The Authoritarian Personality: Contemporary Appraisals and Implications for the Crisis of Expertise

> (Authoritarian Personalities) seem to combine the worst elements of each kind of personality, being power-hungry, unsupportive of equality, manipulative, and amoral, as social dominators are in general, while also being religiously ethnocentric and dogmatic, as right-wing authoritarians tend to be. The author suggested that, although they are small in number, such persons can have considerable impact on society because they are well-positioned to become the leaders of prejudiced right-wing political movements.

> Highly dominating, highly authoritarian personalities - PubMed (nih.gov)

> "... Researchers found some common traits between left-wing and right-wing authoritarians, including a "preference for social uniformity, prejudice towards different others, willingness to wield group authority to coerce behavior, cognitive rigidity, aggression and punitiveness towards perceived enemies, outsized concern for hierarchy, and moral absolutism."

> How Experts Overlooked Left-Wing Authoritarianism - The Atlantic

In *The Authoritarian Personality*, one of the most influential and widely debated works in the history of social science, Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswick, Daniel J. Levinson, and R. Nevitt Sanford (Adorno, et al. 1950) proposed a psychodynamic theory of prejudice and ideology that was intended to explain why economic frustration brought on by World War I and the Great Depression contributed to the mass popularity of fascist movements in Europe from the 1920s to the 1940s. The gist of their argument was that "status anxiety produces authoritarian discipline which produces repression of faults and shortcomings and of aggression against authority," which is then "projected onto minorities and outsiders" (Brown 1965, p. 504).

One of the central insights of this theoretical perspective, which has received a great deal of empirical support, is that "a man who is hostile toward one minority group is very likely to be hostile against a wide variety of others" (Adorno, et al. 1950, p. 9). In other words, the authoritarian is an individual for whom generalized prejudice has become a structured aspect of his or her personality. In this seminal work addressing the individual and social origins of authoritarianism as a personality characteristic, the legendary social theorist T.W. Adorno teamed up with three research psychologists at the University of California, Berkeley. They constructed a new questionnaire to measure pre-fascist tendencies (the F-Scale) as well as instruments to measure ethnocentrism or anti-Semitism (the E-scale) and political-economic conservatism (the P.E.C. scale).

The Angst of Mid-21st Century Life

Are we facing a different kind of angst today than we were during the 1950s and 1960s? This is an important question to ask because Angst causes people to retreat to their corners. As members of the psychoanalytic community have often suggested, high levels of angst must be contained—or it will expand and spill out to infect other parts of our life and the lives of other people with whom we interact. When we are considering individualized anxiety, then the container is often to be found in

personal defenses (such as regression or denial) or, preferably, the office of a psychotherapist. When angst as a shared source of anxiety is widely found, then the container often resides in their respective right-wing conservative or left-wing liberal groups. A collective "corner" is provided by their group where one can hide from the onslaught of angst. It seems that angst is not only created in a collective manner but is also contained by collective action.

What does all of this mean? It seems that a challenge we face in our current national and world environment is that angst (and associated stress) causes people to move to extremes based on their social contexts and psychological makeup. Family members, neighbors and co-workers migrate to their "in-groups" or tribes that share similar personalities and thinking and begin to distrust "out-groups" in the opposite corners. Different thinking styles make it difficult for these groups to engage in constructive conversations in order to live or work together.

As time goes by, these groups become increasingly insular and their beliefs and thinking become narrower. As we have described before, research described by neurobiologist Robert Sapolsky (2017) suggests authoritarian personalities tend to be uncomfortable with ambiguity while liberal thinkers "think harder"! Sapolsky quotes political scientist Philip Tetlock's research suggesting that "leftists" have a greater capacity for "integrative complexity".

This implies that when faced with complex and challenging social conditions such as Covid 19, high inflation and financial angst or international conflicts, conservative authoritarian thinkers are more likely to believe conspiracy theorists like Alex Jones (who has been found guilty of propagating lies and disinformation for financial gain) than more liberal leaders or experts such as Dr. Anthony Fauci or liberal leaders who serve as members of the Biden Administration. Often this absolute rejection of liberal supported information is to the detriment (health and financial) of conservative thinkers.

Do we also find a form of conspiracy arising among liberal thinkers and leaders? Is there also a fear among those on the left that the right wing is bent on the destruction of democracy —and ultimately the destruction of American life as we know it (or the life of other countries that are fighting the forces of authoritarianism). While it is often hard to admit that fault resides on both ends of the political spectrum, it is important to recognize that political polarization is highly infectious. It is hard not to become rigid about another person's rigidity or to be intolerant of another person's (or group's) intolerance. There is a wonderfully ironic statement to be offered in this regard: "there are only two kinds of people in this world: those who think there are two kinds of people and those who don't!!"

