditional modes of experience, but also on inner, subjective experience in a methodologically robust sense. It would support most forms of current scientific practice and would encourage other forms that are either currently not part of the scientific portfolio or are only marginally accepted, often in the face of explicit resistance from mainstream scientific institutions....

Science 3 would intuitively exclude monist models that are reductive, such as a materialist one, but also an idealist monist model.

Monist models encounter the difficulty of explaining how a categorically different entity can arise from another one. We do not think that emergentist models that make consciousness contingent on and the result of the complex organisation of the brain really present a viable alternative.

Another approach from a psychoscience perspective is reported by Philip Ball (*The Trouble With Scientists*, *Nautilus*, 14 May 2015). This endeavours to clarify the human biases in science. Tragically science could be said to betray Galileo, whilst upholding him as an exemplar of science. This is evident in the systematic promotion of reference to "sunrise" and "sunset" by meteorology and astronomy -- a reversion to the geocentric perspective which Galileo heroically endeavoured to correct. No appropriate expressions have been offered to reinforce a heliocentric perspective in the face of a **flat Earth** and **flatland** mentality. This pattern can be understood as equivalent to the logocentric and egocentric perspectives reinforced by many religions -- in contrast with the radical cognitive insights to which mystics endeavour to indicate.

It is not a question of how science is to be criticized from a contextual philosophical perspective, nor a matter of how it is to be criticized internally from a metascientific perspective, Rather **there is the question of how one major mode of engagement with reality through inquiry positions itself as uniquely and exclusively beneficial in contrast with all other modes**. Why are these then to be deemed in consequence as dangerously misguided -- and to be actively suppressed wherever possible? In this behavioural pattern science follows only too tragically in the path of religion which it prides itself as having superseded.

Understood more generally, as science might be expected to enable, **the challenge faced by society is one of engaging effectively with "anti-otherness"** (*Elaborating a Declaration on Combating Anti-otherness -- including anti-science, anti-spiritual, anti-women, anti-gay, anti-socialism, anti-animal, and anti-negativity*, 2018). Is science as perplexed by manifestations of "anti" in society as it is by **anti-matter** -- and by the **dark matter** which is purportedly the preponderant form in the universe as claimed by the **Standard Model** in which physicists are expected to believe?

It is highly embarrassing for science that no hard evidence for dark matter has yet been found, although this in no way prevents the neglect of alternative models (David Merritt, *A Non-Standard Model*, *Aeon*, 19 July 2021). In human affairs, is there a "dark matter" which science has yet to recognize -- as Jung has argued -- and for which evidence can be advanced?

Challenges of science upheld as an exclusive mode of inquiry

For the purpose of this argument, the following challenges are best indicated briefly since there tends to be extensive commentary on each. They are discussed separately in an [Annex](#).

Existence of "science"?	Human factor?
Scientism	Gender bias in science
Questionable quality of evidence-based science	Questionable priorities
Complicity of science in its politicisation and misuse	Lack of self-reflexivity
Constrained capacity to deal with diversity	Pseudorelevance to the pandemic

Questions might fruitfully include:

- which topics are not pursued and why
- who does not cite whom and why
- what is the role of ignorance given the degree to which it is evident and any perception of present-day science by the future

Arguably it is not a question of what is thought or asserted, but from what perspective it is asserted.

Vulnerability of collective initiatives to memetic diseases

In quest of insight of an appropriately broad and general nature, it is useful to see science as embedded in an ecosystem of "ways of knowing" and cognitive modalities -- which may be variously institutionalised as collective initiatives. This frames questions regarding their vulnerability to memetic diseases.

Is science vulnerable to such disorders to a greater or lesser extent -- or especially protected by some form of auto-immunity (as every religion tends to claim)?

Collective madness? It is easy to frame the current condition of global civilization as being a case of collective madness -- whether or not this can be appreciated as surreal or an emergent hyperreality (*Surreal nature of current global governance as experienced*, 2016). There is therefore a case for exploring the insights in the magnum opus of Michel Foucault (*Madness and Civilization: a history of insanity in the Age of Reason / Folie et Dérailson: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, 1961).

Dangerous individuals? As Director of the influential **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**, and a scientist of repute, **Rochelle Walensky** has now warned of the dangers to society of the unvaccinated (*C.D.C. Director Warns of a 'Pandemic of the Unvaccinated'*, *The New York Times*, 16 July 2021) -- an extraordinarily irresponsible misrepresentation of a pandemic and its causes by science.

Potentially even more relevant is therefore Foucault's own exploration of the "dangerous individual" (*About the concept of the "dangerous individual" in 19th-century legal psychiatry International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 1, 1978, 1; Richard F. Wetzell, *About the Concept of the 'Dangerous Individual' in Turn-of-the-Century Penal Reform: Debates on Recidivism, Etat Dangereux, Indeterminate Sentencing, and Civil Liberty in the International Union of Penal Law, 1889-1914*, *GLOSSAE: European Journal of Legal History*, 120, 2020).

Unplanned obsolescence? Given the tendency to discount evaluations by the future of the present condition, it is useful to recognize the degree to which modes of knowing of the past are now deprecated as obsolete -- even "mad", if not dangerously so. The [Galileo Affair](#) offers insights in that respect -- with [Galileo Galilei](#) as a "dangerous individual" and a source of misinformation challenging the universal insights of the Catholic Church, to be upheld as beyond question for all eternity.

Is it to be expected that the mode of knowing defined by institutional science will be seen to be deranged at some period in the future -- in a century, in a millennium, or in the longer-term future? **Why has science assumed that its methodology and the insights it derives (like those of the many religions) are immutable and valid for all time?**

Relevance to the pandemic? It might then be asked how Foucault's arguments apply to extremists, radicals, terrorists and "anti-vaxxers" -- variously held to be a fundamental danger to the well-being of the world community. With respect to the response to the pandemic, there are indeed explorations of relevance from that perspective:

- Roberto Esposito: *The Immunization Paradigm* (*Diacritics* 36, 2006, 2), as a response to Foucault's notion of biopolitics
- Kimberly S. Engels: *Biopower, Normalization, and HPV: A Foucauldian Analysis of the HPV Vaccine Controversy* (*Journal of Medical Humanities*, 37, 2016, 3), utilizing the Foucauldian concepts of biopower and normalization to give an analysis of the debate surrounding the controversial administration of the HPV vaccine to adolescents.
- Danielle L. Couch, et al.: *COVID-19: Extending Surveillance and the Panopticon* (*Journal of Bioethical Inquiry*, 17, 2020)
- Kevin Dew: *Epidemics, Panic and Power: Representations of Measles and Measles Vaccines* (*Health*, 3, 1999, 4)
- Begüm Burak: *Analyzing the Coronavirus Pandemic from a Foucauldian Perspective* *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 12 January 2021), arguing that Foucault's conceptualizations of "biopower" and "governmentality" can be used as analytical tools in the analysis of different countries' management of the coronavirus.
- Matthew G. Hannah, et al.: *Thinking Through Covid-19 Responses With Foucault – An Initial Overview* (*Antipode Online*, 5 May 2020)
- Philipp Sarasin: *Understanding the Coronavirus Pandemic with Foucault?* (*FoucaultBlog*, 31 March 2020)
- Gerasimos Kakoliris: *A Foucauldian enquiry in the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic management* (*Critical Legal Thinking*, 11 May 2020)

Kakoliris argues that:

Foucault seems to offer us, in an exceptionally illuminating way, a perspective on the conception of the ongoing management of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is, in fact, the management model of the plague. At the beginning of the 18th century, the "model of the inclusion of plague victims" as he named it, superseded the "model of the exclusion of the lepers"... Contrary to the management of leprosy, which required the leper's exclusion from society for putting everyone in danger, the management of the plague placed in the centre of a disciplinary mechanism not only the plague victim but the general population in its totality. The purpose of this disciplinary mechanism was to prevent the spread of the contagious disease by imposing a strict control on the circulation of bodies.

[Colin Gordon](#) precedes his own review of Foucault's insights with the following quotations favoured by the latter (*Histoire de la folie : an unknown book by Michel Foucault* *History of the Human Sciences*, 3. 1990, 1; *History of Madness; History of Exclusion*, 2012)"

- I will take from things the illusion they produce to save themselves from us, and let them keep the part of themselves which they offer us
- The madman on his crazy boat sets sail for the other world, and it is from the other world that he comes when he disembarks
- There is no establishment of truth without an essential positing of otherness; the truth is never the same; there can be truth only in the form of the other world and the other life

Comparability of science with religion? It is from such a perspective, and in the spirit of [general systems](#) inquiry, that the approach to the pandemic of institutional science can be usefully compared with institutional religion as epitomized by the Catholic Church, as indicated above. Of relevance to such an inquiry is the initiative to map discussions and ideals about the responsibility of science toward society in the light of the Foucauldian notion of 'political rationality' (Cecilie Glerup and Maja Horst, *Mapping 'social responsibility' in science*, *Journal of Responsible Innovation*, 1, 2014, 1).

Masking recalls the precautions recommended by institutional religions against "infection" by contact with those holding alternative beliefs -- framed as the "voice of the devil". Social distancing recalls efforts by such religions to avoid contact with those adhering to such beliefs -- exemplified in some cases by recognition of their dangerous impurity. Sanitising recalls the role of ritual washing in religion -- and holy water -- especially prior to entering places of worship. The greatest emphasis has of course been placed on indoctrination in anticipation of conversion -- curiously reminiscent of the inoculation now so authoritatively recommended by science.

This comparison then frames the question as to why religions can be said to have "failed" -- especially by the criteria of science. Other than by ignoring the fact, science is curiously unable to handle the fact that many scientists hold religious beliefs which are meaningless from a scientific perspective, even though those beliefs may be explored by "religious sciences" (*Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*). Promotion of those beliefs, as some scientists feel obliged to do, could then be construed as the dissemination of dangerous misinformation, as separately explored (*Comparability of "Vaxxing Saves" with "Jesus Saves" as Misinformation? Problematic challenge of global discernment*, 2021; *Reframing Fundamental Belief as Disinformation? Pandemic challenge to advertising, ideology, religion and science*, 2021).

Vulnerability to memetic disease? Any notion of the failure of collective initiatives then invites its exploration as a form of "disease" -- understood in systemic terms (*Variety of System Failures Engendered by Negligent Distinctions*, 2016). Clearly many strategic

undertakings by government (if not most) tend to "fail" -- just as businesses enterprises tend to fail. Potentially more challenging is why those envisaged by social change optimists also tend to fail -- and why science has so little to offer in that regard (despite the probability of its own "failure" at some future time):

- Alexa Clay: *Like start-ups, most intentional communities fail – why?* (*Aeon*, 28 February 2017)
- Bill Metcalf *Utopian Struggle: preconceptions and realities of intentional communities* (*RCC Perspectives*, 2012, 8)
- Livia Gershon, *When Communes Don't Fail* (*Jstor Daily*, 26 October 2018)
- William M. Kephart, *Why They Fail: A Socio-Historical Analysis of Religious and Secular Communes* (*Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 5, 1974, 2)

Defensive shell games as a common characteristic? Use is now widely made of the bubble metaphor to frame the sense of coherence within which any collective initiative functions. This could be understood as an extension of its application to the individual as a **filter bubble** whereby information is presented and received as a consequence of externally determined criteria, most obviously in the case of dependence on internet searches. Such dependence can engender a sense of comfortable complacency.

The collective implications, especially at the global level, can be variously explored (*Pricking the Bubble of Global Complacent Complicity: hyperdimensional insights from the physics of bubble blowing, bursting and collapse?* 2017). Potentially of greater relevance is recognition of the manner in which the bubble constitutes a defensive shell providing a form of immunity against information that threaten its integrity. The integrity of the collective initiative must necessarily be protected at all costs by individuals associated with it -- given the manner in which their own identity is intimately entangled with it.

The shell can perhaps be best understood in dynamic terms through the classic **shell game**. Although commonly a feature of fair ground gambling, as a form of confidence trick, it is also recognized as a common conjuring trick -- a confidence trick -- of which one name is **cups and balls**. A typical routine includes many of the most fundamental effects of magic: the balls can vanish, appear, transpose, reappear and transform. The skills required include: **misdirection**, **manual dexterity**, **sleight of hand**, and audience management.

This can be used to model the defensive response by a collective initiative -- whether a religion, science, or an ideology -- to critical citation of a particular instance of its practice in fundamental contradiction with its declared principles. With one or more balls as the principles, the challenge to management of a critical audience is the process whereby members are invited to name the cup under which the ball is assumed to be hidden.

Misdirection and verbal sleight of hand is then used to show that the principles are not associated with the assumed cup, but are hidden under another cup. Alternatively, as fundamental principles, and therefore necessarily elusive, the ball may be shown to not be under any cup. As the focus of criticism, the cups are therefore particular instances unrelated to those fundamental principles. The malpractice and abuses of any collective can thus be held to be incidental and in no way compromising the integrity engendered by the principles.

Masks as symbols from popular perspectives

The argument can be most usefully developed through the following quotations.

For Lucia Martinelli, et al.: *Face Masks During the COVID-19 Pandemic: a simple protection tool with many meanings* (*Frontiers of Public Health*, January 2021)

This article aims to identify the diversity of sociocultural, ethical, and political meanings attributed to face masks, how they might impact public health policies, and how they should be considered in health communication.

For David Marcus: *COVID and America -- masks became symbols during the pandemic. Time to take them off and ask why* (*Fox News*, 14 June 2021):

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) loosened masks requirements a bit more last week to allow the vaccinated to go barefaced in outdoor transportation settings. It's another small step toward normalcy, but some Americans seem unwilling to forgo the face covering even in the face of the new guidance. In so many cases over the past year, masks have been less a protective tool and more a symbol of virtue. This is a problem. Tools are easily discarded. When the job is done you put away the hammer or saw without a second thought. Not so with symbols. Symbols become a part of us, a part of our identity that mingles with our self-worth. Why are so many Americans still donning face muzzles well past their sell-by date? Obviously, it is not entirely for medical reasons. It's often because the cloth coverings have become as essential part of who they are.

