Crossing Conceptual Boundaries IX

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Articles

Greece: the self in transition, or maybe not?

Efi Koutantou

Abstract

The current economic crisis in Greece affects young people in many ways, concerning both the socioeconomic conditions and their sense of self, which seems to face its own crisis. The sociocultural values, deeply embedded in the Greek self, are challenged too. The financial crisis has proved to cause a crisis of the self; society is in a prolonged state of suffering where young people are trying to plan for their futures. The paper discusses some recent findings concerning young people and families in Greece, their thoughts about the current circumstances and the way they think that they will overcome the constraints and develop their capacities. However, since the family plays an important role in the South Europe and in Greece, as well, the approaches used in recent research might need to be supplemented by a more psychosocial understanding of family ties, too. The second part of the paper proposes a psychosocial alternative of understanding the plight of young people in Greece and the role of their family ties in developing a mature personality while also living in a society at risk. The meaning behind the kinship ties for young people while they are trying to articulate their own action, is investigated.

Introduction

Since 2008, Greece is experiencing a severe sovereign debt crisis and Greek people have become subjected to the severest austerity measures. Secure anchors of social and economic stability seem to have vanished, with nothing replacing them. Austerity, as is well known, has resulted in increasing work precariousness, reduction of the minimum wage and social benefits, fewer jobs for young people, and so on. It has also had a serious impact on health, with an increase in depression, health inequalities, suicides, etc. (Alexiou, Economou, Madianos & Stefanis 2011; Economou, Madianos 2013). Within this context, young people are facing serious limitations in their journey towards their future. Their perception of and response to the crisis is an emerging research subject in various fields, such as economics (Sakellaropoulos, S. 2010, Matsaganis, M. 2013) policy, politics and social sciences (Malkoutzis, N. 2011; Joseph N. Lekakis & Kousis, M. 2013; Verney S. & Bosco, A. 2013; Kretsos, L. 2014), etc.

The first part of this paper discusses some recent research findings concerning young people and families in Greece. What are their thoughts about the current circumstances? How do they think they will overcome the constraints and develop their capacities? The second part argues that the research approaches adopted so far elucidate a more social or socio-psychological aspect of the problem and proposes another alternative, a psychosocial one to add to the understanding of the plight of young people of Greece and the role of the family for their future.

Recent research

Using a Giddensian model of agency and reflexivity (Giddens 1990, 1991), Chalari (November, 2012) argues that Greeks display a critical understanding towards both themselves and the situation they are in by acknowledging their own responsibility, whilst referring to specific mentalities that led to the present state of things, such as remaining passive and doing nothing. They now seem aware of the need to improve things themselves, without expecting solutions from external or foreign agents. The self becomes more reflexive, Chalari argues, as it leaves behind tradition, while facing more challenges and uncertainties. At the same time, some of Chalari's interview participants showed nnostalgia towards certain values inherited from the previous generations and highlighted the importance of family, despite being critical about the mentality of their parents. Young people, Charali comments, experience disorientation, fear and anxiety while trying to create their own mechanisms to face the situation.

In another study, Tsekeris (2015a) demonstrated the complex relationship between the individual and the collective suffering in the young Greeks' response to the crisis. The majority of them lack the resources to survive the crisis on their own and are dependent on their families. Tsekeris argues that the loss of the social imaginaries that was developed during the postwar period, namely of economic growth, occupational stability and representative civil democracy, caused existential anxieties which tend to 'dissociate the self'. Participants from research conducted by Tsekeris (2015a) consider themselves as part of the collective suffering, which echoes the failure of social support systems; at the same time, they showed signs of resistance, viewing the current crisis as an opportunity to adopt more self-conscious ways of thinking and behaving, giving emphasis to reciprocity and more relational ways of being based on solidarity. However, although the wounded self (Tsekeris, 2015) looks for fellow sufferers to make sense of life, this relational turn is directed towards their significant others and loved ones (namely the family) rather than the wider social community and civic engagement, as this research shows. In a

later research (Chalari, 2016), Chalari interviewed UK and Greek participants' suffering and anxiety towards austerity; she found that most participants from UK described their suffering related to the impact of the welfare cuts on a more collective level, in relation to a class divide, while in Greek participants this suffering was expressed mostly individually and towards their loved ones.

However, we should not attribute this 'turn to the family' to the economic crisis. Family was always important in Greece. Young people in Greece develop their socialization within the nuclear family, with little civic engagement and participation in voluntary associations (Chtouris 2006). The family plays an important role in the welfare state of the young (Kretsos 2014: 110) and has always been a feature of the Greek economy. For instance, the family is expected to provide for the youth until the 'appropriate' job was found (Dendrinos 2014; Iacovou 2010). Small family businesses funded by relatives are also supposed to offer support or act as social networks in finding a job (Kretsos 2014: 110), and university students are generally reluctant to combine studies with work, citing low attractiveness of precarious jobs or voluntarism and preferring to rely on the family. Dendrinos observes: 'it is obvious that apart from institutional factors that affect labor relations, we should also consider the sociocultural norms and discuss family ties, which also structure work attitudes' (Dendrinos 2014).

It could be argued that the greater reliance on the family may be a Southern European phenomenon, as some evidence shows for Greece, Italy and Spain (Bettio & Plantenga 2004; Bettio & Villa, 1998; 1999; Bagavos 2001; Karamesini 2008, Teperoglou *et al*,). The increased numbers of young adults residing with their parents in SE Europe has a negative long term effect in youth's employability as it postpones their transition to adulthood (Chtouris 2006; Kretsos, 2014). Until recently, young Greeks left the parental home at the age of 29 (Eurofound 2014). During the crisis independence is deferred for an indefinite future. Strangely enough, the majority of young people in Tsekeris' study (93,3%) (2015b) "completely agreed with the statement that parents and children need to stay attached to each other as much as possible" (Tsekeris 2015b: 15), to take care of the family. Although not engaged in collective social action, they consider social transformation possible through "solidarity, cooperation and volunteerism" (Tsekeris 2015b: 19). In the context of late modernity, it is often argued that people have to engage in new concepts of agency and subjectivity (Bansel & Walkerdine 2010) and individuals have the duty to construct their own biographies (Beck & Beck – Gernsheim 2009; Giddens 1990, 1991). This is and is not the case in Greece. Kesisoglou (2016), examined how young people working in precarious conditions in Greece speak about their possibilities of emigrating as a path towards constructing their agency and subjectivity. They identified themselves as "effortful and entrepreneurial subjects (Kesisoglou, 2016: 1)", who rely on their individual effort and agency.

In recent research, Tsekeris (2017) discusses the phenomenon of Greek youth returning to the parental home (known as a Boomerang generation) after losing their jobs or finishing education and the disruption caused in their life-trajectories. They seem to maintain a traditional way of thinking which includes a linear life with financial and professional stability under the "state protection". Their discourses with their peers support their belief that it was the institutional failure, which led them to financial dependence on their families. "Cohabitation with parents is perceived to be a multi-dimensionally defined option" as Tsekeris (2017: 42) argues; on the one hand, participants in this research claim that they have more to gain by staying at the parental house but, on the other hand, this condition "postpones the transition to the economically independent adult life" (Tsekeris, 2017: 42). So, young adults need to redefine expectations, which cannot be satisfied. Consequently, they may "follow a tendency for regression to a more closed self which may manage to realize intimate desires" (Tsekeris, 2017, pp. 42). Moreover, the return to the parental home creates problems for these people who need to renegotiate their status as adult and set their boundaries for privacy and independence.

An attempt towards a Psychosocial alternative

From the few examples discussed so far, it becomes obvious that the Greek youth experience is interpreted mostly on the basis of reflexivity which refers to the individual's ability to become critical towards themselves and society. Although social agents are indeed able to reflect on social change, this approach represents only one side of the story. In the case of the Greek society, it is also a matter of inherited systems and transmitted values especially within the family (Avdela 2002; Campbell 1964; Friedl 1962; Gallant 2001; Gallant and Honor 2000; Loizos & Papataxiarchis 1991; Paxson 1968) and in terms of its location in a given culture (Collier & Yanagisako 1987; Kaftantzoglou 1977). At this point it makes sense to ask: if psychic investments are formed through discourses within the milieu to which one belongs how easy is it for these values to be altered? How can one negotiate or challenge the so-called 'individual responsibility'?

Greece is said to be a collectivist society (Kafetsios 2006), characterized by strong in-group shared values, which are used as behavioral guides (Kalogeraki 2009; Triandis 1988, 1989, 2001). This is corroborated by older sociological research (Dragonas 1983; Doumanis 1983). More recent studies found people still focused around national and religious homogeneity (Georgas 1997; Kalogeraki 2009; Kataki,2012; Triandis 1988, 1989, 2001; Voulgaris 2006). It is also the case that Greek family policy reproduces the ideological assumption that the family is the main provider of welfare in society (Papadopoulos 1998; Tsoukalas 1987).

One could argue that an alternative point of view, of explaining Greek youth experience may be necessary, focusing on the examination of the intensity of the attachment bonds, which could explain the attachment to the family and the power relations in terms of their location in Greek culture.

As many of the research findings above show young Greeks not engaged in collective social action and their relational turn not to be directed towards civic engagement, one could argue that one of the problems in Greece may be the "abandonment of social responsibility", a term explained by Altman (2005:3). "By social responsibility", Altman means "the concern for the welfare of others in a larger society that leads one to take action of their behalf when their welfare is threatened" (Altman, 2005:4). Psychoanalysis could provide an analytical lens for addressing social problems and Altman tries to address the problem of abandonment of social responsibility psychoanalytically (p. 3). Various psychoanalytic theories explain this problem differently. In a Kleinian model, caring and concern for the other comes with the depressive position, from the reparative impulse to restore the fantasied destruction to the loved object, internal or external (Segal, 1964). In Winnicott's theory, ruthless love is represented by the attack of the baby to the breast while guilt is represented by the concern for the damaged caused by the ruthless attacks (Winnicott, 1954: 89-100). In both theories, love and care is other-focused. With this relational context, there is a move towards transcending the individualism and the self-centered human motivation in favor of subjectivity in modern "depressive society" (Rudan 2016: 339).

However, according to Giannaras (1997: 27), a Greek philosopher, Greeks have not really the ability to embody this modernity principle of the priority of the Person, his rights and responsibility, the consciousness of Otherness, which also establishes democracy and neoliberal economy. Giannaras doubts that Greece represents a western-type of democracy as the country tries to organize a European state for more than 170 years and does not succeed in this, he continues (p. 27). He draws the problem in Greece's cultural difference, which has been created from its Orthodox tradition. It seems to me that he argues for a re-discovery of the Orthodox

tradition and values, which, in his opinion, do not generate culture and cultural identity any more. The Orthodox suggestion nowadays is the priority of the Person and the consciousness of Otherness, as freedom but this notion is alienated (Giannaras, 1997: 27-30) by false interpretations and practices which capture its real meaning.

In general terms, the inability to bear depressive guilt and the psychic reality of loss gives space to defences, like denial, to tolerate the pain. In relation to the function of capitalistic socioeconomic institutions as a system, we could speak of a sense of collective guilt emerging from group identifications that produce national feelings of pride or shame, common beliefs and fantasy relations around which members of groups are organized (Bion 1989). Future research could extend this idea to include manic defense behaviors on a wider group level that defend against or foreclose a sense of collective guilt.

One could question what is the role of the 'manic defence' between an interpersonal relationship and the wider society. Altman (2005) argues that the 'manic defence' makes it difficult to care about others and therefore, it turns against social responsibility. In the case of a governing structure, the society's failure in containment of anxiety (Bion 1962) and social provision (Winnicott, 1971) which may represent the provisions of the parental environment, generates losses to people as they feel less protected from the social environment; these losses are coming to terms people's own limitations that can signify a failure. The Greek self, experienced as a failed one, is in conflict with the culture's belief in its omnipotence and invulnerability, demonstrated in the need to seem as victorious and superior over other cultures (Peltz 2005).

One could argue that the problem concerning Greek 'parental environment' may not be that of the absence of the qualities of 'holding' and 'containment' but, instead, the over-holding, over-pampering and over-protecting familial environment. Along the same lines, it would be possible to say that Greeks have not overcome the libidinal composition of the family. In "Mourning and Melancholia" (Freud: 1917), Freud shows how people may "never abandon the lost loved object, not even when a substitute is already beckoning to them" (Freud, 1971: 4); the libido is withdrawn into the ego instead of being displaced to an Other 'object of love'. This 'regression to narcissism' could be one part of the explanation of the merging with the inwards oriented protected environment with shared in-group values and strong bonds in kinship systems. These notes may show that psychic investments and inherited values is not an easy task to be altered and that the intensity of attachment bonds may explain the adult attachment to the family. Since people "may never abandon the loved object" (p.4), it is then difficult for them to care about others and therefore, it may show an abandonment of social responsibility.

