Concept Paper

Theorising Pandemic Necropolitics as Evil: Thinking Inequalities, Suffering, and Vulnerabilities with Arendt

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Abstract: A conceptualisation of the COVID-19 pandemic through the analytic lens of a 'necropolitics as evil' brings to the fore Hannah Arendt's theorisation that evil is both an expression of, and a threat to, humanity and its plurality as an intersectional assemblage, and by extension as freedom in political action. Arendt accepts that while evil—as an expression of our humanity—can never be eradicated, it must—as a threat to our common humanity—be confronted. From this perspective, the functioning of race, gender, and wider structural inequalities as operational hinges of COVID-19 capitalism required spaces for resistance and change within the political economy of global inequalities during the recent pandemic. This (concept) paper explores such a conceptualisation through stories of the pandemic and with a particular focus on Indigenous people, marginalised groups such as migrants and asylum seekers, as well as the homeless. It is through the viral logics of cytopathic COVID-19 capitalisms that we confront and resist theoretical pathologies by re-theorising evil as conceptual currency to confront this conjuncture, critique limitations, and meaningfully translate the current societal landscape through this lens. This allows for engaging in a particular kind of reading of Arendt that is contextualised in terms of the stakes of the paper: the importance of thinking about convivialising solidarities in the ongoing pandemic that has been perpetuated by 'evil political formations/evil governance' under capitalism, and as such, the structural pathologies that exacerbate COVID-19's deathly effects.

Keywords: pandemic necropolitics; evil; Arendt; inequality; suffering; vulnerability; social marginalisation; capitalism; intersectionality; solidarity

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1. Situating Biopolitics, Bioethics, and Pandemic Social Milieus

The year 2020, while unforgettable in many ways, remarkably with the emergence of the coronavirus pandemic, unveiled several key critical moments globally. COVID-19, while an unprecedented new pandemic with its devastating impact on the loss of lives, shattering of economies, and transformation of lifestyles, at the same time exposed deep structural weaknesses of states, the fragility of supranational cooperation and alliances, existing historical class and racialised divisions, gendered inequalities in caring, coping, and labour contexts, domestic and gendered violence, and continues to have extensive impacts on the physical and mental health, working and caring practices, as well as social relations in many countries around the world. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed not just 'the destructive forces of Anglo-American hypercapitalism' but has significantly led to a global realisation that 'the progressive dismantling of public health care and social security has directly contributed to the destruction of livelihoods and to hundreds of thousands of avoidable deaths' [1] (p.137). At the same time, this has pointed to a historical re-affirmation of the pernicious politics of capitalism—never stationery and always evolving with market-driven objectives for profit as the sole focus irrespective of the human cost [2].

The multi-vocal accounts of capturing changing lives and livelihoods under the recent global health and social crises have had emotional and embodied intersectional effects. This is primarily due to entrenched structural inequalities where the ongoing marginalisation

of particular groups has rendered visible the forces that amplify such exclusions. At the same time, encompassing affectivities of vulnerabilities, feelings of fear, anger, grief, and loss give rise to a global crisis-stricken *governance of evil* where solidarity meets resistance, but hope is hostage to the *enemies*. An agonistic return to Arendt's writings on evil and the intimacies of connectedness to the 'human condition' [3] reveals a scholarship entrenched with inherent concerns over evil, as what can only be characterised by way of a perpetual possibility of existential demise of humanity, in all its everlasting, tragic insight into historical injustices. When we deploy an agonistic return to Arendt's writings, we mean both an exploration of Arendtian theorisation as a way to understand agonistic social conflict and an agonistic reading for interpretation of the current societal necropolitical regimes of COVID-19 capitalism. This approach reveals an opportunity for critical social theory to highlight the relevance of Arendtian thought when preoccupied with evil as equally relevant to understanding the current necropolitics of contemporary capitalism. This necropolitics of evil refers to the capitalist response to the pandemic rather than the pandemic itself. It is rather evident, but worth mentioning for the avoidance of any misunderstanding that COVID-19 as such is not evil, nor does it engage with necropolitics. In its simplistic rendition, it is a virus, and as a virus, it does what viruses do. Therefore, when we refer to 'the COVID-19 pandemic', we are not using the term to refer to the actual outbreak and spread of the virus, but rather to the capitalist response to the outbreak and the societal impacts this approach has had for particular communities, groups, and individuals, which exemplify a mirroring of necropolitics through conceptualising Arendtian evil.