For Travis Schultz: *The symbolism of a mask – will a pandemic transition it from evil to good?* (28 January 2021):

Perhaps my unease with a sea of masks is simply a question of social conditioning? ... And the consternation got me wondering; is my disquiet at the vision of masks really caused by the absence of facial expression or the comforting quell of a sly smile or flash of pearly whites? ... Perhaps the bigger question is whether future generations will perceive masks as symbolic of good or evil? And will the emotional response be one of calm or alarm? ... Who would have thought a flimsy piece of polypropylene would ever be worth so much? Or mean so much in the current campaign to see humanity win this viral war? ... While it once invoked fear, separation and infection, in the future it may symbolise the unification of our nation in fighting a common foe.

For Judy Fahys: *To Mask or Not? The Weighty Symbolism Behind a Simple Choice* (*Inside Climate News*, 11 May 2020):

Coronavirus masks have become the latest symbol in the culture wars, with many liberals and conservatives in the United States taking opposing sides, much as they have in the fight over climate action. For one side, masks represent an affront to liberty, signaling an overreaction to the pandemic that's been led by state governments and public health experts, and fueled by ivory-tower elitists... Many mask wearers, on the other hand, view mingling mask-free in public places as both offensive and unhealthy, an affront to efforts to "flatten the curve" of Covid-19 cases in the United States

For Adam Bloodworth: *How Face Masks Became A Powerful Symbol Of Expression In Dark Times* (*HuffPost*, 26 August 2020):

... a culture war has been waging between those happy or at least resigned to wearing masks and those who don't believe in enforcement – either because they question their efficacy in the fight against COVID-19 or because they see it as an infringement of rights to be told to wear one. That same culture war is playing out in the US, fuelled by the whims of politicians and the great American public. Meanwhile, in other countries, particularly in parts of Asia where face masks and coverings have been commonplace for decades, people are bemused at what our problem is.

But like them or not, as masks have become normalised, they have also become personalised. Inevitably, fashion and sportswear brands – looking to diversify their offering in tough economic times – have capitalised on our demand, with styles and fits available in all the colours of the rainbow.... Our face mask or covering now tells the world who we are -- they are reflective of our style and quirks; and they are statements of intent, solidarity and identity.

For Saul Levine: *The Enigma and Metaphor of Face Masks* (*Psychology Today*, 21 June 2020) argues, following a useful review of resistance to mask wearing:

Wearing a mask raises one's consciousness that we are indeed in the midst of a dangerous pandemic. It reminds us that we're doing what is recommended by the experts, including other important behaviors, like not touching our faces, washing our hands frequently, disinfecting surfaces, avoiding crowds, and certainly keeping at safe interpersonal social distances.

This singular act of wearing a face mask is a metaphor for caring and civility, an inherently noble gesture: Mask wearers protect their families, friends and neighbors, shopkeepers and many others. By wearing a face mask during this pandemic, people are performing a personal and social "Act of Human Kindness". This is an acknowledgement that we humans are all in this together. It is a generous, benevolent act of communality, a visible symbol of considerateness, respect and empathy.

Curiously there is little emphasis on the following contrasts -- exemplified by national and world leaders:

- a degree of familiarity with the past tendency of those masked to be suffering from a respiratory disease and employing the mask **to avoid infecting others** -- a courtesy especially characteristic of Japanese culture. The emphasis is now reversed, with usage primarily intended as a means of **preventing personal infection from others**.
- widespread familiarity with the use of masks as a disguise by criminals, a familiarity cultivated from childhood games of "cops and robbers" -- reinforced by media dramas. Again the emphasis is reversed, with **masking promoted as a practice by the "good guys"** -- rather than the irresponsible or those of evil intent
- deprecation (if not banning) of veiling as a symbol of belief by Islamic women, vigorously justified by human rights and security arguments -- contrasted with the imposition of masking in the belief that it offers security against infection, thereby ensuring the health of the community

Pseudoscience: From the perspective of a particular understanding of science, pseudoscience is held to consist of statements, beliefs, or practices that are claimed to be both scientific and factual but are incompatible with the scientific method (*List of topics characterized as pseudoscience*). The phrase "Not even wrong" is often used to describe pseudoscience or bad science. Criticism of pseudoscience by the scientific community or skeptical organizations, involves critiques of the logical, methodological, or rhetorical bases of the topic in question. Though some topics identified continue to be investigated scientifically, others have only been subject to scientific research in the past, and today are considered refuted however they may be resurrected in a pseudoscientific fashion. Other ideas presented are entirely non-scientific, but have in one way or another impinged on scientific domains or practices.

With respect to the relevance of any psychosciences, the situation has proven to be difficult in the light of problematic assessments of the leader of the nation acclaimed for the superiority of its science and actively contradicting its recommendations with respect to the pandemic (Bandy X. Lee, *The 'Shared Psychosis' of Donald Trump and His Loyalists*, *Scientific American*, 11 January 2021; Jerome L. Kroll, *The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump: 27 psychiatrists and Mental health experts assess a president*, *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, 46, 2018, 2; *Shrinks Battle Over Diagnosing Donald Trump: chaos in the White House fuels discord amongst the experts*, *Psychology Today*, 31 January 2017).

Neuroses of scientists? As a preoccupation of the psychosciences, there is therefore considerable irony to the many references to the neuroses and psychoses of scientists (Nicholas Maxwell, *Is Science Neurotic? Metaphilosophy*, 24 January 2003; Stephanie Pappas, *Why Creative Geniuses Are Often Neurotic*, *LiveScience*, 1 September 2015; Bernardo Kastrup, *The Physicist Worldview as Neurotic Ego-Defense Mechanism*, *Sage Open*, 1 October 2016). For the latter:

The physicalist worldview is often portrayed as a dispassionate interpretation of reality motivated purely by observable facts. In this article, ideas of both depth and social psychology are used to show that this portrayal may not be accurate. Physicalism --

whether it ultimately turns out to be philosophically correct or not -- is hypothesized to be partly motivated by the neurotic endeavor to project onto the world attributes that help one avoid confronting unacknowledged aspects of one's own inner life. Moreover, contrary to what most people assume, physicalism creates an opportunity for the intellectual elites who develop and promote it to maintain a sense of meaning in their own lives through fluid compensation. However, because this compensatory strategy does not apply to a large segment of society, it creates a schism -- with corresponding tensions—that may help explain the contemporary conflict between neo-atheism and religious belief.

Recognized as an archetype of psychological disorder in a scientist is the depiction of [Dr Strangelove](#) in the movie of that name (*Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, 1964). The character has been held to be an amalgamation of RAND Corporation strategist Herman Kahn, mathematician and Manhattan Project principal John von Neumann, rocket scientist Wernher von Braun, and Edward Teller, the "father of the hydrogen bomb".

Some scientific disciplines take a degree of pride in eccentricities of their icons -- readily diagnosed as exhibiting mental health disorders (Stephanie Pappas, *Why Creative Geniuses Are Often Neurotic*, *Live Science*, 1 September 2015). Less evident is any exploration of the disorders characteristic of particular sciences -- and of their methodological biases -- although the incidence of Asperger's disorder is frequently noted (Michael Fitzgerald, *Asperger's Disorder and Mathematicians of Genius*, *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 32, 2002, 1). It is unclear how any recognition of "disorders" of scientists by the psychosciences is to be reconciled by science with any notion of pseudoscience.

Pandemic implications from a professional "psychoscience" perspective

The historic differences between the psychoscience disciplines, inherited from their founders, is now reflected in their distinctive considerations of the pandemic. There has seemingly never been any question of using their own insights to resolve their own differences more fruitfully. The unordered array of psychosciences could itself therefore be considered a metaphor of the collective inability to engage cognitively with a crisis like the pandemic. Typical of the dynamic is the manner in which preferred modality deems the others misguided in some manner, if not dangerously so, and as such -- each, ironically (from a pandemic perspective) as a purveyor of "misinformation".

More relevant to this exploration are the themes, seemingly avoided by the professions, which the icons of those disciplines might have chosen to address -- each in their own way.

Freudian perspective: Of particular note is the special issue of the *International Journal of Applied Analytic Studies* which reports various initiatives by psychoanalysts in relation to the pandemic. As introduced by the editors of the issue Marianne Leuzinger-Bohleber and Heribert Blass (*Editorial introduction: Psychoanalytical perspectives on the COVID-19 pandemic*, *International Journal of Applied Analytic Studies*, 3 June 2021), of relevance are the contrasting positions in reaction to the pandemic of the Sigmund Freud Institute (SFI), and the international psychoanalytical organizations such as the [International Psychoanalytic Association](#) (IPA) and the European Psychoanalytic Federation (EPF). The editors stress the preliminary nature of the views expressed in the collection. Also stressed is the extent to which the contributors' thinking, clinical findings, and theoretical considerations are necessarily preliminary at this point, recognizing that psychoanalytic work on such a current, complex topic, is quite controversial in the psychoanalytic community. There are indeed quite a few psychoanalysts and psychoanalytic institutions who regard such "psychoanalytic activism" as highly suspect.

The editors comment specifically on:

- **Psychoanalytic "activism" in times of acute societal crisis as the the current pandemic:** The question whether and in which form psychoanalysts should get involved in social, political, and public actions seems to us to be as old as psychoanalysis.... How can political "activism" be reconciled with the professional neutrality of the analyst? ... Don't analysts present themselves as so-called "do-gooders" ("*Gutmenschen*") when they stand up for social justice and thus make the processing and analyzing of aggressive-destructive impulses in the transference/countertransference more difficult? Do psychoanalysts satisfy their own problematic exhibitionistic or pathological narcissistic needs through their public commitment?
- **Psychoanalytical institutions in the current pandemic:** Freud's entire clinical and literary work is based on a multidisciplinary understanding of science. If we take as a basis his famous concept of the "complementary series"... (Freud, 1905) between nature and environment and then look at his writings on cultural theory, it becomes immediately clear that Freud, too, always saw men and their mental movements: affects, emotions and thinking, in interaction with their respective environment. Some brief references to such important articles as *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921), *The Future of an Illusion* (1927) or *Civilization and its Discontents* (last 1930) may suffice to show that Freud was always interested in social issues and included them in the scope of psychoanalysis. So, when we deal in this special issue with the impact of the pandemic on our culture and society, we are following a consistent tradition of Freudian thought.

An overview is offered with respect to the contributions to the journal issue in the light of what has psychoanalysis to contribute in the current COVID-19 pandemic, with papers clustered into

- Clinical and conceptual papers
- Commitments of psychoanalysts and psychoanalytic institution in the pandemic
- Observations of political and societal events during the pandemic

Especially relevant to this argument are the two contributions in that last cluster, described by the editors as follows

- Liana Giorgi (Vienna, Austria) begins her paper *Not a Political Statement: Psychoanalytic Notes on the Measures to Fight the Pandemic and the Responses to Them* by citing Joe Biden as US President Elect: *The mask is not a political statement.*

Nevertheless, there were ideological fights about the use of the mask in the United States and in countries on the European continent. The author proposes to critically examine some of the measures installed to fight the pandemic, such as the face mask, and subsequent responses. Giorgi concludes by noting that *Faced with the unconscious meanings of the pandemic, on the one hand, and the unconscious readings of the measures introduced to fight it, on the other hand, what can be learned about political risk management and communication?*

- Ira Brenner (Bala Cynwyd, USA), in his passionate paper *Disinformation, disease, and Donald Trump*, develops the concept of the "dual plague" comparing the pandemic with the political "virus" spread by Donald Trump. Brenner discusses many historical parallels to Nero and the fall of the Roman Empire, to Hitler and Mussolini in a convincing and differentiated way. "Donald Trump's desperate efforts to subvert the rule of law in order to stay in power for the sake of staying in power took precedence over his actually using that power to mitigate the American carnage he swore to end.

Jungian perspective: This can be explored from the perspective of *analytical psychology*, named by Jung to describe research into his new "empirical science" of the psyche. It was designed to distinguish it from Freud's psychoanalytic theories. As in the above case, responses to the pandemic are articulated in the corresponding professional "journal of Jungian practice and theory", published on behalf of the Society of Analytical Psychology (*Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 66, June 2021, 3). The contributions include:

- Irene Agnello and Chiara Giubellini: *Clinical experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic*
- Deborah Bryon: *Processing trauma in psychoanalysis in 'real' time and in dreams: the convergence of past, present and future during COVID-19*
- Magda Di Renzo and Bruno Tagliacozzi: *Dreams and COVID-19*
- Donald Kalsched: *Intersections of personal vs. collective trauma during the COVID-19 pandemic: the hijacking of the human imagination*
- Marilyn A.F. Mathew: *Together – apart: in touch in a time of separation*
- John Merchant: *Working online due to the COVID-19 pandemic: a research and literature review*
- Betty Sacco German: *Archetypes of the pandemic*
- Susan Schwartz: *COVID-19, precarity and loneliness*
- Kristina Schellinski: *Essential anxiety: COVID-19 in analytic practice*
- Robert Tyminski: *Adolescents coping with the COVID-19 pandemic: 'every day is like another Sunday'*
- Nancy van den Berg-Cook: *Coronavirus: does its activation of archetypes of evil cause added psychological suffering?*
- William K. Grevatt: *The archetype of the apocalypse: analysing the pandemics of racism, COVID-19 and climate change*

Psychological science perspective: The American Psychological Association (APA) is preparing a special issue on *Psychology and the Pandemic* in its journal *Translational Issues in Psychological Science* to be published in September 2022 -- co-sponsored with the American Psychological Association of Graduate Students (APAGS). Papers are intended to address the following topics:

- Psychological methods for improving adherence to health guidelines
- Using psychology to improve disease modeling and prediction
- Understanding and mitigating socially disruptive pandemic behaviors (e.g., panic buying)
- Overcoming pandemic-related racism and other forms of discrimination
- Improving media literacy: Helping people distinguish true from fake medical news
- Understanding and mitigating long-term psychological impacts of pandemics
- Promoting resilience and posttraumatic growth during pandemics
- Promoting wellness among frontline workers
- Developing and evaluating new ways of providing psychological services (e.g., e-health)
- The psychology of the under-responder: People don't take the pandemic seriously
- Pandemic-related mental health issues for special populations (e.g., under-served groups)
- Role of psychology in national and international health organizations (e.g., CDC, WHO)

Implications of masking: sexual and otherwise

Ironically the worldwide emphasis on the importance of masking as a preventive measure has immediately followed widespread condemnation of various forms of masking of women, as prescribed according to the principles of several religions. Specifically deprecated is use of the burkha and niqab as purportedly required by Islam (*Burkha as Metaphorical Mirror for Imperious Culture?* 2009; Marnia Lazreg, *Questioning the Veil: Open Letters to Muslim Women*, 2009). The requirement is disputed by some Islamic scholars although enforced in practice in many contexts, notably in the light of an interpretation of the so-called "mantle verse" in the Koran (33:59). This is understood as establishing women's security as a rationale for veiling:

O Prophet, tell your wives and daughters, and the women of the faithful, to draw their wraps (*jalabib*, sing. *jilbab*) over them. They will thus be recognized and no harm will come to them.