One could say that this is a psychoanalytic assumption, which may need strong clinical and cultural evidence if we wish to generalize for a whole culture. While this may be the case, we can initially ask, what is the element that differentiates Greece compared to other countries? Family dynamics may contribute to the maintenance of attachment styles from childhood to adulthood but I would argue that future research could focus on how the family system shapes the attachment styles of its members over time; the relationships between specific dimensions of family systems (family rules, behavioral patterns) and the attachment styles of young adults who are raised in those systems (Kiselica, M., & Pfaller, J. 1998). This question could find place if one investigates the historical evidence, which can better explain the so-called "collective force" or fusion.

Another avenue of research could be exploring the 'wider historical trauma' as Greeks may feel that the recent crisis has been a 'national disaster' embodied through the history of wars and upheavals in Greece during the last 150 years; a trauma which becomes personal suffering, persisting and returning through the intensity of strong attachment which intensify the transmission of traumatic experiences. Frosh (2013: 120) views trauma as an unconscious form of

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"haunting"; so, "we might have to see all identity construction as a mode of traumatic possession" (Frosh 2013: 120).

These events are traumatic in the sense that they are not recognized as such, so they become repressed, uncanny, yet continuing to operate in the psyche (Frosh 2013:45). Only what is repressed can return with the force required to ensure neurotic attachment to irrational ideas and can act like our Superego/ external authority internalized as a sense of guilt (Frosh 2013:133-134). "Our parents and intimates, all with whom we struggle are the ghosts that pass on their desires and expectations, that 'haunt' us and from whom we are inhabited" (Frosh 2013: 140); they carry all this unmanageable stuff which is found in history, in culture, embedded in the social structure that maintain the status of its living through (collective) memories. Nowadays, as the structures collapse in Greece, the younger generation loses the traditional points of reference or inherits them as traumatic.

Conclusion

Young people in Greece and their perception and response of the crisis is an emerging subject of research; it seems that their subjective experience begins to matter, to be researched and the results are meaningful to be published. This paper is to demonstrate and discuss the constraints that currently young people are facing while living in a society "in the middle". Younger generation's approach in the process of developing a mature personality is discussed. The effects of austerity, the delay in entering the job market before and during the crisis and the notion of precarity are further demonstrated, based on current research findings. Most of the narratives presented above show young people as being trapped in the sociopolitical milieu, hoping for a better future while some others try to adopt a different way of life. Some of them are identified with past beliefs; some others try to put their personal effort to improve their lives.

This work is an attempt to demonstrate what is being left out at the moment in the interpretation of the way in which Greek youth tries to form an adult, independent life. As both older and contemporary research suggests, in the case of the Greek society, it is also a matter of inheritance systems and transmitted values, especially within the family and in terms of its location in a given society and culture. This approach is an attempt to investigate the interweaving of the social and the personal. The role of the unconscious, located in the intensity and maintenance of the primordial attachment bonds might explain the maintenance of the adult attachment to the family and would offer a first, tentative suggestion of unconscious processes. Borrowing psychoanalytical terms, it would also be valid to say that Greeks, even the younger generation, have never abandoned the libidinal position of the family; they still invest psychically in. They internalize it, identify with it as an ideal, as part of their own ego.

In conclusion, when talking about Greek youth in transition, in their effort to articulate and create a life of their own in the middle of some difficult external circumstances, we should not ignore their internal state of mind, their early attachments, too; their influences, values, bonds, history and cultural origin. Researching history and culture in a given society may also lead us to revealing the 'wider historical traumas', expectations and desires from ancestors, which through the years, become personal suffering for the next generations, returning via attachment bonds, as an unconscious form of 'haunting'. Many times, we may seem to struggle with external environment situations while, the real 'war' may also take place inside us, silently.

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Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous:

a Spiritual and Therapeutic Program

Elis C D F Chasan

Abstract

Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous (SLAA) is a Twelve Steps group that adopts the Alcoholics Anonymous tenets to control alcohol consumption, to regulate intimate relations. In this paper, I explore how the concept of sex and love has been shaped in SLAA and suggest some continuities and shifts in the perceptions of what is considered today pathological in relationships. First, I discuss the emergence of SLAA, its spiritual and therapeutic discourses and the constitutive problems of using a fundamentally spiritual and abstinence-focused program to regulate intimate relations. Adopting a Lacanian psychoanalytical point of view, I briefly discuss how the decline of some regulative traditions has altered the organisation of desire and created uncertainties in relationships. In that context, I then argue, the emergence and expansion of SLAA could offers members two things, first, a clear prescription of to regulate desire, and second, a safe space for the containment of unwanted emotions. Finally, I examine the experience of some SLAA's female members and argue that despite of the program's limitations, it still seems to offer a valid temporary option to manage the anxieties prompted by distressful relationships

Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous a Spiritual and Therapeutic Program

Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous (SLAA) is an organisation which offers a program aimed at helping members to manage the anxieties of failed relationships whilst regaining a sense of agency. These are to be achieved by following the Twelve Steps [1]program,a fundamentally spiritual process which was devised by Alcoholics Anonymous in 1939 (AA Services, 2002) to control alcohol consumption. Since the mid 1950's the AA's Twelve Steps program has been adapted to manage a myriad of conditions, from gambling and drug abuse, in which 'there is a subjective experience of lack of control' (Kurtz, 2010). Apart from the Twelve Steps program, SLAA's recovery program draws heavily on its approved[2] self-help literature (Beattie, 2013 ; Davis Kasl, 1990; Norwood, 2008; Peabody, 2011).

In this paper, I discuss the emergence of SLAA, its conceptualisation of sex and love addiction and the constitutive problems of using an abstinence-focused program to regulate intimate relations. Adopting a Lacanian psychoanalytical point of view, I argue that the emergence and expansion of SLAA reflects the decline of some regulative traditions which has altered the organisation of desire and created uncertainties in intimate relationships (Bauman, 2003; Illouz, 2013; Rowan, 2013; Soler, 2006; Verhaeghe, 2011). The program sets itself up as an authoritarian discourse with the power to fill the void left by the de-regulation of intimate relationships. Despite its limitations, I contend that the SLAA's program offers an important temporary venue to help members to manage anxiety, recover a sense of agency and have a sense of belonging. This paper attempts to offers insights into the program, what works and how.

The emergence of SLAA

The term 'sex and love addiction' emerged in 1976 in an Alcoholics Anonymous group in Boston. One of the group's members coined the term to describe his frequent masturbation, impersonal sex, emotional dependency and extra-marital affairs. He concluded, via self-diagnosis, that he was suffering from a 'new' disease of 'obsessive, compulsive, uncontrollable' erotic

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[1] THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS 1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable. 2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him. 4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. 5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. 6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. 7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings. 8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all. 9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. 10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it. 11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out. 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs. Copyright © 1952, 1953, 1981 by Alcoholics Anonymous Publishing (now known as Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.) All rights reserved.

[1] http://www.slaafws.org/download/core-files/The_Twelve_Steps_of_SLAA.pdf (accessed 02/02/2014)

[2] SLAA approved books: 'Conference-approved literature at this time. Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous neither endorses nor recommends the following books; they are identified only to provide individuals with the opportunity to learn about other material dealing with addiction to sex, love and relationships.' http://slaaonline.org/books/

impulses, which he called 'sex and love addiction'. To 'cure' himself he modified AAs 'Twelve Steps Program' to focus on sexual sobriety rather than alcohol sobriety (Haaken, 1993). This initial focus on the control of sexuality from a masculine perspective has now substantially changed. SLAA meetings and sex and love addiction is no longer addressed to men only, the majority of SLAA meetings are mixed (98 per cent as 10/2015) and out of control sexuality and excesses in love are conceptualised as being part of the same phenomenon.

Since its inception in the USA, SLAA has grown worldwide[3]. Since February 2010, when I started my research, the number of SLAA weekly meetings in London grew from 18 to 43 (as measured in February 2016)[4], an increase of almost 140% in a six-year period. The expansion and acceptance of the labels of sex and love addiction, and of SLAA itself, can be demonstrated by its adoption by the NHS. In 2010, the NHS added a section on its website where it explained the condition and offered links to Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous[5]. This clearly demonstrates both the endorsement of the program by the medical discourse and the views that not only sexual behaviour but also difficulties in love leads to levels of emotional distress that are deemed to require regulation.

The current description of sex and love addiction by SLAA encompasses the concept of 'disease', following AA, and places equal emphasis on issues of sex and love addiction. Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous is also referred to as the Augustine Fellowship, due to the similarity of the symptomatology to that of St Augustine of Hippo's work *Confessions* (Haaken, 1993).
The following is SLAA description or definition of sex and love addiction:

> We in S.L.A.A. believe that sex and love addiction is a progressive illness which cannot be cured but which, like many illnesses, can be arrested. It may take several forms – including, but not limited to, a compulsive need for sex, extreme dependency on one or many people, or a chronic preoccupation with romance, intrigue, or fantasy. An obsessive compulsive pattern, either sexual or emotional, or both, exists in which relationships or sexual activities have become increasingly destructive to career, family and sense of self-respect. Sex addiction and love addiction, if left unchecked, always gets worse. However, if we follow a simple program which has proven successful for scores of other men and women with the same illness, we can recover.
> (The Augustine Fellowship, Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, Fellowship-Wide Services, 2010).[6]

The transformation of SLAA from a fellowship that mainly addressed uncontrollable erotic impulses to also encompass 'extreme dependency on one or many people, or a chronic preoccupation with romance, intrigue, or fantasy' can be traced back to the dissemination of the concept of co-dependency starting in the 1970s. Starting in 1940s, in the United States mental health professionals identified that individuals (mostly women) who engaged with, or who have a history engaging with individuals with addiction, exhibited patterns of behaviour typified by being caring and supportive in ways that instead of helping the addict to stop problematic behaviour, contributed to its maintenance (Price, 1945; Whalen, 1953). These authors were influenced by the

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[3]Due to the anonymity at the core of the Twelve Steps Program, no official figures can be found about SLAA's demographics. However, today SLAA is an international phenomenon, with meetings in many countries, including countries in Asia, South America and the Caribbean, Africa and the Middle East, Europe, Australia and Oceania. http://www.slaafws.org/meetings (accessed 13/02/2016)
[4] http://www.slaauk.org/meeting-list/london-meetings/ accessed 09/02/2016
[5] http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/addiction/Pages/sexandloveaddiction.aspx (accessed 26/10/2013)
[6] (http://www.slaafws.org/download/core-files/ accessed 26/10/2013).

work of the German neo-Freudian, Karen Horney (Rotunda, 2001), whose theories were in vogue during that period in America. Horney (1993) challenged the socio-cultural conditions which encouraged women to be dependent on men's love, wealth, and protection, and developed the notions of 'morbid dependence' and 'parasitical, symbiotic relationships' as motivated by a 'drive for total surrender', 'to find unity through merging with a partner' and the 'drive to lose oneself' (Horney 1950, p.258).

During the 1970s, mental health professionals working with family members of alcoholics adopted the term 'co-dependency' to refer to the underlying motivations that were in play in the supportive and caring behaviour of the person contributing to the addictive behaviour (Cermark, 1991; Cocores, 1987; Morgan, 1991; Roehling, 1996; Stafford, 2001).

The first Twelve Steps program to incorporate therapeutic discourse was Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA or ACA) created in New York in 1979, three years after SLAA's inception. ACOA was created by two female therapists who envisaged combining the AA philosophy with the use of mental health literature in order to manage the 'pathology' of attachment, referred to as co-dependence, which could be observed in some dysfunctional families. In the United States, ACOA has become a new idiom which articulates alcoholism as a family disease, a socially recognised emotional disability, particularly among women, and has had a significant impact on the field of mental health. (Brown, 2006; Haaeken, 1993).

SLAA's approved self-help literature refers to co-dependency, as one of the symptoms of sex and love addiction (Beattie,2013; Kasl, 1990; Norwood, 2008; Peabody, 2011). The propagation of the self-help literature on sex and love addiction is intertwined with the dissemination of the concept of co-dependence in self-help literature to refer to problematic ways of relating prompted by a dysfunctional background.

In the late 1980s, Codependents Anonymous (CODA) was created. This fellowship is very similar to ACOA, but it has a lesser focus on the role of substance abuse. It addresses a mode of relating marked by a need to help others who are immature, dependent, and irresponsible. Co-dependency is also understood as a relationship addiction. The codependent is trapped in a dynamic which is emotionally draining and that enables others (not necessarily partners) to maintain problematic behaviour. In CODA, inappropriate parenting is overcompensated for by an excessive need to care for others. (Haaken, 1990, Irvine, 1999).

In England, CODA has only one third of the groups of SLAA (as of May 2014), as with SLAA majority of the groups are mixed. The main difference between CODA and SLAA is that CODA focuses on co-dependency whilst in SLAA co-dependency is only one of the broader range of difficulties in intimate relationships.

The conceptualisation of Sex and Love Addiction in SLAA

In order to better understand what sex and love addiction is for SLAA, I will refer to SLAA's twelve characteristics of sex and love addiction. These were produced by members (like all the literature in the fellowship) and are arguably highly influenced by SLAA's self-help literature.

Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction

1. Having few healthy boundaries, we become sexually involved with and/or emotionally attached to people without knowing them.

2. Fearing abandonment and loneliness, we stay in and return to painful, destructive relationships, concealing our dependency needs from ourselves and others, growing more isolated and alienated from friends and loved ones, ourselves, and God.

3. Fearing emotional and/or sexual deprivation, we compulsively pursue and involve ourselves in one relationship after another, sometimes having more than one sexual or emotional liaison at a time.

4. We confuse love with neediness, physical and sexual attraction, pity and/or the need to rescue or be rescued.

5. We feel empty and incomplete when we are alone. Even though we fear intimacy and commitment, we continually search for relationships and sexual contacts.

6. We sexualize stress, guilt, loneliness, anger, shame, fear and envy. We use sex or emotional dependence as substitutes for nurturing care, and support.

7. We use sex and emotional involvement to manipulate and control others.

8. We become immobilized or seriously distracted by romantic or sexual obsessions or fantasies.

9. We avoid responsibility for ourselves by attaching ourselves to people who are emotionally unavailable.

10. We stay enslaved to emotional dependency, romantic intrigue, or compulsive sexual activities.

11. To avoid feeling vulnerable, we may retreat from all intimate involvement, mistaking sexual and emotional anorexia for recovery.

12. We assign magical qualities to others. We idealize and pursue them, then blame them for not fulfilling our fantasies and expectations.

(http://www.slaafws.org/download/core-files/Characteristics-of-Sex-Love-Addiction.pdf (assessed on 2/02/2014)

These characteristics emphasise the addict's difficulty in understanding and managing their emotions and the flawed ways in which they seek to have their emotional needs met. Their need for love and support is underlined by fear: fear of loneliness, abandonment and emotional and sexual deprivation. According to this rationale, addicts present ambivalent psychological processes; they desire intimacy but at the same time fear it. They choose unavailable partners and/or idealise and invest in romantic and fantasy scenarios which disregard what the other brings to the relationship, the other's subjectivity. They may also avoid partners as a result of their failure to confront and deal with their difficulties. They have problems setting boundaries and become dependent on others to fulfil their psychological needs.

Since the concept of addiction is shaped around failed relationships, all the vulnerabilities and the motivations that are at play in forming relationships and bonds of love are understood in retrospect as pathological. The complexity of the psychological processes, contradictions and uncertainties between desires and ways of fulfilling them, vulnerabilities that arise from the experience of relating, and feelings of dependency, are not contextualised as being part of the shaping human relations. Healthy love becomes idealised as non-conflictual and rational. The anxieties and difficulties inherent to love are all deemed unhealthy and to be avoided. Moreover, the SLAA approach implies that the causes of the failures of relationships have to be located within this specific range of ways of relating, disregarding the particularity of individuals symptoms and their dynamics.

The group is important in the operation of the program. It has often been argued that it is only by framing the difficulties and dilemmas of the group as fundamentally similar that strategies can be put into place to overcome them. For example, Hochschild (1997) has argued that self-help groups teach members a new vernacular—what she calls 'feeling rules'—to cope

with the task of managing emotions (p. 552). Antze (1976) has claimed that groups like SLAA create a unique ideology, involving the sharing of psychological problems and of possible solutions to these conditions, which could be preventative or curative. Similarly, Suler (1984) has claimed that the group's beliefs help guide the group, diminishing members' anxieties—it not only provides a way of understanding the condition, but also offers coping strategies that are advocated by the group.

Spiritual and Therapeutic Strategies

Like all Twelve Steps programs, SLAA is a fundamentally spiritual program, which means the only authority in the groups is 'a loving God' (Tradition 2), who may be present in the group's conscience. The program revolves around members individually working the steps, participating in the meetings and helping other members.

The steps have to be followed in a specific order: the first step involves admitting to be powerless in relation to the addiction. This step sets the recovery process, by acknowledging the problem within the group: 'I am a …' (add here the problematic behaviour, e.g. alcoholic, sex and love addict etc.). Denial is curtailed and the process of recovering begins. . This step reflects how most Twelve Steps meetings start: members introduce themselves by saying their name, followed by the statement 'I am an alcoholic' or 'I am a sex and love addict' etc., depending on the problem. Steps two and three involve the individual's recognition of his or her self-centredness and the embracing of a higher power. This step entails changing the ways of relating to oneself and to others and embracing one's spirituality. In step four, members are supposed to make a moral inventory, referring to difficult past experiences. Step five continues this process of reflection and acknowledgment of the problem. In steps six and seven, wrongdoings and defects of character are to be left behind and absolved by God. In steps eight and nine, members are supposed to reflect on and take responsibility for their wrongdoings and shortcomings. This is a more active process, in the sense that members are encouraged to ask forgiveness of people they have hurt and to make amends when possible. Steps ten to twelve are aimed at reinforcing the need to remain attuned to God's will, to sustain sobriety, to reach others in need of help and to use the principles of the program in all spheres of life. Nowinski and Baker (2012) attribute the success of the Twelve Steps Program to the fact that it breaks down complex psychological dynamics into simple terms. Phrases such as 'letting go' and 'turn it over' help individuals deal with their lives in a more pragmatic manner.

Meetings are considered the grounding place for the program and are rigidly structured. They start with members admitting their addiction. The acknowledgment of the addiction is considered the first step for individuals to accept and deal with denial and loss of control in relation to the addictive behaviour (Beattie, 2013; Nowinski and Baker, 2012). Members then read a piece from the fellowship literature and are able to share their experiences at an allocated time. Cross talking (commenting directly or indirectly on what other members say in the group) and personal opinions are not allowed. Members are encouraged to 'tell stories, don't give advice' (Mullins, 2010, p. 152). There is no authority in the group and there are no top-down instructions; instead, management is led by 'trusted servants' who are encouraged to rotate regularly and all decisions are democratically discussed and agreed (Kelly et al., 2000, p. 18). Members are encouraged to have a sponsor, a more experienced member of the group, in order to have more dedicated support (Kelly et al., 2000). The function of the sponsor involves helping

the new member to set bottom lines (e.g. problematic behaviours to be avoided, recognising the triggers of the addiction), offering his or her own experience of recovery as a way of support. Here is worth to mention that bottom lined behaviour is to be completely avoided, that implies that sex and love addicts are to avoid relating until they have recovered a sense of agency, and have at least arrived in Step 8. The mutual benefits of members helping each other have been widely recognised. By helping others, sponsors further develop their coping strategies (Kurtz, 1997 and Levine, 1988), feel better about themselves and their sense of control and competence (Mullin, 2010) and transform themselves from victims to helpers (Dosset, 2013)).

In SLAA's approved self-help literature, powerlessness arises as an effect of family background: individuals act out their past; they are powerless in relation to it, but can change their predicament if they identify what has caused or provoked the behaviour they act out. That is to say that by virtue of assuaging the power of the past in the present, individuals can gain agency (Beattie, 2013; Davis Kasl, 1990; Norwood, 2008; Peabody, 2011).

This is very different from the ways in which powerlessness is articulated in AA, in which powerlessness is not related to family background, but is an unchangeable feature in one's self; it cannot be worked through, only controlled with the support of the group and of a Higher Power (Valverde, 1998). In this regard, by adopting a therapeutic discourse, SLAA possibly contravenes what is at the heart of the Twelve Steps Program. It does not adapt to it, but rather, changes it from being a fundamentally spiritual program, to being a therapeutic *and* spiritual one.

This has a significant effect on how the Twelve Steps Program is articulated in SLAA, not only in terms of philosophy but also in terms of outcomes. Whilst addiction, when seen as a spiritual disease, can only be 'controlled' but not ultimately 'resolved', addiction as a disease in SLAA's approved literature is seen as a psychological condition that can be worked through. Individuals can change their predicament and can have fulfilling relationships, but on the proviso that they are guarded.

The conceptualisation of addiction as an effect of a dysfunctional background permeates SLAA's discourse. The addict lacks a proper template for love and is deemed to repeat childhood traumas (Beattie, 2013; Davis Kasl, 1990; Norwood, 2008; Peabody, 2011). In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud contended that what was at stake in a patient's repetition was an attempt to master an original trauma and to turn passivity into activity; however, because the process of repetition does not entail learning, there is no working through, individuals continue to repeat without mastering their circumstances and without avoiding discomfort.

It is this dynamic of the 'repetition compulsion', revealing the failed attempt to master the pains of the past, that seems to underlie the notion of emotional determinism present in the sex and love addiction self-help literature. Freud (1914) suggested that in analytical settings, through the process of transference, new meanings can be given to the repetitive symptom. Insofar as the analytical setting encourages the release of resistance, the unconscious material can emerge and be given a new signification. This process of giving new signification to the symptom is what allows the individual to stop repeating the past, and repetition is replaced by elaboration. In analytic treatment, attention is placed in the ways in which the unconscious material emerges, for example through slips of the tongue and dreams. This material is interpreted and gains new significations.

Underlying SLAA's discourse is the idea that unconscious forces are at play, determining the symptom; however, in managing the symptom in this way, SLAA's discourse disregards the power of repression or the different ways that a symptom can be addressed in language. Instead, it demands that the ego should attribute meaning to the symptom. Although this is problematic

from the point of view of a therapeutic approach that takes into account the unconscious, it can be helpful in terms of providing containment and agency. Whilst it has been argued that, by virtue of giving meaning to lived experience, circumstances may become more contained, without anything really changing (Bruner, 1991), it is questionable whether it is true that nothing really changes, as shaping one's lived experience in a more manageable way can be helpful in itself.

In the SLAA context, however, because what lies 'underneath' persists and is never really examined, a spiritual dimension seems to offer a solution to that. The spiritual comes to account for all that eludes explanation. Whatever cannot be mastered by narrative control is to be mastered by connecting with the Higher Power. The function of the Higher Power is similar to what Lacan (1974) sees as the role of religion: it 'appeals' (or 'posits') to a cure and a meaning to that which does not work. However, to what extent can we ignore or dismiss the Higher Power, when it becomes a form of the containing Other, not a simple religious function? This containing Other is similar to Freud's (1927) idea, that at the heart of religion there is a longing for a father, a protective father (paternal figure) who can assuage anxiety. Therefore, what seems to be at stake in the program is the wish for containment, in terms of giving a meaning to the symptom, appealing to a Higher Power that is ever-present. In this sense, it can be argued that despite the fact that the inclusion of the spiritual discourse within the therapeutic discourse contains its own failures and paradoxes, it nevertheless can offer a valuable strategy in moments of crisis. In my research, SLAA members interviewed seemed to benefit from the confluence of therapeutic and the spiritual strategies, the therapeutic as a means to understanding their difficulties and the spiritual as a way to contain anxiety and provide hope.

I would therefore argue that the notion of the Higher Power in SLAA does not contradict the emphasis on rationality. Instead, it should be understood in terms of complementarity; what cannot be understood and contained by reason should be managed by relating to the Higher Power. In this respect, it can be argued that the notion of a Higher Power seems to provide a transformative experience—it can transform anxieties into manageable emotions and thoughts.

Situating SLAA's notion of a Higher Power within the Twelve Steps Program, the Irish psychoanalyst Rik Loose (2002) contends that the Twelve Steps offer a religious discourse, attempting to produce knowledge precisely where it is lacking, and in this process, closing the possibility of symbolisation. He contends that addicts have a difficulty in accepting life's own terms and that the discourses of education, science, and religion on addiction often confuse cause and explanation. They all attempt to produce knowledge of the addict and where there is a lack in the domain of the Real, a hole that nothing can fill. This difficulty is accentuated by the fantasy of the existence of an ideal Wholeness; in other words, the idea that Eros can be separated from Thanatos.

Loose's (2002) argument can be seen as valid from a psychoanalytic perspective. However, it misses the point that the Twelve Steps Program functions within a robust discourse of 'castration': members are constantly reminded of their powerlessness and limitations. In that sense, it could be argued that the Twelve Steps do not separate Eros from Thanatos; Thanatos is very much the symptom in the context of the members' weaknesses and failures. By extension, it seems to me that the notion of a Higher Power, religious though it is in origin, re-positions the 'good' or positive aspects of subjectivity outside the perimeter of the 'damaged' or suffering self. It therefore creates a margin of hope. I would further argue that SLAA's spiritual solution offers a valuable coping strategy, which members can always draw upon when their internal resources are not sufficient in managing distress and ontological insecurities. It gives a meaning to the Real, to the trauma and anxiety, to that that fails symbolisation, to that which words cannot contain,

and although the meaning it provides is illusory (Lacan, 1975); it helps individuals to manage difficult states of mind. In this sense, dismissing the Higher Power as merely religious misses the point.

The De-Regulation of Intimacy and Narcissistic Defences

It is important to appreciate the socio-cultural context of the twentieth century, and the time during which SLAA emerges and flourishes.