In that direction, this paper is grounded on a conceptualisation of the COVID-19 pandemic through the analytic lens of *necropolitics as evil* as an expression of and a threat to humanity and its plurality as an intersectional assemblage, as well as by extension as freedom in political action. From this perspective, the functioning of race, gender, and wider structural inequalities as operational hinges of COVID-19 capitalism requires spaces for resistance and change within the political economy of global inequalities. This paper explores such a conceptualisation through stories of the pandemic and with a particular focus on Indigenous people, minoritised groups such as migrants and asylum seekers, as well as the homeless. Analytically, the aim to explore a re-turn to an Arendtian formulation of evil through pandemic necropolitics contributes to post-foundational thought at the juncture of conceptual dislocations on contemporary social change, power imbalances, and current inequalities. The viral logics of cytopathic COVID-19 capitalisms require confrontation and resistance since theoretical pathologies by conjuncture, critique of limitations, and meaningful translation of current societal landscapes can offer means to new analytical avenues while embracing the reframing of old conceptualisations. The importance of re-convivialising collective solidarities is the societal move, while turning back to Arendt to refresh understandings of evil with examinations of contemporary phenomena of catastrophic capitalisms offers a chance to also conceptually move forward with newer philosophical insights. This return is further unpacked in the next section.

By re-theorising the politics and governance of evil as conceptual currency, the paper contributes its core argument through using narratives to discuss pandemic necropolitics, drawing in Arendt as an interlocutor to help develop its framework on accounting for evil. This allows for engaging in a particular kind of reading of Arendt that is contextualised in terms of the stakes of the paper: the importance of thinking about convivialising solidarities in the ongoing pandemic that has been perpetuated by 'evil political formations/evil governance' under capitalism, and as such, the structural pathologies that exacerbate COVID-19's deathly effects.

2. Re-Turning Evil to Arendt: Framing Some Post-Foundational Demarcations

Not having an absolute foundation and embracing a post-foundational analytical design[1] does not render the absence of any foundation as conceptually flawed. The lens employed here is not *anti-foundationalism* but *post*, rather, in making the political difference as a tool of critical analysis for 'evil'. As a post-foundational invocation of the political,

the associational contingency is with the 'social', when the collective comes into existence through the founding event of the pandemic. Invoking the political then is invariably an act to divest politics of neutralising efforts and to align with experiences of 'public self-constitution, or of conflict and antagonism' [4] (p.114). It is for this reason, thus important, to maintain the distinction between politics and the political,[2] where the former remains a specific discursive regime in the form of the particularities of a social system and action, while the latter assumes the principle of autonomy of politics [6]. To accurately situate the political with Arendt's work is to clearly align it with freedom and action, while the social realm is in its antithesis grounded with necessity and behaviour.

Arendt's *Human Condition* (HC) elaborates a triple-layered narrative about modernity in how the reconfiguration of the three dimensions of the 'vita active' [3] (labour, work, and action) shapes mere surviving/living into a journey of ontological hierarchy, where 'action' [3] becomes the manifestation of performance of speaking words into doing deeds: 'With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world, and this insertion is like a second birth, in which we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance' (HC 176–77). While human existence is contingent on the simple but necessarily vital bodily needs of sustenance/nourishment and hydration, as much as breathing and sleeping, it is only through the act of speech and action that we are *in being*, while this Arendtian ontological link establishes the realm of *political becoming*. On the premises of Hellenic thought, Arendtian ontological meaning is one that is elevated because of action and contemplation in the political. This combination of the interactivity and intersubjectivity in appearances is through the presence of others and aligned to Arendt's conceptualisation of action, which radically transforms the social into the political. It is in the concept of *narrative* that they both come together, and so this paper draws on segments of *stories of the pandemic*, informed by a *re-theorisation of evil* in a post-foundational paradigm, encompassing a public sphere with the denigration that capitalist crises bring. This reconciles with how capitalism, in a state of perpetual crisis, is also on a mission to alienate and individualise human suffering, where current conditions of neoliberalism exacerbate loneliness. In the same critical thread of thought, loneliness, according to Arendt [7], is a precondition for totalitarian domination, as people who are socially isolated are more likely to follow such ideologies and movements. In the 'liminality of loneliness' [8] that the current pandemic has instilled, it is only with re-thinking in more radical, intersectional, and feminist inclusive ways that the shift from neoliberal individualisation to collective solidarity can emerge.