In condemnation of such practice, all comparison is avoided with paradoxical contradictions relating to other forms of masking (or the lack thereof), including the fashionable use of *veils* by Western women a century ago (*Facism as Superficial Intercultural Extremism: burkha, toplessness, sunglasses, beards, and flu masks*, 2009). In addition to Islam, the practice of veiling women has been prominent in different forms in *Judaism* and *Christianity*. The *veiling of men* is limited to some West African cultures and to rituals of sado-masochistic eroticism.

The actual sociocultural, psychological, and sociosexual functions of veils have not been studied extensively but have been recognized to include the maintenance of social distance and the communication of social status and cultural identity (Robert F. Murphy, *Social Distance and the Veil*, *American Anthropologist*, *New Series*, 66, 1964, 6, Part 1). Of some relevance are the early insights of the latter with regard to the veiling of Tuareg men:

Beyond the aspect of ceremonial avoidance, it would seem that there is another component closely related to this symbolism, that of maintenance of the dignity of the actor-by his symbolic withdrawal from the threatening situation vis-a-vis the superordinate, Ego is also furthering the maintenance of his self image.... The above data suggest that there are two aspects to distance: the external dialogue and the internal dialogue; the actor maintaining the interaction situation and Ego maintaining ego. Perhaps this is best illustrated by the fact that the veil is not worn by men at two phases in the life cycle-when they have no status, as in the case of minors, and when they have too much status, as in the case of the *hajji*. The latter is the honorific term applied by most Moslems to persons who have made the pilgrimage to Mecca, and this status signifies that the occupant of it has gained religious merit and, with it, secular prestige. But beyond this the *hajji* is a person who has partaken of the sacred and by so doing has absorbed it as part of his identity....

My thesis, then, is that given this ambiguity and ambivalence of relationships, this immanence of role conflict, the Tuareg veil functions to maintain a diffuse and generalized kind of distance between the actor and those who surround him socially and physically. By the symbolic removal of a portion of his identity from the interaction situation, the Tuareg is allowed to act in the presence of conflicting interests and uncertainty. The social distance set in some societies by joking and respect or avoidance behavior towards certain specific categories of relatives is accomplished here through the veil.

It is argued that veiling women is a form of male mate guarding strategy, which aims to increase sexual fidelity by decreasing overt displays of his mate's physical attractiveness, thereby helping to secure his reproductive success (Farid Pazhoohi and Alan Kingstone, *Sex Difference on the Importance of Veiling: A Cross-Cultural Investigation*, *Cross-Cultural Research*, 54, 2020, 5; Khandis R. Blake, et al., *Who suppresses female sexuality? An examination of support for Islamic veiling in a secular Muslim democracy as a function of sex and offspring sex*. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 39, 2018, 6).

The question is then how Freud might have commented on the worldwide enthusiasm for masking. For Murphy (1964):

The literature of Freudian psychology gives extensive documentation to the female symbolism of the mouth, its vulnerability to penetration, and to the unconscious association between the eyes and the male generative powers; it is not surprising to find that it is these areas that are defended most often in social interaction. Beyond this, these are the areas of the body by which we most actively communicate with others and from which we emit the cues that guide those with whom we interact. But there is more to social distance than the simple symbolism involved in the non-use of the eye and mouth regions.

Remarking on O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra*, S. Georgia Nugent sees the playwright using Freud not to reveal, but to mask a darkness, specifically "the dark continent" of feminine sexuality (*Masking Becomes Electra: O'Neill, Freud, and the Feminine*, *Comparative Drama*, 22, 1988, 1). For Jung, the *persona*, was the social face the individual presented to the world: *a kind of mask, designed on the one hand to make a definite impression upon others, and on the other to conceal the true nature of the individual*.

Seemingly coincidentally considerable importance is now attached to the use of facial recognition for security purposes -- an early justification for banning of facial covering. The effectiveness of such recognition is now called into question by new research (Erez Freud, et al, *The COVID-19 pandemic masks the way people perceive faces*, *Scientific Reports*, 10, 2020, 22344):

The unprecedented efforts to minimize the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic introduce a new arena for human face recognition in which faces are partially occluded with masks... As expected, a substantial decrease in performance was found for masked faces. Importantly, the inclusion of masks also led to a qualitative change in the way masked faces are perceived. In particular, holistic processing, the hallmark of face perception, was disrupted for faces with masks... In particular, there was a major decrease in performance (about 15%) for masked compared to non-masked faces.

Of potentially greater relevance in terms of any form of psychoanalysis is the concealment of emotion offered by masking (Monica Gori, et al., *Masking Emotions: Face Masks Impair How We Read Emotions* *Frontiers in Psychology*, 25 May 2021):

This report demonstrates that face masks influence the human ability to infer emotions by observing facial configurations. Specifically, a mask obstructing a face limits the ability of people of all ages to infer emotions expressed by facial features, but the difficulties associated with the mask's use are significantly pronounced in children aged between 3 and 5 years old. These findings are of essential importance, as they suggest that we live in a time that may potentially affect the development of social and emotion reasoning, and young children's future social abilities should be monitored to assess the true impact of the use of masks.

For Todd McGowan (*The Mask of Universality: Politics in the Pandemic Response*, *Crisis Critique*, 24 November 2020)

Proponents of wearing masks during the pandemic have argued that the mask is not political and simply serves public health. This essay argues that the mask is actually an important political signifier, a signifier that points toward universality. This is why contemporary populist leaders have refused to adopt policies mandating masks, despite the political benefits that such a policy

would bring them. As an indication of universality, the mask represents a threat not just to populist leaders but also to the prevailing liberal ideology underlying the capitalist economy. The mask brings us into a constant confrontation with universality, which is the foundation for an emancipatory challenge to the logic of capitalism.

Arthur Asa Berger cites a question of Freud's (1962): *What means does civilization employ in order to inhibit the aggressiveness which opposes it, to make it harmless, to get rid of it, perhaps?* Berger then argues:

Symbols are keys that enable us to unlock the doors shielding our unconscious feelings and beliefs from scrutiny. Symbols are messages from our unconscious... According to this theory, then, we mask our unconscious sexual and aggressive desires through symbolization, which enables us to escape guilt from the superego.... This is where humor comes in, for in humor we have developed a way to allow ourselves to enjoy certain kinds of aggression by masking them and thus evading guilt feelings. Freud analyzes humor in great detail in *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, one of his most impressive works (*Psychoanalytic Criticism*, In: *Media Analysis Techniques*, 2018).

Liana Giorgi (2021), cited above, includes a valuable discussion of the *Unconscious significations of the face mask*, introduced with the comment:

No other measure introduced during this pandemic has come to signify more potently the restrictions imposed on intimacy but also sexuality and free speech. The three domains are interrelated but also distinct and I suspect individuals (like patients) react variably to these, also depending on the extent to which they have been dealing with the pandemic from the paranoid or depressive position respectively. By itself, as already discussed, the pandemic has tended to exacerbate paranoid reactions especially during the early phase when still little was known as to its risks.

Giorgi concludes that discussion by remarking that:

... the face mask has become a symbol, in some cases a reification, for anxieties and the defenses against these. These are not directly or even primarily linked to disease or contamination, and the virus as such. Rather the pandemic activates the fear of death and annihilation—material and social—and calls forth persecutory anxiety and guilt. Under specific circumstances, such anxiety can undermine the capacity to comply with measures implemented to address the health risks associated with the pandemic.

Specifically noted by Giorgi in that respect:

- People look at each other faces for cues to reassure themselves that they are being understood and not misunderstood, such unconscious mirroring representing a formative aspect of early infant development. But as we know from the psychoanalytic setting with the couch, where the patient is deprived from this form of communication, the face-to-face interaction also serves as a means of controlling the object and forms part of the mechanism of projective identification.
- In such a context, unconscious phantasies are likely to become reactivated, and these are mainly paranoid in character: May I trust the object to be positively inclined toward me is the question posed by the paranoid subject facing a masked object.
- The other common association to the mask as a muzzle expresses the same fear in reverse: one feels unable to speak one's own mind if masked and at the same time fears the masked others are likewise not speaking their minds. At a deeper, more unconscious level, the fear is that the masked state of mind deprives one of all defenses against persecutors and persecutory anxiety.
- Conspiracy theories are also more likely to emerge when political institutions themselves make extended use of manipulative communication techniques to advance their agendas. In political jargon, this is today known as “spinning”, the term signifying how political communication has been gradually transformed into political marketing. In former times it was more commonplace to talk about propaganda..., People believing in conspiracy theories tend to displace their fears of the virus onto state institutions, turning fear into rage.
- In this case, the face mask stands for that that is not explicitly talked about during the pandemic, in other words, sexuality. It is an interesting omission considering how our societies pride themselves with respect to sex education, enlightenment, and liberal values. I am here referring to Western societies especially, where also the opposition to the face mask has been greatest. In this light, such opposition could be understood as fueled by the unwillingness to comply with restrictions imposed on sexuality, and, especially, sexual promiscuity.

There is a remarkable irony to the manner in which much science, especially that of strategic significance, can be recognized as effectively "masked". This is most evident in the extent to which it is secretive, non-transparent, and potentially covered by [non-disclosure agreements](#). The irony is all the greater in that it may apply to studies by science of the efficacy of masking against infection (Kristen Panthagani, *Masked Science: Fact-checking Mask Studies, You Can Know Things*, 22 July 2020).

Strategic panic in response to vaccine hesitancy

It has been emphatically stressed by world leaders that universal vaccination is essential to achieving [herd immunity](#). The analogous distinctions in other countries have added to arguments regarding the inequalities engendered by the pandemic and access to vaccines, exemplified by the declarations of the UN Secretary-General (*Guterres: Vaccines should be considered 'global public goods'*, *UN News*,

11 June 2021):

"We are at war" with the coronavirus, he said, that continues to cause "tremendous suffering" and destroy the global economy. To defeat the virus, we must "boost our weapons", he added, calling for a "global vaccination plan".

For Eliana Cusato (*Beyond War Talk: Laying Bare the Structural Violence of the Pandemic*, *European Journal of International Law*, 3 May 2020):

As put by Arundhati Roy, *the mandarin who are managing this pandemic are fond of speaking of war. They don't even use war as a metaphor, they use it literally*. Indeed, Donald Trump declared himself a *wartime president* and proclaimed *We will win this war*; Boris Johnson announced that *We must act like any wartime government*; and Emmanuel Macron said *We are in a war in which nothing should divert us from fighting an invisible enemy*.

As previously argued, the United Nations has been frustrated over decades in its inability to achieve effective global consensus on the implementation of strategies in response to the range of global crises -- exemplified by those framed by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals as a global "dream" (*Systemic Coherence of the UN's 17 SDGs as a Global Dream*, 2021). This frustration is echoed historically by that of other collective "dreams": Christianity, Communism, Socialism, and the like.

The current global consensus on the desirability of universal vaccination can therefore be recognized as the closest that humanity has come to achieving the kind of consensus sought by those initiatives of the past. Given that many can be said to have been articulated as a surrogate for the quest of the world's monotheistic religions for universal belief in a particular deity, universal vaccination can be explored in that light, as previously argued (*Herd immunity as an unconscious metaphor for groupthink*, 2021; *Application of Universal Vaccination Narrative to Climate Change*, 2021).

Vaccination is now upheld as an unquestionable "good" by health authorities with the complicity of "science" -- of benefit to the individual and to the community. This is irrespective of whether it is administered following the informed consent of the person -- if capable of comprehending the issues and capable of giving it. Any comparison with rape when such consent is lacking is therefore framed as completely inappropriate (Melissa Davey, *Campaign comparing vaccination to rape 'repulsive', health minister says*, *The Guardian*, 23 April 2015). The controversy recalls debate regarding claims of domestic violence when the husband asserts conjugal rights without the consent of the partner.

This is of some relevance to controversies associated with vaccine hesitancy -- given the preoccupation of authorities with the so-called "anti-vaxxer" movement (*Ten threats to global health in 2019*, WHO, 2019; *WHO Says Anti-Vaxxers Are Global Health Threat*, *WebMD*, 17 January 2019; Christine Stabell Benn, *Declaring vaccine hesitancy one of the ten biggest health threats in 2019 is unhelpful*, *The Conversation*, 20 September 2019). Noted above is the authoritative assertion by the CDC that the world is confronted with a "pandemic of the unvaccinated".

The issue has been highlighted in Australia following the highly controversial failure of the government's rollout of a vaccination program. As a remedy for the "lacklustre" public relations of the past, a major campaign is being launched to combat vaccine hesitancy (Nour Haydar, *Australian government releases new advertising campaign to boost vaccination rate*, *ABC News*, 11 July 2007). It will urge Australians "now is the time to arm yourself", "your family", "your friends", "your workmates", "your community" and "someone you love". The associated message, visually presented, is "bare your arm".