According to Verhaeghe (1999), in the second half of the twentieth century, in Western societies ideals of freedom brought along expectations of a new kind of relationship between men and women; at the same time, science replaced church as the authority giving meaning to human experience. According to Jacques-Alain Miller (2012), the 21st century is being restructured along the lines of two prevalent discourses: the discourse of capitalism and the discourse of science. Miller argued that these two discourses have fundamentally altered the traditional organisation of human experience and consequently have devalued the Name-of-the-Father[7].

According to the French psychoanalyst Marie-Hélène Brousse (2007) the growing emergence of scientific discourse has contributed to the waning of the structures that sustain authority in the symbolic domain. Today, signifiers that historically sustained authority have less power; as a result, the truth and authority they brought with them have become disassociated. For example, today, the power of the church and its master signifier, God, is not as mighty as it had been before and therefore truth has become more 'logical and operational'. In the past, truth had been heavily linked to a larger symbolic system with master signifiers, such as God and the church. Today the boundaries are less defined by a Symbolic Order that tells us a 'fundamental No!'. The main consequence of this shift is that boundaries assume a less phallic value and castration is more likely to operate from the order of the Real[8], rather than on the basis of a symbolic process (Brousse, 2007, p. 10). Operating within the order of the Real means that because those boundaries do not come from an internalised Symbolic Order, their effects are arguably much less effective.

The Irish psychoanalyst Alan Rowan (2013) has claimed that the modern family is in crisis. He has argued that modernity has promoted a shift from the two poles of parenthood to an exchangeable parity, a 'monoparentality', leading to the reduction of the family to the 'parent-

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[7] In the 1950s, Lacan referred to the name of the father (without capitals) to allude to the original prohibitive role of the father against the incest taboo. Then from 1963 onwards, the Name-of-the Father became capitalised and took a more precise meaning, becoming 'the fundamental signifier that permits signification to proceed normally'. As a signifier, the Name-of-the-Father has two main functions: to provide an identity within the Symbolic Order and to ensure the Oedipal prohibition of incest (Evans, 2007, p.119).

[8] In Seminar XXII R.S.I. (1974-75), Lacan refers to Freud's text, Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety (1926) to explain how symptoms are 'the effects of the Symbolic in the Real' (p.7), signifying something that does not work and has to be avoided. For example, an inhibition imposes a limit in an action, like a phobia does, or an anxiety. Therefore, both inhibition and anxiety are symptoms which have the function to protect by imposing limits in the Real rather than the in the Symbolic Order. Following this logic, inhibition, symptom and anxiety can function as names-of-the-father, creating a limit without a master signifier; that is they prohibit actions by confronting the Real.

child couple', which favours a narcissistic and problematic relationship. That is, the child becomes an object – a source of enjoyment – and there is no symbolic narrative of the function of the parents, which would not only promote the identification with their ideals, but, more important, regulate desire (p. 8). This new narcissistic model of relating has been associated in sociological discourse to shifts in culture and society that have come about as a result of consumerism, a superficial therapy culture and the insecurities of late capitalism. These changes have allegedly been exacerbated by a lack of social mechanisms of recognition, fostering insecurity and leading individuals to search for external reassurance (Lasch, 1991; Craib, 2002).

Žižek (1999) has argued that one of the consequences of the weakening of the prohibitive function of the Oedipal father is its replacement by the voracious father of *Totem and Taboo* (1913), conveying the idea that total satisfaction is possible. Because the prohibitive function of the Oedipal father is no longer fully operative, it loses both its 'protective function', as well as its purpose in providing a symbolic identity. Consequently, when internal barriers are no longer operative, limits are to be imposed from the Real. This lack of a symbolic identity can result in a poor sense of self, both creating anxiety and promoting narcissistic defence mechanisms.

SLAA, it could be argued, seems to seek to offer an alternative for a lack on the symbolic domain. The program sets itself up as an authoritative agency, with the power of filling out a void in the Symbolic Order; it offers a supportive community, clear boundaries to regulate desire, and strategies to manage anxieties. Paradoxically, the program seems to encourage the same narcissistic mechanism of defence to remediate the anxieties brought about by changes in society at large. That is, SLAA encourages strategies of avoidance which similar to narcissistic defences aim to recover a lost narcissism and to promote self-sufficiency. Avoidance is promoted in two ways. Firstly, by rationalising emotions and the vulnerabilities that relationships prompt as addictions to be supressed; secondly, by promoting self-sufficiency and an investment in the self. SLAA therefore amounts to a paradox: on the one hand, the program cannot escape reproducing the same defences available in society at large, and in this respect it can be argued that it is a symptom of our time; on the other hand, the program seems to offer something very important to its members: containment.

At the same time, the program has a robust discourse of avoidance – saying no to enjoyment, it offers important forms of containment: therapeutic and spiritual. It provides a meaning-interpretation to the real of anxiety, to that which cannot be articulated otherwise, a meaning to that which doesn't work. It helps to assuage anxieties and promote feelings of hope which is so valuable in moments of despair and so underrated in many forms of treatments. In doing so, SLAA seems a beneficial program for individuals who identify with the symptom of sex and love addiction and wish to recover a sense of agency.

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Transhumanism and Advanced Capitalism:
elitist logics and dangerous implications

Alexander Thomas

Abstract: Transhumanism is a relatively new, yet rapidly expanding, field of study. Converging technologies and the possibilities they create for various forms of directed (human) evolution give rise to potentially troubling political, social, cultural, and economic implications and numerous ethical dilemmas. Part of my critique of transhumanism is that its thinking tends towards an instrumentalist view of technology, a kind of techno-anthropocentrism. That is to say that transhumanists underestimate the complexity of our relationship with technology, seeing it as a controllable, malleable tool that with the correct logic and scientific rigour can be turned to any end. Just as technological developments are dependent on the environment in which they arise, they in turn feedback into the culture creating new dynamics, often imperceptibly. One facet of investigation is whether transhumanism is likely to be inclusive. Analysis of the trend of disentitlement within advanced capitalism is an important aspect of this question. If the logics of progress (of economic growth and technological innovation) are the primary value in society, a pervasive sense of scarcity drives the competitiveness that yields the greatest efficiency, in part explaining the technocapitalist tendency towards increasing the numbers of surplus people. In this context, the systemic logic of advanced capitalism combined with the stark inequalities and excess populations that may exist outside of the techno-economic bubble of progress could be suggestive of a genocidal logic inherent within technocapitalism. The implications of exclusion from the system are likely to be far more significant in the future than they are today, but the system itself relies heavily on exclusions to augment its trajectory.

Julian Savulescu and Steve Fuller are two prominent transhumanist thinkers with very different justifications for and visions of human enhancement. Savulescu (2009, 2010, 2012) uses a distinctly secular view of humanity, which focuses on human moral failings and the existential dangers these cause as a justification for upgrade. His work has a distinctly biologically determinist bent, underplaying the complex logics of the social world and their impacts on individual and collective morality and the development and dissemination of technology. Fuller (2010, 2012, 2014) (aided and abetted by Veronika Lapinska (2014) in the The Proactionary Imperative, on which this article primarily focuses) rejects the plausibility of a secular underpinning to transhumanist aspirations, and views humans not as wretched moral failures doomed to extinction, but as nascent Gods destined for transcendence. Fuller and Lupinska (2014) show much more awareness of the prevailing social conditions in determining the development and outcomes of transhumanist technologies, even suggesting altering our current social world to maximise efficiency in progressing their transcendent aspirations. Whilst Savulescu promises that human enhancement can deliver us from evil and offer a moral and egalitarian future for the majority of humankind, Fuller embraces extreme social outcomes (that many would consider as 'evil') as a tool on the journey to omnipotence. The naivety of the path to human enhancement imagined by the former thinker is drawn into focus by that of the latter.

The reasons for analysing the transhumanist ideas of Savulescu and Fuller are twofold. Firstly, the instrumentalist conception of technology enables transhumanist thinkers to underplay the moral dilemmas and practical hazards associated with radical technological developments by considering potential dangers independently and in abstraction. Such thinking presents a false construct: a simple problem, clearly delineated allowing for simple solutions. This characterises the evolution of the relationship between technology and man as deterministic, atomised and ahistorical. The process itself, like the technology, is perceived as machinic – complicated but not complex. In fact technological change, especially in the case of converging technologies with the potential to 'upgrade' human potentiality, is a complex and evolving process. The outcomes of various advancements are dynamic and fundamentally unpredictable as they interact with social, economic and cultural realities. As Capra & Luisi state,

Twentieth-century science has shown repeatedly that all natural phenomena are ultimately interconnected, and that their essential properties, in fact, derive from their relationships to other things. Hence in order to explain any one of them completely, we would have to understand all the others, and that is obviously impossible (2014, p.2).

Savulescu's failure to fully recognise this in the ideas he expounds are drawn into sharp focus by the contrary ideas of Fuller & Lupinska, whose conception of morality is vastly different.

The second reason for analysing the work of these thinkers here is to establish how each, in very different ways conceptually 'dehumanises'. It is my contention that 'systemic dehumanisation' is an emergent characteristic of the interaction between the advanced capitalist system and the ongoing process of radical technological developments. Whilst such a wide-ranging claim cannot be fully considered in the confines of this short article, the ideas of Savulescu and Fuller offer valuable insight into some ways that the application of transhumanist technologies and the ideologies that promote them may have deeply dehumanising impacts. It should be noted that the term 'dehumanisation' in this context refers both to individual humans and the concept of 'human' as a category. It is acknowledged that the relationship between these entities is itself complex, but holds that they can be seen as systems which interact upon each other. Thus the degradation of individual human rights undermines attempts to hold the category

of 'human' as a morally sacrosanct or valuable entity, and likewise the debasement of the moral value ascribed to the 'human' as a category may have real life impacts on individual humans.

Transhumanism – an instrumentalist idea

'Transhumanism' is the idea that humans should transcend their current natural state and limitations through the use of technology. That is to say we should embrace self-directed human evolution. If the history of technological progress can be seen as humankind's attempt to tame nature to better serve its needs, transhumanism is the logical continuation: the revision of humankind's nature to better serve its fantasies. David Pearce, co-founder of the World Transhumanist Association states:

> If we want to live in paradise, we will have to engineer it ourselves. If we want eternal life, then we'll need to rewrite our bug-ridden genetic code and become god-like…only hi-tech solutions can ever eradicate suffering from the world. Compassion alone is not enough (Pearce, 2007)

It is not a single cogent idea, but rather a broad church characterised by numerous schisms. Max More, founder of the Extropy Institute, calls it a 'life philosophy, an intellectual and cultural movement, and an area of study' (2013, p.4). However, in defining the term as 'The study of the ramifications, promises, and potential dangers of technologies that will enable us to overcome fundamental human limitations, and the related study of the ethical matters involved in developing and using such technologies' (2013, p.3), he underplays the faith inherent to the transhumanist position. Any investigation that deems the dangers greater than the potential benefits contravenes the transhumanist's ideology. As David Roden states transhumanism is 'an ethical claim that technological enhancement of human capacities is a desirable aim' (2015 p.9). For them the aspiration to become a technologically enhanced post-human entity is morally sacrosanct.

Transhumanism is a relatively new, yet rapidly expanding, philosophy and field of study. Its growing prominence is largely due to the rapid development of converging NBIC technologies (nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology and cognitive science). These are giving rise to near future potentialities that have long been the domain of science fiction: superintelligence and life-span enhancement are very real possibilities. In some ways it may be wise not to view these developments as some far off radical break with all prior organic evolution, but as an ongoing process already underway. At a systems level above that of the individual human, many aspects of our social world, not least our financial systems, are already largely machine based entities. Algorithms and big data play an increasingly prominent role in our lives. Transhumanists would hold that the trajectory of technologies outlined above would suggest it is only a matter of time before they start to take hold at the level of the human. If we interrogate the complex systems and power structures in which this human / machine hybrid already exists, there is much to be learnt from recent manifestations of this evolving relationship. How recent technologies have been disseminated, utilised, and manipulated within the current global political, cultural and economic landscape can prove instructive.

Due to the rapid pace of technological 'progress', the often Utopian language and expectations that discursively surround and shape our understanding of these developments have tended to remain critically under-interrogated. The tenor of much transhumanist thought dedicated to the profound changes that lie ahead is often characterised by abstraction. Often this is because the possible evolutionary 'advancements' are deemed so radical as to render the

prevailing social conditions irrelevant. Transhumanist thinking tends towards an instrumentalist view of technology, a kind of 'techno-anthropocentrism'. That is to say, transhumanists underestimate the complexity of our relationship with technology, seeing it as a controllable, malleable tool that with the correct logic and scientific rigour can be turned to any end. In fact, just as technological developments are dependent on and reflective of the environment in which they arise, they in turn feedback into the culture creating new dynamics, often imperceptibly. Even if we assume the impending technological changes will bring about an extreme transformation of the very notion of humanity, it does not follow that all humans will be included in this process. What becomes of those outside the bubble of post-humanity requires thorough analysis. Furthermore, the nature and pace of the changes themselves do not exist in a social vacuum. The prevailing societal structures and cultural logics will play a significant role in this evolutionary process and its effects. Therefore, situating the ethical issues within the broader social, cultural, political, and economic contexts within which they emerge is vital.

