

PHILOSOPHICAL
MEDITATIONS ON THE
COVID-19 PANDEMIC: WHAT
HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

GREGORY FRENANDO PAPPAS

Texas A&M University



Gregory Fernando Pappas is a Professor of Philosophy at Texas A & M University. He is a Senior Fellow at MECILA, an international center for advanced studies in the humanities and the social sciences in Latin America. Pappas works within the American Pragmatist and Latin American traditions in ethics and social-political philosophy. He is the author of numerous articles on the philosophy of William James, John Dewey, and Luis Villoro. In 2018 Prof. Pappas was Distinguished Research Fellow for the Latino Research Initiative at The University of Texas at Austin. He is the author of *John Dewey's Ethics: Democracy as Experience* and *Pragmatism in the Americas*. Pappas is a Fulbright scholar, recipient of a Ford Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship, the William James and the Latin American Thought prizes by the American Philosophical Association, and the Mellow Prize by the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy. He is the editor-in-chief of *The Inter-American Journal of Philosophy*.



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We have all received a shock to our collective system, and naturally all of us are compelled to add what we can to the collective response. Philosophy should start with everyday life and problems and should not remain quiet in the midst of the current crisis. In this essay I use the critical tools of philosophy to examine the most common responses to the COVID-19 pandemic by philosophers, activists, scientists and journalists. I will outline the philosophical lessons so far and will suggest a holistic, pluralistic, and communal approach as a way forward; based on the insights and hopes of philosophers like Dussel, Chomsky, Hostos, Dewey, King, Addams, Ortega, Villoro, Peirce, Boggs, as well as Native American philosophers.

According to Grace Lee Boggs, “[e]very crisis, actual or impending, needs to be viewed as an opportunity to bring about profound changes in our society.”¹ However, as philosopher Raymond Boisvert has said, “[u]nfortunately, a crisis can also be an opportunity for authoritarians, reactionaries, and other narrow-minded types.”²

There is already evidence that the current crisis is pregnant with good and with bad opportunities. I do not understand the impulse (a case of epistemic arrogance?) to make predictions of what will eventually happen. While predictions assuage the itch of present uncertainty, the failure of predictions always undermines future trust. For that reason, we should instead make an inventory of the lessons that we are learning, lest we forget our shared experience.

I agree with Ortega y Gasset and John Dewey that disruptions in our everyday habitual life can be windows that disclose our most basic assumptions about reality, knowledge, and values. COVID-19

¹ Grace Lee Boggs, *The Next American Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), xi

² This was Raymond Boisvert’s comment to my post of Grace Lee Boggs on Facebook.

has already exposed a lot and my purpose is to encourage the sort of critical reflection that the crisis has made possible in order to figure out: where do we go from here? As Julio Vincent Gambuto wrote: "What the crisis has given us is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to see ourselves and our country in the plainest of views. At no other time, ever in our lives, have we gotten the opportunity to see what would happen if the world simply stopped. Here it is. We're in it."³ "If we want to create a better country and a better world for our kids, and if we want to make sure we are even sustainable as a nation and as a democracy, we have to pay attention to how we feel right now."⁴

We do not want to reflect on lessons because we have become an impatient people. Charles Peirce argued that we are animals prone to do anything to get rid of the uncomfortable feeling caused by disruptions and doubt. We want to feel normal again, and the warning of Julio Vincent Gambuto seems warranted: "Get ready, my friends. What is about to be unleashed on American society will be the greatest campaign ever created to get you to feel normal again. It will come from brands, it will come from government, it will even come from each other, and it will come from the left and from the right. We will do anything, spend anything, believe anything, just so we can take away how horribly uncomfortable all of this feels."⁵

Neither Peirce nor myself have anything against the quest to regain some feeling of normalcy, but there are better and worse ways to go about it. Let's not forget that in the USA the 9/11 crisis was a disruption that created the opportunity to regain normalcy by learning something, but many became susceptible to explanations that did bring back normalcy and comfort but little learning. Before we all return to our consumer driven ways of life, it may be worthwhile to

³ Gambuto, Julio Vincent, "Prepare for the Ultimate Gaslighting," *Forge.Medium.com*. <https://forge.medium.com/prepare-for-the-ultimate-gaslighting-6a8ce3f0a0e0>

⁴ Gambuto, "Prepare for the Ultimate Gaslighting."

⁵ Gambuto, "Prepare for the Ultimate Gaslighting."

keep track what COVID-19 has exposed.

The current pandemic has already exposed social-systematic injustices, bad habits of inquiry (the quest for simplistic diagnosis and cures), refusal to accept the presence and consequences of risk in reality, and traits of ourselves that we may have underestimated. How should we determine our proper response? What does the problematic situation require of us? What socio-political forces and consequences should not be ignored? What realities will we need to face and how? What sort of inquiry into data is needed? Should the humanities and the people most affected be part of the inquiry? What are our responsibilities? What can we hope for? What sort of changes are needed if we are to not just survive, but to live a better life for all, and be able to face the consequences of this pandemic and the ones still to come?

If philosophical reflection is at all useful, it is because that reflection is the habit of encouraging these questions of reality, knowledge, politics, values and their close interrelationship; and not because it has definitive or final answers. What follows is my attempt to reflect on some of the above questions. I have serious limitations and bias that may become obvious as you read. My empirical resources are limited and my philosophical framework is limited to what I know best, Latin American and American philosophers. Still, I can only start this journey where I am and with what I have.

What has the COVID-19 pandemic disclosed? What is there to learn?

(1) COVID-19 has exposed the structural injustices we live in. Economic and health conditions of communities can be distinguished, but not separated. For example, the patterns of racial and economic injustice do not disappear in a time of crisis. On the contrary, they become visible and sometimes can get worse unless we take this opportunity to address them.

A health crisis like the present one affects different people differently

depending on the present conditions of that society. As Astra Taylor says, "[m]any people will die of coronavirus, no doubt, but how many [of those] who get sick will actually be perishing from preventable shortages/rising poverty/and our lack of a truly public and international healthcare system?"⁶

The USA had, prior to the arrival of COVID-19, "the world's largest prison population, often housed in densely crowded conditions" and a health and economic system that has "a social safety net much thinner and more porous than those in other Western democracies, which may leave many workers having to choose between letting their families go hungry or going to work sick."⁷ The injustices of the health and economic system, and other inequalities that were already present before the virus struck, will become more obvious as this national crisis progresses.