Curiously the Australian campaign is headed by Lieutenant General John Frewen, the newly appointed Co-ordinator General of the National COVID Vaccine Taskforce, who featured in fully bemedalled uniform in the initial media presentations (Amy Remeikis and Daniel Hurst, *General confusion: who is John Frewen, and what is his role in Australia's vaccine rollout?* *The Guardian*, 11 July 2021). His appointment immediately followed the "withdrawal" of Australian and other forces from the Afghanistan arena after a decades-long campaign framed by critics as a defeat. Whether that is a guarantee of appropriate expertise for the coordination of a vaccination campaign remains to be seen (*Transforming the Unsustainable Cost of General Education: strategic insights from Afghanistan*, 2009).

The new presentations of the vaccination campaign, explicitly designed to be "confrontational", also featured a woman in bed -- intended to be someone suffering terminally from COVID infection. Unfortunately the portrayal was equally suggestive of a woman in labour, experiencing an organism, or even the "victim" of a sadomasochistic erotic game. The sexual ambiguities with regard to "inoculation" are made readily apparent.

Development programs, and the response to "virtual wars", have suffered in the past from their use of military metaphors, as previously argued (*Enhancing Sustainable Development Strategies through Avoidance of Military Metaphors*, 1998; *Review of the Range of Virtual Wars: strategic comparison with the global war against terrorism*, 2005).

Symbolism of obsessive sanitising as a preventive measure

Considerable emphasis has been made during the pandemic on "sanitising" the hands -- typically on entry to public buildings, and therefore recalling the [ritual purification](#) required on entering a place of worship. This bears comparison with hand-washing as a well-recognized [obsessive-compulsive disorder - OCD](#) (Vidette Wong, *Compulsive hand-washing*, *DermNet NZ*, September 2019). This is understood as a mental and behavioral disorder in which a person has certain thoughts repeatedly (called "obsessions") and/or feels the need to perform certain routines repeatedly (called "compulsions") to an extent that generates distress or impairs general functioning. Whether encouraging people in such behaviour serves ironically to engender distress and impair general functioning is not discussed.

Freud was notable in framing insight into such compulsive behaviour, as indicated by S. H. Posinsky (*Ritual, Neurotic and Social, American Imago*, 19, 1962, 4):

The compulsive behavior of neurotics or psychotics is frequently described by psychiatrists and psychoanalysts as a ritual. This concept was first delineated by Freud in his article, *Obsessive Acts and Religious Practices* [1907], and was further elaborated in *Totem and Taboo* [1913] and *The Future of an Illusion* [1927]. It found its logical extension in the preface to Reik's *Ritual* [1919], where Freud described the "ceremonials and prohibitions of obsessional patients" as "a private religion".

Of some relevance to the current pandemic, the theme was notably evoked from an anthropological perspective by Mary Douglas (*Purity and Danger*, 1966). It is curious that the strategic response to the pandemic should now evoke what has otherwise been understood by religions as a quest for purity (W. E. van Beek (Ed.), *The Quest for Purity: dynamics of Puritan movements*, 1988). That compilation included a study by Erik van Ree (*The quest for purity in Communism*, 1988). The current response therefore merits comparison with the distinctions made by Sophia Liu (*A Quest for Purity: The Nuances Between Stalin's Great Purge and Mao's Cultural Revolution*, *St Mark's Academic Journal*, 23 January 2018). The compilation on purity also included studies on the Wahhabi movement, the Fulani jihad, and Shi'ite purity, and the Taiping rebellion.

With respect to the nature of Carl Jung's insights into OCD and its relation to the **Shadow**, Jesamine Mello associated this with the psychological dynamics of fixation and resistance, thereby constellating a compensatory reaction in the unconscious:

OCD certainly can be related to the shadow, but it would likely be the shadow of a Collective which has not yet integrated the so-called *problem of evil* into their worldview. For them, evil is "out there" or in "somebody else." They see themselves only as the *good guys*. This collective mindset constellates (perhaps unconsciously) a general fear of evil and sin, which produces compensations. (*Quora*, 13 February 2021)

In a related framework, the preoccupation with sanitising could be strangely associated with "cleansing the soul" -- and hence the prescribed use of **holy water** -- ironically now taking secular form (effectively "blessed" by the pharmaceutical industry). The paradoxical aspects are evident in some rituals to that end (Brock Bastian, *Cleansing the Soul by Hurting the Flesh: the guilt-reducing effect of pain*, *Association for Psychological Science*, 8 March 2011).

The quest for cleanliness and purity extends tragically to a preoccupation with separation from those deemed unclean, as in caste systems and avoidance of contact with those of other religious or ideological beliefs -- extending into avoidance of intermarriage and ethnic cleansing, together with the advocacy and practice of eugenics to ensure the purity of the racial bloodline (Jacques Semelin, *Purify and Destroy: the political uses of massacre and genocide*, 2009).

Understood as an initiative unconsciously evoked, sanitising also suggests a recognition of a dangerous lack of "cognitive hygiene" -- notably suggested by recognition of the need to "clean up" behaviours and attitudes (*Vigorous Application of Derivative Thinking to Derivative Problems*, 2013).

Panic engendered by cultivation of fear of death

Fear of collapse? Fundamental to experience of the pandemic and the response to it is fear of death. Much has been made of the manner in which a **culture of fear** has been engendered and cultivated. It is understood as the manner whereby fear may be incited in the general public to achieve political or workplace goals through emotional bias (Frank Furedi, *The Culture of Fear: risk-taking and the morality of low expectation*, 1997; Barry Glassner, *The Culture of Fear: why Americans are afraid of the wrong things*, 2009).

Fear is evoked and enhanced in the public by media articulations in support of masking, social distancing, lockdowns, sanitising and vaccination -- and the threat of infectious disease. This period is witness to considerable speculation regarding the imminent collapse of global civilization, variously understood as a consequence of a failure of governance and its catastrophic consequences with respect to conflict between countries (*Mind Map of Global Civilizational Collapse: why nothing is happening in response to global challenges*, 2011). Such speculation is compounded by anticipation of the fulfillment of religious prophecies regarding "end times" scenarios.

This focus on collapse can be understood in terms of a death drive, as originally proposed by the pioneering psychoanalyst Sabina Spielrein (*Destruction as the Cause of Coming Into Being*, *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 39, 1912, 2), and adopted by Sigmund Freud (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 1920). This destructive tendency is often expressed through aggression, repetition compulsion, and self-destructiveness. It is understood as opposing the tendency toward survival, propagation, sex, and other creative, life-producing drives. This understanding has been defened by subsequent psychoanalysts such as Jacques Lacan and Melanie Klein.

Less evident is the correspondence between the death drive experienced by individuals and that at the group and societal level. The latter is implied by the study of Jared Diamond (*Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, 2005). However Freud himself developed this insight at the collective level (*Civilization and Its Discontents*, 1930) -- notably with respect to the challenges of Western civilization.

Obsolescence of cognitive modalities? Recognition has been assiduously accorded to dead religions, most obviously through the death of the gods which have been a focus for collective belief (*500 Dead Gods, Atheism: proving the negative*, 6 February 2008). More problematic are the many deities whose existence has been forgotten (*Lists of deities*, Wikipedia).

In that light it could be argued that disciplines may themselves have a form of death drive through which their mode of engagement with reality is rendered irrelevant (Carroll Quigley, *Obsolete Academic Disciplines*, 2015; *Superseded theories in science*, Wikipedia). This suggests a complement to Diamond's study: *How Disciplines Choose to Fail or Succeed*. (*Are the disciplines dead?* Institute of

Education, 3 October 2017; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*, 2003).

The argument has been discussed with respect to science (*End of Science: the death knell as sounded by the Royal Society*, 2008). A related argument has been explored as a result of the dubious complicity of science in strategic responses to the pandemic (Robyn Chuter, *The Death of Science? Empower Total Health*, 17 May 2021). The possibility can be explored in terms of limitation (John Horgan, *The End of Science: facing the limits of knowledge in the twilight of the Scientific Age*, 2015; John D. Barrow, *Impossibility: the Limits of Science and the Science of Limits*, 1998; Nicholas Rescher, *The Limits of Science*, 1999). What might be understood as driving science to its own destruction -- and what degree of panic does it evoke unconsciously for those identified with that cognitive modality?

Spielrein as a symbol? Spielrein serves to highlight the complex subtleties and symbolism of the relationships between innovative approaches to comprehension of the dynamics underlying the conventional behaviours that are the focus of the behavioural sciences. She was in succession the patient, then student, then colleague of Jung, with whom she had an intimate relationship. Spielrein had a collegial relationship with Freud and worked with and psychoanalysed Swiss developmental psychologist [Jean Piaget](#). However, predictably, her skills and insights have been much distorted and deprecated by colleagues of her own profession, as noted by Angela M. Sells (*Sabina Spielrein: the woman and the myth*, 2017).

As the originator of the concept of the death instinct, Spielrein is increasingly recognized as having been marginalized by history because of her unusual eclecticism, refusal to join factions, feminist approach to psychology, and her death in the Holocaust. Spielrein and her daughters were shot dead by a German SS death squad in 1942 as a consequence being Jews. From that perspective she could come to symbolize the unvaccinated and the fate which may be reserved for them -- if only symbolically -- as a perceived source of impurity.

Such symbolism is now all the more sensitive, and potentially relevant, in that she would have been obliged to wear the Star of David to signify her racial impurity for the regime. With current recognition by the CDC that the unvaccinated themselves constitute a pandemic in their own right (being "uncleaned"), how they come to be visibly identified is probably an issue for the immediate future. Suggestions that any such indication might be reminiscent of use of the Star of David by the Nazi regime have aroused considerable protest -- as an offence to the memory of the millions killed in the Holocaust.

The situation is all the more complex in that the unvaccinated will in future include the many millions in the developing countries who have been deprived of vaccines by the developed countries hoarding stocks -- potentially enabling a Holocaust in its own right (Maria De Jesus, *Global herd immunity remains out of reach because of inequitable vaccine distribution: 99% of people in poor countries are unvaccinated*, *The Conversation*, 23 June 2021). This is reinforcing conspiracy theories regarding a hidden depopulation agenda of far greater proportions than the Holocaust (*Conspiracy chaos: coronavirus, Bill Gates, the UN and population*, *Population Matters*, 24 May 2021).

The scenario is reminiscent of allegations of the early distribution of smallpox-infected blankets to Native Americans. The poignancy of Spielrein's much-cited poetic comment, in anticipation of her death, may come to frame such possibilities for millions -- others -- ***It too was once a human being. My name was Sabina Spielrein*** -- to be inscribed on an oak tree she planted.

Engendered panic? The prospect of death, exacerbated by the pandemic, has engendered a degree of individual and collective [panic](#) (Byron J. Good, *Culture and Panic Disorder: how far have we come? Culture Medicine and Psychiatry*, 26, 2002, 2). It can be argued that this is evident in the decision-making capacity of authorities in response to the pandemic.

It can also be argued that engendering panic, as with a culture of fear, is being adopted by some as a means of enabling social change -- thereby bypassing democratic processes and justifying the expanded emergency powers of authorities (John Tierney, *The Politics of Fear*, *City Journal*, 20 May 2020; Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, *Coronavirus: how media coverage of epidemics often stokes fear and panic*, *The Conversation*, 15 February 2020; Amy Lauren Fairchild, et al, *Why using fear to promote COVID-19 vaccination and mask wearing could backfire*, *The Conversation*, 29 January 2021).

Risk-taking and triage: an unexplored possibility? The strategic challenge of the pandemic has been widely framed in terms of war, as noted above. It is therefore curious that the primary response has effectively been to encourage the population to "cower", as separately argued (*Cowering for One's Country in the War against Coronavirus: They also serve who only cower and wait?* 2020). Arguably this is a collective demonstration of [risk-aversion](#) precluding any consideration of the [risk-taking](#) which is otherwise upheld as a necessary response in war time -- and duly honoured for the courage that individuals and communities demonstrate.

The focus of leadership in the pandemic has been on saving lives at all costs -- a strategy with disastrous economic implications in the present and in the time to come. For some the consequences are indeed comparable with war. Leadership in wartime is however renowned for its questionable tolerance of death -- whether among its own forces or among those of the enemy. The examples of World War I trench warfare and Hiroshima need little commentary, These can be understood as risk-taking, however questionable. The pattern has been evident in arenas in the Middle East.

Cultivation of risk-aversion has precluded any systematic assessment of how tolerance of risk of death might be assessed in relation to the pandemic. Despite this posture, people are indeed dying in numbers which may exceed those in some recent arenas of military conflict. There is therefore an undeclared tolerance of death -- dubiously extended to the numbers dying from COVID-related infections in developing countries, and predictably expected to die there in the immediate future. These numbers follow the "calculated" (?) risk of not allowing them access to the stocks of vaccines hoarded by developed countries.

It could therefore be argued that there is indeed an undeclared system of triage in place. [Triage](#) is indeed an unfortunate characteristic of wartime and the challenge to allocation of scarce resources. Conventionally a 5-fold classification is used to indicate the level of threat to life, irrespective of whether resources can be deployed in response. As a form of rationing, restriction of vaccination to particular age groups can be seen in this light. The effective response of developed countries to developing countries could however be understood as a

cynical application of such a classification to justify degrees of negligence.

Potentially more relevant is the manner in which risk-taking by individuals and groups has come to be penalized in the response by authorities to the pandemic. The short-term political benefits of risk-aversion have engendered an avoidance of any assessment of the consequences of acceptance of a higher level of risk -- a level characteristic of wartime. The skills of the insurance industry in that regard have seemingly not been brought into play -- despite the obvious economic impacts.

With the strategic emphasis on "cowering" appropriately, individuals and groups have been deprived of the possibility of taking levels of risks they deem appropriate -- as in wartime. Significant in those periods are distinctions between forced conscription, voluntary conscription, and the use of a lottery system to select those to be "sent to the front". There is no consideration of such options in relation to the pandemic.