Savulescu – saving humanity with enhanced morality

Humankind can be viewed as a creature desperately in need of salvation from the myriad dangers that pose an existential threat at the beginning of the 21st Century. Technology, especially of the sort that intervenes in our very nature, is increasingly looked towards as that salvation. As Marvin Minsky argues,

> we are unlikely to last very long – on either cosmic or human scales of time. In the next hundred or thousand years, we are liable to destroy ourselves, yet we alone are responsible not only for our species' survival but for the continuation of intelligence on this planet and quite possibly in the universe (cited in Garreau, 2005, p.123).

Even if we gropingly navigate our way to some kind of sustainable continued existence, Fuller points out 'In the end, entropy conquers all' (2014, p.29). Savulescu also cites species survival as a primary justification for human enhancement arguing that we face a 'Bermuda Triangle of Extinction': radical technological power, liberal democracy and human moral nature, the triumvirate which threaten to represent a potential cocktail of destruction. Fuller & Lupinska charactarise the thinking of Nick Bostrom and Savulescu thus:

> The various diseases of affluence from which humanity sufferers today - from ecological degradation to mediocre health maintenance and tolerance of massive socioeconomic disparities - are traceable to a failure of our biological hardware to catch up with the aspirational software (i.e. the progressive philosophies, sciences, etc.) that successive generations of humans have programmed into the hardware. (2014, p.84)

Their description is instructive; firstly, in its dehumanising, mechanistic language (perceiving humanity as something akin to a bug ridden computer system), but more importantly as it places morality as the particularly faulty aspect of human nature.

Conceptions of 'human nature' are highly contentious, but it is in this area that Savulescu (2009) believes we have the greatest capacity to influence or alter the alarming future he diagnoses. Savulescu states that we have evolved as a species to exist in a world very different from the one we now live in (a localised Pleistocene hunter-gatherer community versus a globalised world of advanced technological power). This means our moral natures are at odds with the social world we now find ourselves in – we are empathetic, but only to a very limited

degree; we are near sighted, we tend to co-operate only in smaller groups when our efforts are observed and we are distrustful of strangers and naturally xenophobic (Savulescu, 2009). For Savulescu (2009), our inclination for short term thinking explains our slow reactions to climate change and 'kin altruism' or 'the contract of mutual indifference' can be seen as an explanation for the continuing existence of extreme poverty. It is worth noting that for Savulescu the causes of these problems are to be found within our biological wiring. There is no attempt to explain the complex systemic social logics or histories that play a significant role in their development. In his view, these integral failings at the moral core of human nature require technological intervention to prevent us from self-destruction. For Savulescu there is an 'urgent imperative to enhance the moral character of humanity' (Persson & Savulescu, 2008, p.1) exactly because radical technological potentialities are becoming possible. We therefore cannot wait for natural evolution to catch up with the shifting world we find ourselves in: it is too slow and lacks the requisite insight.

Put in these terms, Savulescu's panacea is inviting. The idea that we could simply upgrade ourselves into more benevolent versions of humanity may be highly appealing to a liberal imagination. However, deeper interrogation reveals a number of problems with Savulescu's position. Firstly, rather than considering the myriad moral dilemmas that human enhancement raises, he oversimplifies the views of 'bioconservatives'. He argues that all who view 'enhancement…as [a] threat to human equality and the fundamental dignity of man' have just one criticism: 'the basic concern is, I believe, a unitary one: the Argument from Equality' (Savulescu, 2012, p.184). It is highly dubious to characterise all potential critiques of human enhancement as essentially about equality, but Savulescu further limits the scope of enquiry by reducing the concept of equality to a 'prescriptive ideal':

> It is obvious, even to bioconservatives, that we are all born unequal…However, equality as a moral ideal is not a description of the way the world is or how people are, but an ideal of how people should be treated…The life of each person matters equally and should be treated by political institutions, the law and social norms equally…Bioconservatives worry that either the motivation to enhance, the act of enhancement or the result of enhancement will constitute or lead to people being treated unequally. How could this be so? Since equality is a prescriptive ideal, how could changing the empirical world affect the nature of, or the effectiveness of, a moral prescription? Since these are different ontological categories, it is puzzling how these writers relate one to the other' (2012, p.185)

By interpreting 'equality' in this extremely limited way, Savulescu precludes the possibility of an analysis of actual inequality in the real 'empirical' world as the real world belongs to a different 'ontological category' to 'ideals'. He then proceeds with a brief assessment of 'justice' where he determines that giving people 'a fair go' is a satisfactory conception of justice, then conflating 'a fair go' with the prescriptive ideal of equality (2012, p.187). When it comes to 'intelligence quotients' (itself a notoriously dubious analytical measurement), Savulescu uses quantified graphs and data, dignifying his analysis with a pseudo-scientific precision. And yet, for him, inequality in the empirical world, or for that matter, any analysis of how the world is or how its systemic workings function, would be merely speculative:

> Perhaps the bioconservative worry is a more pragmatic one. Perhaps they worry that the way the world is and the way people are, various enhancements will lead to people being unethically treated more unequally. This is pure empirical speculation without any robust evidence adduced to support it (2012, p.186)

If Savulescu requires evidence that enhancements 'will' lead to the unethical treatment of people, then the only empirical evidence possible is the future outcome. By this rationale, we can say nothing about the future at all, as the only evidence for it has not yet occurred. However, whilst acknowledging the deeply complex social contingencies in which radical technological enhancements are likely to come about, it is possible to interrogate existing systemic logics, analyse already emergent phenomena and utilise this in any assessment of possible outcomes. We can also quantify, to some degree of accuracy, actual inequality defined in a variety of ways.

When we consider the introduction of highly effective psycho-pharmaceuticals, genetic modification, superintelligence, brain-computer interfaces, nano-technology, robotic prosthetics, and even the possible development of life expansion, the global inequities we are already seeing will surely be magnified. It is not easy to conceive of a way in which these potentialities can be enjoyed and utilised by all when we consider the probable contexts and cultures in which they are likely to emerge. The implications of such potent and radical possibilities being available to some and not others are stark. Saskia Sassen's analysis of what she terms the 'emergence of new logics of expulsion' (2014, p.4) is a particularly useful investigation at 'capturing the pathologies of today's global capitalism' (2014, p.4). The expelled include the 60,000 migrants who have lost their lives on fatal journeys in the last 20 years (IOM, 2017) and the victims of the racially skewed profile of ever increasing incarceration rates (Shaw, D., 2015; Alexander, 2015; Nellis, 2016). Unprecedented acute concentration of wealth occurs alongside these expulsions. By 2017, the richest 8 people owned as much wealth as half the world. This figure is down from 388 people in 2010. Meanwhile the wealthiest 1% own more wealth than the other 99% combined (Oxfam, 2017). To dismiss the potential implications of such inequalities as 'empirical speculation' is illogical. Sassen argues that some of our 'most advanced economic and technical achievements' (2014, p.4) play a vital role in enabling the acute concentration and expulsions of surplus groups, whilst at the same time creating a kind of nebulous centrelessness as the locus of power:

> Historically, the oppressed have often risen against their masters. But today the oppressed have mostly been expelled and survive a great distance from their oppressors. Further, the 'oppressor' is increasingly a complex system that combines persons, networks, and machines with no obvious centre (Sassen, 2014, p.10).

Surplus populations expelled from the productive aspects of the social world may rapidly increase in number in the near future as improvements in AI and robotics could result in significant automation unemployment (Chase, 2016; Ford, 2015; Frey & Osborne, 2013;). Large swathes of society may become productively and economically moribund. For Yuval Noah Harari such a prospect could mean that 'the most important question in 21st-century economics may well be: What should we do with all the superfluous people?' (2017). We are left with the scenario of a small elite which has an almost total concentration of wealth with access to the most powerfully transformative technologies in world history and a redundant mass of people no longer suited to the evolutionary environment in which they find themselves and entirely dependent on the benevolence of that elite. The dehumanising treatment of today's expelled groups show that prevailing liberal values in developed countries do not always extend to those who do not share the same privilege, race, culture or religion. History would suggest it is extremely naïve to think, given the likely difference in cultural worlds and even potential species-defining variations between the elite and the rest, that such benevolence would be forthcoming. In an era of radical technological power, the masses may even represent a significant security threat to the elite which could be used to justify aggressive and authoritarian actions.

Another problem with much of Savulescu's argument in Enhancing Equality (2012) is that his examples are focused on individuals and groups that are deemed substandard in some way. In the case of intelligence, he argues that those with an IQ under 97 may have problems 'competing successfully in a global economy and exercising fully the rights and responsibilities of citizenship' (2012, p.192). Savulescu's fanciful suggestion is that:

> Cognitive enhancers could be used to correct inequality and give people a "fair go". If we used cognitive enhancers to bring as many people as possible above the line of sufficient cognitive functioning, we would both be correcting natural inequality and social injustice (ibid.).

Savulescu can only offer up such an unrealistic proposition because of his total failure to engage with the social reality in which these possibilities emerge. Leaving aside the contestability of IQ as an effective measure of intelligence (Weinberg, 1989), there is nothing in the logics of advanced capitalism which would suggest that enhancements would only be available to those with a negative 'natural inequality'. As Yuval Noah Harari points out:

> Healing the sick was an egalitarian project, because it assumed that there is a normative standard of physical and mental health that everyone can and should enjoy…In contrast, upgrading the healthy is an elitist project, because it rejects the idea of a universal standard applicable to all, and seeks to give some individuals an edge over others (2016, p.348)

Savulescu's (2012) arguments predominantly focus on those who fall short of the normative standard in mental domains (such as psychopaths and those with low IQ). It is clear he thereby fails to engage comprehensively with the real social implications of human enhancement possibilities. By only discussing the egalitarian and uncontroversial project of healing those who fail to reach a normative standard (again bearing in mind the complexity of measuring normality in various domains of human capability), he does not address the more problematic issue of enhancements being more readily available to those in positions of power. Under the current social, political and economic logics, such enhancements are far more likely to exacerbate rather than ameliorate existing inequalities.

Savulescu remains seemingly uninterested in the social world and unimpressed by analysis of the complex systemic dynamics from which the possibility of human enhancement is emerging. Despite this he is totally convinced that human enhancement can solve any issue with those complex dynamics:

> Our moral dispositions and choices create social inequality. One way to address that inequality is to change the dispositions of people who make those choices. After all, gross social inequality already exists. It is time to treat the cause rather than the symptom of the disease. And the disease is our limited set of moral dispositions (Savulescu, 2012, p.196)

Savulescu simplifies all social inequality as being caused by human dispositions. But this ignores the fact that our moral dispositions themselves derive from social contexts. If 'moral dispositions' here refers to the biological wiring of all human beings, then it is a dubious claim as it ignores the social contingency of each individual morality, the variety of 'moral dispositions' of different people, the varying positions of power those people wield, and the systemic social and technological logics in which these individuals exist. Elsewhere, he is more cautious, stating: 'It is important to recognise that embracing biological enhancements does not imply biological causation. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with employing biological solutions to social

problems' (Savulescu, 2012, p.192). The problem here is that a lack of awareness of the roots of social problems may well result in biological solutions that exacerbate rather than ameliorate such issues. Whilst the failings of mankind to deal with global problems are increasingly manifest, deep social as well as biological understandings are required. Moral dispositions are neither self constituted (merely biological) nor all determining. Savulescu's insistence on divorcing biological and social systems in his analysis underplays complexity and the inter-related nature of these complementary systems. Indeed systemic logics that determine vested interests and cultural norms play a significant role in how moral dispositions are shaped. Savulescu neglects to situate our moral failings within the wider cultural, political and economic context in which they occur.

Secondly, it is necessary to consider how these technologies are to be disseminated, prescribed and potentially enforced in order to address the moral failings they seek to 'cure'. Whilst it is easy to imagine certain broad mental enhancements such as intelligence would be desirable to people, the idea that 'moral' enhancements would appeal is more dubious. Setting aside for a moment the difficulty in determining exactly what we may mean by 'enhancing moral nature', it is clear that being more empathetic or altruistic may put people at a distinct disadvantage in the context of a competitive capitalist society. Many of the altruistic attributes that Savulescu wishes more people would exhibit would render them less attuned to a fitness landscape where a mantra is 'greed is good'. Indeed, this is one of the reasons why arguing that human moral nature is bad per se is contestable: the advanced capitalist system encourages certain morally dubious behaviours. In fact human moral nature is extremely pliable and varied. Responsibility for the dissemination of moral enhancements would likely reside in the current power structures which may well bear much of the responsibility for these failings in the first place. It is important therefore to thoroughly interrogate the structures and tendencies that exist within our political and economic framework in order to identify the inherent biases within the system. It is these biases that will determine the development, design, accessibility and utilisation of technologies that Savulescu cites as offering strong possibilities for altering our failing moral nature.