While there is a need for more data as to the effects of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable groups, the mere collection of data is not sufficient. Information does not, by itself, lead to change. Secondly, better demographic information about final deaths will not tell us anything surprising or useful. Many academic scholars that are caught up in the "Olympics of oppression" may love to see some final numbers in order to validate their own theories and champions, but beyond more publications, how useful is this knowledge? Venting the old and broad diagnosis that the horrible outcome of COVID-19 is evidence that we live in a society with structural injustices may shake up the naïve who believed we lived in a just and color-blind society. But consciousness-raising and mere venting does not somehow automatically lead to amelioration of our injustices. This was a lesson

⁶ Astra Taylor "This is a Biological and Political Crisis," *Anarresproject.org*. <http://www.anarresproject.org/this-is-a-biological-and-political-crisis/>

⁷ Powell, Alvin. "Will inequality worsen the toll of the pandemic in the U.S.?" *The Harvard Gazette*. <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2020/03/will-inequality-worsen-the-toll-of-the-pandemic-in-the-u-s/>

that Grace Lee Boggs learned during her years of activism.

It is also not clear how such vague and general data about morbidity helps the rest of us that are not naïve or color blind. Let's face it, the results are predictable; the poor, native Americans, blacks and Latinos will come out as suffering disproportionately. Any new and useful knowledge has to come from pinpointing exactly and particularly why someone suffered or died. Grand historical narratives of white supremacy in the USA or the world are of no use. It is much more convincing and powerful to inquire, as much as possible, into the specific causes in particular cities, and to track injustices committed at different phases of the disease from contagion, to testing, to treatment and to death or recovery.

There are different stages in pandemics, and different groups are affected differently in each. When there were not enough tests to go around, witnessing who got to be tested first was already evidence of injustice. Yet it was only when scholars started to investigate the data with a keener eye that the injustices became obvious as a pattern, especially in cities. For example, according to Stephanie Rivera “the spread within the county of Milwaukee has unsurprisingly tracked the hyper-segregation of the city with a hyper concentrated spread in the North side; the historically black part of Milwaukee.”⁸ In years to come, we can expect more alarming data on the effects on the homeless, at different stages of the pandemic, who cannot “stay home” or drive to the few places where the test was provided in some cities (assuming they could even afford the test in the first place). In the city of Nashville, the more affluent parts of Nashville have had testing sites for weeks, but the historically African-American neighborhood experienced weeks of delay because staff couldn't acquire the needed

⁸ Berruz, Stephanie Rivera, “What Am I Looking At? Reading Data in times of COVID-19,” *Stories.Marquette.edu*.
<https://stories.marquette.edu/what-am-i-looking-at-reading-data-in-times-of-covid-19-7b2e2dea3643>

testing gear like masks and gloves.⁹

Counting and tracking is required to understand ongoing pandemics. However, counting and tracking requires testing. As Stephanie Rivera Berruz notes, “[T]esting is reflective of social and political conditions that construct our relationships with a healthcare system that runs for profit and is not equitably accessible.”¹⁰ There is also the problem of how many patients from a racial or ethnic minority group request the test from doctors, but do not get them. “The bio-tech data firm Rubix Life Sciences, based in Boston, reviewed recent billing information in several states, and found that an African American with symptoms like cough and fever was less likely to be given one of the scarce coronavirus tests.”¹¹ The effects from this loss of critical information is compounded by the fact that the same virus does not affect all populations equally. Delays in diagnosis and treatment will be more harmful, particularly for racial or ethnic minority groups that have higher rates of certain diseases, such as diabetes, high blood pressure and kidney disease (that often stem from the same injustices affecting the response to COVID-19). Those chronic illnesses can lead to more severe cases of COVID-19.

COVID-19 has made us aware that any social, political, or medical intervention needs to be as accurate and context-sensitive as possible to the rapidly-changing scenario at the local level (e.g. cities).¹² Similarly, many injustices have been committed at different phases of the spread of COVID-19, and this requires context-sensitive

⁹ Farmer, Blake, “The Coronavirus Doesn't Discriminate, But U.S. Health Care Showing Familiar Biases,” *NPR.org*.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/04/02/825730141/the-coronavirus-doesnt-discriminate-but-u-s-health-care-showing-familiar-biases>

¹⁰ Berruz, Stephanie Rivera, “What Am I Looking At.”

¹¹ Powell, Alvin. “Will inequality worsen the toll of the pandemic in the U.S.?”

¹² We have all seen the graphs that represent the infection process, we could do a national or global graph of it, and there is some usefulness of comparing graphs across cities. However, the timelines for each city is different and the many factors that determine the rate of infection or the flattening of the curve are different.

knowledge that is local by nature. For this purpose, the tools of the social sciences can be helpful, but the inquiry should be as inclusive as possible -- one that includes members of the most affected communities. No amount of training replaces first-hand knowledge of those more directly affected by the disease *and* of the injustices that foster it. Consequently, calls should be made for a “Community of Inquiry” that is committed not just to figuring out who to blame (we spend usually too much time on this), but instead to what we can learn that will help us ameliorate the present crisis and prevent future ones.

In the Community of Inquiry, there is an important role for scholars in the humanities to be critical of those who, sometimes naively or with good intentions, conduct an inquiry into numbers and metrics with some claim of scientific objectivity that hides, selectivity, how we gather the information. Selectivity in even the most robust or scientific or objective of inquiries is unavoidable, but there are better and worse methods, depending on the inquiry and the values that we share as inquirers. As Stephanie Rivera Berruz says “we must be vigilant of the categories with which we compare data and never forget that there is no such thing as value neutral terms.”¹³

The spread of the virus generates data. Collecting that data may seem inherently “objective” in the sense that it is merely a matter of counting. However, there is no escaping the issues of how should we count? Do we only count the number of single individuals affected? Should we go beyond individuals to count how the virus has affected different groups? What particular groups should we count? According to other chronic illnesses? Age, race, ethnicity, or gender? What is the purpose of each of these inquiries? How will we put such knowledge to good use?

Tracking the rate of infection is a matter of life and death; it helps determine where to put resources and how to intervene. Here

¹³ Berruz, Stephanie Rivera, “What Am I Looking At.”

is where bias and disparity in access to medical care may be disclosed. What stands out about pandemics is that tracking the injustices related to health conditions, testing, treatments often cannot be ignored if we want to figure out how best to tackle the disease. We need to know who and where the most vulnerable are, because we need to track where the virus is; and helping the most vulnerable community protects the health of everyone. Therefore, counting age and previous health conditions may not be enough, in order to stop the spread of the disease.