In the spirit of Arendtian storytelling, narrative is a core human activity, fundamental in political textual terms and with a 'redemptive power' [9] to theorise the storying of trauma and historiographical expectations from such actions. Arendt persuasively argued that the 'banality of evil' lies in the simplicity and thoughtless fulfilment of such actions by regimes, through individuals prepared to execute those, regardless of the consequences [10]. The malevolence of such actions, combined with the complicity of those carrying them out, are the embodiment of such banality of evil. The ordinariness lies within how the political and the social combine to materialise (moral) evil and thus might aid in reconciling the confusion left with Arendt's early death in 1975 without having concretely clarified some of the puzzles with the 'banality of evil' in relation to her initial original morality of evil thesis (which has also been further complexified by critics to the present).

While motivations can be obscure and ordinary, packaged in the bureaucratic banality of executioners such as Eichmann, the genocidal acts of evil and the ideological grounding of such evil and inhuman acts are reconciled by their materialisations [11,12]. The horror of evil can be seen through its manifestation as orchestrated action and 'the complexity of mimesis' [13] (p. 479). The next section outlines the theoretical premises of how *pandemic necropolitics* can be theorised in light of *re-framing evil* in a post-foundational context.

3. Theorising Pandemic Necropolitics

The logics of neoliberal politics are linked to discourses of value and worth as the malignant machinery of neoliberalism reigns supreme in marketising social life, corporatising pedagogic practice and higher education learning [14], privatising public spaces, and militarising democratic spheres by exacerbating austerity politics [15] that lead to an alienated and 'quantified self in precarity' [16]. In the face of such continuous crises, the need is paramount to develop alternative political vocabularies, more political agency, and new cultural politics to challenge educators, public intellectuals, social movements activists, and all others who still believe in the promise of global democracy [17,18].

The pervasive aspects of the forms of control through the malignant machinery of neoliberalism as outlined above are accentuated by frequently increasing scenarios of lives lost in deciding whose lives are worthy to save, whose lives we value to preserve, and for which reasons. Such interventions occur when the state does, or does not intervene, or selectively does so during natural disasters, public health, housing, and education provision—all parameters of everyday life that have an impact on who gets to live, what kind of life, and who gets to die, and why. The latter are clearly necropolitical practices by the state.

Etymologically derivative to combine the politics of deathscapes, the necrological capacity of the state defines in absolute terms who matters and who does not, making some disposable and others not, thus signifying that state politics of death as a framework assigning value to human life. These practices illuminate the distribution of power through axes of privilege in the logics of necropolitics, rendering precarious or worthy each human existence [19,20]. As Mbembe explains [21], 'The capitalist system is based on the unequal distribution of the opportunity to live and die. . .this logic of sacrifice has always been at the heart of neoliberalism, and it should be called necroliberalism. This system has always functioned with the idea that some are more valuable than others. Those of no value are expendable'. Thus, in its core manifestations of necropolitical state framings are instances of violence through institutions aligned to racialised capitalisms, carceral capitalisms, (cis/hetero) patriarchies, and colonialisms [22].

Indeed, in the current context, it seems almost impossible to disentangle the politics of grief and mourning with that of dispossession, austerity, and the violence of inequalities. Even more profoundly challenging is the distortion of death and democracy as a confrontation of humanity during a pandemic where loss and grief are the politics that define the current crises. While an abundance of clarity is not always evident, when we recall deathscapes in the UK of frontline workers at the start of the pandemic were almost the same, if not more, for bus drivers as they were for doctors [23], we come to realise that the vulnerability of bodies, the suffering disparities, deaths, and struggles are assemblages of meanings of mourning in the face of democracy challenged. The meaning of praxis over democracy can be viewed through an analytical framing of evil as an organising basis for such, when the value of mourning as meaning–making becomes interconnected with the value of particular lives. Thus, the spectre of social suffering through stories of the pandemic contributes to the post-foundational grounding of evil as both necrological heuristic device and humanistic framing.

The framings I wish to extrapolate (ala [24]) contemplate the dehumanising spectacle of social suffering through the necropolitical evil of pandemic inequalities as a post-foundational temporality to invent a new narrative to (re)turn to humanity. The pandemic necropolitics have extrapolated 'conditions of unlivability' through legacies of racisms, nationalisms, sexisms, and structurally institutionalised, frequently ritualised abuses and injuries, rendering mourning a critical concept (and 'genres of mourning'), fostering reflexivity as a political articulation, uncanny, and through 'matrices of social disposability' [25].