With little analysis, it is assumed that those taking life-threatening risks are in all probability a threat to the wider community -- when whole countries are locked down as a result of a threat in one suburb. How might this threat be limited without the current levels of institutionalisation of risk-aversion -- with its potential implications for the psychology and culture of populations in the future? What consideration is given to enabling people to move beyond the fears reinforced by cowering (Bruce Schneier, *Beyond Fear: thinking sensibly about security in an uncertain world*, 2003; Dorothy Rowe, *Beyond Fear*, 2011).

If the pandemic is indeed to be considered a "black swan event", as would argue Nassim Nicholas Taleb (*The Black Swan: the impact of the highly improbable*, 2007), then missing is the existential requirement for groups and individuals to be able to choose to have "skin in the game", as he argues in a subsequent study (*Skin in the Game: hidden asymmetries in daily life*, 2018).

Interrelating the pandemic as symbol, as imagined and in reality

The psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan is known for developing an understanding of the relationship between symbol, imagination and reality. Strongly influenced by Freud, his controversial innovations led to his expulsion from the [International Psychoanalytic Association](#), together with his followers. Their contrasting perspective on the pandemic is therefore of relevance given the cognitive dynamics between its experience as a symbol, how it is imagined, and the reality to which people are exposed.

Quotations from Lacan of relevance to the pandemic (termed "pandemonium") featured in a presentation by Julia Evans on the occasion of the New Lacanian School of Psychoanalysis (*Jacques Lacan's sayings on or near 'pandemic'*, *Lacanian Works*, 21 June 2020), including:

- Again and again, authors addressing distinctively fetishistic phenomena speak of something through which the subject declares his relationship to sex.... We start by asking why and we immediately get into a kind of **pandemonic** chaos, with different [clinical] orientations crowding around to explain why the subject may be more or less distant from the object and feel arrested or threatened, or feel convicted. Let us first look at this structure. Here it is in the relation of the 'beyond' and the veil on which we can in some sense project ourselves, establishing for ourselves -- as imaginary capture, as the seat of desire -- this relation to a 'beyond' which is fundamental for any establishment of the symbolic relation. The descent of the ternary rhythm subject-object-beyond into the imaginary register, is fundamental for the symbolic relation (*Seminar IV : The Object Relation & Freudian Structures 1956-1957*, 30th January 1957, para 18)
- Quoting Marquis de Sade: *The existence of murderers is as necessary as plagues; without both of them everything in the universe would be upset. . . . such dissolution serves nature's purposes, since it recomposes that which is destroyed. Thus every change operated by man on organized matter serves nature much more than it opposes it. What am I saying? The service of nature requires far more total destructions . . . destructions much more complete than those we are able to accomplish....*
The death drive is to be situated in the historical domain; it is articulated at a level that can only be defined as a function of the signifying chain, that is to say, insofar as a reference point, that is a reference point of order, can be situated relative to the functioning of nature. It requires something from beyond whence it may itself be grasped in a fundamental act of memorization, as a result of which everything may be recaptured, not simply in the movement of the metamorphoses but from an initial intention. (Seminar VII : 4th May 1960 : See *Seminar VII: The ethics of psychoanalysis: 1959-1960*)

For Jacob Johanssen, the paranoid-schizoid insights of psychoanalyst Melanie Klein, are supplemented by Lacan's notion of the [Discourse of the Hysteric](#) in arguing that social media posts often express experiences, thoughts, and fantasies in a schematic manner. They reproduce a paranoid-schizoid logic characteristic of a hysteric mode of relating to an Other (e.g. the expert) that is allegedly withholding important information from the subject. . (*Social Media and Coronavirus: Paranoid-Schizoid Technology and Pandemic?* November 2020)

For Simon Western (*Covid-19: an intrusion of the real the unconscious unleashes its truth* *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 34, 2020, 4; a special issue on ecology, psychoanalysis and global warming: present and future traumas):

Covid-19 reveals our interconnectivity, how nature needs to be re-imagined beyond our 20th century perceptions of it being an outside force, something of beauty to observe and protect, or to use as a resource or to control when disruptive. The paper takes a Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective to reflect on Covid-19 as master signifier of contagion. Covid19 is an intrusion of a traumatic Real into our lifeworlds. The Real enunciates a particular truth to us; that we live in a precarious, inter-dependent connected world, undoing the hegemony and fantasy

For Leigh Tennant: *The Covid-19 Does Not Exist* (*Lacanian Review Online*, 21 October 2020)

Covid-19 ideology denies the existence of social antagonisms and is quick to claim we are all in this together -- but there is no

together! ... Day to day, we generally accept that our society is built on the open exploitation of one another and that the preservation of private property is upheld over all other forms of meaning. The body is the object of our private property, and we love the heroic scientists who protect it from all 'alterity'. We have willingly closed our bodies' borders to the Other, in the name of our *love* ... for the Other?....

My question to the alethosphere is this: why are we willing to pause our lives – indefinitely, I will add – in response to an event where we don't experience anything of its real? The only real the majority will experience (despite their clear unconscious desire for the opposite – a desire for death they must defend themselves against, which is why they were so anxious) is the non-sense of house arrest, screens and boredom....

The only leftist position I can make out, despite a complete reluctance to take a position, is a desire for the government to implement even stricter rules and for there to be even less democratic process. All in order to protect our new master, the 'victim'. This false opposition between 'health' and 'economics' will lead to destruction unless we can exceed the empirical and start talking at the level of the existential

For Gözde Kılıç: [Coronavirus as Metaphor](#) (*Lacanian Review Online*, 6 April 2020):

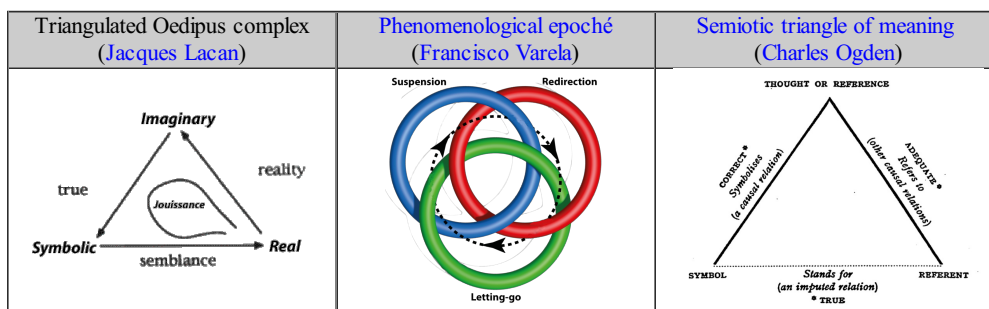
In conclusion, illness is always already a metaphor. This is what brings it into being as a discursive construct in the space of power/knowledge. Under the medical gaze, to use a Foucauldian phrase, we have become so familiar with objectifying, reifying, and externalizing illness that it is almost impossible to envisage it outside of semantics, that is outside the realm of our dreams, fantasies, and projections. In this light, I think the virus is itself a fantasy. It principally serves to quench the quest for perfect health. The belief that better days are coming once we get rid of this pandemic, that life will be wonderful when we get back to our healthy selves again, is the underlying hope that drives our "war" with the virus. Indeed, with every new virus, our desire for immortality is renewed and gains postponed satisfaction. However, as Dubos shows, this "mirage of health" is ill-fated as long as humans try to stay ahead of microbes. Just like our eternal fight with death -- a fight that we cannot win -- our struggle against illness is doomed to replay on a continuous loop with no real success, that is until one day we learn to come to terms with our mortality.

For Thomas Svolos: [Coronavirus and the Hole in the Big Other](#) (*Lacanian Review Online*, 14 March 2020):

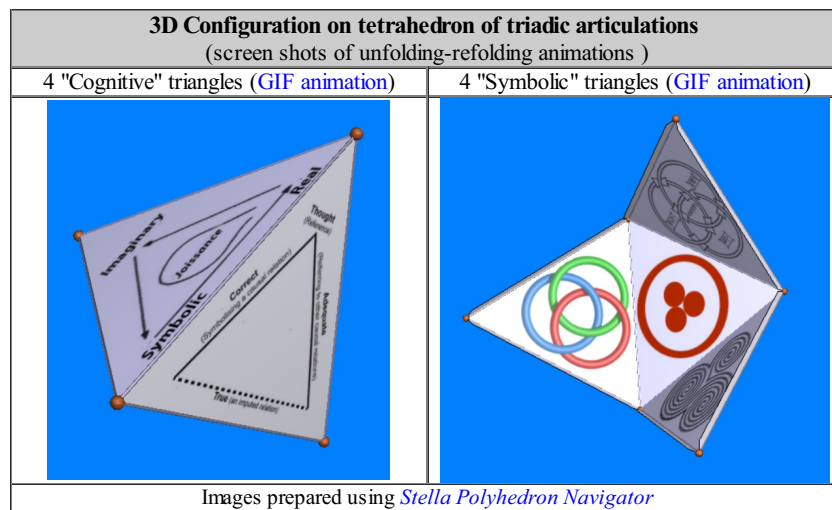
This pandemic has struck, and unlike prior epidemics and pandemics, we – scientists, physicians, the general public – do not know a lot about it.... So, we are confronted with a big lack in the Other. And, speaking beings have a difficult time tolerating this kind of lack of knowledge, this void. So, as happens in so many other situations, people fill up this hole with something, often that very thing which defines how they engage the world. In the psychoanalytic community, we call this fantasy, and we see these fantasies, these opinions, these perspectives about what is happening take so many different forms. For some, this is a catastrophic event, an apocalyptic event, leading to a great deal of fear of the unknown. For others, feeling immune from any possible impact of the Other on them, this is no big deal, something that will pass, nothing to worry about. And, then, there are those imagining agents of one sort or another as the actor behind what is happening. These individual perspectives on what is happening often say more about the person with them, obviously, than the situation that the person is describing.

Given the degree of engagement of "Lacanism" with the pandemic, the triangular schematic that is a central feature of Lacan's insight (left below) merits enrichment in the light of the current global experience. The schematic also echoes that of various much-cited patterns of significance to the study of cognition and associated experience (such as those below). The relevant controversies, presumably predictable, are usefully reviewed by Maurizio Meloni (*A Triangle of Thoughts: Girard, Freud, Lacan, Psychomedia*, 14, 2002).

That of Jacques Lacan is a version of the triangulated Oedipus complex (mother-child-father) combining Freud's theory with structural linguistics, developed from the theories of Saussure, Levi-Strauss and Jakobson (John Phillips, *Lacan and Language*). Descriptions are variously offered by Cadell Last (*Jacques Lacan and the Imaginary-Symbolic-Real* 21 February 2018; *Jacques Lacan and the Imaginary-Symbolic-Real*, YouTube, 21 February 2018).



The images above were first juxtaposed in an exploration of *Visualization in 3D of a trinity of connotations as a cognitive pill* (2017) as part of a discussion of "pill pushing" -- a metaphor of considerable relevance to the strategic response to the pandemic (*Psychosocial Transformation by "Pill Pushing"? Model-making, strategic advocacy and the myth of the "red pill"*. 2017). The visualization possibilities were subsequently further developed (*Interrelating disparate threefold cognitive patterns as a polyhedron*, 2017).



Eradication of evil in the guise of health misinformation?

Evil? From a symbolic perspective, the virus is now framed as the most fundamental evil faced by humanity -- effectively the "new black" in design terminology, for strategies dependent on the need for enemies (*Needing Evil Elsewhere*, 2001). Curiously, and perhaps significantly, science has no methodological capacity to recognize evil, despite the extent to which it is formally cited as a strategic determinant by leaders of the world (*Existence of evil as authoritatively claimed to be an overriding strategic concern*, 2016). Such claims may even feature as a form of misinformation -- as reframed in turn by those thereby held to be evil (*Framing by others of claimants of evil as evil*, 2016).

As with evil in the past (if not the present), the primary challenge is framed as its eradication, as notably evoked most recently with respect to terrorism (*Eradication as the Strategic Final Solution of the 21st Century?* 2014). The light at the end of the strategic tunnel is then the return to "normality" to be achieved by "herd immunity" -- perhaps now to be recognized as "being great again" and a form of secular "heaven". The latter interpretation is of course suspect with its implication of "business as usual" and of "we never had it so good".

Harmful content? Informed by its *Cyber Polygon* simulations, the WEF is instigating a *Global Coalition for Digital Safety* (*Advancing Digital Safety: A Framework to Align Global Action*, WEF, June 2021)

The World Economic Forum (WEF) has formed a new coalition of Big Tech executives and government officials to come up with new "innovations" to police "harmful content and conduct online." The newly-formed group, called the Global Coalition for Digital Safety, is comprised of government regulators from numerous countries -- most notably Australia and the UK -- an executive from Microsoft, and the founder of an AI-powered content moderation filter platform called Two Hat Security. (*World Economic Forum Pledges to Censor 'Health Misinformation' and 'Anti-Vaccine Content' Online*, NewsRescue, 1 July 2021)

Elaborated in collaboration with over 50 experts across government, civil society, academia, and business, this is described as a user-centric framework, with minimum harm thresholds, auditable recommendation systems, appropriate use of personal details, and adequate complaint protocols to create a safety baseline for use of digital products and services. As described by the WEF, this is intended to target and eliminate "harmful content", notably with respect to "health misinformation" and "anti-vaccine content":

One main challenge to online safety is the proliferation of health misinformation, particularly when it comes to vaccines. Research has shown that a small number of influential people are responsible for the bulk of anti-vaccination content on social platforms... The real-world impact of this is now becoming clearer. Research has also shown that exposure to misinformation was associated with a decline in intent to be vaccinated... it is clear that the media ecosystem has a large role to play in both tackling misinformation and reaching audiences to increase knowledge about the vaccine. (Cathy Li and Farah Lalani, *Why we need a global framework to regulate harm online*, WEF, 29 June 2021).

