laetus in praesens

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Being Unmasked as Unshot and Unjabbed

a metaphysical reflection in a time of pandemic

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Introduction

There is an unprecedented global agreement among authorities about the desirability, if not the necessity, of universal vaccination. Via the media, government propaganda urges people to get their "shots" or "jabs". Health authorities echo the urgency otherwise in the quest for herd immunity as a key to a return to normality. In the absence of any *Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities*, being vaccinated is being crafted as a human obligation.

Those who hesitate are variously criticized for failing "to do the right thing". Emergency measures are announced to render such vaccination mandatory for many categories of the population. Those who actively oppose vaccination, if they have the ability to do so, are deprecated as "anti-vaxxers" and may be the subject of more powerful measures of persuasion. There is even the possibility that some may be interned -- consistent with wartime practices of the past.

The following is a reflection on the existential condition of being "unshot" and "unjabbed" -- and being "unmasked" as such. This follows from the sense in which "being shot" has fatal implications in many situations, most particularly in warfare, but possibly in civil violence. It has been an option for the treatment of conscientious objectors. Similarly "being jabbed" is a common experience in violent confrontations and disputes -- and typically as part of bullying and "being mugged" in the street. It may well be characteristic of violence in institutional and workplace settings. It is typically not fatal, but may well be harmful -- even to the point of requiring medical treatment.

Whilst personal recognition of being "unshot" and "unvaxxed" may indeed be a matter for private reflection, as with being "unjabbed", the experience is reframed when one is "unmasked" as being in that condition by one's community or in the eyes of authorities following imposition of health passports. Such unmasking may resemble the experience of being recognized as having issues of gender identity, or of having unusual inclinations conventionally deprecated. In more extreme cases the public unmasking may take the form of indictment for civil or criminal offences. Such unmasking may well be rendered public by the media, possibly with exaggerated and unwelcome implications.

The question here is however the nature of the experience of being unshot or unjabbed -- especially given the absence of any physical evidence. What implications does it have for one's sense of identity and of being? If being shot can confirm identity in a community and in society, does being unshot call this possibility into question in a radically fundamental manner -- even to the point of recalling the contrasts famously explored by Jean-Paul Sartre (*Being and Nothingness: an essay on phenomenological ontology*, 1943).

Is there a sense in which it is becoming impossible to "be" without being "shot" -- possibly evoking the famous question framed by William Shakespeare: *To be, or not to be that is the question*? The exploration is complicated by the degree to which "shot" features as a

metaphor in many domains which have borrowed from its obvious military connotations. This is evident in its use with respect to vaccination, to stimulants, to initiatives, to photography -- as with related use of "shooting" and "target". Who is not thereby entangled cognitively in a militaristic confrontation with reality -- especially in a period in which discourse regarding the pandemic has become an arena of memetic warfare? (*COVID-19 as a Memetic Disease -- an epidemic of panic*, 2020).

Such questions acquire new relevance in the light of the catastrophic upshot in August 2021 to the decades-long intervention in Afghanistan to which the best of Western military strategy has been applied at a cost of over $2 trillion and many lives. Under the leadership of a succession of US generals, each general had been given the opportunity to "have a shot" at curtailing and suppressing the Taliban. With the pandemic framed as a war, and COVID-19 as the "new Taliban", is the same unimaginative style of thinking now only too evident -- with no alternative considered? **Does global governance ever imagine the possibility of a Plan B?**

Connotations of "shot" as a complex metaphorical nexus

Memetic warfare: The problematic use of military metaphors has been reviewed separately (*Enhancing Sustainable Development Strategies through Avoidance of Military Metaphors*, 1998). Their use can be understood as a feature of information warfare and propaganda (C. J. Hopkins, *The Propaganda War (And How to Fight It)*, *Consent Factory*, 18 July 2021l *The Propaganda War* (Part II), *OffGuardian*, 18 August 2021). Potentially more intriguing at this time are the efforts to reframe reality through the use of such metaphors in memetic warfare (*Missiles, Missives, Missions and Memetic Warfare*, 2001; *Information, misinformation and trends -- as spikes in memetic warfare?* 2020).

Instances of use of metaphors in this way -- from one perspective or the other -- are evident in the examples offered by Vincent Iannelli (*Vaccine Analogies and Metaphors*, *Vaxopedia*, 16 October 2018; *Bad Vaccine Analogies*, *Vaxopedia*, 12 February 2020). These can be seen as "shots" in a debate -- in memetic warfare. A notable feature of the exchange is the comparison made by the "unshot" of inoculation as rape -- emphatically denied and dismissed as misrepresentation by those promoting the process, as might be expected. With the increasing recourse by authorities to mandatory vaccination, the absence of consent erodes the credibility of any denial -- as in cases when consent is evoked under duress ("no jab, no job"; "no jab, no travel", etc).

The focus here is however on the wider variety of connotations of "shot" and their extension to "shooting". A point of departure is recognition of the role of gun metaphors (*Loaded Language: the gun metaphors that pervade our everyday slang*, *Washington Post*, 18 April 2013; *Gun Metaphors Deeply Embedded In English Language*, *NPR*, 19 March 2013). The latter notes:

> Gun-oriented language is so pervasive in American English that even Vice President Joe Biden, in a recent press conference about curbing gun violence, discussed "shooting" for a given deadline and the lack of a "silver bullet."

This is suggestive of the degree to which **recourse to "shot" is a cognitive reflex in engagement with otherness of any kind**, especially when framed as a threat. Given the adage, *if all you have is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail*, "shooting" of some kind is a natural reaction -- a default response, and appreciatively crafted as such.

The strategic recourse to universal vaccination merits exploration in this light. Authorities have tended to imply, even explicitly, that **There is no Plan B**. This posture recalls another adage: *Shoot first and ask questions after*. The limitations of this perspective are tragically highlighted by the current outcome of this thinking in Afghanistan (Ray McGovern, *Hold the Generals Accountable This Time*, *Information Clearing House*, 15 August 2021; *Transforming the Unsustainable Cost of General Education: strategic insights from Afghanistan*, 2009).

Curiously, since it is framed as a war, generals are even being confidently appointed in some countries to orchestrate the process of universal vaccination -- and the handling of the"unshot". The appropriateness is beyond question.

Metaphorical borrowing: As the device through which "shots" are aimed and empowered, use of "gun" as a metaphor is evident with respect to resources ("outgunned"), sport, proposals ("bullet points"), high energy physics (experimental "shots"), sex (slang reference to penis), tools (nail gun).

It is readily evident how health authorities have borrowed such metaphorical vocabulary from the military. Some forms of vaccination needle are described as guns -- through which "shots" are delivered (most obviously by veterinarians). In designing health "campaigns", appropriate "targets" are necessarily envisaged. Ironically in the case of vaccination, human arms may be framed as targets -- with little recognition of their relation to arms manufacture, and to the "arms race" towards "shots-for-all".

As with sport, business makes extensive use of such metaphors, especially targets. The vocabulary has been adapted to all aspects of photography and film-making. Perhaps more curious is the use of "shots" in serving liquor (in a shot glass), and the use of "shooting up" with respect to drugs.

Variety of uses of "shot"

As the focus of a complex nexus conditioning militaristic engagement with reality. as yet to be determined is how extensive are the metaphorical connotations of "shot". Clearly there are extensions to:

- "targets" (*Implication of circular configuration of targets*, 2021),
- "bullets" and "missiles" (*Missiles, Needles, Missions, Rifles, Projects, Bullets*, 2021)
- stimulants and drug (ab)use

The following are presented in no particular order, leaving the challenge for a later stage as to how they might be presented in a mind

map or semantic map.