(2) COVID-19 has exposed the consequences of a failing of our economic system (Neoliberalism) and a political system (representative democracy) in many places. The crisis is a test of the priorities of governments and the degree of authoritarianism or democracy in a society.

Health, the economy, and politics are interdependent aspects of the integrity of the everyday life of concrete communities. An unjust economic or political system has consequences for the health of the society and vice versa. The consequences for those that suffer from a health system that runs for profit and is not equally accessible are evident. For others, the interdependence between health and economics is only made obvious when a systematic and contagious sickness has economic consequences.

In times of crisis, the interconnected values of health and economic well-being come into conflict or are in tension. These are opportunities to test or to disclose priorities and the degree of authoritarianism or democracy in a society. Authoritarian people and government will reveal their true colors and take advantage of vulnerabilities for the sake of domination. Even the non-Authoritarians are forced to reveal their priorities. Does our government represent and make decisions based on the well-being, in particular, the health of all the people or special interest (health insurance companies)? Are they instead exploiting a health crisis for

ideological and political gains? Is health a priority?

(3) COVID-19 has exposed the tendency of many to want to find a single cause (e.g. some global account of evil such as the Devil, Neoliberalism, imperialism, modernity as the culprit) and a single cure of social problems. Moving forward requires a holistic, pluralistic, and community of inquiry approach that acknowledges the causal links between our most serious problems (structural injustices, neoliberalism, and global warming), but without slipping into reductionism and oversimplifications that are counterproductive. The revolution needed requires changes in our institutions and economic system but also in our culture and habits to promote communal health.

The view that COVID-19 was just a bioweapon created by the Chinese government China is a lot less plausible than the view that Neoliberalism is implicated. For as stated above, the economy and healthcare are systematically interrelated. There is both fallacy and danger in giving a simple diagnosis across time and countries by using a single “lumpy” name for the cause. Since the onset of this crisis I have been collecting a number of published essays that fall into this temptation.

Here are three examples of this problematic tendency. There will be more of the kind to come, especially as academics start to use their global theories of oppression to explain the crisis.

Costas Lapavitsas argues that “Covid-19 has exposed absurdities of Neoliberalism” and reveals how “an economic system based on competition and naked profit-seeking—both guaranteed by a powerful state—proved incapable of dealing calmly and effectively with a public health shock of unknown severity.”¹⁴ I agree, though by

¹⁴Lapavitsas, Costas, “Covid-19 Crisis Has Exposed Absurdities of Neoliberalism. That Doesn’t Mean It’ll Destroy It,” *Urpe.org*
https://urpe.org/2020/04/02/covid-19-crisis-has-exposed-absurdities-of-neoliberalism-that-doesnt-mean-itll-destroy-it/?fbclid=IwAR0Vd3MzhT54pyT2415hQEekz5Cc6r-9njpl7dL_8CpWeP8_7H2HUubOB8Y

the end of the essay all forms of capitalisms from different countries have been lumped together into a single global cause, as if there are no differences that make a difference. The author takes the pandemic as proof that there is a single and pervasive economic system that has a “fundamentally flawed nature” and that this crisis is an opportunity to disclose the “deeper roots” of the problem. The suggestion seems to be that if we dig “deeper” and find a way to remove the single global cause of the present crisis, amelioration will happen in all corners of the world. This is like hoping that all cancers have a single cause and once we find it, a cure will automatically follow.

In “The Coronavirus outbreak is part of the climate change crisis,”¹⁵ Vijay Kolinjivadi makes a good argument for understanding the current health crisis within a global context and he understands the interconnectedness between the coronavirus and the climate change crisis. However, the essay ends up making the stronger claim that there is, all over the world, a single process of industrial production that has disrupted natural habitats and “is responsible for COVID-19” and climate change; and both problems “have their roots in the world’s current economic model”. Again, there is much truth in this analysis. COVID-19 and climate change are connected, but unwarranted and simplistic diagnosis and solutions are unnecessary and counterproductive.

The recent statement by the regional secretariat for the North African Network for Food Sovereignty “Coronavirus Pandemic in the Shadow of Capitalist Exploitation and Imperialist Domination of People and Nature”¹⁶ makes an even bolder claim about the

¹⁵ Kolinjivadi, Vijay, “The coronavirus outbreak is part of the climate change crisis,” *Aljazeera.com*.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/coronavirus-outbreak-part-climate-change-emergency-200325135058077.html?xif=https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/coronavirus-outbreak-part-climate-change-emergency-200325135058077.html>

¹⁶Sawin, Elizabeth, “Why We Can’t Ignore the Link Between COVID-19, Climate

connection between COVID-19 and other global problems. It asks us to think of this pandemic as caused by global racism, patriarchy, imperialism, exploitation of nature and of people from the South of the globe. “It coincides with and exacerbates a multifaceted global crisis: political, economic, social, environmental and climatic. In other words, we are currently experiencing a crisis of a patriarchal, racist capitalist system.”¹⁷

I appreciate the encouragement to make the connections between the virus and other global problems. To me, this call for a careful empirical inquiry of how these many social evils in particular places and times “feed” into each other, where both the global and local perspective are examined. However, the essay at times reduces all problems into one. There is, the statement implies, a single system that does not vary across countries and time that is the cause of the most serious world problems, COVID-19 is just one consequence of it.¹⁸ It is as if there is a hegemonic single monster or evil that is imposed on all mankind, and the solution is simply to kill it.

One commonality among these and other authors that gravitate (at least rhetorically) towards the notion that the existence of the virus is evidence of the existence of a hegemonic single system

Change and Inequity” *Usnews.com*.