Finally, the conception of 'morality' may differ widely between groups. The logics of advanced capitalism play a role in determining the culturally accepted norms of morality also. In Savulescu's work, although he speaks of promoting social justice and 'good' there is much to suggest his view of morality is a fairly socially conservative one. It is easy to conceive of various moral dangers that radical technological enhancement will create in the future but Savulescu tellingly focuses his attention on individual actors: 'in the next decades there's no reason why a backyard terrorist or fanatic or psychopath could not create a bio weapon that would at least destroy millions of lives' (Savulescu, 2009). While such a reality is readily imaginable, it is worth noting the prominent position of terrorism in the public imagination of developed Western countries today and its relationship to the dehumanising treatment of migrants. As Harari points out: 'Whereas in 2010 obesity and related illnesses killed about 3 million people, terrorists killed a total of 7697 people across the globe, most of them in developing countries. For the average American or European, Coca-Cola poses a far deadlier threat than al-Quaeda' (2016, p.18). Terrorism, however, plays an important role in popularising certain policies that tend to cede civil liberties. Indeed, despite advocating 'fixing' human moral nature, Savulescu claims that the technologically enhanced threat from terrorists and other malign individuals requires the relinquishing of certain civil liberties including the right to privacy. Note in his logic advanced technology is both part of the reason for and the solution to unsustainable peril:

> we will need to relax our commitment to maximum protection of privacy. We're seeing an increase in the surveillance of individuals and that will be necessary if we are to avert the

threats that those with anti-social personality disorder, fanaticism, represent through their access to radically enhanced technology (2009).

Savulescu's argument illustrates Shaw's concern that 'acquiescence to increased surveillance and regulation of the Internet is secured on the basis of the anxieties mobilised by the threat of terrorism, concerns about copyright theft and child protection issues' (2008, p37). In fact this surveillance allows corporations and governments to access and make use of extremely valuable information. The subterranean ideological reasons for surveillance tie in to the technocapitalist system's logic as it has transitioned to an information economy: 'the ultimate commodity in this post-Fordist economic structure is information' (Shaw, 2008, p27). Lanier explains: 'troves of dossiers on the private lives and inner beings of ordinary people, collected over digital networks, are packaged into a new private form of elite money…It is a new kind of security the rich trade in, and the value is naturally driven up. It becomes a giant scale levee inaccessible to ordinary people' (Lanier, 2014, p99). This levee is not only inaccessible but also imperceptible to ordinary people. Its impact extends beyond skewing the economic system towards elites with access to 'siren servers' but also results in significant alterations to the conception of liberty in that the authority of power is both radically more effective and dispersed. It is telling that whilst Savulescu proposes to fix social problems with technological solutions, he simultaneously advocates the loss of rights for individuals due to the social problems technology will bring.

Savulescu ultimately sees human beings as a inadequate species teetering towards oblivion and desperately in need of redemption. By focusing on biological solutions instead of social ones (and failing to fully analyse the interconnectedness of the two) he offers an unconvincing surety that individuals will go unharmed as he works to justify the process that will redeem us: technological human enhancement.

Fuller – The Proactionary Imperative

Fuller & Lipinska (2014) give humans a more elevated standing in their advocacy for transhumanist interventions. Both acknowledge their 'intellectual starting points' as 'non conformist Christians' (2014, p.3) and deem that 'Humans, understood either individually or collectively, are aspiring deities' (2014, p.9) who are 'aiming to beat the house in a cosmic casino where all previous players have come away broke…Homo sapiens know something that prior species did not, which may be to do with their special ties to the cosmic casino's proprietor' (2014, p.63). For Fuller & Lipinska then,

> to play God amounts to discovering our potential to become God, an entity who cannot be fully realised without our agreement to play the role. Our impulse to assume the divine position is evidenced in our ability to stand outside ourselves and adopt the standpoint of 'the view from nowhere' (2014, p.59)

Indeed, they acknowledge that 'if you do not believe in the centrality of humanity to the cosmos - a distinctly Abrahamic theological preoccupation - then you'll find the message of the Proactionary Imperative difficult to hear' (2014, p.8). Not least this is because they acknowledge that the history of human progress is 'best read as adventures in 'pyramid scheme' finance' (2014, p.8), 'Thus, like more ordinary acts of faith, faith in science demands an active 'suspension of disbelief' (2014, p.9). Finally they warn that a rational analysis of history would render faith necessary to justify any transhumanist endeavours, arguing that if you believe in the cogency of human enhancement, 'yet you see yourself as somehow poised 'against' or 'beyond' theology,

then you need to question the source of your confidence in humanity's indefinite self promotion' (2014, p.8). In other words, a belief in God is necessary to justify the belief that transhumanist aims will not end in catastrophe. For this reason, they reject Darwin, not for his theory of evolution per se, but for his failure to give humans a special, rarefied place in the natural world:

> Darwin himself seemed to think that our hypertrophied cerebral cortex, with its capacity for fixed ideas and inflated self regard, was a good candidate for the species killer. In short, big brains made for big egos that too easily amplify the significance of success and repressed the memory of failure. Thus, given the cosmic indifference of natural selection, our ever expanding and fetishised brains may turn out to be a cancer eating away at the human superorganism…The very idea that we might acquire a second-order, systemic understanding of the entire evolutionary process - perhaps transhumanism's most fundamental epistemic assumption - is a collective psychic disorder symptomatic of the cancer's onset (p83-4).

This conception about humanity's metaphysical ontology lies at the heart of Fuller & Lipinska's justification for what they call 'The Proactionary Imperative', an ideological extension of the 'proactionary principle'. The latter term was coined by Max Moore (2005) as a counterfoil to the 'precautionary principle' in the title of a declaration in favour of transhumanist aims. Fuller & Lupinska are clear in distinguishing these polar ideals and of the need to conceive of the 'proactionary' ideal in a religious grounding:

> Both principles are, in philosophical parlance, 'axiological'. They are concerned with values, specifically: what is a human being? The precautionary says that we are part of a larger whole called 'nature' and the meaningfulness of our lives (not to mention our sheer survival) is based on our appreciating that deep metaphysical point. It is all about self-embedding. In contrast, the proactionary says that we are no mere part of nature; rather our existence gives meaning to an otherwise meaningless nature by serving as means to our ends. The precautionary wishes to return us to our biological origins, the proactionary to take us as far away from them as possible through endless acts of self-transcendence. This difference is ultimately grounded in the value of being human: are we animals suffering from too big brains (precautionary) or deities in need of more resources (proactionary)? (2014, p.99-100)

To Fuller & Lipinska, the precautionary principle constitutes a 'fall from Divine Grace' (2014, p.31) by determining that there is a limit to our human powers, or to the notion than envisaging we are part of a nature that pre-exists us, and from which we are not separate, unique and divine. Hence for them, there is 'latent misanthropy…revealed in the popular eco-euphemism, 'anthropocene'…as if the meaning of humanity were reducible to its carbon footprint' (2014, p.31).

As they conceive this ideological battle, our entire political framework should be reconstituted through an up/down proactionary/precautionary lens instead of the old right/left divide:

> people are increasingly affiliating across national borders and species boundaries…some even aspire to discover extraterrestrial intelligence…From this perspective, the basic dilemma that has defined the left right divide for the past two centuries - shall we extend or limit state power? - starts to look a bit stale (2014, p.38-9)

For this reason, 'The precautionary-proactionary divide has the potential to shift the ideological access by 90 degrees…One group will be grounded in the Earth, while the other looks towards the heavens' (2014, p.43). Through rationalising intellectual gymnastics (too banal and redundant to deal with here), Fuller & Lipinska claim the proactionary position as the 'New Left' and the precautionary as the 'New Right' (2014, p.13). However, they also characterise eco-conscious philosophies (including 'posthumanism' as opposed to the proactionary 'transhumanism') as the domain of 'newer style leftists' who adopt 'an exceptionally precautionary brand of politics that treats virtually every enduring human imprint on the planet as a source of fear and loathing' (2014, p.9).

At the heart of Fuller & Lupinska's belief system is that we are obliged to pursue technoscientific progress relentlessly and endlessly. The only cause to halt would be to reach our god-like destiny or infinite power, effectively to serve God by becoming God. It is in their attitude to failure along the way that the real tenor of Fuller & Lupinska's aspirations are revealed. In stating "progressive" politics are dry runs at Universal governance that in practice do not always go to plan' (2014, p.9), the euphemism hides a potentially brutal path to transcendence. 'Progressive' here is not a substitute for 'socially liberal'. On the contrary: 'The proactionary principle is the 18th century enlightenment idea of progress on overdrive' (2014, p.9). The term 'progressive' has thus been co-opted to mean a fundamentalist proactionary ideal. The implications of such a mantra are stark:

> replacing the natural with the artificial is so key to proactionary strategy…some proactionaries speak nowadays of 'black sky thinking' that would have us concede - at least as a serious possibility if not a likelihood - the long-term environmental degradation of the Earth and begin to focus our attention on space colonisation (2014, pp.99-100)

It is not just the Earth itself that would be allowed to fall victim to Fuller & Lupinska's transhumanist super-experiment, but any person or thing that may represent grist for the mill in the transcendent journey.

In The Proactionary Imperative risk is cast as an inherent good, as it is only through risk that humans may prosper. It is to Fuller & Lupinski what greed was to Gordon Gekko, the very life blood of their creed: 'The Proactionary Imperative is about embracing risk as constitutive of what it means to be human: better to give hostage to fortune than be captive to the past' (2014, p.3) and 'Proactionaries define the human condition in terms of its capacity to take, survive and thrive on risk, based on some calculation of benefit to cost' (2014, p.32). This latter nod to a cost/benefit analysis is perfunctory in the extreme and the term 'calculation' is deeply misleading. For Fuller & Lipinska the calculation is pure ideology not mathematics.

> For precautionaries, the value lost through species extinctions cannot be offset by however much room is thereby left to humans to expand their lives…proactionaries are quite open about their willingness to sacrifice a significant part of present-day conditions to enable the future to stay open (2014, p.26)

This transcendent wager of gambling the Earth in the hope of winning the skies is propped up on divine faith alone. There is no attempt at calculating costs (what price on continued existence of Earth and mankind can be offered?), nor probabilities of success (although Fuller & Lipinska themselves acknowledge that logic alone would render the gamble a fool's game as history shows us we are doomed to fail). Furthermore, success is valued as an infinite figure (Universal governance, God-like power, omnipotence) which would break any rational calculation anyway. The resident philosopher of the European Commission's directorate comes

in for particular criticism for his work on 'responsible innovation' (2014, p100) as the proactionary ideology dictates than something very bad happening to you is preferable to the lost potential of something very good happening to you. The underlying logic to this dehumanising and misanthropic position is that being human is worth so much less than being superhuman that the incalculably small odds of achieving that status are worth the risk. Fuller & Lupinska fail to realise that even if we are to take their long term, transcendent aims seriously, those aims are completely undermined by a laissez-faire attitude to social, economic and environmental risk. A sustainable environment is a necessary platform on which to build transcendent goals. It is only blind faith that can cast these two objectives into a logical contradiction. These new political 'poles' collapse in on each other when we realise that the first position is dependent on the other.

The extent of suffering Fuller & Lupinska would be willing to gamble in their cosmic casino is only wholly manifest when we analyse what their project would mean for individual human beings: 'a proactionary world would not merely tolerate risk-taking but outright encourage it, as people are provided with legal incentives to speculate with their bio economic assets. Living riskily would amount to an entrepreneurship of the self' (2014, p.132). Furthermore, 'even when things go horribly wrong, it is less an outright loss than a learning experience' (2014, p.26) and 'proactionaries…seek large long-term benefits for survivors of a revolutionary regime that would permit many harms along the way' (2014, p.101): 'progress on overdrive' will require sacrifices. The economic fragility that humans may soon be faced with may prove extremely useful to the proactionary goals: in a society where vast swathes of the population are entirely reliant on the State for survival, market forces would determine that the less the State provides the more people are likely to risk for a lower reward. Hence, 'proactionaries would re-invent the welfare state as a vehicle for fostering securitised risk taking' (2014, p.42) and 'the proactionary state would operate like a venture capitalist write large' (ibid.). Social justice and the promotion of equality is not a concern of the state here:

> To the proactionary, there is nothing intrinsically valuable in…'equality', despite its reputation as a postmodernist utopia. On the contrary, it looks like the enforcement of…a 'fragile' approach to ecology that fails to recognise the creative power of destruction in both natural and human history (2014, p. 3-4)

At the heart of this thinking is the removal of basic rights for 'Humanity 1.0', Fuller's (2010) term for modern, non-augmented human beings, and the replacement of it by duties. These, in effect, constitute rights for the future augmented transhuman entity as they force modern man to make sacrifices with the intent of increasing the likelihood of enabling this 'Humanity 2.0' to come into being:

The classic welfare state's loss of political salience reflects a massive transformation in humanity's self-understanding, albeit in two diametrically opposed directions. Together they constitute the self-divided entity…'Humanity 2.0'. Both sides in this self-division pull away from 'Humanity 1.0', the entity enshrined in, say, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. One side pulls 'genealogically' to extend similar rights, concerns, etc. to those with a common evolutionary past; the other side 'teleologically', to extend similar rights concerns etc. to those with a common progressive future (Fuller & Lupinska, 2014, p.43).