A VUCA Plus Environment

We propose that collective Angst is not just some ephemeral and diffuse fear that comes automatically with living (though this might also be the case). Rather Angst in mid-21st Century life is linked specifically to six conditions that we have labeled VUCA-Plus. These six conditions not only create Angst, they also make the amelioration of the conditions of Angst that much more difficult—and as a result tend to pull us toward simplistic, reality-denying and polarizing solutions. There is an important ramification here for

those who seek to lead 21st Century organizations and social systems. These leaders often must deal with the major VUCA-Plus-related challenges that escalate the collective Angst.

The Angst can be induced in many ways—there are multiple sources of societal anxiety. We often seem to be stranded on a boat that is caught up in the "perfect storm" of societal Angst. We are proposing that the multiple sources of Angst and the forces that produce the perfect storm can be summarized as VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity). The challenges in a VUCA environment involve both determining what is "real" and how one predicts and makes decisions based on an assessment of this elusive reality. We propose that leadership and decision-making in our 21st Century societies has become even more challenging given the big VUCA waves that are hitting us right now—ranging from COVID to Political Instability, and from Internet-mediated misinformation to foreign invasions.

We will dwell briefly on the meaning to be assigned to each of the VUCA terms and then suggest how we might expand on VUCA. Complexity (C) concerns the many elements and dynamic interaction among elements that have to be considered, while Volatility (V) refers to the rate and shifting rate of change among the elements. The other two terms have to do with epistemology (the way in which knowledge is acquired and reality is defined). Ambiguity (A) concerns the assessment of both the evidence available regarding reality and the meaning assigned to this reality. The fourth term, Uncertainty (U), is about the stability of any assessment being made regarding reality. Does reality change over a short period of time? Why do an extensive assessment if our world is constantly shifting?

VUCA is deservedly becoming the coin-of-the-realm among contemporary organizational analysts and is certainly relevant in a world of pandemic invasions. These four terms (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) clearly capture much of the dynamics swirling around in the perfect storm of COVID-19. We offered a similar description of our current environment. However, our categories expand upon VUCA. We and contradiction. Two of these challenges align directly with VUCA, while the other two add (turbulence and contradiction in describing the VUCA environment.

In seeking to make sense of Turbulence, we turned to a metaphor offered by Peter Vaill (2008), who suggests that we are living in a "white water" world. We suggest that this whitewater world represents a turbulent system Furthermore, we propose that this whitewater system incorporates four subsystems that are exemplified by the properties of a turbulent stream: (1) rapid change (flowing segment of the stream), (2) cyclical change (the stream's whirlpools), (3) stability/non-change (the "stagnant" segment of the stream), and (4) chaos (the segment of a stream existing between the other three segments). All four of these subsystems are operating in our current time.

What about Contradiction? In other essays regarding the crisis of expertise we have both identified the frequent presence of contradictory constructions and interpretations of reality. We suggest that these contradictions are even more prevalent now, with the heightened Angst associated with the other five conditions of VUCA-Plus. We must make decisions that take into account contradictory and polarizing values regarding thoughtful consideration of contemporary societal crises; furthermore, these decisions are subject to frequent review and modification as we try to navigate the perfect storm and prepare for

present and future waves. Obviously, Turbulence and Contradiction are strongly influenced by and tightly interweave with all four of the VUCA challenges.

Given this preliminary description of VUCA-Plus we will briefly delve into the implications of each condition with regard to the pull toward authoritarianism (both right and left wing).

Volatility

We are living in a world where there is rapid change in an unpredictable manner. Furthermore, from a systemic perspective, volatility involves multiple changes that are often interwoven with one another. The rapid changes, cyclical changes and chaotic changes of a white-water world are clearly evident. The personal impact of volatility on our sense of continuity and stability is profound.

We are often surprised and unprepared. Consequently, we look to some form of continuity and stability in our world—a safe rock on which we can land after falling into a turbulent stream. This rock might be something as innocuous as a local community organization or social club. It can also be found in a religious institution —or in a political institution. Today, we often find that the rock is found via social media on some website. And this website can offer misinformation and radical distortions of reality. It can also promote violence and allegiance to a particularly political cause or political leader. Authoritarian perspectives cure the ailment of volatility—but at quite a cost.

Uncertainty

While we may seek to find a stable and predictable environment in our mid-21st Century life, we are liking instead to find a lack of continuity and resulting lack of clarity regarding what is going to happen from day to day in our life. There is an important systemic impact: it is hard to plan for the future or even for one or two days from now. Nothing seems to be permanently in place. We are forced to engage in contingency planning rather than planning in either a tactical or strategic manner. At a personal level, we must keep schedule and expectations quite flexible.