The initiative has evoked considerable critical commentary -- presumably itself to be framed in the future as misinformation (Leo Hohmann, *World Economic Forum announces creation of Orwellian 'Global Coalition for Digital Safety'*, 1 July 2021). Web sites carrying such criticism are already being "taken down" or systematically avoided by search engines.

There are major difficulties in defining what is in future to be framed with the aid of sophisticated AI technology as "harmful content". This is especially the case in the light of the attitude of science to religion -- widely deemed to be harmful in terms of the secular criteria of religion, as articulated by Richard Dawkins, founder of the *Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science* (*The God Delusion*, 2006). For some religions the reverse is of course true, with the methodology of science being intimately related to "harmful content". In the quest for consensus on the nature of "harmful content", the arguments of Dawkins can therefore be generalized (*The Consensus Delusion: mysterious attractor undermining global civilization as currently imagined*, 2011).

The issue is exemplified in the challenge of distinguishing the harm associated with anti-vaxxing "misinformation" in comparison with that of the religions singling out the exclusive merits of their particular religion and thereby deprecating the dangerously misguided nature of others (*Comparability of "Vaxxing Saves" with "Jesus Saves" as Misinformation? Problematic challenge of global discernment*, 2021;

Reframing Fundamental Belief as Disinformation? Pandemic challenge to advertising, ideology, religion and science, 2020). For science, there is of course a fundamental irony in that reference to "God" may well be a requisite in any oath taken in the presentation of scientific evidence in legal proceedings. There is little transparency on the religious beliefs of those who may be mandated to distinguish "harmful content" from a scientific perspective.

More problematic is the manner in which opposing parties in a democracy readily define each others strategies as "harmful", "dangerous" -- and even "evil". How might the Global Coalition for Digital Safety be expected to handle the mutually contradictory information such parties disseminate?

Information resources and search engines? There is already a well-documented tendency to close social media accounts and to shut down websites -- when deemed to be a source of misinformation. Less evidently such censorship may be achieved by search engines which deliberately use algorithms to avoid indexing them, thereby severely inhibiting access to them.

The effort to eradicate misinformation now extends to major sources of purportedly neutral information, as evident in specific criticism of *Wikipedia*. (Eva Bartlett, *Larry Sanger is right, Wikipedia has become the establishment thought police - just look at my entry on there RT*, 12 July 2020). As noted by Ryan Matters: *Google and*

The COVID pseudopandemic has seen internet censorship rise to an unprecedented level. The controllers and their minions are scrambling to silence anyone who dares to question the efficacy of vaccines or the existence of Sars-Cov-2 (*Wikipedia Brainwash You Internet giants cover-up for Big Pharma, suppress alternative medicine and bury inconvenient facts. OffGuardian*, 12 July 2021)

Missing from such criticism is any explicit indication whatsoever of reliable substitutes for such tools -- to be characterized as authentically neutral and objective. The implication is rather that it is the peer reviewed array of journals and books produced by corporations -- deemed reputable and beyond any criticism (which might itself then be considered to be misinformation).

Eradication? As a metaphor, the strategic commitment to eradication avoids consideration of historic failures in that regard -- most obviously with respect to evil itself as a major preoccupation of religions. Similarly evident is the failure with regard to corruption, now so dramatically evident at the highest levels of government of some countries. This is of course the case with respect to crime, especially internationally organized crime.

Etymologically the strategy derives from removal of roots -- hence its widespread application to the elimination of plant and animal pests. This is effectively extended to humans in eugenic strategies, exemplified by genocide and the Holocaust. The strategic thinking concerning the eradication of misinformation can therefore be seen as a treatment of misinformation as effectively pestilential. The infodemic is then recognized in plague terms -- a pandemic of misinformation.

Missing from such oversimplification is an objective consideration of diversity -- purportedly well-recognized by the biosciences. There is seemingly no science capable of clarifying the justification for the diversity of people and beliefs, despite the remarkable capacity to document them. Science would seem to be similarly challenged in the ability to recognize the value of a diversity of perspectives and sources of information -- other than with the purpose of seeking the elimination those that are held to be "wrong".

Science exhibits no embarrassment whatsoever at its high degree of complicity in the elaboration of "harmful content", most notably with respect to weapons of mass destruction and invasive technology. For disciplines other than science, it is its irresponsibility which merits the eradication of that mode of inquiry -- the eradication of science. In that it is comparable to religion -- and the manner in which it is framed by science.

Waste? Science has had a complex relationship to waste, visibly exemplified by the negligent disposal of waste from Antarctic research stations. It is now evident in the quantity of space debris in orbit around the Earth -- engendered by scientific undertakings, as will be the case with occupation of other planets.

Perhaps of more fundamental significance is the ease with which science condemns that which is not immediately relevant to it as "rubbish". This has not however elicited fruitful insights into the treatment of such rubbish -- other than through its elimination, questionably conceived as its annihilation. This simplistic attitude is now reflected to a degree in the treatment of individuals and their preoccupations -- used in its most extreme form as a justification for ethnic cleaning. A pertinent question is whether and how this extends to their psychosocial equivalents, such as the *Great Pacific garbage patch*, to which science has little effective response, to the extent that they are recognized.

Ironically the generation of waste is inherent in the pursuit of the advancement of knowledge as understood through scientific research. Research results quickly become outdated -- usefully recognized as accumulating in the scientific literature as waste. The problem for science as currently conceived is that it will itself come to be framed as obsolete by the future.

Relation to sex? There is a curious sense in which the eradication mindset is applied to women through the well-entrenched "woman as evil" meme -- cultivated as a consequence of menstruation (Danielle Dalechek, *A History of Blood: hysteria, taboos, and evil, Hektoen International: journal of medical humanities*, 30 January 2020), Most obviously this is obvious in the righteous exclusion of women from significant processes in society -- clubs, boardrooms, etc. Women have been effectively eradicated from "men only" societies -- such as Freemasonry. Eradication as "weeding out"?

Associated as it is with eradication, more curious is the sense in which "rooting" is slang for sexual intercourse, most notably in the macho cultures of Australasia. This raises questions as to how eradication is to be understood in relation to both rape and [penis removal](#) - whether in reality or as fantasies. For some, religions sexual intercourse is deemed to be the root of all sin, and therefore to be eradicated.

Symbolic integration of a cognitive challenge of civilization?

Disparate strategic initiatives of the pandemic as metaphors? The strategic response to the pandemic has taken what might otherwise be seen as quite disparate forms. There is a case for assuming that there is a coherence to them, whether recognized or unconscious, they merit exploration as complementary. A related assumption was previously explored with respect to the United Nations (*Systemic Coherence of the UN's 17 SDGs as a Global Dream*, 2021). In this case the shocking nature of their impact could be interpreted as a "bad dream", even a "nightmare".

The elements of the nightmare are:

- social distancing
- sanitising
- masking
- lockdown
- vaccination

They each have their separate effects on daily life, and to different degrees, but less evident is how they are to be understood together. Do they together make offer kind of experiential meaning? How might they be interrelated or configured in order to "make sense"? This is as much a challenge for the individual as for those with responsibilities for governance in these chaotic times -- if only in explaining the coherence of the seemingly chaotic strategies advocated, adopted and imposed.


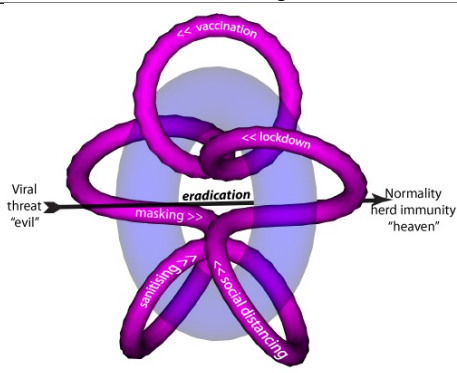
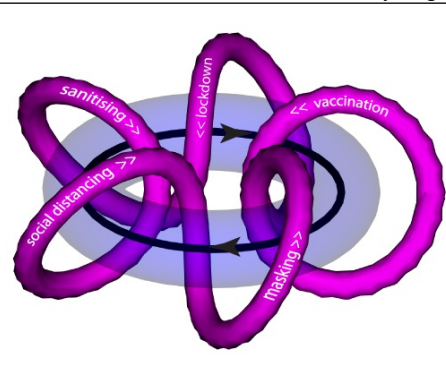

Symbolic insignia: One previous approach to this challenge has been an exploration of the symbolism of the official insignia under which such strategies were authorised (*Symbolic Insignia Indicative of Global Health: immunity passports, travel worthiness and certificates of wholth*, 2021). The latter explored possibilities of heraldic designs of logos more appropriate to the current challenge of the institutions with particular responsibility, such as the of the World Health Organization. The challenge was seen there as shifting beyond dysfunctional imagery to a systemic perspective (*Global institutionalization of one-dimensional health vs Integral connectivity*, 2021). More speculatively, given the public relations challenge, the question was how to elicit more fruitful imaginative responses (*Insignia evocative of imaginative travel: the stargate metaphor*, 2021).

As tentatively explored with respect to insignia design, it is not to be expected that the chaotic nature of the crisis and the deployment of strategic responses lends itself to any simple design. **How best to interrelate the elements of the "nightmare"?**

Configuring disparate strategies: Following from that exercise, and the arguments presented, one approach is to configure as follows what seems to be a 5-fold strategy -- consistent with traditional 5-fold patterns associated with health (*Insights from traditional health pentagrams: 5-dimensional scales?* 2021). Given the complexity as experienced, a requisite degree of convolution is to be expected in any design proposal able to "hold" the elements of the "nightmare" together.

As presented, the image in the centre frames the transformation from the threat to normality through "eradication" enabled by the 5-fold strategy -- whose elements are assumed here to be meaningfully interrelated through serpentine-like coils. Not to be forgotten in this respect is that such coiling is a central feature of the current logo of WHO (below left) and pharmacies everywhere, as with the **Bowl of Hygieia** (below left). Here the coils are presented as continuous, without distinguishing head or tail. The coiling frames a "portal", namely the strategic gateway to normality. The portal is suggestive of processes of evacuation and escape.

The alternative image on the right configures the strategic possibility somewhat differently. Whereas that in the centre implies a linear transformation from "evil" to "heaven" by eradication, in this case the emphasis is on a form of circularity whereby conventional notions of "eradication" are understood otherwise -- as a form of recycling. This is consistent with notions of sustainability and a circular economy.

Experimenting with visual representation of the coherence of the strategic response to the pandemic		
WHO logo	Eradication framed through a linear bias	Circular embodiment of eradication: recycling
		
	Development of patterns explored in <i>Symbolic Insignia Indicative of Global Health</i> (2019)	

Appropriately, if coincidentally, the 5-fold winding is indeed consistent with the 5-fold understanding of health dating from the *Hygieia* of the **Pythagoreans** , specifically echoed in the current strategic emphasis on sanitising and implicit in the other strategies. It could however be argued that the complex of strategies has now been extended to include the following (or more):

- contact tracing (via QR codes), possibly including health "passports"
- misrepresentation and data manipulation
- censorship of discourse critical of the dominant strategy

- pressure on the vaccine refuseniks

The number of "windings" in the schematics could then be increased, as illustrated in the earlier exercise (*Design of a meaningful insignia of salvatory significance*, 2021).

Toroidal living? Arguably the image on the right (above) is consistent with emerging recognition that the virus is not going to "go away" and that people will have to "learn to live with it" -- a widely-reported argument of the UK Prime Minister (*Johnson says UK must live with virus as he announces easing*, *The Independent*, 5 July 2021).

A sense of "living with it" is here suggested by the reconfiguration of the linear "eradication" strategy into circular form -- framed within a torus. Arguably the greatest attention to any sense of "being a torus" has been the focus of Jacques Lacan as a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst. His understanding in that respect is most accessibly articulated by Owen Hewitson (*From the Bridges of Königsberg: why topology matters in psychoanalysis*, *LacanOnline.com*, 9 January 2015; *Why Topology Matters in Psychoanalysis*, *LacanOnline.com*, 1 March 2015).

This understanding can be explored otherwise (*Imagining Toroidal Life as a Sustainable Alternative: from Globalization to Toroidization or back to Flatland?* (2019). That possibility is consistent with continuing reflection on the hypothesis regarding the **shape of the universe** (Sarah Wells, *The Universe Is a Giant Donut that we live inside, new research suggests*, *Vice*, 22 July 2021).

Container metaphors? It is intriguing to recognize that the strategies deployed can be depicted linearly or as curving tubes. Arguably a common feature, highlighted in the latter case, is the sense in which the strategies are effectively containers and together constitute an array of constraining containers through which attention is mobilized and focused. In this sense the strategic response to the pandemic could be interpreted as a process of "incarceration". This usefully reflects any experiential sense of psychic internment.

Foucault offers the insight that:

... such vaunted reforms as the abolition of torture and the emergence of the modern penitentiary have merely shifted the focus of punishment from the prisoner's body to his soul (*Discipline and Punish: the birth of the prison.*, 1972).

It is appropriate to note the attention now given to the container metaphor in communications, dating from the seminal cognitive linguistic approach of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (*Metaphors We Live By*, 1980). The metaphor features in the special issue on the pandemic noted above (August J. Cwik, *The technologically-mediated self: reflections on the container and field of telecommunications*, *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 66, 2021, 3). The arguments presented by Cwik could be applied to the constraining nature of the strategic communications into which individual "buy-in" is sought:

This paper contains reflections on the use of the imagination in technologically-mediated therapy and analysis. As part of the individuation process the psyche is seen as needing to adapt to new technological ways of communicating. The notion of a technologically-mediated self is posited describing a self which can only be apprehended through, and by, the use of telecommunications. This self is seen as identical to the in-person self, a subset, or superset of it. There is a revisioning of our notions of the container and the field in this work performed through technological-mediation. The need to engage the imagination in approaching this kind of work is emphasized in order to create an imaginal play-space in which the body will be deeply affected. Some thoughts on how the process of individuation might look through such analytic work is presented.