The duties that constitute future humans' rights include that the very code of our being can and perhaps must be monetised: 'Conceptualise our genetic material as property that one is entitled, and perhaps even obliged, to dispose of as inherited capital' (2014, p.32) and 'personal autonomy should be seen as a politically licensed franchise whereby individuals understand their bodies as akin to plots of land in what might be called the 'genetic commons' (2014, 69-70).

The neoliberal preoccupation with privatisation should thus extend to human beings according The Proactionary Imperative, a self proclaimed, 'New Left' movement. Indeed, the life-time of debt that is the lived reality of most citizens in developed advanced capitalist nations, takes a further step as you are born into debt:

> Simply by virtue of being allowed to live, you are invested with Capital on which a return is expected…you may not have lived up to your potential (i.e. the capital invested in you) by the time you die: you will not have provided sufficient return on (genetic, educative, etc.) investment. You fail to redeem your debt' (2014, p107)

Fuller & Lipinska refer to this as 'a reinvent[ion] of self ownership in Humanity 2.0…[as an] abstract locus of agency responsible for the management and development of certain bio-economic assets' (2014, p.131). It is something of an understatement when they claim 'Clearly employed here is a radicalisation of attitude toward the human' (ibid.), but one not logically too great a leap from current systemic logics: 'However specified, the ultimate goal in this bio-capital utopia is maximum productivity - making the most of one's inheritance' (2014, p70-71). Socially moribund masses forced to serve the technoscientific super-project of Humanity 2.0 utilises the ideology of market-fundamentalism in its quest for perpetual progress and maximum productivity. The only significant difference is that the stated aim of 'god-like' capabilities is overt, as opposed to the undefined end determined by an ever more efficient market logic.

It is fair to say, Fuller & Lupinska do not accept existing advanced capitalist logics in full. They identify some areas which may undermine their stated intentions (rentism and inheritance are deemed 'socially corrosive' (2014, p.74) and 'irrational (aka traditional) socioeconomic barriers are likely to prevent some individuals especially of poor backgrounds from achieving [maximum productivity]' (2014, p70)). Most notably society's precautionary attitude towards science is the primary concern. Indeed, a significant amount of systemic change is needed:

> The real champions of transhumanism…are engaged in the process of restructuring the governance of the planet, if not the universe, to realise species level ambitions. Such restructuring will require not only fluency in manipulating the genetic code but also clever political, economic and legal mechanisms for adjusting to the consequences of acting on those ambitions, not least by providing compensation for the failures - including deaths - that are bound to occur along the way. It is only this global normative reorientation that truly deserves the title of 'proactionary' (2014, p.7)

The principal intellectual offering put forward by Fuller & Lupinska by way of these economic and legal mechanisms is what they refer to as 'hedgentics', the wayward offspring of hedge funds and genetic engineering:

> The solution that respects both individual responsibility and collective interdependence can be encapsulated in 'hedgenetics', understood as a proactionary legal strategy that simultaneously addresses the scientific need to explore human genetic potential and the political requirements of genetic stewardship. This conceptual hybrid of hedge funds and genetics places genes in the realm of the economy as 'bio-capital' (2014, p.125).

They further advocate bringing about a 'war economy model' impressed as they are by 'unprecedented feats of innovation by virtue of having to respond to a comprehensive yet unpredictable external foe' (2014, p.106). Hence they wish for a kind of permanent 'shock doctrine', disaster capitalism on acid, whereby 'the prospect of ecological collapse, epidemics or

even global financial meltdown [might] serve a similar function to focus minds in our own day' (2014, p.106). Indeed, they even suggest science could be the basis of an alternative brand of loyalty to patriotism: 'by replacing war with science, it may be possible to inspire people to absorb many of the same costs including personal harm or death in a less violent manner and for more reliable benefits to those who matter to them, now and in the future' (2014, p.132).

In case the harm and deaths they expect people to 'absorb' in the name of paying their 'debt' for being 'allowed to live' is not morally dubious enough, Fuller & Lipinska, unabashedly embrace the eugenic nature of their ideology: 'transhumanism' - at least in name - owes its very existence to eugenics, whose spirit it continues to promote under the slightly more politically correct rubric of 'human enhancement' (2014, p.64). And indeed, in a distant echo of Savulescu's rejection of privacy in favour of security Fuller & Lupinska acknowledge that 'eugenics requires mass surveillance and experimentation, with the understanding that many in retrospect may turn out to have been used or sacrificed for science' (2014, p.63). However, like a PR brochure for corporate responsibility in the age of mass human experimentation, they assure us:

> Yes, this is eugenics, but [not] the classical state authoritarian version…Rather, hedgenetics would be a kind of participatory eugenics, a democratically accountable, legally binding version of eugenics written into the heart of intellectual property law and the regulation of financial transactions. (2014, p128)

Presumably the ideology is global – for maximum productivity proactionaries need as many people as possible. After all, 'proactionaries are happy to increase the planet's human population indefinitely as nothing more or less than a series of experiments in living, regardless of outcomes' (2014, p.43). How Fuller & Lupinska ensure democratic accountability across the planet or what takes precedence when democracy threatens to limit productivity they do not say. Likewise, there is no mention of the implications of the significant social and economic inequities that would arise from such a state of precarity in terms of the democratic deficit caused by such skewed power relations.

The only real problem they perceive is 'how to promote a climate of tolerance in a society whose members are no longer compelled by a sense of common ancestry and are inclined to veer into increasingly divergent futures' (2014, p.134). If we ignore the homogenising tendencies of capitalism and accept divergent futures based on broad experimental diversity leading to the most productive outcomes (somehow achieved democratically!), indeed the issue of tolerance in a world where we may see each other effectively as different species is worth concern. Such a world could also promote a constant sense of angst and inadequacy:

> The transhumanist philosophy of 'ableism' offers important insight into the emerging normative horizons of the proactionary world. It argues that in a world where mental and physical enhancement will become more common place, we should expect people's self understanding to shift to an existential condition of 'being always already disabled', if only by virtue of not having undergone the latest popular treatment. As a result, something that modern society had taken for granted for so long - a stable sense of norms in terms of which people might orient their actions and on the basis of which they might claim entitlement or register grievance - would disappear… Failure in this task might result in formally recognised sub speciation: Apartheid 2.0 (2014, p.135)

In reality, the horse may already have bolted on Apartheid 2.0 well before we get to 'ableism' as a potential genocidal concern in the societal structure advocated in The Proactionary Imperative. Presumably genocide would only be a serious concern for proactionaries if it inhibits

progress towards the desired transcendent aim – perhaps by reducing the number of people available for experimentation. It is worth reflecting once more on Savulescu's simplistic notion of 'moral upgrade', and the contestability of the term morality. Such a 'moral upgrade' for Fuller & Lupinska would simply mean making humans more compliant and amenable to whatever enables the greatest efficiency in realising our transcendent trajectory.

Whilst Fuller & Lupinska's controversial tract may not be something most transhumanists would advocate in full, it is important nevertheless, as it does represent a rational transhumanist ideology, building on existing market logics, and legal and political structures. Its grain runs more aligned to advanced capitalism than against it, only adding an external overriding moral impulse (infinite progress towards omnipotence), which directs all vested interests within the system. Whilst Fuller & Lupinska would argue that they dignify man with a superior, indeed divine, purpose in the Universe, the implications for 'Humanity 1.0' (unaugmented modern humans) would be devastating and deeply dehumanising.

Conclusion

The reason for analysing the transhumanist ideas of Savulescu and Fuller is not just to show how individuals are under significant threat from the proposals of both thinkers but to establish how each, in very different ways conceptually 'dehumanises'. For Savulescu, humans are evolutionary relics – morally stunted entities ill fitting for the modern world. Whilst it is hard, in many ways not to agree with him, given the parlous state we find ourselves in, it should be noted that Savulescu puts all blame squarely within the moral core of each and every individual, all of whom need fixing. He offers no recognition of the social contingency of human moral failings. We are biologically, not systemically damned. We all offer such a threat to ourselves and each other that we cannot possibly be trusted and must give up all rights to privacy: the fault is with us, not the technology that heightens our potential for destruction or the social systems that enable it. For Fuller, we are nascent Gods – but this conception too renders us 'dehumanised' as our current manifestation is simply a disposable stepping stone on the path to divinity. Humanity is an iteration – an early one at that. We are Humanity 1.0, ripe for brutal and persistent experimentation and overdue an upgrade. Cultural conceptions of humanity are important. They are systems in themselves. Concepts can inform material reality just as capitalism's ability to turn nefarious ideas and inert matter into priced and categorised entities has become globally manifest. Dominant conceptions of what it means to be human will therefore come to play out in the material reality of what we are to become, though refracted and filtered through the other systemic influences that interconnect with our destiny.

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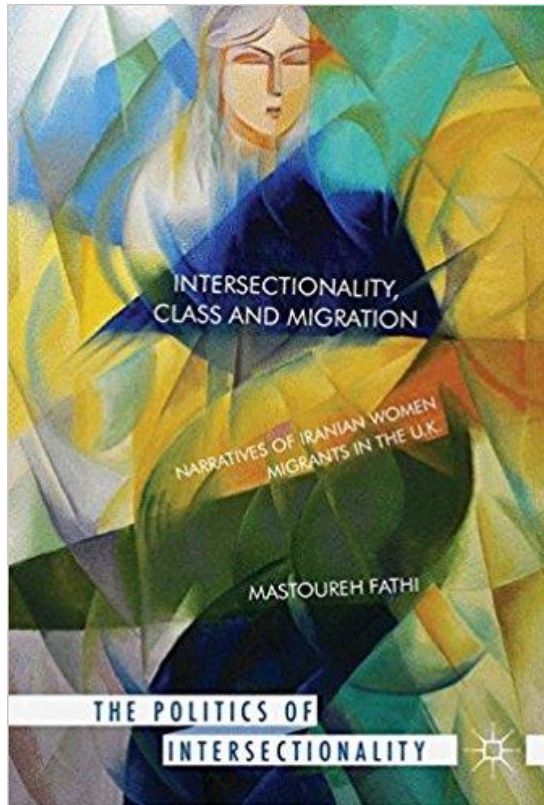
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Publication news from UEL PhD Alumni and Alumnae

2016-2017

a)   Selected Books

Intersectionality, Class and Migration

Narratives of Iranian Women Migrants in the U.K.

Fathi, Mastoureh

This book offers critical analysis of everyday narratives of Iranian middle class migrants who use their social class and careers to "fit in" with British society. Based on a series of interviews and participant observations with two cohorts of "privileged" Iranian migrant women working as doctors, dentists and academics in Britain—groups that are usually absent from studies around migration, marginality and intersectionality—the book applies narrative analysis and intersectionality to critically analyse social class in relation to gender, ethnicity, places and sense of belonging in Britain. As concepts such as "Nation," "Migrant," "Native," "Other," "Security," and "Border" have populated public and policy discourse, it is vital to explore migrants' experiences and perceptions of the society in which they live, to answer deceptively simple questions such as "What does class mean?" and "How is class translated in the lives of migrants?"

Review: This book fills an important gap in intersectionality studies and stratification studies, providing a nuanced intersectional analysis of the experiences, understandings and social position of Iranian women doctors in the UK, with a much needed focus on the importance of the role of class subjectivities and performativities. It advances understandings of social location and social hierarchy in both empirical and theoretical ways and is an important contribution to the burgeoning area of applying a gendered and intersectional lens within research in migration and ethnic studies. This book is essential reading for students, scholars, and professionals who are concerned with the complexity of othering processes and how they are dealt with by subjects and particularly how racialisation, class, and gender can operate in multiple and contradictory ways. Floya Anthias, Professor of Sociology and Social Justice (Emeritus), University of Roehampton University, UK

Dr Mastoureh Fathi received her PhD in 2011 for the thesis, *Classed pathways: Narratives of Iranian migrant women* at the University of East London (UEL), under the supervision of Professor Nira Yuval-Davis. She is lecturer in Sociology at Royal Holloway, University of London. She has published on the topics of belonging, gender, education and social class among migrants. She is a narrative researcher with an interest in Muslim migrants, and their everyday experiences of life in Western countries. Her current research looks at the intersection of religion, gender and parenting.

b)   Selected Edited Collections

Futures and Fictions

Edited by: Simon O'Sullivan, Henriette Gunkel and Ayesha Hameed

Futures and Fictions is a book of essays and conversations that explore possibilities for a different 'political imaginary' or, more simply, the imagining and imaging of alternate narratives and image-worlds that might be pitched against the impasses of our neoliberal present.