If we are not prepared for this high level of uncertainty, then rather than becoming flexible, we are likely to become rigid. We find one specific way to be in the world and look for other people who think and act in a similar manner. Together, we push for laws that enforce this one way of being in the world and seek to elect those leaders who are just as committed to this one way of thinking and acting. If we can't elect them in a legitimately recognized manner, then we are likely to join with others in manipulating the existing system or simply imposed our own choices by force. Our rigidity leads to authoritarianism—as a cure for the seeming malady of uncertainty.

Complexity

We live in a world that is not just complicated (with many moving parts) but also complex (with many parts that are interconnected). We must take into consideration many different things and events that simultaneously impact our life and work. The systemic impact of this complexity is great. It is very hard in mid-21st Century life to make sense of or even find meaning in that which is occurring every day. At a personal level this means that we often must spend considerable amount of time trying to figure out what is happening before making

decisions or taking actions. Slow thoughtful analysis is required (rather than fast "knee-jerk" and habitual thinking) This requires discipline and sustained concentration—which is hard to maintain in our fast-moving world.

There is an alternative. We can choose to reframe our world so that it is not complex. We can ensure that fast, habitual thinking wins the day. This requires that we radically distort the reality of our mid-21st Century life. To do this distorting of reality, we must join with others who distort their world in a similar manner. We can engage in even greater distortions when relating to these other people who perceive reality in a manner that is aligned with our own perceptions. We are in an echo chamber with think-alikes. We devote energy (and money) to ensuring that those who lead and have power are also thinking like us. They might even have helped to "teach" us how to think in this simplistic and fast manner. We are fully devoted to these people who are now in authority—or are vigorously (and often violently) seeking to be in authority.

Ambiguity

Living in the mid-21st Century we are likely to find that many of the things we encounter and events that are happening can be quite confusing. Our world is often not very easy to observe clearly and the conclusions we reach about reality are often not consistent. Our collective blurry vision has an important systemic impact. As a society we can't trust the accuracy of that which we see or hear. Furthermore, we can't trust what "experts" tell us about the world in which we are living. If we are being honest with ourselves then we are forced to adopt a social constructivist view of the world. There is no fundamental reality that can somehow be accurately assessed. Rather there are alternative constructions of the "real" world—which leave us with no clear, unambiguous sense of what is real and what is false. The traditional objectivist perspective must be abandoned. There is no objective way in which to assess the real world.

What does this mean for us personally. It means that we often must look and listen a second or third time to ensure that what is seen or heard is accurate. And we must examine our own assumptions and our own constructive frame of reference to fully understand the way in which we are viewing the world—with all of the distorted lens and shades that are blocking our vision. At a collective level, Plato's Cave is fully in operation. We are viewing the shadows cast on the wall rather than the actual objects that are casting these shadows. Furthermore, we are often not even seeing the shadows. Rather, we are listening to someone who is interpreting the nature and meaning of the shadows for us.

How do we deal with this very troubling ambiguity and the implications of a social constructive perspective? There is a strong inclination for us to return to an objectivist perspective. We can do so by subscribing to the reality offered by one particular "expert" who arrives at our doorstep with a mantle of authority. This authority can come from academic or research-based pedigrees or from a position of power. Unfortunately, academic and research-based credibility can readily be questioned given the inherent instability of academia and research in the mid-21st Century. It gets even worse when this instability is accompanied by acknowledgement of social construction as an underlying framework for assessing the value of expertise that is offered. Better to turn to the second source—that is much more stable and reassuring. It is authority embedded in power that will often win the day when the world is saturated with ambiguity.

Turbulence

The white water is all around us at this point in the 21st Century. Some things in our life and work are moving rapidly, while other things are moving in a cyclical manner. We are also likely to find that some things are not moving at all—even if we would like them to move. Perhaps, most importantly, some things in our life and work are moving in a chaotic manner—they are swirling about in an absolutely unpredictable manner. We might be able to adjust temporary to one of these four conditions, but soon find that we are facing a different set of conditions that require a quite different manner of planning and leadership.

What is the systemic Impact? Four subsystems are all operating at the same time—and they are often bumping into one another. There is another important factor that we must add to this complex equation. We know that any system will grow chaotic when it moves faster. Thus, in a world where accelerating change (the first subsystem) is becoming more prevalent, then we are likely to find that chaos (the fourth subsystem) will also become more prevalent. The cyclical changes—that are more predictable—will become less prevalent.

Stagnation (the third subsystem) will also tend to decline in magnitude—or it will become more isolated from the other subsystem. While reduction in the size of this third subsystem might initially seem to be a positive outcome, we find that this is not the case, for the third subsystem is often a source of stability for any system (especially a human system). What Talcott Parsons called "latent pattern maintenance" tends to reside in the third subsystem. Furthermore, we know that the nutrients in a natural system (such as a mountain stream) reside primarily in the so-called "stagnant" portion of the stream. This is where leaves eventually end up and where they sink to rot (convert into new forms of nutrition for other living beings in this stream). We might find that this same nutritional function is being served in human systems. But simply, this third subsystem is just as important as the other three. Overly rapid change damages everything in a system and makes this system hard to manage.