- Shot as solution:
  - as in "best shot" in resolving any challenge. "Shot" is thereby framed as an answer -- in argument or in practice -- leaving unclear the question to which it is a response. Is vaccination the "best shot" of global governance?
  - as in simple agreement on resolution of a problem -- most obviously assassination and "taking out" leadership of any opposition
  - as in having "only one shot", whether in making a good first impression, or in many forms of hunting
  - possibly understood as using a "silver bullet" -- as vaccines have been imagined to be by the highest authorities
- Shot as evaluation of performance:
  - as in appreciation of a "good shot' and those esteemed as a " fine shot" -- or a "top gun"
- Shot as test or trial:
  - as discussed below with respect to rites of passage, most obviously with the "first shot" in learning to shoot
  - as with "have a shot at it", or "take a shot", blurring the distinction between the usual meaning of shooting a gun, its metaphorical meaning of seizing a chance, and its pun meaning of consuming alcohol
  - as in marketing with a "mail shot"
  - possibly taking the form of a "shot in the dark"
  - overshoot, as with an aiming failure or misjudgement
- Shot as ensuring health and well-being:
  - especially with respect to vaccination as a guarantee of health (or the illusion thereof), with "getting a shot" upheld as beneficial both for the recipient and for the community
  - as with having "had your shots"
- Shot as stimulant:
  - as in "shot in the arm"
  - as in liquor consumption in a shot glass (whether a single "shooter", or a double), with quantities of the same order as a vial of vaccine
  - as with in drug use and "shooting up"
- Shot as termination and closure:
  - as an indication of exhaustion ("I am shot")
  - as an indication of failure ("he is shot"), namely as deprecation of a "loser"
  - as an indication of fatality and death ("he has been shot")
  - possibly indicative of end of contract, or being no longer in the loop
- Shot down, recalling destruction of planes and missiles:
  - as with an idea or its proposers having been "shot down", namely as a form of rejection
- Shot in a sexual context:
  - as with male infertility described as "shooting blanks" or having "no shots left"
- Shot as fragmentation, and recalling the pellets of a shotgun:
  - as in "shot to pieces" or "shot full of holes"
- Shot in photography, visual media and shooting film:
  - variety of shots, and the poses potentially required (Kelsea Davis *How to Create Powerful Opening Shots — It's Easier Than You Think StudioBinder*, 24 February 2020; *The Complete HSC English Visual Techniques Cheat Sheet Art of Smart*)
- Shot as control:
  - Ramzy Baroud: *US Foreign Policy Adrift: Why Washington No Longer Calling the Shots* (*Scoop*, 9 August 2021)
  - Rebecca Weisser: *Waging the War on Covid: masked pharmocrats calling the shots* (*Spectator Australia*, 7 August 2021)
  - riding shotgun, namely to claim the front passenger seat of a car -- reminiscent of the process in war of a person shooting out the window at enemies.
- Shot as having spiritual implications -- even with God as a form of immunization against evil (religion as opium of the people) :
  - as reviewed in *Immunizations and Religion* (Vanderbilt University Medical Center)
  - Gordana Pelčić, et al: *Religious exception for vaccination or religious excuses for avoiding vaccination* (*Croatian Medical Journal*. 57, 2016, 5)
  - Jan Hoffman: *Clergy Preach Faith in the Covid Vaccine to Doubters* (*The New York Times*, 14 March 2021)
  - Rebecca Randall: *Not Worth a Shot: Why Some Christians Refuse Vaccinations on Moral Grounds* (*Christianity Today*, 26 April 2019)
  - Pascal Sacré: *The Specter of Vaccine Fundamentalism: Bowing Down and Serving the "God of Vaccines"* (*Global Research*, 18 August 2021)
  - Pope Francis: *"Thank God we have vaccines" – Pope calls for vaccination*, *Prime Time Zone*, 18 August 2021; *Pope Francis backs COVID-19 vaccination as an 'act of love' in new video AP*, 18 August 2021)
  - *Anglican Bishop encourages vaccination: "God performs ... miracles through science"* (*Valvoline*, 8 March 2021)
  - *Is the COVID-19 Vaccine the Mark of the Beast?* (*CrossWalk*, 4 August 2020)
  - *Why can't science and vaccines be gifts from God?* (*Los Angeles Times*, 16 August 2021)

As indicated earlier, use of "shot" is necessarily closely related to metaphorical use of "shooting", including:

- shooting up
- shoot first, aim later
- shoot from the hip

- shoot oneself in the foot
- shooting the messenger

Given the relation between "shot" and "pill" as alternative forms of medication, also of relevance are arguments relating to their promotion (*Psychosocial Transformation by "Pill Pushing"? Model-making, strategic advocacy and the myth of the "red pill"*, 2017).

In addition to the military and gun enthusiasts, it might then be asked **what proportion of the population is (not) cognitively entangled in the vocabulary of shots and shooting**, including: sport, business, entertainment, photography and toys.

Groupthink sustaining a "shot" mindset in a period of pandemic

Arguably those entangled within the bubble of a shot-reflex are characterized by a form of groupthink -- necessarily psychologically immune to alternative possibilities, as clarified by the following:

- Irving L. Janis: *Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign-policy Decisions and Fiascoes* (Houghton, Mifflin, 1972).
- P. Kowert: *Groupthink or Deadlock: When do Leaders Learn from their Advisors?* (State University of New York Press, 2002)
- M. Schafer, et al: *Groupthink versus High-Quality Decision Making in International Relations* (Columbia University Press, 2010)
- Cass R. Sunstein, et al: *Wiser: Getting Beyond Groupthink to Make Groups Smarter* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2014).

It is appropriate to recall the role of groupthink in justifying the questionable US-led intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan:

- Dina Badie: *Groupthink, Iraq, and the War on Terror: explaining US policy shift toward Iraq* (*Foreign Policy Analysis*, 6, 2010, 4)
- A. Mcqueen: *A Groupthink Perspective on the Invasion of Iraq* (*Semantic Scholar*, 2005)
- Fahmi Masdah: *The US invasion of Iraq: a symbiotic model of groupthink and bureaucratic politics* (*Medium*, 6 November 2018)
- John Maszka: *Groupthink or Gross Incompetence: the 2003 Invasion of Iraq* (6 June 2008)
- Vilde Rodin: *Unknown Knowns: a groupthink model on the U.S. decision to go to war in Iraq* (*E-International Relations*, 25 July 2015)
- Sharifullah Dorani: *The Impact of Groupthink on Decision Making Case Study: the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars* (*CESRAN International*, 25 October 2019)

The challenge of groupthink has been variously raised with respect to the current strategic response to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Ari R Joffe: *COVID-19: Rethinking the Lockdown Groupthink* (*Frontiers in Public Health*, 26 February 2021)
- T. Luis: *Covid1984: The Groupthink Pandemic: the world we live in* (6 July 2020)
- Sean Heneghan, et al: *Leadership in COVID-19: the dangers of groupthink in crisis leadership* (*The Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine*, 26 May 2020)
- Stephen Reicher, et al: *Blaming Covid mistakes on 'groupthink' lets the government off the hook* (*The Guardian*, 2 June 2021)
- Athif Shakoor: *Groupthink and its potential to cause injury and hurt during a pandemic* (*FT.lk*, 13 November 2020)\

Being "shot" as a rite of passage?

Many cultures have long had rites of passage -- possibly involving several stages of initiation (*Liminality - Rites of Passage*, Arnold van Gennep, These maybe somewhat less evident and more subtle in modern societies -- or framed otherwise. Arguably a shot or a jab is now becoming recognizable as a form of rite of passage (Amanda C Cohn, et al, *Immunizations in the United States: a rite of passage*, *Pediatric Clinics of North America*, 52, 2005, 3; Stephanie Salmons, *A New Rite of Passage? Teens opt for vaccinations in the hope of returning to 'normal'*, *Hawaii Tribune-Herald*, 25 April 2021; *Guidance on Vaccines*, *Rite of Passage*). It has even been suggested that the pandemic is itself a rite of passage (Erik Assadourian, *Is COVID-19 a Collective Rite of Passage?* 17 April 2020).

There is therefore a case for comparison of a shot with:

- religious male circumcision
- religious female circumcision
- scarification / duelling scars
- ritual body piercing
- tattoos

- castration
- ritual amputation (*Yubitsume*)
- foot binding
- hazing
- "taking a bullet"

These may in turn be compared to loss of virginity -- metaphorical or otherwise -- whether for females or males. Far more problematic are situations in which this is done without consent, namely as rape -- again whether male or female. This in turn may be compared to being in a fight -- and being beaten up.

Again there are situations in which harassment and molestation by elders may be framed in this light, especially in the implied obligation to learn how to handle it in the "real world". Of relevance are the various explorations of symbolic wounds and psychic wounds (Bruno Bettelheim, *Symbolic Wounds; puberty rites and the envious male*, 1962; R. Ludvico, et al, *Symbolic or Not-so-Symbolic Wounds: the behavioral ecology of human scarification*, *Ethology and Sociobiology*, 16, 1995, 2; Allen Meek, *Media Traumatization, Symbolic Wounds and Digital Culture*, *CM Komunikacija i mediji*, 38, 2016, 11; Mary Watkins and Helene Shulman, *Psychic Wounds of Colonialism and Globalization*, 2008).

Some of these rites of passage have as their intention or effect, to "break the spirit" of the person, when there is any implication of its

independent nature. They are then to be understood as ensuring conformity to the community norm -- effectively a process of dumbing down, potentially exemplified by indoctrination and inoculation.