<https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/articles/2020-04-01/why-we-cant-ignore-the-link-between-coronavirus-climate-change-and-inequity>

https://siyada.org/siyada-board/statements/statement-by-the-regional-secretariat-coronavirus-pandemic-in-the-shadow-of-capitalist-exploitation-and-imperialist-domination-of-people-and-nature/?fbclid=IwAR2E8nIeE0vxe0FFBv7pek_Q_wihORiGH0IEaod44zhJQ6JIF_GmbXF090

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ The statement says “This global health crisis and its repercussions are only one facet of the capitalist exploitation and the imperialist domination of peoples and nature” “Every crisis is an opportunity, and the capitalist-imperialist system – together with our despotic and comprador elites – will seek to renew itself by other means through dispossessing people of their wealth.” *ibid.*

is that they always present some large and coherent historical narrative of it (a genealogy). In the case of Neoliberalism, some trace it back to the Reagan-Thatcher years and explain how we got here. Others like Latin American philosopher Enrique Dussel think that this is not far back enough. Dussel explains COVID-19 within a much broader historical perspective than the above authors, who are all centered on Neoliberalism. According to Dussel, capitalism is part of a large history of humanity born in 1492, the European conquest and modernity. “El yo europeo produjo una revolución científica en el siglo XVII, una revolución tecnológica en el XVIII, habiendo desde el siglo XVI inaugurado un sistema capitalista con una ideología moderna eurocéntrica, colonial.”¹⁹

Modernity is a stage in history in which enormous scientific and technological discoveries can be seen; creation of great civilizing instruments until reaching the electronic age. Dussel acknowledges the positive side of modernity, but the onset of COVID-19 has made us aware of “una sistemática ceguera de los *efectos negativos* de sus descubrimientos y sus continuas intervenciones en la naturaleza.”²⁰ Modernity was inaugurated with the discovery of America and includes ideas of our relation to nature as well as the creation of capitalism.

There is much in Dussel’s account to agree with. It is refreshing and appropriate to encourage us to take a much wider perspective than those found in interpretations of our present crisis that limit themselves to the political or the economical. I agree with Dussel that the present crisis invites us to question certain inherited modern dualisms and views of our relation to nature. However, I do

¹⁹ Dussel, Enrique, “Cuando la naturaleza jaquea la orgullosa modernidad”
Jornada.com

https://www.jornada.com.mx/2020/04/04/opinion/008a1pol?fbclid=IwAR0Wqd8puMZLDzOt1U7e_V8yenln3ZZfsO2yDwGaklPQmqp3BfpOoeXW9jA

²⁰ *ibid.*

not see the empirical basis, nor the need, nor the value of, interpreting the present crisis as part of a larger historical narrative where the cause is something created in 1492 called “modernity” - that includes technology, capitalism, and European domination. He says “Se trata entonces de interpretar la presente epidemia como si fuera un bumerán que la modernidad lanzó contra la naturaleza.”²¹

All of the above analyses of the present situation are well intentioned and contain some truth. That the current health crisis must be analysed and understood in a global context and that all the evils mentioned are related, I have no doubt. I see however no need to postulate, or even use the rhetoric of, the existence of a hegemonic single structural sin that is pervasive and persistent across times and contexts. Not even COVID-19 is the exact same virus across time and contexts and with the same consequences.

While there is such a thing as a global economic system, there are also differences between countries and places in their economies, government, and health systems and practices. They make a difference in how they handle a pandemic. Those of us with strong feelings against capitalism in general, wish we could, at this stage of the pandemic, be able to make the case for a necessary and absolute correlation between countries that have capitalist economic systems and the worst health outcomes. But can we? Maybe we will, but even now there is some counter-evidence. For instance, the fatality rate of Germany has been low. Why? Their particular circumstances are different, and the factors that explain the difference are many. For example, the average age of those initially infected was lower than other countries, and they have done things differently for many reasons that have nothing to do with the economic system. Is it the particular historical circumstances? Their culture? Is it their general trust of government? Their decision making process? A tradition to

²¹ *ibid.*

have a robust public health care system? In theory and in abstraction, all forms of capitalism may have the same structure and probable consequences, but in practice they operate differently depending on many factors that have to do with local circumstances.

Is there a way to be fully attentive to the historical and global connections between injustices and COVID-19 without the need to presuppose a tighter connection that might not be empirically warranted? The alternative to isolating problems that are clearly interconnected is not lumping all social problems into one.

A recent essay by Elizabeth Sawin, entitled “Why we cannot ignore the link between COVID-19, climate change and inequity,”²² is an example of the proper inquiry and analysis that is needed. Sawin establishes the connections between the virus, climate change, and racial and economic inequities without the danger of reductionism and oversimplification. She does this while being critical of another common tendency that we need to guard against moving forward in inquiry about COVID-19: experts who isolate social global problems that are actually interrelated. “While experts do essential work on each of these problems within their own domains, there is little evidence so far that leaders or key agencies are attacking these problems together. If we continue to address these problems entirely in isolation from one another, solutions to one problem could make the others much worse.”²³ I agree with Sawin and I am afraid the emphasis on expertise in the academic world works against the sort of inclusive community of inquiry that is needed best to address this pandemic, one that should include different sciences and the humanities.

It is because pandemics affect all aspects of life that many expertise are needed and why it is a mistake to address the problem

²²Sawin, Elizabeth, “Why We Can’t Ignore the Link Between COVID-19, Climate Change and Inequity” *Usnews.com*.

²³ *ibid.*

from isolated disciplines and perspectives. Moving forward requires a holistic and pluralistic approach that acknowledges the causal links between our most serious problems, such as pandemics, social injustices, neoliberalism, and global warming. How strong or weak are these “links,” and who should be included in the inquiries, will depend on the particular context. However, we must avoid the temptation to link or lump all problems into one. To be sure, some problems are simple enough to be treated in isolation, others are so tightly interconnected to other problems that we may ameliorate them all by intervention on one of them. My sense is that a pandemic calls for neither approach. To fight the pandemic we cannot ignore a plurality of different but related problems related to our coexistence with other organisms on the planet.

I agree with Sawin that the proper holistic and pluralistic strategy should start at the local level forming communities of inquiry that are inclusive. “[W]e must as soon as possible – in our cities, states and nations – convene emergency task forces to tackle equity, the pandemic and climate change as an integrated whole. These task forces will need expertise in climate, clean energy, equity, public health, epidemiology and people-centered economics. Each task force should include an additional kind of expertise: the life experience of those who are most impacted by inequity, climate change and COVID-19. Those who live with the impacts of multiple problems often have the most creative ideas about addressing them.”²⁴

To be sure, to organize local Communities of Inquiry does not mean that we do not need them at a national or global level. The notion that cities and states can be separated have been put to question by this pandemic. The need for cooperation across man-made boundaries have never been more obvious. However, the need for local communities of inquiry is also paramount. Local knowledge is

²⁴ *ibid.*

needed for context sensitive inquiry about how national policies (e.g., testing and treatment) affect communities. Moreover, it empowers the people against top-down remedies that may be manipulative and narrow minded. We can also hope that local Communities of Inquiry can function as an important resistance against neoliberal policies simply because they will not be solely constituted or dominated by people whose only concern is profit, but by people that care about the well-being of their surroundings.