Given these characteristics of a "white water" world, we find that the personal impact is likely to be great for any of us who are living and working this environment. The white-water environment requires a search for balance and direction which in turn requires ongoing attention. Apparently, we need a kayak when navigating the white water. A canoe will just tip over, for it doesn't' have the flexibility of a kayak. Furthermore, we must find our center of gravity when steering our kayak through the white water. Peter Vaill (2008) goes so far as to suggest that this center of gravity is often found in our embracing of a core set of principles and values—even operating from a spiritual perspective on life and work.

One might wonder if this core can't be found in basic religious beliefs and in an alliance with some authoritarian figure. Don't we find balance when we find guidance in a set of firm religious tenants? We would suggest that this rarely the case, for these beliefs, alliances and tenants are much to rigid. They operate like canoes that can only move in one direction (forward). Furthermore, the person operating the canoe has a one-bladed paddle that must be moved from one side of the canoe to the other side. Counterbalancing and adjusting to changes in the water's direction is difficult—as is also the case in a white-water organization or society. By contrast, the person navigating the kayak is provided with a two-bladed paddle that makes counterbalancing and shifting directions much easier. The term agility can readily be applied to the successful operations of a kayak—and to the successful leadership of a mid-21st Century organization. This term does not readily apply to someone or some organization that is caught up in the vice-grips of authoritarian rule.

Contradiction

We come now to the final conditions of our VUCA-Plus environment. This is the condition that is most likely to drive people to an authoritarian regime. We are confronted with messages that are being delivered all the time that are valid (the condition of ambiguity). We often wish that they would remain vague, for when they are clear, these messages often point in quite different directions. At a trivial level, we are inundated with advertisement that conflict with one another. Which, after all, is the best way to brighten our smile. Do we need one of those fancy whitening trays prepared by our dentist or will one of those much less expensive whitening toothpastes sufficient. And what about mouth odor, wrinkles and digestive challenges? At a more profound level, we find the radical contradictions offered by political candidates. The men and women running for office often seem to be living on two different worlds. Their differences are not easily resolved. There often does not seem to be a meeting ground. The moderate candidate and those advocating compromise seem to be out-of-date with current polarized political realities

There is major systemic impact when contradiction is saturating our 21st Century life. Credible advice is being offered by people and institutions that can be trusted—but the advice is often inconsistent. As a result, we can't trust any expertise, since the "experts" don't seem to agree on anything. There are alternative interpretations of the shadows cast on the wall of our Platonic Cave. In some cases, the experts even seem to be looking at and telling us about quite different shadows on the wall. We even wonder if we are in the same cave as some of the experts.

As a personal level, contradiction can have a challenging impact. To remain "sane" we often must change our mind about certain issues or at least be open to new perspectives and ideas. It is not hard to try out a new whitening procedure—it is a whole other matter to change our political affiliations or our attitude about something as important as domestic violence or climate change. When we are being cognitively "lazy" and are falling back on habitual, fast thinking, then the contradictions will disappear. We listen to one expert and one point of view.

Life becomes much easier. Don't change the news channel or pick up a newspaper or social media posting that offers an alternative interpretation of the daily news—or even a more balanced perspective. After a hard and demanding day of work and some time playing with our kids, the last thing we need is a thoughtful analysis offered from quite different political perspectives. Enough already! Authoritarianism makes it much easier to relax and retire from the daily challenges of life and work. No more contradictions. It is all clean and simple.

Authoritarian Trait or Authoritarian State: Which is It?

At this point it is important (and timely) to pose a critical question: is authoritarianism a trait or a state? The distinction between trait and state is central to any thoughtful analysis of human behavior. A trait (often called a personality characteristic or character) is considered to be relatively permanent. Like traditional notions about intelligence (IQ), a personality trait is assumed to be something with which we are born or something that we acquire in early life (usually as a result of the way we are treated by our parents). It is hard to change personality traits. Tragically, most of the attempts to change personality traits have involved some grotesque bodily intrusion (such as lobotomy or massive injections of certain tranquilizing drugs).

By contrast, a personality state is assumed to be temporary in nature and a result of some external environmental condition that produces (or at least strongly encourages) a specific behavior. For instance, there is something that is often called an anxiety trait. This is found among people who are constantly in a state of agitation and diffuse fear. By contrast, there is an anxiety state. This is a condition that we have all experienced. We encounter something that arouses significant fear in us – such as preparation in college for an important test or meeting our potential in-laws. While trait anxiety often requires some medication or at least stress-reduction practices, there is usually no need for the treatment of state anxiety unless it frequently occurs. If there is to be a state anxiety treatment, then it will usually focus on alteration of the environment in which the anxious person is living or working.