Aligned to these conceptualisations, this paper advances the intervention by Pele and Riley [26], who (draw on the work of Didier Fassin) theorise the right to health as an integral part of a radical politics of life as a *governmentality* approach to power and a proper response to the pandemic, while resisting being subsumed within neoliberal

logics. Such a response is also undeniably linked to the affective mood of the pandemic, which is complex and contradictory in its conflation of suffering and fear with hope and exhilarating excitement in the face of technological and medical advances, but always in the backdrop of the vulnerability of the posthuman [27]. Such posthuman vulnerabilities are enmeshed with the massive socio-economic inequalities, the political instabilities, and the neoliberal governance enabling the foundations of toxic populisms to spread as neo-contagion, exacerbating the politics of hate, ignorance, and power imbalances. Landscapes of perceived humanity must be questioned against dominant ideas of simplistic assumptions of a superior social subject, which is White, Eurocentric, masculine in its social reproduction and heteronormativity, able-bodied, urbanised in its metropolitan demeanour, with a standard discourse that is far from a neutral category [15,28]. These are social subjects who are political actors, negotiating lockdowns against economies, policies, libertarian beliefs, rising death tolls, borderscapes, national exhaustion and social fatigue, notions of entitlement of over-developed worlds, and recurring psychosocial complexities of loss, mourning, grief, and hopelessness.

Parallel to the latter are social milieus of 'othered' subjects, minoritised, dehumanised, excluded, sexualised, and racialised [15,28]. Finally, the layers of a feminist, intersectional, and decolonial theorising to pandemic necropolitics make for useful links to understanding inequalities as embedded within embodied, experiential, historical, ontological, empiricist, and epistemological categories. These categories produce values and knowledges that erase the existing and ongoing experiences of those cultures that are colonised, indigenous, marginalised, and excluded from the majority, and whose suffering and fear of destruction, death, dispossession, epidemics, and environmental devastation have been marked by European imperialist conquests and colonial invasions that generationally appropriated their land, livelihoods, health, and wellbeing. This is encapsulated in the catastrophes of grand scale for many First Nations peoples as an everyday reality, interconnected with intergenerational transmission of disease and environmental destruction by Europeans [28].

In the next section and through the conceptual lenses above, we delve into stories of social suffering, minoritarian inequalities, and political vulnerabilities by drawing on several case studies on a transnational and translocal level with particular groups.

4. Stories of Social Suffering, Inequalities, and Vulnerabilities

In thinking through the conceptual parameters discussed earlier and grappling with that lens while drawing from stories of pandemic inequalities, suffering, and vulnerabilities, I explore what I term 'stories within the built environment' and 'the pandemic from the pavement' with stories from homeless. The narrative responses to the pandemic that inform the analysis have originated in a number of countries (Australia, Canada, China, India, Brazil, Rwanda, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey), but with a few extracts contextualising the analysis in this section and with no intention of privileging any kind of 'methodological nationalism' [29], which would conceive the nation-state as the sole unit of analysis or a unified container for social processes. On the contrary, this paper wishes to contribute to new debates towards 'methodological de-nationalism' [30] and to propose expanding new dialogues on ontopolitical ethics and current pandemic necropolitics as a political philosophy of evil. In theorising pandemic necropolitics as evil through a political (not moral) avenue, we can also further engage with linking pandemic politics/policy with 'evil collectives' [31].

It is important to also note methodologically why digital open access narrative stories have been selected and to situate my ethical positionality in how I draw on extracts from these here. I am in agreement with Gachago and Livingston when they discuss 'the elephant in the room' as regards tensions with normative research and an ethics of care for digital storytelling [32]. They argue that ethical practice cannot be simply contained in the documentation of codes of conduct and in the signing off of ethical applications by institutional review boards. Rather, as a matter of daily professional, personal, and political caring practice, adopting an 'ethics of care' approach [33–35] is to incorporate

personal narratives in research as a process of documenting historically and socio-culturally embedded lived experience through the digital space, which might incorporate words, images, and sound, developed frequently through non-professional tools/actors.