In particular, the book contributes to prescient discussions around decolonization, post-capitalism and new kinds of social movements – exploring the intersections of these with contemporary art practice and visual culture. Contributions range from work on science, sonic and financial fictions and alternative space-time plots to myths and images generated by marginalized and 'minor' communities, queer-feminist strategies of fictioning, and the production of new Afro- and other futurisms.

Paperback ISBN: 9781910924631 ($14.95 US // $15.95 CAN)
eBook ISBN: 9781910924648 ($8.99 US & CAN)

Dr Henriette Gunkel received her PhD in 2010 for the thesis: The cultural politics of female same-sex intimacy in post-apartheid South Africa, the University of East London (UEL), Director of Studies, Prof. Nira Yuval-Davis. She is lecturer in Visual Cultures, at Goldsmith's College, University of London. She is the author of *The Cultural Politics of Female Sexuality in South Africa* (Routledge, 2010) and co-editor of *Undutiful Daughters. New Directions in Feminist Thought and Practice* (Palgrave 2012), *What Can A Body Do?* (Campus, 2010) *and Frieda Grafe. 30 Filme* (Brinkman & Bose, 2013). She currently works on a monograph on Africanist Science Fictional interventions.

c) Selected Journal Articles

Alzeer, Gergana. 2017. Cocoons as a space of their own: a case of Emirati Women Learners. *Gender, Place and Culture: a Journal of Feminist Geography.*

Abstract: This article focuses on 'cocooning' as a spatial practice of Emirati higher education women learners in a singlesex learning context, which emerged from exploring the intersectional and intertwined relationship of gender, place and culture with its unique cultural formation that informs women learners' spatiality. To understand women's spatiality and explore these intersecting relations, I conducted an ethnographic qualitative inquiry, applying multiple levels of data gathering and analysis. I also utilised social theories of space as a theoretical framework, specifically the social construction of space and Lefebvre's triad of perceived, conceived and lived space. Cocooning, represented in these women learners' unique spatial appropriation in their quest for a space of their own, emerged as a pervasive socially constructed spatial theme. As a spatial practice, it was largely influenced by the women learners' cultural model, including socio-cultural status and gender roles, rooted in their national, historical colonial and traditional past as well as current economic, political, demographic, academic-institutional and global positions and demands. Furthermore, cocooning is a spatial representation of what also seems a universal longing among women, beyond context and culture, for a space of one's own. Such a spatial need is manifested differently in the perceived space while shared in the conceived and lived.

Barbagallo, Camille. 2017. 'Feminist Demands and the Contradictions of Choice: Work and Childcare in Neoliberal Britain' *Feminist Review*, Special Edition: Women, Work and Value (forthcoming).

Abstract: The development of 24-hour childcare in Britain is both the result of feminist struggle and, at the same time, indicates the significant transformations that have occurred under neoliberalism to waged work including the rise and proliferation of a typical working hours changes that have disproportionately had a negative effect on migrant and working-class women's lives. This paper investigates how the politics of choice has been influential in structuring feminist and neoliberal discourses of women's work and the labour of reproduction. It argues that while choice is central to feminist politics, it is via the discourse of choice that neoliberalism enters the domestic sphere and reorganises the practices and processes of reproduction and the subjectivity of motherhood. The paper returns to the different articulations of class and gender in the 1970s feminist critique of women's domestic destiny as well as working-class women's struggle for equal pay and employment to examine both the feminist demand for care and the subsequent expansion and marketisation of the childcare sector.

Fathi, Mastoureh. 2016. Becoming a woman doctor in Iran : The formation of classed and gendered selves. Gender and Education, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2016.1263290

Abstract: This paper analyses the pedagogical pathways of a group of first-generation Iranian migrant doctors in the UK. It explores the complex system of class production and growing up as a classed subject in Iran, a process that ties young women's educational aspirations to female independence on the one hand and to the modern feminine, heterosexual identity that sees women as part of the patriarchal family system on the other. By using Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital and habitus [Bourdieu 1984. Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul] and Foucault's theory of surveillance [Foucault 1984. "The Means of Correct Training." In The Foucault Reader, edited by Paul Rabinow. London: Penguin Books, pp. 188-205], this paper analyses how migrant women's trajectories of becoming highly educated are translated into their roles as mothers. Three major aspects of pedagogical trajectories are identified in the formation of classed selves: the first is the generational surveillance within families, particularly of girls by their mothers; the second is the normalisation of pathways and the importance of destined pathways that separate certain families, practices and choices in superior positions; the third is the moralising of educational choices, which distance being a doctor from classed consciousness, giving rise to an altruistic self as opposed to a selfish one.

Yuval-Davis, Nira; Varjú, Viktor; Tervonen, Miika; Hakim, Jamie; Fathi, Mastoureh. 2017 Press discourses on Roma in the UK, Finland and Hungary. Ethnic and Racial Studies, 40 (7), 1151-1169.

Abstract: This article analyses the political and media discourses on Roma in Hungary, Finland and the UK, in relation to the local Roma in these countries as well as those who migrated from Central and Eastern Europe countries following the fall of communism. The authors have analysed left of centre and right of centre major newspapers in these three countries, focusing on specific case studies which were the foci of public debates during the last two decades. We also examined a common case study in 2013 ("blond Maria") that was discussed throughout Europe. In each news paper, the constructions of Roma, local and migrant, and the changes to related discourses over the period were studied. In conclusion, we examine the multi-layered processes of social and political borderings in Europe which dominate discourses on Roma, "indigenous" and migrant, and the extent to which they constitute a coherent "European" construction of "the Roma".

Hameso, Seyoum. 2017. Farmers and policy-makers' perceptions of climate change in Ethiopia. Climate and Development, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17565529.2017.1291408

Abstract: Climate change is one of the most urgent and complex challenges for societies and economies. Left unaddressed it contains the potential to compromise the well-being of the current and future generations. Smallholder farmers who depend on rain-fed agriculture are heavily affected and it is important to understand what they think about the problem and its impacts so that remedial measures can be tailored to address the same. Hence this study

explores how farmers and policy-makers in Ethiopia conceived climate change, factors contributing to it and its impacts. The study is based on a field research conducted from January to May 2012 in Sidama's three agroecological zones (AEZs), namely, the highlands, midlands and lowlands. It deployed both qualitative and quantitative research method. Data collection involved (a) semi-structured interviews with 15 farmers and 17 policy-makers, (b) focus group discussion with 30 farmers, and (c) a survey of 120 farmers. The novelty of the study lies in exploring and comparing two sets of views (that of local people and the policymakers) on climate change. Findings revealed that farmers clearly perceived climate risks based on their experience and knowledge of their local environment. The commonly cited indicators of change include high temperature, rainfall, seasonal shifts and incidence of certain diseases. Farmers also identified specific indicators such as change in wind direction, disappearance of plant (crop and tree) species, growing hitherto unfamiliar crops and emergence of new parasites and weeds. Their perceptions of causes of climate change are mixed: deforestation, God's wrath, human activities, and weakened indigenous practices and values. On the other hand, participants from policy-making community espoused views shared by scientific discourse such as deforestation, global warming and CO_2 emissions. The gap in understanding needs to be bridged by information and education of the local public with the policy-makers paying attention to the importance of indigenous knowledge.

Johanssen, Jacob. 2016. The Subject in the Crowd: A Critical Discussion of Jodi Dean's "Crowds and Party". tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique. 14 (2), pp. 428-437.

Abstract: This article presents a critical discussion of Jodi Dean's (2016) book "Crowds and Party". I pay particular attention to her discussion of crowds and the Communist Party that is influenced by psychoanalysis. Dean has put forward an important argument for the affectivity within crowds that may be transformed into a Communist Party that is characterised by a similar affective infrastructure. I suggest that Dean's discussion of affect is slightly vague at times and may be supplemented with Sigmund Freud's work on affect. In contrast to Dean, who stresses the collectivity and deindividuation of the crowd, I argue that the crowd needs to be thought of as a place where individuality and collectivity come together and remain in tension. Such a tension may then be managed by the Party, as Dean illustrates.

Johanssen, Jacob. 2016. Not Belonging to one's Self: Affect on Facebook's Site Governance page. International Journal of Cultural Studies, https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1367877916666116

Abstract: This article makes a contribution to a growing number of works that discuss affect and social media. I use Freudian affect theory to analyse user posts on the public Site Governance Facebook page. Freud's work may help us to explore the affectivity within the user narratives and I suggest that they are expressions of alienation, dispossession and powerlessness that relate to the users' relations with Facebook as well as to their internal and wider social relations. The article thus introduces a new angle on studies of negative user experiences that draws on psychoanalysis and critical theory.

Johanssen, Jacob. 2016. Media Research and Psychoanalysis: A Suggestion. International Communication Gazette. 78 (7), pp. 688-693.

Abstract: This short commentary outlines psychoanalysis as a theory and method and its potential value to media research. Following Dahlgren (2013), it is suggested that psychoanalysis may enrich the field because it may offer a complex theory of the human subject, as well as methodological means of doing justice to the richness, ambivalence and contradictions of human experience. The psychoanalytic technique of free association and how it has been adapted in social research (Hollway and Jefferson 2000) is suggested as a means to open up subjective modes of expression and thinking – in researchers and research participants alike – that lie beyond rationality and conscious agency.

Johanssen, Jacob. 2016. Did We Fail? (Counter-)Transference in a Qualitative Media Research Interview . Interactions: Studies in Communication & Culture. 7 (1), pp. 99-111.

Abstract: Drawing on Joke Hermes' (2006) account of a troubling interview, this article reproduces and reflects on passages from a qualitative interview with a user of a social networking site that was experienced as uncomfortable by both interviewee and interviewer (myself). The psychoanalytic concept of (counter-)transference is used to analyse the possible processes that led to the emergence of two narratives by the interviewee and interviewer and resulted in an unsuccessful research encounter. It is suggested that the analysis of the interview narratives may contribute to Wanda S. Pillow's (2003) notion of an 'uncomfortable reflexivity'. It may further add to methodological discussions of the interview in media research by placing an emphasis on a complex theory of the subject and intersubjective dynamics.

Malubale, Sanny. 2017. Rethinking the Effects of Identity Politics in a Multi-Ethic Society. A Comparative Analysis of Zambia and Kenya. *Politikon,* 44 :1, 49-71.

Abstract: This paper is an investigation of identity politics and its relevance. It engages the 'instrumentalist model' in understanding the causal chains that can either stabilise or destabilise multi-ethnic societies. It employs a comparative case analysis of Zambia and Kenya. A substantial similarity in our cases is that identity politics has a hold in both nations and the extreme difference is ethnic identity cleavages appear divisive among Kenya's elites, thus spilling into communities, whereas Zambia shows positive ethnic cohesion trends due to responsible elite conduct. The central proposition of this paper is that politics founded on identity fosters societal stability as opposed to instability. Politicised identities appear to promote division in a multi-ethnic society only because of instrumentalist causes. Thus, with the aid of cases, we analytically illustrate how and why 'identity politics' is not necessarily bad and we demonstrate its relevance in enhancing governing capacity which then translates into social harmony.

Vieten, M. Urlike and Scott Poynting. 2016. Contemporary Far-Right Racist Populism in Europe. *Journal of Intercultural Studies,* 37(6), 533-540.

Vieten, M. Urlike. 2016. Far Right Populism and Women: The Normalisation of Gendered Anti-Muslim Racism and Gendered Culturalism in the Netherlands. Journal of Intercultural Studies, 37 (6), 621-636.

Abstract: The paper approaches the rise of far right populism in Europe with a feminist lens and on the background of the discursively constructed sexist and racist features of the current moral panic. It is argued that we can follow up a continuum of normalised culturalist gendered discourses in Europe, and for some time, in the Netherlands in particular. The paper is organised by looking, first, at the place of gender in far right discourses and the role of women in far right-wing populist parties. Second, a feminist critique of processes of normalisation is presented, helping to clarify the term 'culturalism'. To illustrate the dynamics of gendered culturalism and the way it impacts the everyday life of Muslim women in the Netherlands, some interview sequences of an empirical study with female Dutch-Moroccan citizens are discussed. The experiences of the women illustrate how far right populist perspectives and prejudices entered their daily lives, and which counter strategies, the women used to resist intimidation.

Why do women in the diaspora matter in peace processes and policies?

20 April 2017
Amnesty International

In recent years, diaspora women have had a considerable degree of influence on policy agendas in conflict-affected countries on issues ranging from advocating for inclusive peace processes to pressing for sustainable development. Diaspora women, many of whom have been directly affected by war, often possess unique skills and first-hand experience of the local and global context and are well-placed to influence international policies in favour of women in war-affected countries.

Please join WPP for the launch of 'United Women for Peace' an initiative of the non-profit "Women for Peace and Participation." The event will highlight the role of diaspora women leaders based in the UK but who continue to advocate for inclusive and gender-sensitive peace processes and in their home countries and the inclusion of their communities in policy making, including Afghanistan, Algeria, Indonesia, Kosovo, Libya, South Sudan and Turkey.

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