A similar distinction can be drawn between depression as a trait and depression as a state. Once again, depression can be a major medical condition that must be treated through the use of specific medical procedures. Conversely, we have all experienced the "blues" when something has occurred in our life that makes us sad. Grieving is an important (and healthy) source of human adaptation to the vicissitudes of life. There are many other important distinctions to be made between trait and state – including the trait and state of violence, the trait and state of altruism – and even the trait and state of consistency (are we consistent about being consistent?)

Is Authoritarianism a Trait or State?

While over the past seven decades most of the research and conversations about authoritarianism have treated it as an enduring personality trait, it might well be the case that an authoritarian perspective is engaged when one is consistently subjected to an anxiety-provoking set of challenges. We might find that people are inclined to align with an authoritarian source of power and control as a result of the swirling mess of a world in which they are living. They might become rigid and closed-minded because what they see out in the world is bewildering and not easily understood. In other word. Is authoritarianism so pervasive today because we are in a state of VUCA-Plus? Given the analyses we have just offered regarding each of the six VUCA-Plus environmental characteristics, is it any wonder that some people chose to hide out and dwell in a world that is simple, consistent, clear and supported by authoritarian power and control?

While there is not a simple answer to this important question – how could there be simplicity in a VUCA-Plus world—there might be a complex answer that interweaves trait and state. We might find that some people are particularly vulnerable to acceptance of an authoritarian perspective. These proclivities might, in turn, be traced to their own childhood or even to some genetic determinants. These members of our society lead perfectly normal lives and are responsible citizens. They serve us food at our favorite restaurant, run our corporations and work in successful advertising agencies. It is only when they are confronted with specific VUCA-Plus challenges in their life that their authoritarian proclivities show up. It is when they are tired, stressed or simply overwhelmed by the daily events in their world, that there is a "regression" to this more primitive, fast-thinking mode.

Ragged Authoritarianism

In his own analysis of the way we tend to reason and make decisions, William Perry (1998) describes ragged stages of cognitive development. We tend to be mature and advanced in some areas of our thinking but remain quite infantile in other areas. I am quite enlightened and flexible when it comes to my perspectives and

practices regarding services being offered to the elderly citizens in my community but tend to be much more rigid and old fashion in my attitudes about the use of illegal drugs by teenagers.

Furthermore, these differing levels of development will tend to shift depending on the amount of anxiety associated with challenges in specific areas. I might become rather rigid when I see that the senior services are being offered primarily by a church that is founded in tenants and doctrines that I strongly oppose. I might instead become much more open-minded about teenage drug abuse when it comes to the arrest of a decent young man whom I have known for many years.

This more nuanced analysis offered by Perry suggests that authoritarian trait and state dance with one another in an intricate manner. We are never just authoritarian or just equalitarian. Rather, at any one point in time, we might be quite mixed in our level of cognitive development regarding specific issues. Of greatest importance might be our attitudes regarding those citizens who tend to reside at the other end of the political spectrum. We can be downright nasty and rigid in our analysis of their "unyielding" perspectives and their inhumane practices. In other words, we can be just as unyielding and just as inhumane in our views regarding and treatment of those with whom we disagree. In Perry's world of ragged development, authoritarian perspectives and practices can be quite infectious. We all catch this malignant virus on occasion.

The Real Problem are those Right-Wing Conservatives: Right? Wrong!

In addition to the perplexing issue regarding authoritarian traits or authoritarian states, there is the lingering question of the political orientation that is prevalent among those who embrace an authoritarian perspective and stance – regardless of whether it is trait-based or state-based. Is there a bias in the nature of biases that are being analyzed? Are liberal and progressive social observers being closed-minded and rigid regarding their own belief that authoritarianism to be found primarily in the conservative right-wing? Should these left-wing critics living in their own glass houses quit throwing stones at those who hold quite different beliefs and advocate quite different policies and actions. Can neither the left-wing or right-wing live with the volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity, turbulence—and particularly the contradictions—that reside in our 21st Century world?

The great preponderance of research and political focus to date has been on the notion of Right Wing Authoritarianism and the attitudes and behaviors that manifest from these individuals and groups. But what about similar behaviors from other groups, particularly the willingness for violence to support their social and political views? Indeed, as psychiatrist Sally Satel (2021) notes, "people purporting to be antiracist or antifascist protesters have set fires and committed other acts of violence since the summer of 2020.