While acknowledging elements of the researcher's gaze, methodologically this paper seeks to become informed in how de-centring the 'white gaze' [36] requires researcher efforts to enhance potential to empower through personal reflection, growth, and the development of new multimodal literacies in our research studies. In line with an 'ethic of care' [34] approach, ethical practices in research are aligned to everyday life decisions of care and how we shape caring relationships instead of a rigid adherence to prescriptive guidelines. Ethical behaviour as care in the context of this research is complex and connected to a commitment that social justice informing and 'repairing' our social world is an interwoven set of practices that we engage with as researchers, teachers, and academic activists.

At the same time, I am reflexively aware of the caution drawn by Chandler and Reid [37,38] in the valorising and through such '(re)colonization of indigeneity' with a turn to Indigenous research by 'western' academics. As Chandler and Reid explain [38] (p.485), to 'ontologise indigeneity' is particularly problematic; in that, rather than challenging contemporary governmental approaches, this kind of reification, exoticisation, and provincialising of what is perceived as 'critical imaginaries' of 'lives in ruins' through the realities of Indigenous struggles and suffering from a prism of privileged white Eurocentric academic elite. In maintaining a reflexive stance, it is important to highlight a genuine acknowledgement when, as non-Indigenous scholars, our positionality is not one seeking to produce Indigenous analytics, but rather through this limitation to knowledge production to strengthen self-awareness in the visibility and importance of using conceptual tools from otherwise marginalised communities. Placing their knowledges at the centre of our knowing is only one small step in dismantling epistemic and Eurocentric violences.

Terminology becomes further destabilised and *de-centred* when positionality situates our research at the crossroads of activism and neoliberal academia. In self-identifying as a working-class migrant academic activist, trade unionist, feminist, and anti-racist (who is a survivor of the violences/exclusions of the neoliberal Academy), I am fully aware of the privileges, as limited as they can be, logistically, in advocating to carve emotional labour and to legitimise writing time and space (within otherwise unsustainable workloads) to write about the continued marginalisations and oppressions that the participant extracts and wider life stories express.

Finally, the extracts from stories include those drawn from interviews published in the form of a graphic novel written by Klema and Zuntz [39] (p.4), who acknowledge that while the devastation brought by COVID-19 to millions has been indescribable, 'marginalised populations, including people of colour, persons with disabilities, Indigenous people, the elderly, women and children, refugees, and migrants, are more at risk of becoming ill and more vulnerable to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19'. Their graphic novel presents stories from displaced Syrian farmworkers during the pandemic through the 'Refugee Labour under Lockdown' project, which explores how COVID-19-related movement restrictions along with wider disruptions to workers have affected livelihoods and working conditions of displaced Syrians in the Middle East. The graphic novel as an output of this project draws on remote, semi-structured interviews with 80 Syrian agricultural workers in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, and northern Syria, along with participant diaries documenting daily lives through 'work diaries'.

I now provide the extracts below that contextualise the discussion while also providing additional analysis through the conceptual lens developed earlier:

> The virus is here to wake up the world. Too many people are not connected to the land and water. It's time for people to pay attention, to be still and to re-evaluate our lives. It's time for us to be connected to our own way of being in the world and to get in touch with our own self in spirit. (Teaching by Elder Liz Akiwenzie, 12 May 2020)[3].

The virus can become a catalyst for awakening political discourse to issues of inequity/inequality of lives dehumanised when denied rights and justice. This awakening can also have a twofold outcome in creating awareness of ecological issues and human/nature/machine relationships. Connecting our own sense of self and being with the wider social world but, more importantly, with the natural world can also highlight historical issues of alienation that are produced by the very mission of capitalism.

> Time. I've spent the last eight months dancing with time. Time to be a mother. Time to be a student. Time to pay the bills. Time to cook. Time to advocate. Time to clean. Time to be a wife, daughter, auntie, and friend. Time to self. Time to practice culture. Time to do ceremony. Time for exercise. Time to run a business. Time to homeschool. Before the pandemic, I always knew how to use my time, and there never seemed to be enough. Once the virus hit, I had to learn how to do more things at one time in a confined space. I became filled with uncertainty, fear and anxiety, losing track of time and space. I needed my family to be safe, and I fought to keep them well. To keep them well, I needed to be balanced mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually. (Vanessa Ambtman-Smith)[4]

It is important not to disregard the deaths of the elderly during the pandemic, especially when those were directly associated with political decisions in particular countries. That is, age is a powerful political determinant given that older people are not active producers of surplus value in the capitalist mode of production; on the contrary, they are frequently in need of state-sponsored health and social care, plus pensions and other benefits. Lack of prioritising these elderly lives is a supposition of a predatory social policy that benefits the neoliberal system under the premise that those who are not producing are not worthy of living. This is a traumatic realisation in confronting such necropolitical policies and the deathscapes of capitalism.