With regard to the pandemic, this could be understood as a "dangerous thing" in the light of the further development of arguments relating to the container metaphor (George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: what categories reveal about the mind*. 1987). Of some relevance is a generalization proposed by Alexander Klose (*The Container Principle: how a box changes the way we think*, 2015).

With respect to the framing of public discourse regarding the pandemic, one commentary notes the extent to which regimes seek to rehabilitate their images, seed doubt about the virus' origins, shift the blame, highlight failures in democracies, and promote authoritarianism (Nad'a Kovalčíková and Ariane Tabatabai, *Five Authoritarian Pandemic Messaging Frames and How to Respond*, German Marshall Fund of the United States, August 2020). The authors quote the following from another study by Lakoff (*Don't Think of an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*, 2004):

...frames are mental structures that shape the way we see the world. As a result, they shape the goals we seek, the plans we make, the way we act, and what counts as a good or bad outcome of our actions.

The exploration of a torus as the basis of an appropriate container for an array of strategies contrasts with the discussion paper produced by Kate Raworth (*A Safe and Just Space for Humanity: can we live within the doughnut?* Oxfam, February 2012; *A Safe and Just Space for Humanity: can we live within the doughnut?* Oxfam Discussion Papers, 2017). The paper presents a single visual framework -- shaped like a doughnut -- that represents a space within which humanity can thrive.

This doughnut-like area is defined by combining the much-debated set of 9 "planetary boundaries" with a new set of 11 social boundaries, based on the 11 dimensions of human deprivation that emerged from the issues raised by governments in their Rio+20 submissions. Oxfam's two-dimensional doughnut can be transformed into a three-dimensional torus, as previously argued (*Exploring the Hidden Mysteries of Oxfam's Doughnut: recognizing the systemic negligence of an Earth Summit*, 2012; *Transforming the world into a doughnut: a vital clarification*, 2019).

Any implication of a "portal", offered by the configuration of strategies in relation a torus, offers useful associations beyond the stargate meme to that of the "gateless gate" framed by 48 koan (*Configuring a Set of Zen Koan as a Wisdom Container: formatting the Gateless Gate for Twitter*, 2012)

Psychosexual connotations of a toroidal configuration

Especially relevant with respect to "toroidal living" is the discussion of the sexual connotations of the form of the torus in terms of "scoring" as a metaphor in ball-games and war (*Torc-bearing, Playing-ball, Scoring and Nesting*, 2019). As suggested by the images above, this is paradoxically related to the process of eradication -- especially given the intimate relation between genitalia and the annus, with the connotations of each in symbolic terms -- most notably in relation to creativity, recreation and reproduction.

This may indeed be transformed into a focus on scoring goals, as in the many ball games having as objective to get the ball into a goal -- whether a net, ring, or otherwise (*Baseball metaphors for sex*, *Wikipedia*). There are only too obvious parallels to the sexual analogue for which "scoring" is a very common metaphor -- if not "balling" (*69 Common Phrases In Sports That Sound Like Sex Terminology*, *PGP*, 30 September 2014; *The 19 Greatest Sports-Related Sex Euphemisms*, *TotalProSports*, 21 July 2010). Widely recognized in many contexts is the sense of being "scored against", typically framed as having been "fucked" -- a process determining psychosocial dynamics thereafter in the priority given to "settling old scores". Of some relevance are the number of references to people being "raped with a baseball bat" and its use in other forms of torture.

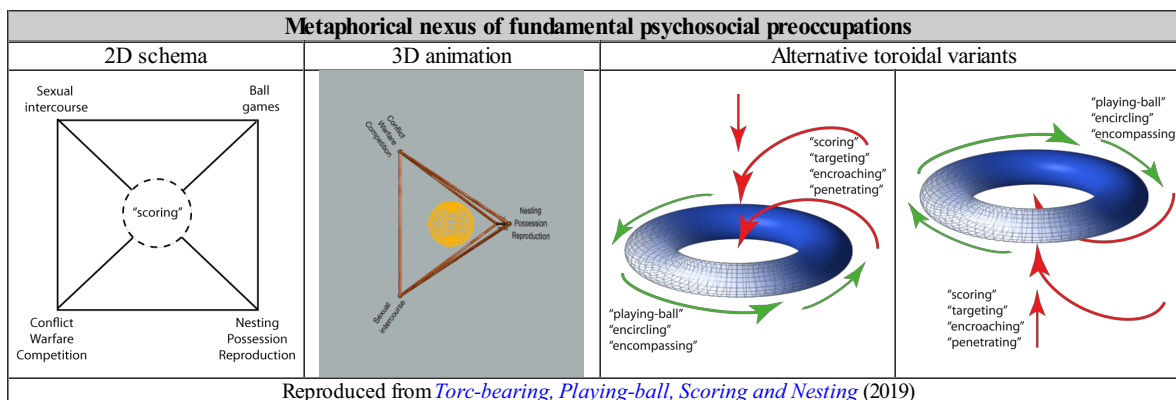
Given the manner in which sporting metaphors are also used with respect to war (scoring against the enemy), together with the sexual implications of war, this complex of associations has been variously examined and criticized:

- David G. Winter and Otto Rank: *Circulating Metaphors of Sexuality, Aggression, and Power: Otto Rank's Analysis of 'Conquering Cities and 'Conquering' Women'*, *Political Psychology*, 31, 2010, 1 pp. 1-19)
- Valentina Georgieva: *Military Language and Sexual Language (Research Work of the Russian Universities*, 54, 2015, 11)
- Kelly Oliver: *Women as Weapons of War: Iraq, Sex, and the Media* (Columbia University Press, 2010)
- Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern: *Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War?: Perceptions, prescriptions, problems in the Congo and beyond* (Zed Books, 2013)
- Lisa Wade: *War as Sexual Domination (Sociological Images*, 14 June 2008)
- Deborah Roffman: *The Power of Language: baseball as a sexual metaphor in American culture (SIECUS Report*, 19, 1991, 5)

Obvious correspondences are to be recognized between "shooting" in ball-games and metaphoric use of that term to refer to the ejaculation of sperm -- then readily to be compared to firing bullets in any conflict situation and the "transformation" they are anticipated as accomplishing in the other.

Given that context, the widespread current references to vaccination in public communication in terms of "getting a shot" merits careful attention -- especially given the related use in the drug culture of "shooting up". It is questionable whether its reframing as "getting a jab" and "no jab, no job", recalls the aggressive manner in which the baseball bat may be used.

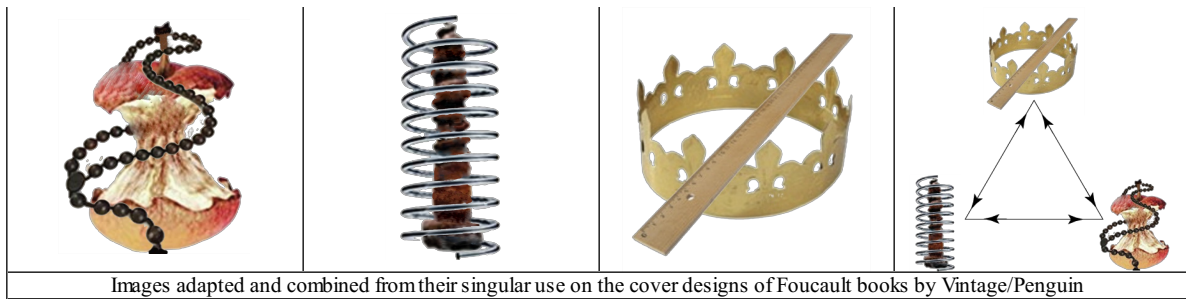
The following images were used in that earlier discussion to explore those interrelationships



The complex nexus of issues indicated in this argument have been a feature of the in-depth study of the widely cited work of Michel Foucault (*The History of Madness*, 1961; and *The History of Sexuality*, 1976). The complex interrelationships of the issues addressed, and the length of the works, has resulted in their controversial abridgement in subsequent translation and publication, as discussed by Colin Gordon (*Histoire de la folie : an unknown book by Michel Foucault*, *History of the Human Sciences*, 3. 1990, 1; *History of Madness; History of Exclusion*, 2012).

There is therefore a case for presenting that complex of insights through the strikingly provocative singular images by which the covers of the English editions have been illustrated by Penguin/Vintage. Here the individual images from various books are suggestively superimposed below in pairs -- combining the result in a final complex offering some implication of their interconnection, and the challenge to its comprehension.

Combinations and juxtapositions of perspectives relating to Foucault's <i>History of Sexuality</i>			
Apple and Rosary	Helix and Screw	Crown and Ruler	Systemic interrelationship dynamically framed?
<i>Use of Pleasure</i> and <i>Confessions of the Flesh</i>	<i>History of Sexuality</i> and <i>The Care of the Self</i>	<i>Power-Knowledge</i> and <i>Discipline and Punish</i>	



Images adapted and combined from their singular use on the cover designs of Foucault books by Vintage/Penguin

Configurative design clues from the traditional Ouroboros, Tesla and the Tokamak

Ouroboros: The [Ouroboros](#) symbol continues to be widely valued in jewellery and iconography, with many imaginative variants in torcs, pendants and clasped bracelets. Of considerable significance in this respect is its appeal as a symbol by-passing a plethora of explanations and commentary. However it is the manner in which the intertwining of its elements is explored that merits recognition of an intuitive appreciation of forms of complexity understood through symmetry. Some forms recall the widely recognized symbol of infinity with which the ouroboros is closely associated. That on the right below recalls the association with the [dream of August Kekulé](#) enabling the discovery of the structure of the benzene molecule so fundamental to organic life.



Given that fundamental significance, there is a case for exploring how it might be rendered in 3D and animated, as explored separately (*Cognitive Osmosis in a Knowledge-based Civilization: interface challenge of inside-outside, insight-outsight, information-outformation*, 2017). This included sections on:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clues to recognition of a more general pattern? Complementary visual patterns: Ouroboros, Möbius strip, Klein bottle Configuration and animation possibilities in 3D Experimental animations in 3D of the ouroboros pattern | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circular configuration of cognitive phases framing toroidal experience? To proprioceive or not to proprioceive -- is that the question? Unproprioception: demining, mine-sweeping and waste management |
|--|--|

ITER Tokamak fusion reactor: The images below (left and centre) are reproduced from that exploration of design possibilities of potential strategic significance. As expressed in dynamic form, these can be compared with the current design challenges of the *International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor* (ITER), as presented schematically in the image on the right. The arguments justifying such a comparison from a strategic perspective are developed separately (*Enactivating a Cognitive Fusion Reactor: Imaginal Transformation of Energy Resourcing (ITER-8)*, 2006). The declared ambition of ITER is to replicating the fusion processes of the Sun to create energy on Earth.

Deirdre O'Donnell *Nuclear Fusion Edges Closer: Chinese Tokamak facility can heat plasma to hotter than 6 Suns*, *Evolving Science*, 22 November 2018)

Nuclear fusion's main disadvantage, at the moment, is that it is neither stable nor reliable. The process sounds so straightforward: heat the plasma until it starts the fusion reaction, and then keep it in an ouroboros-like state that is metaphorical and also physically literal in some respects. Indeed, the more successful type of fusion reactor today is a tokamak, which is a hollow doughnut of metal and high-tech equipment intended to keep a ring of plasma flowing around it in a high-energy confinement state (or 'H-mode').

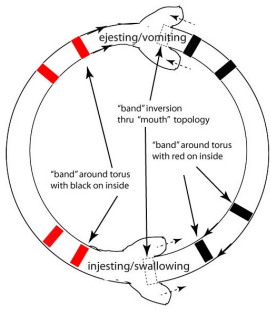
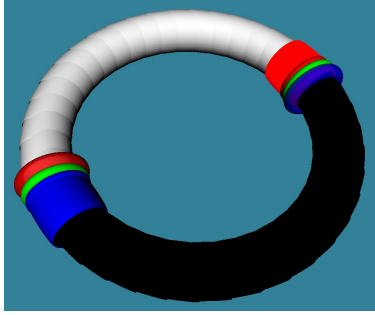
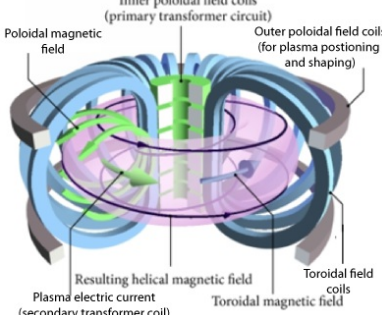
However, even the most prominent tokamaks, such as ITER in France, cannot seem to keep this idealized state of plasma going for a long time. This is because a range of important factors acts on the plasma during reactions, which can sully the process of fusion, or disrupt it altogether.

Ironically in the light of symbolism explored here, so-called "impurity snakes" pose an exceptional problem in tokamak reactors, as described by Kathy Kincade (*Taming Plasma Fusion Snakes*, *NERSC*, 24 January 2014):

One commonly observed instability is the plasma density snake, named for its corkscrew-shaped appearance. Impurity snakes have been a regular feature in every major tokamak fusion experiment of the last 25 years....

The question to be highlighted is: **does the convoluted set of strategies in response to the pandemic engender psychosocial "field effects" of which collective anxiety might be considered but one identifiable manifestation?** If configured appropriately, as tentatively indicated above, do these effectively frame a pathway beyond the crisis? Is that pathway more sustainable if cognitively

configured in the light of the design insights by which the potential of ITER is constrained?