These acts stop short of, say, the 1970s bombing campaign by the far-left Weather Underground, but surely call the prevailing wisdom (that authoritarian personalities are all conservatives) into doubt. (Supporters of revolutionary regimes overseas have demonstrated even more clearly that some people on the left try to get their way through intimidation and force)". Clearly, the psychological predisposition to be resentful against out-groups and "get my way" through violence is not simply a right-wing conservative phenomenon.

Satel, (2021) offers an insightful look into the one-sided history of research into Right Wing Authoritarian personality. She notes:

> An ambitious new study on the subject by the Emory University researcher Thomas H. Costello and five colleagues should settle the question. It proposes a rigorous new measure of antidemocratic attitudes on the left. And, by drawing on a survey of 7,258 adults, **Costello's team firmly establishes that such attitudes exist on both sides of the American electorate**. the researchers found some common traits between left-wing and right-wing authoritarians, including a "preference for social uniformity, prejudice towards different others, willingness to wield group authority to coerce behavior, cognitive rigidity, aggression and punitiveness towards perceived enemies, outsized concern for hierarchy, and moral absolutism".

Costello's research suggests that right wing and left-wing authoritarianism share many similar traits, but that LWA simply has been largely ignored by researchers. One of the reasons for this is the reality that most academic researchers tend to be liberal, thus making right wing an out-group phenomenon – psychologist and researchers fall blindly into the in-group/out-group trap and unknowingly point to others as being the problem.

While this appears compelling, Costello does identify some significant differences between Right Wing and Left-Wing beliefs and thinking:

> Relative to right-wing authoritarians, left-wing authoritarians were lower in dogmatism and cognitive rigidity, higher in negative emotionality, and expressed stronger support for a political system with substantial centralized state control. Our results also indicate that LWA powerfully predicts behavioral aggression and is strongly correlated with participation in political violence.

In summary, a tendency towards authoritarianism places individuals and groups at risk because they are more likely to avoid critical thinking, believe conspiracy theories and misinformation that supports their in-group beliefs and disbelieve objective experts and leaders attempting to inform and protect the public.

Follow-up I: Authors of the California Study

What happened to authors of *The Authoritarian Personality?* Each of them continued their contributions to the field—and each confronted troubling experiences that all too often (and tragically) aligned with and provided real-life evidence of destructive outcomes associated with the phenomenon they were studying.

Theodore Adorno

It is often not acknowledged that he was not really the major figure in preparation of this book. He is only the one with name starting with "A" and was best known at the time. A famous and controversial member of the Frankfort school which blended Freudian and Marxist thought. He definitely was not a "neutral" observer. He returned to Europe soon after this book was completed and continued to be a major contributor to the field that is often identified as "social-critical theory." For many of those aligned with this field, Adorno is much better known for his writing in areas other than the study of authoritarian personalities.

Nevitt Sanford

He was the major figure in preparation of *The Authoritarian Personality*. He later made major contributions to the field of higher education—especially student development. Caught up in and played a major role in the loyalty oath conflicts at the University of California. While more than 200 faculty members at this university originally refused to sign this oath that was mandated by a repressive (and communist-phobic) government, virtually all of them eventually gave in and signed the oath.

Nevitt was only one of 11 professors who refused to sign the oath. He was fired along with his 10 colleagues. Nevitt eventually ended up at Stanford University. Following a successful lawsuit filed during the late 1950s, Nevitt Sanford's appointment at the University of California was reinstated. Nevitt Sanford resigned from the University of California after only one day back at this university. He later started the Wright Institute—which initially featured social-critical analysis as well as training in psychodynamic-oriented psychotherapy. It seems that the authoritarian personality was to become not just a phenomenon to be studied at a distance. It became a political reality that impacted directly on Nevitt Sanford's life.

Daniel Levinson

The youngest member of the California Study Group, Daniel Levinson became known later for his work on adult development in mid-life. He was a major figure in this field. It seems that his interest in the sources of authoritarian perspectives and practices expanded out to an interest in the ways all adults are molded and changed by the world in which they were not only brought up but also continued to encounter during their mature years.

Else Frenkel-Brunswick

This remarkable woman was not only a pioneer in the rise of women as research psychologists (and psychoanalysts), she was also witness to many social forces that influenced her interest in the authoritarian personality. She left Europe to escape the holocaust (as a Jew). Later she was caught up like Sanford in the loyalty oaths of the University of California. Along with her husband, the noted young psychologist, Egon Brunswick, Else struggled with the pressure of conformity to the political dictates associated with the oath.

In addition, she was faced with the challenge of caring for her husband during a long period of illness. Egon Brunswick eventually committed suicide. Despondent regarding his death, Else Frenkel-Brunswick soon committed suicide herself. One of us [WB] conducted an extensive interview with Nevitt Sanford about the loyalty oaths. He contended that the suicide of both Egon and Eliza could be attributed in large part to stress associated with the loyalty oaths. As was the case with Nevitt Sanford, the authoritarian personality came after Else Frenkel-Brunswick when she lived in Europe –and now when she moved to the United States. Authoritarianism destroyed her life.