> When people cry, I can't take it. When people torture each other, I just can't take it. I'm not talking about things that are outside my control, but whenever something is within my control, I take some time off work and help out. (...) In the current context, it is not possible for us to survive without ensuring others in our community survive as well. These efforts may not always solve the problem, but they help us find the strength to keep going. (Sulagna)

Creating solidarities is a key pathway to developing coping mechanisms that build communities and a sense of agency where some sense of control appears possible. Building resilient and sustainable communities through solidarity drivers for inclusive practices can develop opportunities for dialogue and engagement, aiding the feeling of regaining a sense of agency over our lives. Self-agency is necessary to instil as the participant explains the void of having it removed and the manifestation of the fear when it is forcibly extracted from us.

> To be honest, for me this action is fuelled by anger. I don't like to be helpless. I don't like what's happening right now, and I need to channel that energy into doing something that will change that. I think that's what it is for a lot of us: we can't sit here with our hands on our heads and wait for something to happen; we need to do it ourselves. It's still fuelled by anger for a lot of people, and people are still struggling to process it, but doing something helps you tackle that. Doing something about an issue helps us to come to terms with it by finding some amount of agency in the situation. We can't control everyone's actions, but at least we can control what we are doing. (Ahana)[5]

The relationship between culture and technology has been a contested one and is now exacerbated by ongoing advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and computing, which are posing new societal challenges as well as offering opportunities. Rethinking the relationship of technology and the human–machine relationship is relevant as regards the wider discussion on health inequalities. Sociological analyses of conceptualising human systems of the

machine cultures and their meaning-making for how this nexus of culture-machine-humans can create patterns and interactions is a compelling and complex topic [41–43].

> I worked every day in the last month, my body is exhausted. (. . .) I am selling our possessions one after the other. . .I can see meat in my dreams. . .the children beg me to buy it. (. . .) The area where we live is full of widows and martyrs. Women have to work to provide a living for their children. (Suhair, single mother)[6]

- *We Are People and Stories, But We Are Invisible'*[7]
- Verse 1
- Invisible like the virus that crosses continents
  Alone on the streets that connect so many.
  On the margins of society, on the verge of the crisis.
  Facing the reality of such a sad State.
  Incredible, for they are still stories and faces.
  Of Mários, Marias, and Josés.
  That connect everyone.
  Politics for people on the street is defending what's yours from others.
  Corona just reveals who are the priority when you talk about a people.
- Verse 3
- In the dark, the little black boy disappears
  In the light, he is forever sought
  In the day candies are sold by black bodies
  Riddled by bullets at night
  Squeezed in the middle of the alley
  We are black bodies trampled over
  At the funk ball that causes fear
  High society gets down on high heels
  Put your hands in the air, today is a day off, hey hey
  White dude thought it was a robbery, I told him to stick it, tee-hee-hee!

The above extracts, as narrative glimpses of varying experiences of inequality, vulnerability, and suffering during the pandemic, are set against a backdrop of extensive empirical research showing the negative effects of inequalities on public health, gendered violence, social trust, and social isolation [8]. Within this context, Schuppert [44] interrogates if for policy-orientated theorists a question arises as to the normative implications of empirical findings might have, if any, for philosophers working on in/equality. Schuppert [44] (p.97) argues that 'the first lesson philosophers should take away from the empirical literature is that the issue that needs to be addressed is harmful social inequality, rather than unequal material distributions, or unequal opportunities and starting gates as such'. To make this more coherent, the problem itself can be concretised as 'the negative effects of certain harmful forms of complex social inequalities'.

For the analysis that follows in linking to an Arendtian re-turn to evil, this entails that we should focus on the conceptualisation of the evil of social inequality and the kinds of relationships and institutional arrangements that COVID-19 capitalisms make compatible with it as necropolitics for the marginalised. Victor Seidler [45] (p.76) prompts us to ask ourselves, 'What does it mean to be sensitive to the pain of others? How do we learn to respect the traumatic memories of loss that other people carry when they seem to threaten our own'? Here, we might even contemplate how we create from the rubble of dystopias the new utopias that can re-invent our humanity as one resembling a sense of belongingness and homing. As Johan Siebers [46] (p.361) asserts, 'The spirit of utopia is above all the active appropriation of the awareness that we are open beings in an open world, strangers in a strange land, that might be made into something resembling the memory of a place where no one has ever been: home'. Contrary to perceptions of Arendt as conceptually inaugurating an 'anti-utopian age', her writing displays a different kind of utopian thinking, 'consisting in an imaginative and idealized reconstruction of existing polities' [47] (p.12).