With respect to being effectively "shot", of further concern is the wider significance of "deflowering" when framed as a rite of passage, given its collective implications, most notably for any culture or civilization, as argued separately (*Flowering of Civilization -- Deflowering of Culture*, 2014).

Identity of the "shot" and the "jabbed" in a community?

Given the choice of metaphor, the future may consider it extraordinary that the global consensus of authorities with respect to universal vaccination involves the requirement that people get "shot" with the complicity of health authorities -- even multiple times, if not regularly. This could well be described as effectively a strategic endeavour to "shoot" or "jab" a high proportion of the population of the world in an effort to achieve herd immunity.

Ironically this could be understood as a global exercise in self-harm -- even as a strange form of self-sacrifice, or one of civilizational self-immolation (Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, 2005). It could be recognized as somewhat reminiscent of the arguments made in 1978 to the population of the Jonestown community at which 918 people notoriously committed "revolutionary suicide".

Having been "shot" or "jabbed" multiple times -- having received a "shot" -- are people to be perceived as having been "wounded" in some symbolic or psychic manner? (Tiger Webb, *The COVID-19 pandemic has seen few words loathed as much as 'jab'* ABC News, 19 April 2021).

More problematic, given the fatal connotations of "being shot", are people then to be considered "dead" -- possibly as the living dead? To the extent that rites of passage seek in some measure to break any "spirit of individuality", to what extent does this engender some form of soullessness? How is this to be distinguished from the widespread preoccupation with the emergence and prevalence of so-called zombies? How does having "received a shot", and having been "shot" or "jabbed" several times, transform one's sense of identity?

The question is especially pertinent when it is framed as "doing the right thing" for the community. Some sense of this is evident from the shared experience of war veterans, especially the wounded and the physically disabled, who have put themselves on the line for their country. Such veterans include many who continue to suffer post-traumatic stress disorder. Will any equivalent be evident in the case of the "shot"? Will some experience a form of psychic wound -- as a feature of the experience of "Long COVID"?

As the major proportion of the global population, if vaccination achieves a degree of universality, is there a sense in which the shot and the jabbed constitute a population of walking wounded?

Potentially more problematic may be the experience of health workers and authorities who framed the pro-vaccination narrative and ensured the worldwide implementation of experimental jabs-for-all -- if the program comes to be perceived as entirely misconceived and abusive. The aftermath of the Nazi endeavour may then offer parallels -- both with respect to its condemnation (according to the Nuremberg Code) and the immunity obtained by many, as well as through their redemption.

Community perception of the "unshot" and "unjabbed"?

The question here is how avoidance of these processes -- by whatever means -- may be experienced as comparable to being unshot or unjabbed. By comparison, in a community which expects people to experience rites of passage of some particular form, what is the implication for the sense of identity of an:

- uncircumcised person, where circumcision or genital modification is considered a normal transition
- unscarred person, where scarification is a mark of identity and its acquisition within a community
- untattooed person, where a tattoo (like a scar) is a mark of identity within a community
- unpierced person, where piercing is a vital mark of identity
- unhazed person, where submitting to hazing is considered a normal requirement for recognition as a member of a workplace, academic institution or military unit
- unharassed person, where seniors in a community are deemed to have a right (*droit de seigneur*) to harass those seeking membership of the community -- potentially taking the form of molestation and rape, thereby framing the status of the unraped and unmolested
- unbeaten person, where (as with hazing) a beating by an elder is a mark of recognition of community leadership and its acceptance
- unwounded person, where membership of a gang (at least) is indicated, and confirmed, by having been wounded -- even "taken a bullet" -- or possibly with the reverse requirement of wounding or killing another (as a particular indication of engagement and commitment)

In a religious context such processes may be understood as a form of confirmation following indoctrination -- ensuring people are spiritually "clean" and "healthy" rather than "unclean" and "unhealthy". The processes can be understood as assimilation and acculturation, thereby framing questions regarding the sense of identity of the unassimilated, unconfirmed, and uncultured -- even the unbelievers -- and how they are perceived in turn by the community. This may be understood as the capacity to "take it".

Science fiction has evoked widespread insight into assimilation by the Borg (of the *Star Trek* fictional universe) into the hive mind -- the "Collective". This has been otherwise explored through *The Matrix* (1999).

The "unshot" as the archetypal outsider -- the "leprous" unbeliever?

Heroes and Heroines: It is strange to note what might be considered the contrast between archetypal outsider extremes, namely the hero and the anti-hero. In a period of lockdown, the population is encouraged to cower at home, as separately argued (*Cowering for One's Country in the War against Coronavirus: they also serve who only cower and wait?* 2020). Rather than being encouraged, courageous risk-taking is framed as highly irresponsible, against the interests of the community, and may be severely penalized.

In wartime, it is the hero who takes unreasonable risks and is honoured thereafter. Fictional depictions frame the hero as both unjabbable and unjabbed -- typically an expert in the martial arts who can take on all-comers and triumph -- emerging unjabbed and unblemished (*Lists of superheroes*, *Wikipedia*). There may however be wounds upheld as honourable.

Anti-heroes: By contrast the anti-hero, disparaged and rejected by the community, embodies the role of outsider otherwise -- and may embody wounds perceived as repugnant and even dangerous. The anti-hero is a natural scapegoat -- potentially to be a focus for community blame and any viable processes of exclusion (*List of fictional antiheroes*, *Wikipedia*). With respect to that list, the characteristics include the following:

- imperfections that separate them from typically heroic characters (selfishness, ignorance, bigotry, etc.)
- lack of positive qualities such as "courage, physical prowess, and fortitude", and "generally feel helpless in a world over which they have no control"
- qualities considered dark traits, usually belonging to villains, (amorality, greed, violent tendencies, etc.) that may be tempered with more human, identifiable traits that blur the moral lines between the protagonist and antagonist.

For Charles Eisenstein (*Mob Morality and the Unvaxxed*, *Substack*, 2 August 2021):

> The original sacrificial crisis -- the greatest threat to early societies -- was escalating cycles of violence and retribution. The solution was to redirect the vengeance away from each other and, in violent unanimity, toward a scapegoat or class of scapegoats... In other words, what we rationalize in the language of justice and deterrence is actually a blood ritual, in which a person, whether guilty or not, becomes a symbol...
>
> By the same token, it mattered little that Afghan villagers or Iraqi politicians had no culpability for 9/11; nor did it matter that bombing them would have no practical effect on future terrorism (except to further inflame it). Obviously, the United States was using 9/11 as a pretext to accomplish larger geopolitical aims. Yet it worked as a pretext only because of broad public agreement that "something must be done.".
>
> Not just any victim will do as an object of human sacrifice. Victims must be, as Harding puts it, "in, but not of, the society." That is why, during the Black Death, mobs roamed about murdering Jews for "poisoning the wells." The entire Jewish population of Basel was burned alive, a scene repeated throughout Western Europe.... Scapegoats needn't be guilty, but they must be marginal, outcasts, heretics, taboo-breakers, or infidels of one kind or another. If they are too alien, they will unsuitable as transfer objects of in-group aggression. Neither can they be full members of society, lest cycles of vengeance ensue. If they are not already marginal, they must be made so....
>
> Aside from criminals, who today serves as the representative of ... "disorder", "social chaos", and "breakdown of values" that seem to be overtaking the world? ... **defying left-right categorization is a promising new scapegoat class, the heretics of our time: the anti-vaxxers. As a readily identifiable subpopulation, they are ideal candidates for scapegoating.**
>
> It matters little whether any of these pose a real threat to society. As with the subjects of criminal justice, their guilt is irrelevant to the project of restoring order through blood sacrifice (or expulsion from the community by incarceration or, in more tepid but possibly prefigurative form, through "canceling"). All that is necessary is that the dehumanized class arouse the blind indignation and rage necessary to incite a paroxysm of unifying violence. *[emphasis added]*

Outsider: The role and significance of the outsider has notably been explored in the best-selling study by Colin Wilson (*The Outsider*, 1956) and its sequels. As described by *Wikipedia*:

> The book is structured in order to mirror the Outsider's experience: a sense of dislocation, or of being at odds with society. These are figures like Dostoyevsky's *Underground-Man* who seem to be lost to despair and non-transcendence with no way out.
>
> Characters are then brought to the fore (including the title character from Hermann Hesse's novel *Steppenwolf*). These are presented as examples of those who have insightful moments of lucidity in which they feel as though things are worthwhile/meaningful amidst their shared, usual, experience of nihilism and gloom. Sartre's *Nausea* is herein the key text – and the moment when the hero listens to a song in a cafe which momentarily lifts his spirits is the outlook on life to be normalized.