Follow-Up II: Further Studies

Roger Brown contributed to the follow-up studies after the California studies were published. As one of the most respected and influential social psychologists in the United States, he also received the attention of others in the field when he offered a judgement during the 1960s. Brown summarizes and evaluates over a decade of criticism directed at the California Study Group findings. He concludes in

1965 that, despite methodological flaws with the original research program, the central thesis of The Authoritarian Personality—that (for psychological reasons) a constellation of rigid, intolerant, authoritarian, and ethnocentric attitudes tend to co-occur—is not only plausible, but also likely correct.

International Perspective

While much of the work on authoritarianism was produced during the first decade following publication of the California Study findings, the studies have continued to be published – and increasingly have been conducted outside the United States. Typically, the attention in essays emanating from outside the United States focus on differences in the American culture and the culture in which the author lives or in the cultures they are studying (e.g. Chin-Lung Chien June, 2016, Beyond Authoritarian Personality: The Culture-Inclusive Theory of Chinese Authoritarian Orientation; Jaime Napier and John T Jost Aug 2008, Journal of Social Issues The "Antidemocratic Personality" Revisited: A Cross-National Investigation of Working-Class Authoritarianism; Sergej Flere and Rudi Klanjšek Apr 2009, Cross-Cultural Insight into the Association Between Religiousness and Authoritarianism).

Other studies from outside the United States applied the concept of authoritarian personality to specific events or political trends that have taken place in their own country (e.g. John T Jost and Anna Kende Nov 2019, Setting the record straight: System justification and rigidity-of-the-right in contemporary Hungarian politics; Pavlos Vasilopoulos Jul 2022, Authoritarianism, Political Attitudes, and Vote Choice: A Longitudinal Analysis of the British Electorate; Pavlos Vasilopoulos and Romain Lachat, Authoritarianism and Political Choice in France; Julian Aichholzer and Martina Zandonella Jul 2016, Personality and Individual Differences, Psychological bases of support for radical right parties.)

Political Perspective and Methodology

We also find essays being published throughout the world that are critical of the left-leaning perspective taken by the original authors (e.g. Jarret Thomas Crawford, THE (NOT SO) ELUSIVE LIBERAL BIAS IN SOCIAL COGNITION). Other authors are critical of the psychoanalytic perspective taken by Adorno and his associates (Jos D. Meloen, Gert Van der Linden and Hans De Witte Dec 1996, A Test of the Approaches of Adorno et al., Lederer and Altemeyer of Authoritarianism in Belgian Flanders: A Research Note).

The primary focus in most of the essays was directed to the faulty methodology to be found in the original authoritarian personality studies—with alternative methods often being proposed (and used) (e.g. Altemeyer, 1981). Alterations in the original authoritarian personality construct have also been offered or a second personality trait such as social dominance (Pratto, e. al, 1994) has been proposed. It should be noted in most cases that there is still the underlying assumption that authoritarianism is a trait (probably established in childhood) rather than a state (elicited in a specific situation and setting)—an exception being the study conducted by Kreindler (2005) on the relationship between authoritarian and group cohesion.

What then remains to be honored from the original Adorno studies? In one of the most comprehensive reviews of the authoritarian personality research, John Duckitt (2015, p. 256) (from the University of Auckland in New Zealand) concluded that there are two basic tenets from the original study that have held up and are generally considered valid: "These were the assumptions that social attitudes and beliefs were meaningfully organized along a single broad ideological dimension and that these attitudes were direct expressions of personality".

Implications Regarding the Crisis of Expertise

For a moment let's consider what the conclusions reached by Duckitt means regarding the crisis of expertise. First, there appears to be a tendency among some people to form a single unified perspective regarding the society in which they live. Furthermore, as the name "authoritarian" implies, this unified perspective is often aligned with (and even formed by) someone or some organization that claims authority in this society. This means that those with an Authoritarian personality are likely to look only to those experts who are in powerful positions (authority) or proclaim their affiliation with some greater power (such as a divine entity). Duckitt conclusion also includes the assumption that this authoritarian perspective is deeply engrained in the "personality" (trait) of this person—meaning that this perspective is not easily changed and experts from outside this authoritarian's "silo of authority" are never going to be listened to or welcomed in.

As we look beyond Duckitt's conclusions, we find that many of the studies of the authoritarian personality link this trait specifically to Ethnocentrism. An authoritarian is likely to be looking only to those experts "who are one of us" There is not much room for diversity in the authoritarian's silo. Experts from "outside" cultures, who are of the "wrong" color or sexual orientation need not apply. There is also very little tolerance for experts who present a nonstandard ability/disability profile or admit to (let alone advocate) a "deviant" religious belief. Once again, as part of an enduring trait, this biased perspective regarding people who are "different" is likely to dramatically restrict the range of expert-based information that the authoritarian will receive and accept.