The processual rediscovering of both the post-foundational and philosophical dimensions of Arendt's work in theorising pandemic necropolitics does not, by any sense, 'de-politicise' her work; rather, it actualises this pluralisation by underscoring what Sophie Loidolt refers to when bringing phenomenological plurality and political intersubjectivity into prominence while re-reading Arendt by foregrounding experiencing (social) subjects as 'existing in enactment' [48] (p.84) and their multiplicity in their 'human conditionality'. Here, *Loidolt* advances a theorisation of 'spaces of meaning' as dynamic structure of the Arendtian 'labour-work-action' triad with interconnected conditions: 'Since all conditions are actualised simply by human existence, i.e., by being a living body, by being involved in the world of objects/tools, and by existing in the plural, being human means to dwell, however passively, in all of these meaning-spaces at one and the same time' [48] (p.116). These meaningful spaces, with their specificities of temporalities and spatialities, are sequential paths to the intersubjectivities of subject modalities and rhythms. This activating process is intersubjective, temporally and spatially contingent to the complexity of human existence and cannot be neatly placed into spheres of the private, the political, and the social. The latter is especially pertinent if we are to understand how these assemblages have morphed into each other during the pandemic and how blurred temporal and spatial configurations become when we talk about homelessness, marginalisation and marginalised groups, lockdowns, working from home and the home as workplace, the domestic and private voyeuristically exposed to the professional and public sphere, etc. All these temporalities and spatialities can be conceptually melting and morphing into each other, with theoretical boundaries negotiated, evaded, invaded, avoided, and re-invented.

Pandemic-driven processual morphing of public and private spheres and the reconfiguration of state necropolitics also highlight the centrality of radical participatory democracy in Arendt's work, one linking to agency and advocating a radical extension of freedom and equality within a project of democracy that is inherently unfinished as it lacks a continuous inclusivity and reflexivity in the juxtapositions of justice with evil. This is a 'people's utopia' [49] that can socially enterprise and channel people's participation in designing popular decision-making, grass-roots governance, and participatory mechanisms for opportunities to involve traditionally marginalised sectors of subjects to engage in politics as agency and democratic deepening as an eradication of state necropolitics.

5. Conclusions: Cytopathic Capitalisms, Viral Logics, and Theoretical Pathologies

This paper has advanced a re-reading of Arendt in understanding pandemic necropolitics as evil and, from this position, extends a political and policy imperative of reconstituting the social imaginary through the vision of utopia [50], yet, beyond the boundaries of Western modernity, where that social imaginary has indeed failed us in terms of dysfunctional and deadly consequences of the norms and values, ideals, and convictions of living together unlivable lives [51]. The paper contributes this core argument by using narratives to discuss pandemic necropolitics, drawing in Arendt as interlocutor to help develop its framework on accounting for evil. The political imaginary of how to conceptualise such utopias might be complex. Nevertheless, the politics of such an imaginary might be more evident in effects that are formative and constitutive of the political [52]. Constituting the imaginary does pose questions on how to make and learn the political, how the emergence of political forms evolves, and what kind of constraints and conditions in practices and understandings are illuminated through activating methods of utopian politics. For one, fundamental elements of this alternative politics are to question the presumption of equity, the meanings of good for all, the clear demarcation between public and private space, and the value of individuality and the collective. Such manifestations of westernised social imaginaries clash with the socialities that emerge when state necropolitics contain agential outcomes.

One way to enact social change is through social engagement of solidarity activities. A new way to conceptualise, ontologically, by not separating 'the self' from 'the other' is through Deniz Duru's concept of 'convivial solidarity' [53] (p.134), which refers to collective work that aims to identify solutions, to eradicate hierarchies, to introduce practices of

common humanity, to promote a normative drive for equal rights, and to solve societal crises through social support. For to dismiss any effort to apply these would be a catalyst to embedding evil, magnified through the inhumanity of denial that such is 'a violence against those who are already not quite living, that is, living in a state of suspension between life and death' [54] (p.36).