Murray Ewing offers a valuable list of the literary works discussed by Colin Wilson (*List of works discussed in The Outsider*), with links to online versions, where available). As thematically clustered by Ewing, the authors include:
- *The Country of the Blind*: Henri Barbusse, H. G. Wells, Jean-Paul Sartre
- *World without Values*: Albert Camus, Ernest Hemingway, Harley Granville-Barker
- *The Romantic Outsider*: Hermann Hesse
- *The Attempt to Gain Control*: T. E. Lawrence, Vincent Van Gogh, Vaslav Nijinsky
- *The Pain Threshold*: William James, T S Eliot, Friedrich Nietzsche
- *The Question of Identity*: Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky
- *The Great Synthesis...*: Fyodor Dostoevsky, Thomas Mann
- *The Outsider as Visionary*: George Fox, William Blake

Unbelievers as framed by religion? As highlighted by vaccine hesitancy and the associated debate, of particular significance is the problematic role of the "unshot" as unbelievers in the mainstream narrative regarding the vital need for universal vaccination -- "Jabs-for-all by 2022"? This strategy follows years of promises by UN agencies for: "food for all", "education for all", "jobs for all", "literacy for all", "health for all", "water for all", "justice for all", "peace for all", etc -- many of which were indicated as being "by the year 2000".

Religions have been extremely preoccupied with the challenge of unbelievers (Andrew Wheatcroft, *Infidels: a history of the conflict between Christendom and Islam*, 2005).

- *Christianity*: The term infidel was used by Christians to describe those perceived as the enemies of Christianity. In modern literature, the term infidel includes in its scope atheists, polytheists, animists, heathens and pagans. A willingness to identify other religious people as infidels corresponds to preference for orthodoxy over pluralism.
- *Islam*: Kafir is the corresponding term in Islam, namely a person who disbelieves in God as per Islam, or denies the authority of God, or rejects the tenets of Islam. Various types of unbelievers as well as types of disbelief
- *Judaism*: Jewish heresy refers to those beliefs which contradict the traditional doctrines of Rabbinic Judaism, including theological beliefs and opinions about the practice of *halakha* (Jewish religious law). Jewish tradition contains a range of statements about heretics, including laws for how to deal with them in a communal context, and statements about the divine punishment they are expected to receive.
- *Hinduism*: Hindu scriptures indicate zero tolerance for unbelief. It is indicated that those rejecting the *Vedas* may be put to death. Discourse and contact with unbeliever should be avoided (*Unbelievers in Hinduism*, 6 October 2016)

Ironically it is of course the case that the believers in one religion are framed as unbelievers by the others -- and necessarily to be abhorred as such, with potentially fatal outcomes.

A somewhat similar concern has been evident with respect to belief in the ideologies of capitalism, communism, socialism, and the like -- exemplified by attitudes to anarchism. For those experiencing themselves as outsiders it may however be far from the case that they are "unbelievers" in any definitive static sense. Rather they may be existentially challenged by the implications for identity of the process of belief, what to believe, how and why.

Curiously it could be argued that it is science, despite claiming to have superceded religion, that is especially complicit in enabling processes engendering the "shot". As with religion, science is especially deprecating of alternative cognitive modalities, notably those framed as pseudosciences. These and other disciplines are then to be recognized as the unbelievers of science -- and as such worthy of extreme abhorrence.

Unbelievers as lepers -- the achetypal stigma? Since publication of Colin Wilson's seminal clarification from a philosophical perspective, of particular relevance to popular appreciation of the role of the outsider has been the remarkable appeal of the multi-volume mythopoetic series by Stephen Donaldson (*The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant: the unbeliever*, 1977-2013).

The main character of *The Chronicles* is Thomas Covenant, an embittered and cynical writer, afflicted with leprosy and shunned by society -- is an outcast. In this pandemic period, given the historic significance of leprosy, the fictional exploration of that character's interaction with society offers a range of valuable insights into the role and psychological condition of the "unshot" -- most obviously those condemned as "anti-vaxxers".

With respect to the pandemic and its orchestration, the titles of the volumes of *The Chronicles* are indicative of ways in which the experience of the pandemic could be imaginatively reframed by many alienated by the sterility of the current mainstream narrative:

- *Lord Foul's Bane* (1977)
- *The Illearth War* (1978)
- *The Power That Preserves* (1979)
- *The Wounded Land* (1980)
- *The One Tree* (1982)
- *White Gold Wielder* (1983)
- *The Runes of the Earth* (2004)
- *Fatal Revenant* (2007)
- *Against All Things Ending* (2010)
- *The Last Dark* (2013)

In the midst of the pandemic -- an "Illearth War" indeed -- it could be argued that there is no lack of imaginative speculation on social media as to the identity of "Lord Foul" and to the challenges faced by the "Wounded Land" and "Against All Things Ending".

The stigma attached to the disease of leprosy persisted into the Middle Ages -- and is, to a lesser extent, still present today. This was accompanied by a desire to separate those afflicted from the rest of society. Leprosariums sprang up all over medieval Europe. Lepers lived in a community with other lepers until they either got better or died. This was the only way that people knew how to contain the spread of the contagious forms of leprosy.

There have been indications since 2016 that the "unshot" may well be similarly confined to internment camps -- following the wartime playbook for the handling of suspected enemies (Vincent James, *Mass Internment Camps for the Unvaccinated being discussed by the CDC and DHS*, EarthNewspaper, 13 August 2021; *UN Setting Up Massive Internment Camp System for the Un-vaccinated*, *Speaking about News*, 29 July 2021; Ray Flores, *Internment for the Unvaccinated*, 25 October 2017).

Leprosy is a focus of considerable attention in the *Bible* (*Leprosy in the Bible*, Bible Study Tools; *21 Bible Verses about Leprosy*, *Knowing Jesus*; Alan L. Gillen, *Biblical Leprosy: Shedding Light on the Disease that Shuns*, *Answers in Genesis,* 10 June 2007; Austin Cline, *What Does the Bible Say About Leprosy and Lepers?* Learn Religions, 19 August 2018).

Given current worldwide regulations regarding social distancing, **it is somewhat extraordinary to note the indication that a leper was not allowed to come within 6 feet (1.8 metres) of any other human**, including his own family. As noted in *Cleansing of the Leper* (*Never Thirsty*, Like The Master Ministries):

> In the book of *Leviticus*, God gave the Israelites guidelines for controlling the disease of leprosy. God provided guidelines in *Leviticus 13-14* which would help the priests identify leprosy and know how to respond if and when the man or woman was healed. When leprosy was identified in a man or woman, he or she had to live alone (*Leviticus 13:46*). According to Josephus, Jewish lepers were expelled from the city (Josephus, Flavius. *The Wars of the Jews* 5.227). Everywhere they went they had to shout out loud, "Unclean, unclean!" (*Leviticus 13:45*). **The *Talmud* required that a leper had to stay six feet (1.8 m) away from other people and 150 ft (45.6 m) when there was wind.** According to the *Mishnah*, anyone who touched a leper, was near a leper, touched anything that a leper had touched, or entered his/her home was ceremonially unclean (Neusner, Jacob. *The Mishnah* pp. 997-1009). As a result the Jewish rabbis avoided lepers. *[emphasis added]*

Leviticus did not seem to judge the leper morally but considered him to be ritually impure -- with the skin condition an outward manifestation of some sort of internal evil (*In Medieval times leprosy was a disease to be feared and sufferers removed to a place of isolation*, *Intriguing History*). Ironically current confusion regarding reference to leprosy during the pandemic has evoked concern (Kaamil Ahmed, *Health campaigners call for an end to the use of the word leper*, *The Guardian*, 12 July 2021). The confusion is exacerbated by widespread advertising for "leper masks" for Halloween and other folk celebrations -- associated with marketing of the face masks required by health authorities in response to COVID-19.

Thomas Covenant called himself the "Unbeliever" because he dared not believe in the strange alternative world in which he suddenly found himself. So framed, does the pandemic constitute a strange cognitive world which the "unshot" are discovering they inhabit as unbelievers? As a leper, in his own world Covenant had been an outcast, unclean, a pariah -- prior to recognitioon of his heroic role. Given the possibility of disastrous future health implications for those receiving experimental "shots", will the "unshot" come to constitute a vital resource for humanity, as speculatively argued (*Controls and Guinea Pigs in the Pandemic Experiment: honouring the sacrifice of vaccine refuseniks for the wider community*, 2021)?

Fellowship of the damned? Curiously the application of the Biblical "6-foot rule", as fundamental to social distancing, would seem to be treating a significant proportion of the world's population as lepers, if only symbolically -- under the aegis of the World Health Organization -- and whether vaccinated or not (Christopher Carr, *Vaccinated but still treated like a leper*, *Quadrant*, 24 June 2021).