A holistic, pluralistic, and communal approach about how to move forward after this pandemic should be critical of, and guard against, global ideologies and political forces that will try to take advantage of the people's vulnerability. That is not enough, however. The holistic approach suggests a simplistic view that problems only come from outside or above, and we are okay. This is an opportunity to address changes in *ourselves*, our bodies and communities in all aspects of living. The current crisis is an opportunity to question our consumer and individualistic ways of life we have taken for granted. It is not only the government that has to put people before profit. I agree with Grace Lee Boggs that a revolution in our institutions goes hand in hand with a needed revolution in the culture, in changes of lifestyles and habits that minimize consumption and that promote communal health. The alternative to the lifestyle that is prevalent in western countries, which is predicated on the perpetual growth of consumerism, is more decentralized and requires a shift from a globalized and even national economic model to a more localized grass-roots economy.

(4) COVID-19 has made us more aware of the following traits of reality: (a) we are just one more organism in an environment (part of nature) (b) life is uncertain and precarious (c) social interdependence is unavoidable. This requires more humbleness, social responsibility, and a radical view of democracy as a way of life with a more ecological perspective.

In “Epidemics and Society: From the Black Death to the Present,” Frank M. Snowden says “Epidemics are a category of disease that seem to hold up the mirror to human beings as to who we really are. That is to say, they obviously have everything to do with our relationship to our mortality, to death, to our lives. They also reflect our relationships with the environment—the built environment that we create and the natural environment that responds. They show the moral relationships that we have toward each other as people, and we’re seeing that today.”²⁵

We live in a precarious and interdependent world, and no amount of technological advancement or separation from nature or others can protect anyone from the indirect consequences of coexistence. Latin American philosopher Enrique Dussel and the American philosopher John Dewey agree on this point. The first pandemic in a century forcefully and sadly reminds us of our place in the natural world. For Dewey, humans are organisms in an environment just like every other organism. All of our technological advances cannot shield us from nature’s demands and vicissitudes. According to Kurt Cobb, “that the world is ‘wildly unprepared’ for this pandemic is in part a result of our belief the we are on a separate journey from the rest of the natural world, headed toward a perfected existence in which nature obeys all of our commands and bothers us

²⁵ Interview with Frank Snowden in “How Pandemics Change History” by Isaac Chotiner. *The New Yorker*. March 3, 2020 <https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/how-pandemics-change-history>

not at all. Why prepare for something that is merely a product of nature? We have the technology to overcome it, don't we? There must be a pill, right? Actually, wrong."²⁶

Technology is part of nature. Nature is not something external to us and subjected to our control. The alternative to these dualisms is that we are all *in* the integral, processive whole referred to by some Latin American and American philosophies (especially indigenous ones across the Americas) as "la vida" or "nature" broadly conceived; and *within it* there is a symbiotic or organic relation between its organisms and forces. We are in nature, and as deadly as this virus is, it is part of the larger ecosystem that we are in and have affected. This is why the effects of global warming can be interpreted as messages sent to us by other parts of nature. Arturo Massol has made the same point in regard to our current COVID-19 crisis "we should learn from the message that the planet has sent us."²⁷ Therefore, while there is much talk today about COVID-19 as the "enemy", it is not an "other" divorced from humanity.

Our entire way of life has been dramatically disrupted worldwide. Many desperately seek a vaccine, and we should. However, after we find a cure, will we return to our old ways of living and coexisting in nature? Will we learn any lessons and will there be any change in our everyday habits? Can we seek better ways to co-live with the world of microorganisms we inhabit? "The very way in which we live—constantly pressing on the edge of wilderness to

²⁶ Cobb, Kurt, "Coronavirus reminds us we are organisms in an environment," *Resilience.org*.

<https://www.resilience.org/stories/2020-03-08/coronavirus-reminds-us-we-are-organisms-in-an-environment/>

²⁷ My own translation from interview with Arturo Massol in Puerto Rico's TV station Telemundo (March 29, 2020)

<https://www.telemundopr.com/noticias/puerto-rico/merman-los-niveles-de-contaminacion-en-el-aire-a-causa-del-distanciamiento-social-a-nivel-global/2064293/?fbclid=IwAR3N1g7tGyRT-Ub0STZ-aHdhpJF9VNVrH6QSxD7PGawexpC2zeGFXjOA6Hk>

develop it and exploit it—puts humans potentially in contact with millions of viruses from which will come the next pandemic.”²⁸

I agree with Dussel that the present crisis calls for rethinking our relation with nature. “If we continue with competitive individualism... [and exploitation of nature] humanity commits suicide. The other alternative is let’s start taking life as a criterion of development, economy and humanism.”²⁹ COVID-19 is an opportunity to learn from our mistakes or human arrogance and adopt a certain respect and affirmation of “la vida” in its integrity, understanding that this requires a more ecological perspective.

Mexican philosopher Luis Villoro, inspired in part by ideas from indigenous communities, sought alternatives to the doctrines defended by both Right and even Left ideologies that assumed the economy should grow without restraint and without concern for the environment. In “On the consumer society” (April 11, 1973) he says that liberation of the people “does not consist in reaching the consumer society but in ending it. They will have to project different models of society for the future: egalitarian societies, which are not aimed at creating superfluous needs and realizing the purchasing desire of a minority, but at satisfying the basic needs, both material and spiritual, of all.”³⁰ Villoro was convinced that the exploitation of nature could not continue at the same rate.

For Villoro and Dewey, the narrow Western notion of democracy as a political representative system has failed us, and that failure needs to be questioned. Instead, democracy should be “radical”

²⁸ Cobb, Kurt, “Coronavirus reminds us we are organisms in an environment,” *Resilience.org*.