Nuancing analytically the conversation of how biopolitics and necropolitics can be enhanced, recent works grapple with feminist and queer investments of 'cosmopolitics' in the current global scale of how neo-imperial and homonationalist practices continue to strategically mark particular lives as more or less worthy than others [8,55,56]. From a phenomenological perspective of evil, we also need to turn to societal trauma and reconciliation, as acts of evil have a number of existential, affective, intersubjective, and political components [57]. Activating the dynamics of social spheres, where we depicted through the stories of participants in their narrative extracts, how the evil of pandemic necropolitics appears, how it feels, how it affects their lives, and what it does to those people pushed to the margins of societies and further dehumanised, is to exemplify the politics of excessive forms of evil, their consequences for the conditionality of our humanity, and how through such relational acts we discover the core of its biopolitics. In the operational acts of the aftermath of pandemic necropolitics, we can situate the dynamical categories of re-inventing new conditionalities of humanity as new utopias in manifestations of convivialising solidarities. Such capacities to experience an ability to verbalise the unspoken acts of evil as patterns to override dehumanising otherings are enacted in precisely advocating and calling for a resistance to evil through acts of solidarity and social change. We then shift from a moral to a *political* argument of evil, its transmission, and eradication.

While it is undeniable that social exclusions, biopolitics, and necropolitics will continue to be widespread, new political practices through protest movements are emerging via the multiple constructedness of stories and ideologies of visible marginalisations. This is a juncture that has been perceived as conceptually rich for post-foundational thought as a 'way in which the breakdowns, dislocations, and (progressive) social change in which people across the globe are engaging today can explicitly formulate critiques of present power imbalances and inequality' [58] (p.273). This paper also endeavours to offer a conceptual direction that builds on Vogler's [59] (p.15) efforts in making theoretical advancements in relation to political protest and emotions and their potential value in the formulations of 'a three-pronged approach that focuses on intensities, clusters of feeling-thinking processes, and the patterned, yet diverse, subjective deliberations within and on protest'. This contribution has highlighted how the deepening of radical entanglements between evil and politics is one mirroring the 'thinking-feeling' processes of intensity-reflexivity in how we need to extend conversations on constructing radical participatory democracies as convivial solidarities erasing contemporary evil.

Finally, reflecting on these processes, we also inevitably might contemplate the relationship between theory/academic work and political movements. This relationship is frequently suffused by an anxiety of purpose and impact over whose publics our works reach and, if they are 'activist' enough to count as to be relatable to political movements in making sense, not necessarily as 'manifestos'. Jeremy Gilbert [60] (p.234) responds to this conundrum by accepting that these processes by which the circulation of ideas occurs are much more complex, while the role of politically informed academic work is not usually to inspire activists but to influence and change the academic milieu in generating analyses for general and movement use. The actions of the ruling classes in capitalist governments and the problematic discursive rhetorics (ala: 'we are all in this together'!) they espoused to hide their responsibilities by portraying the pandemic necropolitics as an exogenous force disconnected from the politics and structural conditions through which modern capitalist states are governed. Such structural pathologies have currently exposed multiple governing flaws of global capitalism. The reproduction of an intensification of inequalities through failures in policy responses has exacerbated the suffering of the most vulnerable through socio-economic and health impacts. While pandemic necropolitics have revealed

the materialities of inequalities through geographies of division embedded in the structural relations of re/production between the Global North and the Global South [61], it is the dynamics underpinning the exacerbation of vulnerabilities, social suffering, and the intensification of inequalities that render theorising such as *evil political formations* discursively dialogic to post-foundational social analyses.

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Notes

[1] Postfoundationalism is a theory of epistemology denoting a rejection of an assumed or given authority for a specific action or belief, but arguing, in dialectical fashion, for a rationale for action or belief.

[2] For a more detailed discussion, please refer to [5].

[3] Refer to [40] (p. 14).

[4] Ibid.

[5] 'Stories of collective resistance in the context of hardship and crisis: An anonymous collective contribution from India during the pandemic crisis': Published with the same title in the *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work* | 2021 | No. 2. Available online: www.dulwichcentre.com.au (accessed on 30 August 2024).

[6] Refer to [39]. (p. 68).

[7] Homelessness in Times of Covid: 'We Are Faces and Stories, But We Are Invisible' #Brazils Part 1—South, 8 March 2021: Available online: https://rioonwatch.org/?p=63746 (accessed on 30 August 2024).

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