In that sense it is also curious to note the degree to which the obligation to be vaccinated is framed as being in the communal interest -- "all in it together" -- effectively an act of "global fellowship". Since the long-term effects are as yet unknown, the fellowship could be explored in mythopoetic terms as a "fellowship of the damned" in contrast to what has been evoked by the poetic myth appreciated worldwide as the *Fellowship of the Ring* (1954) by J. R. R. Tolkien.

Are the unvaccinated indeed to be recognized as the damned -- to be treated like lepers and wraiths? Or are they to be appreciated as the nine "ring bearers" of Tolkien's tale -- as distinct from the "ring wraiths" of that tale. The latter were the nine Nazgûl who had succumbed to Sauron's power through wearing Rings of Power, which gave them immortality but reduced them to invisible wraiths, servants bound to the power of the One Ring and completely under Sauron's control (*The "Dark Riders" of Social Change: a challenge for any Fellowship of the Ring*, 2002).

Worldwide appreciation of Tolkien's myth suggests that there is much to be learned collectively with respect to connectivity in times of crisis, as can be variously argued (*Relevance of Mythopoeic Insights to Global Challenges Cognitive integration implied by the Lord of the Rings*, 2009; *Configuring the pattern that connects*, 2006; *Time for Provocative Mnemonic Aids to Systemic Connectivity? Possibilities of reconciling the "headless hearts" to the "heartless heads"*, 2018).

Masked versus Unmasked in a pandemic of "leprosy"

Seemingly accepted to a far higher degree -- whether by the "shot" or the "unshot" -- the significance of masks has evoked considerable reflection (*Masks as symbols from popular perspectives*, 2021; *Implications of masking: sexual and otherwise*, 2021).

Masking? The current global requirement for masking has evoked a range of comments on how this experienced.

- Adam Bloodworth: *How Face Masks became a Powerful Symbol of Expression in Dark Times* (*HuffPost*, 26 August 2020)
- Luca Tateo: *Face masks as layers of meaning in times of COVID-19* (*Culture and Psychology*, 9 September 2020)
- Donald Pollock: *Masks and the Semiotics of Identity* (*Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 1, 1995, 3),
- Katie Canales: *How Masks Became Political Symbols in COVID-19 and 1918* (*Business Insider*, 30 May 2020)
- David Abrams: *The Hidden Meanings of Wearing a Mask* (*NYU School of Global Public Health*, 8 May 2020)

It is therefore interesting to note the compilation from a wide range of perspectives prepared by the MIT School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (*The Meanings of Masks: new ways to think about and practice protective masking*, *MIT News*, 24 September 2020).

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 justifed 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

With respect to "arms", a degree of irony is evident in the contrast between:

- the commitment to the secretive manufacture and sale of of arms by the military-industrial complex -- to enable shots of greatest efficacity
- the commitment to ensuring exposure of arms as the primary target for the pharmaceutical-industry complex -- to enable maximum number of shots

There is a further 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).

Such ironies are exemplified by the apparent transparency of a "shot" -- as the commonly depicted vaccine -- in contrast with total lack of transparency as to its acquisition, manufacturer, costs and distribution.

Unmasking? It has become curious to note the extent to which masking is required of the population at large -- deprived thereby of the support that facial expressions give to interpersonal communication. By contrast public announcements to media audiences are made by the unmasked -- by authorities now recognized as having most to hide, despite their desperate appeals for public trust in their declarations.

Concealing any smile of vital importance to bonding between people, the facial covering resulting from mask-mandates has implications transcending health and safety, as argued by Mo Woltering (*Stealing Our Faces: the deeper effects of the mask movement*, *The Imaginative Cconservative*, 3 September 2020). In contrast with the "faceless", arguably it is only the unmasked who are now capable of signifying their authenticity. For Woltering:

> Historically, masks have been associated with playing a role, like in the theatre. In fact, the Latin word *persona* comes from the Greek word *prosopon*, which originates from the dramatic arts. From this understanding, wearing a mask is more like putting on the face of another or portraying someone else. In moving to the precise term "facial covering", instead of "mask", it becomes clearer that the effect is to blot out the human face and ultimately blot out God from our sight.

Woltering comments on the insight of C. S. Lewis (*Till We Have Faces: a myth retold,* 1956; provisionally titled *Bareface*):

> ... among the multiple levels at work in the book, Lewis is undeniably trying to connect the discovery of self through the gods to discovering the One True God ultimately. The intersection point lies in the title. Toward the end of the book, Orual says, *How can [the gods] meet us face to face till we have faces?* ... God becomes man and bears a human face.

Developing this argument from a Christian perspective, Woltering adds:

> The most profound reason for the importance of the human face is that God has a human face... Christ elevates the human face and gives it its dignity. At the same time, the face of the Word made flesh is truly the face of God. What we see day to day in the human face bears Divinity. There is a deep theological foundation for the importance of the human face.

Woltering concludes:

> Yes, I think masks are being used to stoke fear and cultivate compliance. However, on a basic and fundamental level, facial coverings are stripping us of our humanity and blotting out the face of God from our sight. You might think that the governing elites cannot possibly be thinking at this kind of theological level. Maybe not, but I wouldn't be so sure. There are many instances where the elites have been caught showing what they really believe. Facial coverings are required for the unquestioning masses, but not for the governing elite.

Also of relevance to the role of anonymous elites in this pandemic period is an earlier work by C. S. Lewis (*That Hideous Strength: a modern fairy-tale for grown-ups*, 1945). The story involves an ostensibly scientific institute, the N.I.C.E. -- National Institute for Co-ordinated Experiments -- which is a front for sinister supernatural forces.

Considered otherwise, especially problematic is the development of a variety of technologies to unmask those who have not received their "shots" -- most notably through widespread implementation of immunity passports. To be anticipated are hotlines whereby members of the public can inform on those of their neighbours who remain vaccine hesitant -- a pattern notoriously characteristic of dictatorships of the past.

Unexplored existential condition of being "unshot"

In its early stages, the Committee on Conceptual and Terminological Analysis (COCTA) of the International Sociological Association was notably attentive to missing interpretations in use of terms, whether or not they were present in languages other than English. Of particular interest was the absence of terms for the excluded middle in any binary contrast. Given the rarity of use of "unshot", it is especially interesting from that perspective, in the light of the many strongly militaristic connotations of "shot" (as noted above). Is overriding significance of "shot" indicative of the exclusive strategic focus on "Plan A" -- with the lack of consideration of the "unshot"

as consistent with the inability to consider any alternative "Plan B"?

Veloping? A similar question was the focus of a speculative exploration in the light of the questionable outcome of decades of development (*Veloping: the Art of Sustaining Significance*, 1997):

> If the process of "development" is such a dubious strategy, maybe it should be asked whether the prefix "de" could be most fruitfully associated with that of the "de" in "degrading" or in "destruction". What is the elusive present condition which is the subject of "degradation", "destruction" or "development"? Is it possible that the sustainable process we should be exploring is better captured by "veloping" rather than "developing"? Veloping would then be the art of recognizing and sustaining the significance of what we already have.

The approach was subsequently explored in relation to climate change (*Enveloping Development through Cognitive Enactivism: engaging with climate change by changing apprehension of climate*, 2009). Arguably the degradation of integrity implied by many uses of "shot" calls for speculation on the nature of "unshot" -- especially since the condition of the environment and the climate could indeed be defined as "shot".