²⁹ Dussel, Enrique, “if-humanity-does-not-change-its-goals-it-will-commit-suicide,” *Explica.co*.
<https://www.explica.co/if-humanity-does-not-change-its-goals-it-will-commit-suicide-dussel/>

³⁰ “El socialismo ecologista de Luis Villoro,” *Razon.com*.
<https://www.razon.com.mx/opinion/el-socialismo-ecologista-de-luis-villoro/>

in the sense that it requires changes in all institutions (economic, health), but also a change of our ways of interacting with others in nature (acquiring an ecological consciousness). Western views of democracy replaced hierarchical views with democratic visions that rest on an atomistic individualism that absolutizes every human individual (as having “rights”) and that sets humans apart from other animals in nature; and therefore justifies exploitation. For Dewey, by contrast, the foundations of democratic respect are a certain way of experiencing everything--and not an exclusive and abstract regard for human rights or justice that is independent of nature. For the truly democratic character, “every existence deserving the name of existence has something unique and irreplaceable about it...each speaks for itself and demands consideration on its own behalf” it “must be reckoned with on its own account.”³¹ This is the sort of natural piety that Dewey hoped for as a consequence of abolishing hierarchical ways of looking at the world.

An aspect of “la vida” or “nature” that was exposed by COVID-19 is the reality of uncertainty and risk. In this time of uncertainty caused by the threat of illness, not only are governments making difficult decisions, but all of us are making daily decisions regarding how much risk is worth taking. I am reminded of William James in the “The Will to Believe”, warning everyone that risk is what life is about, that there is no “safe place” or certainty. However, this becomes more obvious when issues seem “intellectually undecidable” and a lot is at stake. The only decision is what risk you are willing to take (as there will be losses one way or another) and are you ready to take the responsibility.

COVID-19 has made us particularly aware that precariousness, sickness, and death are an integral part of “la vida”

³¹ John Dewey *The Middle Works*, Vol 11, 1918-1919, “Philosophy and Democracy”, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982) 51-52.

(reality). The denial of these as traits of reality and the responsibilities this may entail, helps no one. Dewey warned us about this human tendency:

Our magical safeguard against the uncertain character of the world is to deny the existence of chance, to mumble universal and necessary law, the ubiquity of cause and effect, the uniformity of nature, universal progress, and the inherent rationality of the universe. . . . Through science we have secured a degree of power of prediction and of control; through tools, machinery and an accompanying technique we have made the world more conformable to our needs, a more secure abode. We have heaped up riches and means of comfort between ourselves and the risks of the world. We have professionalized amusement as an agency of escape and forgetfulness. But when all is said and done, the fundamentally hazardous character of the world is not seriously modified, much less eliminated.³²

For Dewey reality (i.e., life) is an “inextricable mixture of stability and uncertainty” where the “precarious” including sickness and death are unavoidable. This does not mean that the proper response is pessimism or passive resignation. For reality (living) is also more or less responsive to our actions and we have a responsibility. The fact that we are all vulnerable, fallible, and with limitations can be the grounds for a faith in collective intelligence as the better way to ameliorate the precarious and our most serious shared problems. This faith requires acceptance of evil and of our limitations. Therefore, some humbleness.

³² John Dewey *The Later Works of John Dewey* Vol 1: 1925, *Experience and Nature*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981), 45.

To be sure, the alternative to denial and human arrogance is not to romanticize pandemics, injustices and death. We must “fight” against them, but these are events that make us aware of the limitations of the hierarchies and protections from the precarious we have socially created and institutionalized. I am not naïve. Pandemics are an opportunity to be more arrogant, and authoritarian that we were before, but they are also an opportunity to recognize the vulnerability of everyone and the need for community bonding and cooperation.

In other words, there is a certain equalizing effect that injustices, sickness, and death can have. These events can be therefore opportunities for a communal bond in the face of the precariousness in life. This affirmation of community is based on an affirmation of life expressed often as “whatever our differences we are all in the same boat”. This possibility was expressed recently by Farhad Manjoo in the New York Times, right after the pandemic’s first week in the USA. “There may be a silver lining here: What if the virus forces Americans and their elected representatives to recognize the strength of a collectivist ethos? The coronavirus, in fact, offers something like a preview of many of the threats we might face from the worst effects of climate change. Because the virus is coldly indiscriminate and nearly inescapable, it leaves us all, rich and poor, in the same boat: The only way any of us is truly protected is if the least among us is protected.”³³

For John Dewey the experience of the precarious is key to a well-grounded faith in democracy as a way of life; it even had religious significance. “Whether or not we are, save in some metaphorical

³³ Manjoo, Farhad, “Republicans Want Medicare for All, but Just for This One Disease” *NYTimes.com*
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/11/opinion/coronavirus-socialism.html?fbclid=IwAR0Y4c7RFPN2F0lmiy36l3x5yMTbiNRBAIreBnE4hx6lOZA-LOd7MuN4XaE>

sense, all brothers, we are at least all in the same boat traversing the same turbulent ocean. The potential religious significance of this fact is infinite."³⁴ To be clear, that we are “all in the same boat” in the sense of “traversing the same turbulent ocean” does not mean that we are all equally affected by a pandemic. This is not an excuse to neglect the injustices to the most vulnerable, but it does get rid of some myths and open possibilities not appreciated before. It undermines the quest of many elites for absolute safety, protectionism, isolation from “others”. John Ackerman said it best when he described what many in the upper classes must be experiencing right now:

The real panic surrounding coronavirus [that we are witnessing] is fundamentally a fear of equality, a hysteria of the privileged who now face the stringent equality of nature's regard. Global elites have suddenly had to confront the hard truth that their walls, their cages, their armies, their bodyguards, their private schools, and their shopping malls, have failed to establish that desired and reliable hermetic separation between global North and South, between the 'good' and the 'bad,' the 'clean' and the 'dirty,' between the rich and the poor, between those who are 'white' and those who are 'dark'.³⁵

The pandemic reveals that sickness and social interdependence is real and unavoidable. It seriously questions the recent ideologies in the world by politicians towards protectionisms,

³⁴ John Dewey *The Later Works of John Dewey* Vol 9: 1933-1934, *A Common Faith*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), 56.

³⁵ John Ackerman “Un virus democrático” in *Revistas Jurídicas* 2020, translation by Julio Covarrubias, <https://revistas.juridicas.unam.mx/index.php/hechos-y-derechos/article/view/14528/15640?fbclid=IwAR21IkeCDOjRAJ3r1S6smujPR4vofYU2B1wDBC00Z6uJHHliw733kXn5jWE>

building walls, putting their country first in an exclusive way. The virus may force the necessity of cooperation at a time when there has been a movement towards every country to themselves. To be sure, many will probably use the pandemic to build even bigger walls, but others will learn from this crisis the need to embrace interdependence in a more collaborative or democratic way. In the words of Martin Luther King, “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”³⁶

We should care for the poor, the working class, and racial or ethnic minority groups because they are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. If this appeal to some sense of justice is not sufficient, pandemics offer good self-interested reasons for the privileged and elite to take care of the worst in society. They should care and search for data according to class, race, and ethnicity because these groups are not only the majority in some cities and countries, but they are usually part of the labor force needed to take care of everyone. Without the data and enough tests you will not know where the virus is located. However, this sort of self-interested reasoning is not the best we can hope for in democracy as a moral ideal way of life. We should also take care of them more because it is in the interest of the entire community, society, and the globe.