Ouroboros pattern: design schematic	Ouroboros pattern: virtual reality animation	Nuclear fusion reactor
Highlighting some design issues and questions of directionality	Screen shot with moving "heads" and trailing "bodies" (skins non-transparent)	Schematic of toroidal and poloidal fields of a Tokamak
		
	Interactive animation: X3D, VRML. Video mp4	S. Li, H. Jiang, Z. Ren, C. Xu, CC BY 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Rotation of a magnetic field (Tesla): The question of relevance here is whether the remarkable discovery of Nikola Tesla with regard to the rotation of magnetic fields has psychosocial implications, as discussed separately (*Potential implications of alternation and rotation in psychosocial fields*, 2014) in a more general exploration (*Reimagining Tesla's Creativity through Technomimicry: psychosocial empowerment by imagining charged conditions otherwise*, 2014)

Creative insight into handling duality

Visual thinking as indicated by Tesla and by consideration thereof

Psychosocial relevance of Tesla's creative process

Imagining a method for adapting Tesla's insights to a psychosocial context

Potential implications of alternation and rotation in psychosocial fields

Insight into global dynamics through Tesla's focus on the sphere

Psychosocial insights from the electrical of War Currents -- AC versus DC

Encycling positive and negative for future sustainability

Aspects of that argument were subsequently developed (*Representation of Creative Processes through Dynamics in Three Dimensions*, 2014).

The breakthrough in Tesla's thinking with respect to alternation/rotation is eloquently described by John J. O'Neill (*Prodigal Genius: the life of Nikola Tesla*, 1968):

What Tesla discovered was a means of creating a rotating magnetic field, a magnetic whirlwind in space which possessed fantastically new and intriguing properties. It was an utterly new conception. In direct-current motors a fixed magnetic field was tricked by mechanical means into producing rotation in an armature by connecting successively through a commutator each of a series of coils arranged around the circumference of a cylindrical armature. Tesla produced a field of force which rotated in space at high speed and was able to lock tightly into its embrace an armature which required no electrical connections. The rotating field possessed the property of transferring wirelessly through space, by means of its lines of force, energy to the simple closed circuit coils on the isolated armature which enabled it to build up its own magnetic field that locked itself into the rotating magnetic whirlwind produced by the field coils. The need for a commutator was completely eliminated. (pp. 50-51)

Force-field analysis and pandemic responses

Force-field analysis: In the light of Tesla's discovery, clues to the manner in which "field effects" might be understood in psychosocial terms -- with respect to the pandemic -- are offered by the work of Kurt Lewin, held to be a founder of social psychology. His focus on force-field analysis derived from his interest in Gestalt psychology. It provides a framework for looking at the factors (*forces*) that influence social situations. It looks at forces that are either driving movement toward a goal (helping forces) or blocking movement toward a goal (hindering forces). As originally noted by Lewin (*Defining a Field at a Given Time*. *Psychological Review* 50, 1943, 3):

The increasing trend toward field theory in psychology (i.e. in variations of psychoanalysis and in theory of the conditioned reflex) makes the clarification of the meaning of field theory especially important at this time. The field theory cannot be called a theory in the usual sense for it can hardly be called correct or incorrect. "Field theory is probably best characterized as a method: namely, a method of analyzing causal relations and of building scientific constructs".

There are now a number of reference to the relevance of such analysis to decision-making. The relevance to health has been highlighted by the Australian Government's Department of Health (*Analysing your own situation for work-based learning*, 2004). Citing Cronshaw (2008) and Smartt (2018), its specific relevance has been noted with respect to the pandemic by U. Tuzun (*COVID-19: Combating the Pandemic One Year on - Street Wise or Street Science? Psychology and Behavioral Science*, 16, 2021, 2). The latter includes the following table.

<p>Forces Driving and Resisting the Continuation of COVID-19 Pandemic balanced against the Forces for Societal Change and Measures Applied to Restrain the Adverse Effects</p>

Forces for Change	Restraining Forces
Disruption to Public Services	Income Support Schemes
Disruption to Industry Sectors	Tax and Mortgage Postponement
Redundancy and Loss of Income	Business and Industry Support
Loss of Physical Social Contact	Alternative Employment Schemes
Loss of Business Activity	Free Social and Healthcare
Driving Forces	Resisting Forces
Spread Rates of Infection	Health Protective Measures
Increasing Number of Hospitalizations	Test & Trace
Increasing Intensity of Infection	Self-Isolation
Increasing Mortality Rates	Blood Plasma Donations
Slow Progress with Therapeutic Drugs & Vaccine Development & Social Care Staff	Increased Experience of Hospital
Anticipation of Protracted Vaccine Testing & Field Trials	Improved Hospital Facilities
	Low Reinfection Rates

Reproduced from : U Tuzan (*Forces Driving and Resisting the Continuation of COVID-19 Pandemic balanced against the Forces for Societal Change and Measures Applied to Restrain the Adverse Effects*, 2021)

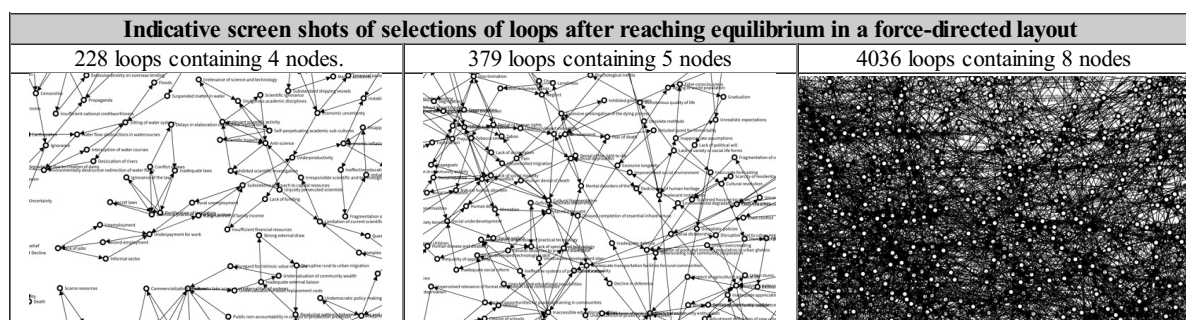
Tuzan's stresses the importance of recognizing the action components in the table under the sections of *Forces for Change and Restraining Forces* as non-pharmaceutical and socio-economic policy interventions whilst the sections of *Driving Forces and Resisting Forces* respectively represent the pharmaceutical and medical interventions. Also stressed is that:

The system component action lists are by no means exhaustive and are also subject to change in priority levels in fast evolving emergency scenarios. A further important aspect of the force-field analysis is the rate of information flow between nonpharmaceutical and pharmaceutical/medical data collection activities and their respective statistical evaluation and projection modelling of future trends

Visualization of force-fields? It is appropriate to note development of software applications known as [force-directed graph drawing](#), and specifically as [data-driven documents -- d3.js](#) (Elijah Meeks, *D3.js in Action*, 2014; Ritchie King, *Visual Storytelling with D3: an introduction to data visualization in JavaScript*, 2014). Such applications are relevant to the visualization of force-field analyses. Some representations of pandemic data have used these techniques, but seemingly not with respect to force-field analysis, despite a range of acclaimed possibilities (Neo4j, [Graph Visualization Tools](#); Brian McKenna, [Coronavirus: How data visualisation could build resilience against future pandemics](#), *ComputerWeekly*, 26 March 2020).

With respect to any understanding of the "driving" and "resisting" forces of force-field analysis, of particular relevance is the profiling of world problems in the online *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential*. This specifically interlinks over 56,000 problems on the basis of how they aggravate (or are aggravated by) other problems, or how they reduce (or are reduced by) other problems. The technique is applied to the complementary data set on over 32,000 global strategies, indicating whether a strategy alleviates (or is alleviated by) another strategy, or how a strategy constrains (or is constrained by) another strategy. Use of interactive spring-maps has been explored to visualize such data.

Consideration has been given to use of d3.js (Tomás Fülöpp, [Loop Mining in the Encyclopedia of World Problems](#), 2017). The focus on feedback loops linking a set of problems has enabled detection (and interactive display) of cycles with a given number of problems ([Vicious Cycles; Vicious cycles and loops](#)). The screen shots below are for displays of selections of loops which settle into an optimum configuration and allow for interaction manipulation.



With respect to such loops, there is the future possibility of identifying patterns of commonality, as might be suggested by general systems theory. This would then offer the possibility of their configuration in more generic patterns consistent with the argument above. Of some relevance is that the force-directed layout effectively imagines the linkages in the loops as "springs", inviting recognition of linkages in helical terms -- and as cycles of helices..

A 12-fold configuration of strategic responses to the pandemic?

Emphasis was given above to a 5-fold primary set of strategic responses to the pandemic through: masking, social distancing, lockdowns, sanitising and vaccination. The possibility of further elaboration of the set was indicated: contact tracing (via QR codes), health "passports", misrepresentation and data manipulation, censorship of discourse critical of the dominant strategy, and pressure on

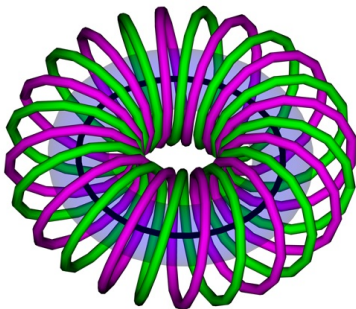
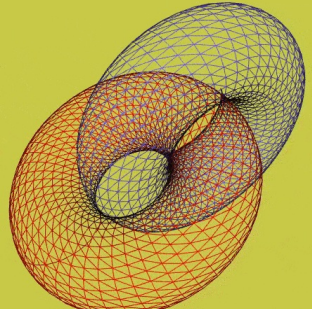
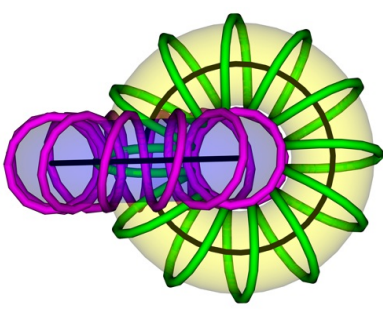
vaccine refuseniks.

It could be argued that a degree of coherence to the strategic response will be recognized only when it (finally?) takes 12-fold form, as is so frequently and inexplicably the case (*Checklist of 12-fold Principles, Plans, Symbols and Concepts: web resources*, 2011).

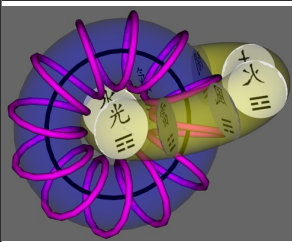
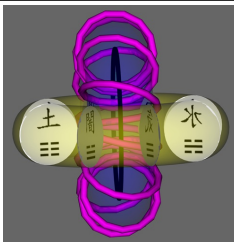
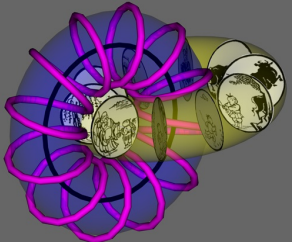
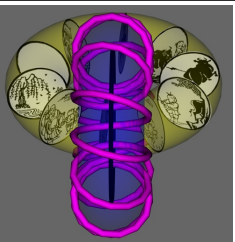
Such a possibility can be variously explored (*Enabling a 12-fold Pattern of Systemic Dialogue for Governance*, 2011; *Eliciting a 12-fold Pattern of Generic Operational Insights: recognition of memory constraints on collective strategic comprehension*, 2011; *Time for Provocative Mnemonic Aids to Systemic Connectivity? Possibilities of reconciling the "headless hearts" to the "heartless heads"*, 2018). A distinction with regard to "headless hearts" and "heartless heads" might then be usefully made with respect to vaccine acceptance and hesitancy.

Assuming a 12-fold pattern, and in the light of the Tesla approach to rotation of magnetic fields (as mentioned above), various visualizations can be explored which may be indicative of more fruitful ways to think about the force-field **dynamics** of a 12-fold complex of strategies. In the animation on the left below, two helices each with 12 windings are (counter)rotated with respect to one another. as "containers" for a torus (with possibility of modifying relative rates).

An animation of two interlocked tori can be variously discussed (*Comprehension of Requisite Variety for Sustainable Psychosocial Dynamics*, 2006; *Cognitive osmosis through topological eversion and interlocking tori -- framing outside-inside otherwise*, 2017), reproduced here in the central image (*Interlocking tori: combining the two alternative representations*, 2006). There the **red torus** has a vortex ("smoke ring") dynamic -- interlocking with the **wheel-like dynamic** of the **blue torus** (presented as wire-frame versions). That animation suggests the possibility of dynamic interlocking of two 12-fold helical windings, as shown in the image on the right below [*Due to technical limitations only the mauve helix rotates in the model*].

Animations of toroidal configurations of helices		
Animation of 2 12-fold helices	Animation of 2 intertwined tori	Animation of 2 intertwined 12-fold helices
		
Mutual rotation (X3D, WRL) Counter-rotation (X3D, WRL)	X3D and WRL models (kindly developed by Sergey Bederov of Cortona3D).	Interactive model (X3D, WRL) Video of rotation (mp4)

An earlier exercise animated the 8-fold pattern of Chinese **BaGua** trigrams within a torus, contrasted with the 10-fold **Zen Ox-herding** pattern (*Circular configuration of cognitive phases framing toroidal experience?*) as separately discussed (*Zen of Facticity: Bull, Ox or Otherwise? Herding facts and their alternatives in a post-truth-era*, 2017). The animation on the right (above) suggests that both patterns might be "engendered" experientially by the rotation of a toroidal helical winding as indicated below.

Experimental animations of cycling sets of fundamental symbols using interlocked tori			
Dynamic with 8-fold Chinese BaGua trigram pattern		Dynamic with 10-fold Zen Ox-herding pattern	
"Horizontal" perspective	"Vertical" perspective	"Horizontal" perspective	"Vertical" perspective
			
Interactive virtual reality model (X3D; WRL)		Interactive virtual reality model (X3D; WRL)	

Fro, a scientific perspective it is useful to recall the whole approach to binary coding fundamental to computers was reinforced in the thinking of to **Gottfried Leibniz** by the extension of trigrams to hexagrams as featured in the classical circle of **Shao Yong** (or *I Ching hexagram circle*). "Science" might need to manage its reactionary deprecation of the influential cultural role of such traditional articulations, especially now that China is exceeding other countries in its innovative capacity (*China extends lead over U.S. in global patents filings*, U.N. says, Reuters, 2 March 2021).

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