Unshot? To the extent that it is currently (although rarely) used, the term unshot is held to signify:

- to take or draw the shot or ball out of a gun; to remove the shot from a piece of ordnance
- not hit by shot.
- not shot; not discharged; not fired off

Of greater relevance to this argument are the unexplored implications which might potentially follow from reversal of the metaphorical uses of "shot" -- and possibly the mysterious nature of any "ungun" and the process of "unshooting". These might then suggest:

- Unshot as resolution through indirection and non-intervention, possibly inviting speculation on the nature of an "unmissile" or even a "silver unbullet"
- Unshot as an evaluation of tacit performance through indirection
- Unshot as test or trial requiring skill in avoidance of the reflexive shot reaction
- Unshot as an implication of natural health and inherent well-being
- Unshot as a natural stimulant
- Unshot as non-termination and non-closure
- Unshot recalling processes of lift in planes, as with an idea or its proposers having been "uplifted"
- Unshot in a sexual context
- Unshot as defragmentation and "getting an act together"
- Unshot in photography, visual media and shooting film
  - avoiding implications of image "capture", notably where this is invasive for indigenous cultures -- suggesting a variety of "unshots" and techniques of "unshooting"
- Unshot as avoidance of control
  - *Getting a Handle on a Hands-Off Policy* Crisis Prevention Institute, 22 August 2011
- Unshot as having spiritual implications:
  - as potentially cultivated in the religious tradition of the Quakers, for example
  - with religion potentially framed as the opium of the people -- a form of shot -- an unshot might be understood in terms of the connectivity offered by nature, as articulated by ecophilosophy and the process of communing with nature,
  - any implication that indoctrination regarding spirituality is a form of immunization against evil invites speculation on the opposite of indoctrination, potentially distinguished as:
    - Opposite of the state of being educated or enlightened
    - Opposite of a belief or set of beliefs held and taught by a Church, political party, or other group
    - Opposite of a concerted set of messages aimed at influencing the opinions or behavior of large numbers of people
    - Opposite of process of adopting radical positions
    - Opposite of formal bestowal or presentation of a possessory or prescriptive right
  - Jane Stannus: *Will the Unvaccinated Be Saved?* (*Crisis Magazine*, 19 August 2021)

Martial arts? Rather than endeavouring to "define" any experience of which "unshot" is indicative, there is a case for noting clues to relevant insights. Given the militaristic connotations of "shot", one such is provided by the influential study by Eugen Herrigel (*Zen in the Art of Archery*, 1953) in which archery is described as follows:

> The archer ceases to be conscious of himself as the one who is engaged in hitting the bull's-eye which confronts him. This state of unconscious is realized only when, completely empty and rid of the self, he becomes one with the perfecting of his technical skill, though there is in it something of a quite different order which cannot be attained by any progressive study of the art...

The philosophy informing some other Eastern martial arts is also indicative (*Engaging an Opposing Ideology via Martial Arts Philosophy*, 2016). There it is noted that there are three kinds of victories: winning after fighting, winning before fighting, and winning without fighting.

The aim of the martial art is to achieve the latter through the use of a set of technical tools -- as well as the appropriate philosophical attitude. So framed "combat" uses intuition, which must go as far as a sort of harmony with any opponent. The argument is developed in the following sections:

As frequently presented, the associated attitude calls into question the nature of "winning" and dependence on having that as an objective in the engagement with an opponent. The recourse to violence, physical, verbal or otherwise, is thus called into question -- whether or not this is adequately framed by understandings of "nonviolence".

This could be framed in terms of "not-doing" as characterized by some Eastern philosophies -- totally in contrast to Western understanding of "doing nothing". A comparison of French and Japanese cooking makes the point that a French master chef is recognized by what he characteristically does in the way of adding flavours to the food, whereas a Japanese master chef is acknowledged by the impossibility of recognizing any imposed effect on the flavour of the food. After Afghanistan, what is to be learned from non-action (*The Quest for the Socio-Economics of Non-Action*, 1993)?

Interplay of "pro" and "con"? The common preference for a "shot-style" engagement with any perceived challenge can be recognized as "pro" -- in contrast with any reservations recognized as "con", as might be articulated through an "unshot" cognitive modality. The subtlety of their interplay goes much further in that the prefix "pro" is intrinsic to projection and projectiles favoured by professionals in many fields of action.

There is therefore a case for exploring the complementary role of "con" as it features in conjecture, conference, congress, consensus, confidence, and the like (*Prefix "Re-cognition" as Prelude to Fixing Sustainability -- "Pro" vs "Con" ?* 2017; *Considerable Conglomeration of "Cons" of Global Concern*, 2012).

Unknown knowns? The strategic thinking fundamental to the intervention in Iraq and the engagement with the Taliban was notoriously articulated in a press briefing by Donald Rumsfeld as US Secretary of Defense (*There are known knowns*, February 2002). This continues to be the inspiration for extensive commentary and documentaries regarding his distinction of the "known unknowns" and the "unknown unknowns" (Paul Austin Murphy, *Rumsfeld's Logic of Known Knowns, Known Unknowns and Unknown Unknowns*, *Medium*, 13 December 2020; Nathan Freier (*Known Unknowns: Unconventional 'Strategic Shocks' in Defense Strategy Development*, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, November 2008).

Rumsfeld can be recognized as the architect of a decades-long strategy which has culminated in the current disaster in Afghanistan. The framework he provided could however offer a valuable means of distinguishing between the cognitive space of those entangled in the "shot-world" and that of the lived reality of the "unshot". The former is the realm of the known, with minimal recognition of the unknown. The latter is the realm of the unknown, with problematic experience of the known (*Relevance of the framework articulated by a US Secretary of Defense?* 2020).

The framework can be adapted to the "undoing" which characterizes the reactions of the "shot' to the unknown -- and to the associated sense of "unfeeling" to which the "unshot" are exposed (*Unknown Undoing: challenge of incomprehensibility of systemic neglect*, 2008).

Answers versus Questions? The Rumsfeld-style thinking of the "shot", and the generals responsible for its implementation, could be understood as especially identified with answers -- minimizing any consideration of challenging questions. This is now especially evident in global governance of the pandemic. There is an abhorrence of questions, especially those raised on social media and by the "unshot".

Arguably, as noted above, vaccination is unquestionably "the answer". Once vaccinated, no further questions need be asked. Vaccination is a form of closure -- and intended as such -- notably precluding any form of critical thinking (*Question Avoidance, Evasion, Aversion and Phobia: why we are unable to escape from traps*, 2006).

For the "unshot", however, all answers are questionable. What indeed is "the question" of the times? This obliges them to live in a realm of radical uncertainty, as can be variously explored (*Sustaining the Quest for Sustainable Answers on COVID-19: beyond the divisive preoccupation with unquestionable assertions and unanswered questions*, 2020; *Am I Question or Answer? Problem or (re)solution?* 2006; *Living with Incomprehension and Uncertainty: re-cognizing the varieties of non-comprehension and misunderstanding*, 2012).

In its promotion of a "shot-style" reaction in Afghanistan, there is a degree of irony to the fact that the US-led operation in Afghanistan can itself now be recognized as "shot". With the universal condemnation of the Taliban as exemplars of the repugnant -- outsiders for the global community -- there is little understanding of the culture which enabled them to triumph, as can be otherwise explored (*Poetic Engagement with Afghanistan, Caucasus and Iran: an unexplored strategic opportunity?* 2009). Ironically it is the jihadists themselves who have recognized the the opportunity offered by poetry (Elisabeth Kendall, *Jihadist Propaganda and its Exploitation of the Arab Poetic Tradition*).

In the world of the "shot" it is too readily assumed that it is hard facts that make people free -- whereas other cultural contexts may call into question this assumption -- and especially the "hardness" of the facts. In the world of the "unshot" such facts lose their solidity and become malleable -- as a characteristic of questionable propaganda in memetic warfare. Curiously the contents of the purportedly misinformed discourse of the "unshot" is specifically framed by authorities as composed of "myths" (*Checklist of pandemic concerns, whether framed as myths or lies*, 2021).

The point is perhaps most insightfully made by the poet John Keats in 1817 in terms of "negative capability". The focus on positive answers in the form of "shots" inhibits any ability to explore insights informed by the questions which characterize the style of the "unshot". Thus for Keats:

> ...that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason... remaining content with half-knowledge.

Unsaying? A further clue is offered by the case for apophasis -- discourse through not-saying -- a feature of apophatic theology (Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, 1994).

Is the contrast between the "shot" and the "unshot" to be recognized in terms of that between kataphatic and apophatic identity, as discussed separately (*Being What You Want: problematic kataphatic identity vs. potential of apophatic identity?* 2008).

Self-identity of the "unshot" and the "unjabbed" -- as unfulfilled?

Undefined? For those who do not pass through rites of passage acceptably -- the "unshot" -- there is then the question of whether they experience themselves to be metaphorically "uncooked", "undone' or "unfinished" -- even "undefined" with respect to their community.

On the one hand, if those processes are perceived as invasive, is there a sense in which the "unshot" perceive themselves as retaining a sense of innocent integrity, rather than losing it? On the other hand, when this is not the case, do those processes then indeed offer a sense of the experience of being "unshot", "unjabbed", "unwounded" and "unblemished" in some way?

People who would tend to experience themselves as "unfinished" could, for example, include:

- the physically or mentally disabled, otherwise recognized as "crippled" (Jeffrey Willett, et al, *Liminality and Disability: rites of passage and community in hypermodern society*, *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 21, 2001, 3)
- those suffering an incurable disease, most obviously leprosy -- or physically marked distinctively, as with albinos or dwarfs
- those variously disconnected from the community, as with orphans and criminals
- the socially handicapped, preferring life as a recluse -- and therefore inviting suspicion

For the "shot" the matter of their identity as members of the community in good standing is definitively resolved -- except for the potential challenge constituted by the "unshot", then readily perceived as a threat. The belief of the "shot" has been formally declared (as with any oath of allegiance), and embodied (as with an appropriate scar). By contrast the "unshot" are repeatedly confronted with the challenge of refining the question of their identity ("who am I, indeed").

