

Introduction: Viral Contagion and Death of the Social

Winter of Hope/Spring of Melancholy

The disruption of everyday life has created an enormous opening that is quickly being seized upon by monopolistic digital platforms. Consumers have been driven into the waiting arms of Amazon, who happily takes human contact out of the equation for all manner of exchanges. Google and Apple pounce on the opportunity to develop contact-tracing technology, their products edging closer to becoming mandatory, rather than merely ubiquitous. And, in the absence of opportunities for physical human connection, platforms happily intervene, while maintaining practices that compromise user privacy and capitalize on user attention. If platforms were already on the path towards total integration into everyday life, then this very well might be the moment in which they consolidate their power over the imagination.

– Craig Fahner, *“emptyre-soft-skinned space”*

During the pandemic, I sheltered in place on Vancouver Island, literally an island of attentive solitude in the global stream of viral contagion, thinking of technologies of the new real and the suddenly proximate, instantly changed meaning of “I Stepped into the Future and It Wasn’t There.” Here, the pandemic was controlled by means of a resilient public health system and political leadership deferring to medical expertise, relying on a widely shared sense of civic responsibility and general care for the community in responding to the COVID-19 virus. Now more than ever in this time of viral delirium, Vancouver Island seemed like a rare, magical intersection of the four meridians of air, earth, fire, and water, an undeclared republic tilting towards social justice just off the western continental mass of North America – social solidarity in the face of viral contagion.

Ironically, the winter months preceding the pandemic were just the opposite of isolation and social distancing. As part of a collective political

struggle during the winter, many of us in British Columbia (BC) and elsewhere were involved in an active alliance with youth and elders involved in Indigenous resurgence and environmental activists to protest the armed occupation of Indigenous territories by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) in support of aggressive pipeline expansion. Like an epochal rip in the fabric of normal time and space, the provincial Parliament Buildings in Victoria, BC, were surrounded by a large Indigenous youth encampment, vibrant with the lighting of sacred fires, drumming, inspiring speeches, and a field of red dresses symbolizing murdered and missing Indigenous women, all carried out with a spirit of love, not violence, and with very courageous, very determined resolve on the part of the Indigenous youth and elders. I may have been teaching a seminar on the politics of race and power by day, with that haunting trilogy of *Black Skin/White Masks*, *Red Skin/White Masks*, and *Brown Skin/White Masks*,² but by night many students were at the encampment in active solidarity with Indigenous youth, while others responded to frequent appeals during the night-time hours to come to the Legislature to help protect the Indigenous youth from possible police violence. What I witnessed over the winter was a glimpse into the possibility of a more just future traced out in all its social creativity, political courage, and profound ecological understanding by Indigenous thought and practice, and by strong alliances between Indigenous youth and many other young people conscious of the historical injustices of settler colonialism.

Then, the pandemic struck, with all its globalized panic fear and political cynicism. The darkness of the pandemic spring was just the opposite of the lightness of winter politics. Watching President Trump’s daily televised orgies of unconstrained narcissism and spasms of self-pity interspersed with mean-spirited scapegoating and cynical lies, all applauded by an enormous popular following howling the deep rage of their discontent, I was reminded of Deleuze and Guattari’s description of the continuing power of seductive appeals to the suicidal death drive of fascism.³ Here the political virus of right-wing populism, fuelled by panic fear and intense anxiety over the loss of jobs in the very real-life context for many people in the contemporary economy of work or starve, seeks to attach itself to the host cell of the television audience, releasing its genetic instructions and then waiting as the host cell reproduces the virus, whether expressed in the form of angry white male hysteria, scapegoating of Asians, border violence against asylum seekers, or studied popular silence concerning the cynical hijacking of relief funds by large corporations in the United States and by carbon-heavy energy companies in Canada.

The immediate consequences of viral contagion are dire: the eclipse of the social and the death of politics. And there’s something else as

technologies of the new real, viral contagion and death of the social. arthur/marilouise kroger

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first.last

A: lookup unfamiliar words `google query = { <word> definition }`

contagion: the communication of disease from one person to another by close contact.

"the rooms held no risk of contagion", a disease spread by close contact.

B: write your reflection:

Mechanical questions to stimulate a reflection.

narrative: sociological theory pondering the new real, pandemic, viral contagion

1. How are digital platforms monopolizing your time and personal behavior?
2. Are you concerned about living a life under surveillance?
3. “the continuing power of seductive appeals to the suicidal death drive of fascism” is a significant theory in our world today, thought and assessed in the 1970s. Given you like don’t know what it is, what would cause you to get curious about such things personally?

update your work to google sheets.submit: it.226.spring.2023.submit

May all of you experience wonder at some point in your lives.

A	Objectives	Expand your vocabulary by experiencing “big words” in meaningful passages across different forms of media including, historical, modern, news, splack, internet, and social science theory.
B	Background	<p><u>Anyone</u> can grow their vocabulary!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It takes practice, determination, word use, and experiencing words. Humans grok in different ways but spend their life expressing themselves. Polysyllabic words enrich experiences and self expression. Polysyllabic words also assist in building respect amongst your peers.
C	Why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A brain is strange; one never knows when an item will “pop” into it. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher consciousness theory indicates the normality of items coming from “the air.” Use of free association writing stimulates this outcome. ➤ Pack the gray matter to fuel fierce thought, fire communication, and wit. ➤ I’ve been thanked years later for this approach; perhaps you may too.
D	How perform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set aside 20-30 minutes when your mind is clear - like a Sunday morning. Ensure to turn off your phone so that your mind can flow.
E	Part I Complete a reflection	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Read and reflect on a passage. Google unknown words: google query = { <word> defintion } Write 2-3 sentences about the passage. Reflect options: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> on a word, use of a term a phrase, something striking, quirky, haunting, beautiful how the characters or situation made you feel the goal is allow your thoughts to flow and write freely
F	Part II	<p>Copy and paste special \ values <or as plain text> to it.226.spring.2023.submit</p> <p>This activity is 10-15% of your grade, i.e., a potential letter grade difference.</p>
G	Concerns?	Your learning is the primary focus so please reach out directly to me.
H	FYI passage materials	<p>My graduate training includes data science and sociological theory, including robotics, human as machine, info.TECH, data.TRASH, nonsense, and transhumanism. Passages from sociological theory may describe haunting, terror, computation insanity, cyber flesh or skin, and the use of feminist descriptive words such as penetration or tech absorption.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nothing is intened to shock, alarm, make uncomfortable, discriminate, and so on. It’s advanced “computer science” and.or computer science theory material. <p>The intent is to expose you to unfamiliar words and contexts regarding the infusion of computer science into our personhood with fleshy wearable tech (iWatch), strange impants, sensors, and limb replacements. Nothing is unbecoming nor intended to disturb you.</p> <p><u>Please qualify</u> the sharing of any of this work with ANYONE outside of class as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ academic learning/theory media ➤ If something is too unordinary or concerning, ask me for clarification. <p>Note: passages are also from the Torah, classics (Moby-Dick), philosophers, and critics.</p> <p>~v/r brian.hogan 1/21/23 v3 ~v/r brian.hogan 1/7/23 v2</p>

This weekly activity is 10-15% of your grade, i.e., a potential letter grade difference.