If American philosophers Martin Luther King and Jane Addams were around today, they would encourage us to take this opportunity to test our ethics and our claims to live in a genuine democracy and move beyond individualism and self-interest reasoning. They would argue that what the crisis demands of us is to question these ideas (implicit in an economic system predicated on this narrow reasoning and pecuniary values) and would be encouraging all

³⁶ King, Martin Luther, “Letter From a Birmingham Jail,” 1963.

of us, in order to defeat this virus, to work together by extending our imaginative sympathetic understanding beyond our immediate circle of family and friends.

The virus has been a test of what Addams called our “social ethics,” and challenges our narrow political notions of democracy. She argued that each generation has to face a social crisis that is a big “test” of its moral commitments, in particular, and how far can they extend their “sympathetic understanding” of “others” and corresponding moral obligations. “[E]ach generation has its own test, the contemporaneous and current standard by which alone it can adequately judge of its own moral achievements. The test which they would apply to their conduct is a social test. They fail to be content with the fulfilment of their family and personal obligations and find themselves striving to respond to a new demand involving a social obligation.”³⁷

The virus exposes our individualism. We become aware of how “much of the insensibility and hardness of the world is due to the lack of imagination which prevents a realization of the experiences of other people.”³⁸ The lack of empathy of our present president is a mirror of what we have become as a society.

Addams’ words resonate today: “To attain individual morality in an age demanding social morality, to pride one’s self on the results of personal effort when the time demands social adjustment, is utterly to fail to apprehend the situation.”³⁹ Our representative and political views of democracy (Liberalism) need to be replaced by a more communal and moral notion. One in which “the identification with the common lot which is the essential idea of Democracy becomes the

³⁷ Jane Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics* (Champaign, IL; University of Illinois Press, 2002), 8.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.* 6

source and expression of social ethics.”⁴⁰ This hope is not any different than the one expressed recently by Noam Chomsky, who said that a “democracy (informed public involved and in more control of their fate) ...recreating social bonds...is the one hope we have to overcoming the crisis”⁴¹

(5) COVID-19 has made us aware of the need for the sort of grass roots communal solidarity required for a more robust view of democracy.

COVID-19 has called for citizens to change their habits and make some sacrifices. Many will do this out of self-interest (“I do not want to get infected”) others as a result of an externally imposed law to stay home by a government. These are both non-democratic motives and means for democratic ends. In a democratic community citizen sacrifices (like “social distancing”) are accepted because there is no sharp boundary between individual or personal good and that of the larger community. While no one lives in such an ideal democratic society, not moving in that direction has consequences. As sociologist Eric Klinenberg argues, social solidarity, or the interdependence between individuals and across groups is “an essential tool for combating infectious diseases and other collective threats. Solidarity motivates us to promote public health, not just our own personal security. It keeps us from hoarding medicine, toughing out a cold in the workplace or sending a sick child to school. It compels us to let a ship of stranded people dock in our safe harbors, to knock on our older neighbor’s door.” “Social solidarity leads to policies that benefit public well-being, even if it costs some individuals more.”⁴²

⁴⁰ · *Ibid* 9

⁴¹ Chomsky, Noam, “Noam Chomsky: Coronavirus - what is at stake? | DiEM25 TV” *Youtube.com*. Interview.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-N3In2rLI4&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR0cXgnpC4M6bt7_fQNJoTXDyL5GwStHPYtRd7qtRHlatWEI3l9tBp_dnyw)

[N3In2rLI4&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR0cXgnpC4M6bt7_fQNJoTXDyL5GwStHPYtRd7qtRHlatWEI3l9tBp_dnyw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-N3In2rLI4&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR0cXgnpC4M6bt7_fQNJoTXDyL5GwStHPYtRd7qtRHlatWEI3l9tBp_dnyw)

⁴²Klinenberg, Eric, “We Need Social Solidarity, Not Just Social Distancing”

We live in a country mired in a mythos of individualism and this collides with a pandemic that demands social solidarity and collective sacrifice. Some are skeptical that we can meet this challenge or “test” (in the above sense by Addams) “It’s an open question whether Americans have enough social solidarity to stave off the worst possibilities of the coronavirus pandemic. There’s ample reason to be skeptical.”⁴³ What is the state of our moral relationships with the environment and others?

One of the lessons that Grace Lee Boggs learned in the many crises she witnessed in Detroit was that in such events the people learned “the only way to survive is by taking care of one another, by recreating our relationships to one another, that we have created a society, over the last period, in particular, where each of us is pursuing self-interest. We have devolved as human beings.”⁴⁴

The people in Puerto Rico learned a similar lesson from the destruction wrought by hurricane Maria. According to María A. Cintrón Ríos, “Hurricane Maria made us wake up and aware of our reality as the people ... we learned the hard way to persevere and the value of communal organization.”⁴⁵ Maria took the crisis as validation of some of the ideas of Puerto Rican philosopher Eugenio Maria de Hostos. “The Hostonian philosophy grounded on practical wisdom teaches us to focus our intelligence towards the common good.”⁴⁶ One concept of Hostos that has helped communities in Puerto Rico is

NYTimes.com.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/14/opinion/coronavirus-social-distancing.html>

⁴³ Klinenberg, Eric, “We Need Social Solidarity, Not Just Social Distancing” *NYTimes.com.*

⁴⁴ Boggs, Grace Lee, “Detroit Activist, Philosopher Grace Lee Boggs: “The Only Way to Survive Is by Taking Care of One Another,” *Democracynow.org*
https://www.democracynow.org/2010/4/2/grace_lee_boggs

⁴⁵ Ríos, María A. Cintrón, “Ostos sin H y Hostos con H,” *80Grados.net*
<https://www.80grados.net/ostos-sin-h-y-hostos-con-h/>