Existential despair? Arguably the "shot" are primarily nourished by hope, cultivating a reactive attitude to despair despite any progressive erosion of trust (*Credibility Crunch engendered by Hope-mongering*, 2008). By contrast the "unshot" are obliged to engage with despair, whether as a consequence of their condition or that of the planet (*Implication of Personal Despair in Planetary Despair: avoiding entrapment in hopeful anticipation*, 2010).

The sense of extreme existential despair which individuals may experience has been remarkably articulated by R. D. Laing (*The Divided Self; an existential study in sanity and madness*, 1960). Laing contrasts the experience of the "ontologically secure" person with that of a person who "cannot take the realness, aliveness, autonomy and identity of himself and others for granted" and who consequently contrives strategies to avoid "losing his self".

> There might be someone addressing us, but in listening to a schizophrenic, it is very difficult to know "who" is talking, and it is just as difficult to know "whom" one is addressing... One may begin to recognize patches of speech, or fragments of behaviour cropping up at different times, which seem to belong together by reason of similarities of the intonation, the vocabulary, syntax, the preoccupations in the utterance or to cohere as behaviour by reason of certain stereotyped gestures or mannerisms. It seemed therefore that one was in the presence of various fragments, or incomplete elements, of different "personalities" in operation at the one time...
> Personal unity is a prerequisite of reflective awareness, that is, the ability to be aware of one's self acting relatively unselfconsciously, or with a simple primary non-reflective awareness.... In so far as reflective awareness was absent, "memory", for which reflective awareness would seem to be prerequisite, was very patchy... Each partial system seemed to have within it its own focus of centre of awareness: it had its own very limited memory schemata and limited ways of structuring precepts; its own quasi-autonomous drives or component drives; its own tendency to preserve its autonomy, and special dangers which threatened its autonomy. (pp. 214-7)

Such articulation merits comparison with the fictional account by Doris Lessing of communication of insight by a galactic agent with a representative of those facing planetary disaster (*Re: Colonised Planet 5 - Shikasta*, 1979):

> To say that he understood what went on was true. To say that he did not understand -- was true. I would sit and explain, over and over again. He listened, his eyes fixed on my face, his lips moving as he repeated to himself what I was saying. He would nod: yes, he had grasped it. But a few minutes later, when I might be saying something of the same kind, he was uncomfortable, threatened.
>
> Why was I saying that? and that? his troubled eyes asked of my face: What did I mean? His questions at such moments were as if I had never taught him anything at all. He was like one drugged or in shock.
>
> Yet it seemed that he did absorb information for sometimes he would talk as if from a basis of shared knowledge: it was as if a part of him knew and remembered all I told him, but other parts had not heard a word. I have never before or since had so

strongly that experience of being with a person and knowing that all the time there was certainly a part of that person in contact with you, something real and alive and listening -- and yet most of the time what one said did not reach that silent and invisible being, and what he said was not often said by the real part of him. It was as if someone stood there bound and gagged while an inferior impersonator spoke for him. (pp. 56-57).

Radical experience and identity? It is intriguing to recognize the degree to which anything qualified as "radical" has been conflated with extremism and the strategic implications for its eradication in the war against terror (*Eradication as the Strategic Final Solution of the 21st Century?* 2014; *Radical Innovators Beware -- in the arts, sciences and philosophy*, 2016).

The experience of the unshot, the outsider and the radical could be understood as overlapping to a degree which remains to be clarified. By whom, when all are deprecated, if not condemned? The fundamental challenge for the unshot is the radical nature of their cognitive experience and identity -- to which various allusions may be made (*Identifying the Root Cause Focus of Radical Identity*, 2015; *Radical Localization in a Global Systemic Context*, 2015; *Coming Out as a Radical -- or Coming In?* 2015).

Missing information? To the extent that the elusive nature of the unshot experience offers a contrast to the conventions of shot-informed thinking, a key factor with respect to the emergence of appropriate strategic knowledge may be intimately associated with what is missing, as argued by Terrence W. Deacon (*Incomplete Nature: how mind emerged from matter*, 2011) and previously discussed (*Evolutionary influence of the absent*, 2011). For Deacon:

> ... **have we been looking in the wrong places for clues?** ... brain researchers and philosophers of mind have focused on brain processes, neural computations and their correspondences with the material world. But what if we should be focusing on what is not there instead? ... I believe that in order to overcome this stalemate **we need to pay more attention to what is intrinsically not present in everything** -- from life's functions and meanings to mind's experiences and values. *[emphasis added]*

Nothing and pointlessness? The sense of nothingness may be especially characteristic of the unshot experience as a form of cognitive "ground zero" (*Way Round Cognitive Ground Zero and Pointlessness: embodying the geometry of fundamental cognitive dynamics*, 2012; *Emerging Significance of Nothing*, 2012), discussed under the following headings:

Implying nothing
Inevitability of nothing
Physics of nothing

From "point-making" to "world-making"
Containing the uncontainable

The point might be explored otherwise through the counter-intuitive process of enantiodromia -- a transformation from a "shot" to an "unshot" mindset following concerns regarding the pointlessness of the Afghan intervention (*'Was it all Pointless?': Military veterans tormented by Taliban's Afghan takeover*, *Euro Examiner*, 20 August 2021; Medea Benjamin, et al, *Bombing Afghan cities with B-52s is pointless and brutal*, Salon, 12 August 2021; Tim Black, *Afghanistan: a war for nothing*, *Spiked*, 6 July 2021).

Holes and their embodiment? A circle constitutes a strange boundary for a space whose contents may be cognitively under-defined -- even understood as "nothing". The mysterious nature of such "holes" has been explored by Roberto Casati and Achille C. Varzi (*Holes and Other Superficialities*, 1994). They are then associated with the vital function and symbolism of water wells in many cultures -- and by extension a sense of health as a source of "well-being".

At the borderline of metaphysics, everyday geometry, and the theory of perception -- as summarized by the author in the entry on holes in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* -- the quest is for the answer to two basic questions: ***Do holes really exist? And if so, what are they?*** Philosophers would typically like to expel holes from their ontological inventory. This is an attitude reminiscent of the rejection of outsiders.

Arguing in favour of the "existence" of such absences as full-fledged cognitive entities, the authors examine the ontology of holes, their geometry, their part-whole relations, their identity, their causal role, and the ways they are perceived. In cylindrical form holes are centred on an implied axis, with which a "point" can only be associated dynamically -- or as a succession of "points". In a sense there is no "point", except as possibly implied by that at the circular start of the "hole" and at its projection into the circular end (as a "target", at "the end of the tunnel").

The curious nature of a hole is notably evident in confrontation with one end of a tunnel, as exemplified by *Down the Rabbit Hole*, namely the first chapter of the classic by Lewis Carroll (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 1865). Curiously the tunnel metaphor is currently of great importance as a means of framing the outcome of pandemic-related strategies -- the "light at the end of the tunnel" then implying a return to normality.

A related sense is evident in use of phrases such as *down the plughole* or *down the tube* -- perhaps to be given added significance in the light of the recognition of strategic "black holes" and their relation to complementary "white holes" (*Marrying Strategic White Holes with Problematic Black Holes*, 2015). Equally problematic is the recognition of deprecated silo thinking.

Hyperreality and hyperconnectivity? It is curious to note the geometry associated with "shot", especially to the extent that it takes the form of a sphere, as it did originally with the cannon ball. This contrasts strangely with the integrative sense of a "whole" -- whether with regard to the identity of an individual or the sense of a global civilization. Use of "shot" is frequently associated with destructive engagement with that "spherical" integrity, if only in metaphorical terms implying its penetration.

Potentially more curious is the preoccupation of cosmologists with the shape of the universe as a whole, in contrast to the lack of corresponding interest by the social sciences in the shape of civilization or of the individual psyche. Astronomy limits recognition of the

shape to an observable sphere. Hypotheses by cosmologists, regarding the shape of the universe beyond, focus on its possible curvature, whether uncurved (flat), positively curved (spherical), or negatively curved (hyperbolic). (Salah A. Mabkhout, *The Hyperbolic Universe*. July 2015; Lukas Schlagenhauf, *What Is the Geometry of the Universe? Quanta Magazine*, 16 March 2020; Alexey Stakhov, et al, *The "golden" hyperbolic models of Universe*, *Chaos, Solitons and Fractals*, 34, 2007, 2,)

In that light there is then a case for recognizing understandings of "shot" as primarily associated with zero curvature (local "flat Earth" assumptions) or with positive curvature (missile launches around the globe). These raise the possibility that any mystery to the nature of "unshot" might be associated with an experience of negative curvature and its topology. This would distinctively frame the challenges to comprehension of the experience and sense of identity of the "unshot" -- and the cognitive space they inhabit -- potentially of relevance under surrealistic conditions (*Surreal nature of current global governance as experienced*, 2016)

There is clearly a case for exploring the significance that may be associated experientially with hyperbolic geometry to enable a degree of coherence to the engagement with the hyperreality of the "unshot" (*Engaging with Hyperreality through Demonique and Angelique? Mnemonic clues to global governance from mathematical theology and hyperbolic tessellation*, 2016; *Hyperaction through Hypercomprehension and Hyperdrive: necessary complement to proliferation of hypermedia in hypersociety*, 2006).

Although hyperrealism is recognized as a genre of painting and sculpture, from an experiential perspective the term hyperreality also offers a sense of connectivity of a higher order -- hyperconnectivity -- framing questions of how it might be comprehended. Indra's net offers indications in that respect, as articulated in topological terms (David Mumford, Caroline Series and David Wright, *Indra's Pearls: the vision of Felix Klein*, 2002). Other clues are offered by Alan Turing, as discussed separately (*Imagining Order as Hypercomputing: operating an information engine through meta-analogy*, 2014),
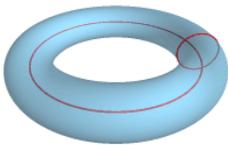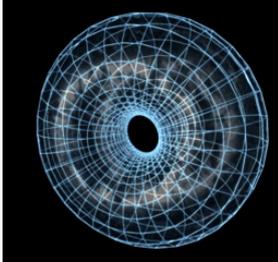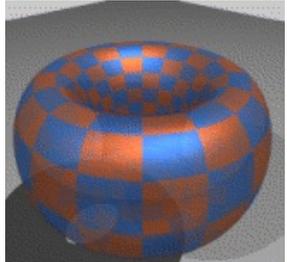
Embodiment of paradoxical cognitive dynamic between "shot" and "unshot"?

Rather than assume a definitive nature to the cognitive extremes of "shot" and "unshot", there is a case for exploring how any dynamic between them might be comprehended. Such an exploration is necessarily fraught with the reactive tendencies of both. For this reason use might be best made of visualization of suggestive geometry and its animation.

Sphere-Torus dynamic: One valuable animation is that on the left below. This shows a transformation between the extremes of a torus and a sphere. The sphere is conveniently reminiscent of the form of the original cannon ball (and the form of a bullet) with which any shooting is associated -- as with the ball of many games. At the same time, the spherical form is reminiscent of the ideal whole -- of which the globe is an example.

The form of the torus at the other extreme of the animation offers a sense of the target of ball games -- such as basketball -- into which the ball is "shot". It also offers a sense of the hole in the integrity of any other which penetrative shooting is intended to create -- possibly fatally.

For the "unshot", the torus is indicative of the existential emptiness which may be central to their experience. Their integrity, to the extent that they experience it, does not take the form of a sphere so characteristic of the "shot" and the reality-bubble within which they dwell.
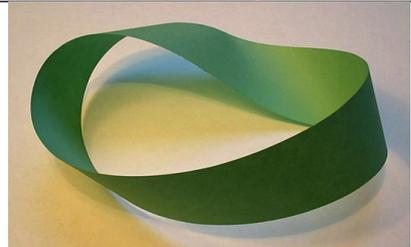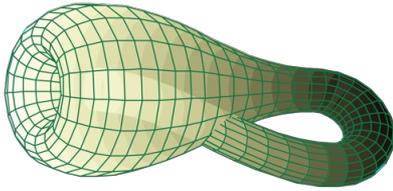
Use of sphere-torus transformations as indications of the dynamic between "shot" and "unshot" modalities			
Ring torus becomes a horn torus, then a spindle torus, and finally degenerates into a sphere.	Turning a punctured torus inside-out	A stereographic projection of a Clifford torus performing a simple rotation through the xz plane.	4D *flat torus* projected into 3-dimensions and rotated on a fixed axis.
By w:en:User:Surot - English Wikipedia, Public Domain, Link	Created by Jason Hise with Maya and Macromedia Fireworks.	Claudio Rocchini [CC BY-SA 3.0], via Wikimedia Commons	User:Kieff [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

Paradox: The improbable animation between the extremes is indicative of a cognitive paradox (highlighted otherwise by the other animations). As such it is a challenge for both. Expressed simplistically, the "shot" are confronted with the need to recognize the "hole" in their attitude -- or the hole to which it gives rise -- whereas the "unshot" are faced with the challenge of embodying-incorporating-internalizing the external spherical integrity by which their reality is threatened.

The value of a torus as a complement to the conventional global focus can be variously explored separately (*Imagining Toroidal Life as a Sustainable Alternative: from globalization to toroidization or back to flatland?* 2019; *Implication of Toroidal Transformation of the Crown of Thorns: design challenge to enable integrative comprehension of global dynamics*, 2011; *Coronavirus -- Global Plan, Doughnut, Torus, Helix and/or Pineapple?* 2020).

Complementary insights can be derived with respect to a sphere (*Comparable Dynamics of Point, Bullet, Ball and Globe: cognitive significance of systemic similarities conventionally obscured*, 2021; *Pricking the Bubble of Global Complacent Complicity: hyperdimensional insights from the physics of bubble blowing, bursting and collapse?* 2017).

The divisive distinction between the "shot" and the "unshot" -- currently cultivated as a form of cognitive apartheid -- could be fruitfully reframed in the light of the topology of the Möbius strip and the Klein bottle as depicted below.

Forms suggestive of paradoxical cognitive reconciliation	
Möbius strip	Klein bottle
David Benbennick, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons	Tttrung, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons

Their cognitive implications are the focus of the various studies by Steven M. Rosen (*Bridging the "Two Cultures": Merleau-Ponty and the crisis in modern physics*, 2009; *Topologies of the Flesh*, 2006; *Dimensions of Apeiron: a topological phenomenology of space, time and individuation*, 2004; *Science, Paradox, and the Moebius Principle*, 1994).

Complexification: The quest for completion and fulfillment, which could be held to be common to both the "shot" and the "unshot", may require forms of greater complexity -- of which the dynamics of ball games may be indicative (*Destabilizing Multipolar Society through Binary Decision-making: alternatives to "2-stroke democracy" suggested by 4-sided ball games*, 2016).

Although this argument is framed as a "metaphysical reflection", it is developed in a period in which there is increasing recognition among promoters of "**Plan A thinking**" that their iconic initiatives are themselves "shot". This has become only too obvious in the case of Afghanistan in which the forces of intervention have been outmanoeuvered by the Taliban -- exemplars of abhorrent outsiders and now effectively the "unshot". It is also becoming obvious with the manner in which the Delta variant is outmanoeuvering plans for achieving total eradication of the COVID virus. The modelling of the techno-optimistic strategies in both cases has been unmasked as fundamentally flawed and in need of reformulation.

However, rather than recognizing the possibility of any "**Plan B thinking**", it is intriguing to note the shift in thinking which authorities now find themselves obliged to make. There is of course no question of admitting "defeat" -- either in Afghanistan or with respect to the pandemic. The process underway is one of reframing, best recognized in terms of the ball-game metaphor of "shifting the goal posts". In the case of COVID the argument becoming central to the mainstream narrative is the need for everyone to "learn to live with the virus" -- just as is done in the case of influenza. The merit of the vaccines is now "re-presented" as vital in reducing the degree of illness and the level of fatalities. Traces of such a shift are evident in the case of the Taliban -- namely expressions of a need for a degree of accommodation.

Clearly the disastrous consequences of the intervention in Afghanistan could have been avoided, as with the global consequences of the pandemic, if the modelling had been able to integrate the possibilities of both Plan A thinking with those of Plan B thinking -- that of the "shot" with that of the "unshot" Arguably this calls for modelling of a higher order -- a challenge in its own right and one calling for new means of enabling its comprehension.

Hopefully this will be acknowledged in the case of climate change, where the "Plan A" modelling of the IPCC has focused explicitly on the physics of the process (*Sixth Assessment Report, Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis*, August 2021). It completely avoids any concern with the climate of opinion -- the realm of the unbelievers -- through which effective response might otherwise be enabled.

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