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

“poder social”. This is the capacity of a local community to empower itself and make changes (ameliorate particular injustices) by trying creative ways to reduce dependency. This seems relevant to the current pandemic. COVID-19 has exposed the value and need of grass-roots democratic efforts by local communities and institutions to ameliorate the lives of many instead of relying solely on top down solutions. The virus has exposed, in different parts of the world, the inefficiency and irresponsibility on the parts of politicians and the large national institutions that we have depended on to take care of the people. The response in many places has been something that is needed not just in the time of a crisis: grass-roots democratic efforts by local communities and institutions to ameliorate the lives of many. For example, distribution of food and creation of inexpensive ventilators.⁴⁷

(6) COVID-19 has made us aware of the need for serious reconstruction at all levels, of our institutions, conditions, relationships, “souls”, and values. In other words, the sort of “revolution” of values sought by Grace Lee Boggs that goes beyond Left/Right politics including a better holistic understanding of “health” as a social value. We need more inquiry about causes and concern for the proper environmental and social conditions for health instead of a quick fix. For instance, beyond creating a “cure” (like creating a vaccine) the issues of accessibility and prevention for all need to be addressed.

The most critical factor for dealing with this and future pandemics is to make a rapid transition from our current profit-oriented Health Care industry towards a people-oriented Health Care system. However, there is also a need to rethink our understanding of “health”, its nature and conditions as well as what is required to maintain it as

⁴⁷ Brown, Joshua E., “Vermont Team Invents Emergency Ventilator” *UVM.edu*. https://www.uvm.edu/uvmnews/news/vermont-team-invents-emergency-ventilator?fbclid=IwAR2TCnTWYTFvYGy7ijgz-_8DqTwNX1zC9UQ8Uffmz-184PmX8ntUqsdWBv8#.XoetW1yLDRk.facebook

a social good.

Philosopher Grace Lee Boggs has been critical of politicians in the USA from both the Left and the Right for having debates about health and education “confined to narrow parameters. Too often we regard health care and education as commodities, and we remain complicit as our elected representatives reduce us to consumers.” However, “we need nothing less than a paradigm shift of health as a value.” “Our circular debates in the United States about our mounting social crises illustrate the need for a paradigm shift. Millions of Americans, out of concern for their own families or for others less fortunate, are worried about our failing health and education systems. Thus we have been locked in a titanic battle between the Left and the Right over the proper role of government and the redistribution of resources from the haves to the have-nots. “We forgo an opportunity to debate and discuss real solutions to the crises at hand. Instead of focusing directly on the issue of health care, our political discourse centers on health insurance programs that have more to do with feeding the already monstrous medical industrial complex than with our physical, mental, and spiritual health.”⁴⁸

For Boggs health should be conceived as a social-public-communal good and not an individual commodity that we purchase through insurance companies, nor something given by a government. Of course, the need to reform our health system at a national level is necessary, but we also need a reorientation of health as local good that we all contribute to in our communities. For Boggs:

Our challenge in the 21st century is to engage our children from K-12 in problem solving and community building activities ... to become participants in caring for their own

⁴⁸ Boggs, *The Next American Revolution* 2012, p.77-78

health, and that of their families and communities.⁴⁹

Our notions of health must also become more holistic, preventive and ecological. We need more inquiry about causes and concern for the proper environmental and social conditions for Health instead of a quick fix. For instance, beyond creating a “cure” (like creating a vaccine) the issues of accessibility and prevention for all need to be addressed. John Dewey’s response in 1923 to attempts to find a “cure” to the influenza pandemic is worth quoting at length:⁵⁰

The world has always been more or less a sick world. The isles of harmony and health with which we dot the map of human history are largely constructions of the imagination. But it may be doubted if the consciousness of sickness was so widespread as it is today. A cured body is in no way the same thing as a healthy, vitally growing mind or body, any more than winning a lawsuit is the same thing as cooperative social relationships...cure is a negative idea: health a positive one. The interest in cures and salvations is evidence of how sick the world is.; it is also evidence of its unwillingness to deal with the causes of its sickness; its preoccupation with symptoms and effects. A cure may reduce, suppress or transfer an effect; it does not touch the cause. Or if it does, it is something more than a cure. It is re-education: it is restoration of an organism which manifest symptoms of health because it is rightly constructed.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Grace Lee Boggs, *The Next American Revolution*, 78

⁵⁰ Dewey in particular criticizes Coueism, a popular method of psychotherapy and self-improvement based on optimistic autosuggestion.

⁵¹ John Dewey *The Middle Works*, Vol 15, 1923-1924, “A Sick World”, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), 43.

Health, cure and illness are related notions. There is something about a pandemic that questions the most common notions in our health system. In “Ten Premises for A Pandemic,” Ian Alan Paul writes, “[T]he pandemic doesn’t simply happen to us...but is instead something we partake in. A pandemic is a social relation between people.”⁵² A pandemic makes obvious what is true of all medical illness, while it is a condition that affects a particular body it cannot be divorced from a complex web of relations including a social environment; and this means that there many diseases that require looking for causes in that environment and not quick fixes that target the biological state of the body. Pandemics are things that affect our immune systems but these vary among people and groups depending on different social circumstances. One need not disregard the important role of personal responsibility in regard to one's health to acknowledge that our immune system depends in part on the environment. That includes social economic injustices and structural causes, such as lack of access to a healthy diet, or just growing up in a violent-chaotic-fearful neighborhood.

To deal intelligently and democratically with pandemics requires “health” understood as including the minimal necessary conditions by which all bodies can hold up to pandemics and remain strong. This requires inquiry into these environmental causes and preventive measures instead of waiting for illness to occur and find some cure. As Kurt Cobb says, “if we continue to think of health as the absence of illness, of illness as something that is prevented by a pill or a shot—and if not ultimately prevented, treated by a pill or a shot—we humans won’t make the necessary changes as a global society to better withstand more frequent pandemics.” “Robust health, not techno-fixes, is the best way to confront the biological perils of the natural world in which we participate. Such a focus would, however,

⁵² *Ibid.*

take a complete rethinking of who we humans are, namely, organisms in an environment. Will the coronavirus awaken any more of us to this fact?"⁵³

The way to procure health is not in an *ad hoc* fashion and trying to find quick fix "cures" of illnesses as they come. We need to work on maintaining the conditions for prevention, the same with justice. In both it has something to do with focusing on healthy relationships with ourselves and the environment.

⁵³ Cobb, Kurt, "Coronavirus reminds us we are organisms in an environment," *Resilience.org*.