There is more to add here. Misanthropy is typically associated with the authoritarian personality trait. Those who are "different' from the authoritarian will be not only ignored. They will also be despised—and even hated. Consequently, the authoritarian will be looking only to those experts who speak negatively of most (if not all) human beings who differ in virtually any way from themselves. It is particularly important to note that those who embrace a misanthropic mistrust or hatred of most people tend to focus on the inanimate rather than the animate (living beings). They love machines and ignore children. They take care of the car but not their parents. When choosing an expert, the misanthrope (and the authoritarian) is likely to choose someone who bangs into other people (an aggressive athlete) or knows their way around weapons and warfare.

There is also the matter of rigidity—another of enduring characteristics often associated with the authoritarian personality. Those people who exhibit this trait are likely to stick with the same expert regardless of their lack of knowledge about a specific area of concern for the authoritarian. A desire for continuity will be given highest priority when selecting and listening to someone purporting to be an "expert." A lack of appropriate expertise is assigned very little value. Dogmatism is closely related to authoritarian rigidity. This means, once again, that the authoritarian is likely to look only to those experts who share a set of core beliefs. With this rigidity and dogmatism comes a cycle of positive feedback regarding beliefs. The authoritarian looks for an expert with shared beliefs and the expert will, in turn, provide information that confirms the belief, thus further fortifying this belief. With the belief even more fully entrenched, the authoritarian will become even more rigidly committed to this expert. More begets more.

Finally, there is the much deeper issue regarding Anomie and Alienation. These forces and outcomes of social and political inequity should not be considered just a left-wing (and perhaps even socialist or communist) bias. It is not the elite who receive the attention (and empathic understanding) of the

authoritarian researchers. Attention is direct to those members of a society who are ignored or mistreated. These are the people who are feeling helpless and isolated from society. They will look for any expertise that either welcomes them to a "new society" or advocates violence against the old "alienating" society.

It is those social observers from the left-wing, ironically, who best appreciate the predicament and psychological damage done to those on the right-wing who most despise these left-wing critics. Caring attention by the left-wing is viewed as patronizing attention by the right-wing. Another vicious cycle is engaged. The left wing appreciates the anger aroused by the right wing regarding this appreciation by the left wing. Expertise regarding authoritarianism is viewed as being of greatest dishonor to those who exhibit authoritarian tendencies. The lines are drawn. The warfare of words intensifies. Silo walls are reinforced and thickened. No one from outside the silo is allowed in – especially if this person purports to be an expert on authoritarianism—and silos.

Theoretical Additions

The original study by Adorno et al. was deeply influenced and informed by both Psychoanalytic Theory and Marxist theory –which were brought together by a group of analysts who formed the Frankfort School. Theodore Adorno was one of these founders. Major contributions to our understanding of the authoritarian personality have also been made by those who did not blend psychanalysis and Marist theory. We turn briefly to a consideration of both neo-Analytic and neo-Marxist perspectives on authoritarianism. Our attention then is directed to perspectives aligned with Humanistic psychology and social psychology. We conclude this section by considering authoritarianism from a unique perspective offered by the newly expanding field of neuropsychology.

Psychoanalytic Perspective: Carl Jung and Tavistock

While the Adorno group was comprised of researchers and theorists with a strong psychoanalytic viewpoint (especially Nevitt Sanford), there are others from a psychoanalytic tradition who have something to say about authoritarian personalities. First, there are the Jungians, led by Carl Jung who broke away from Sigmund Freud early in the history of psychoanalysis. For the Jungians, the primary source of authoritarianism resides in the confrontation of each of us with powerful unconscious forces that are both frightening and compelling.

We can turn, for instance, to imagery of the Flood. It can be shown that images of floods are to be found in virtually every culture. There is not only Noah's flood in the Old Testament of the Bible (and the Jewish Torah), but also in Babylonian myth as well as the myths of many Asian cultures. In some ways, these myths can be justified because there really are annual floods in the societies where the myths are told. However, for the Jungians, imagery of the flood arises from a deeper intrapsychic source. They speak of the Ouroboros—which is a pull toward unity and oneness. The flood destroys everything and leaves everything in identical space. Unity requires absolute destruction. The Ouroboros is symbolized by the serpent eating its own tail.

In Babylonia myth, the flood represents chaos and it's representative (Tiamat) is engaged in cosmic war with Marduk (the representative of order) The flood is both a source of great fear and a source of profound hope. In the real word of Babylonia, the flood was both feared and welcomed, for the yearly flooding of the Tigress and Euphrates rivers was needed to replenish the crops. Jungians relish this compelling polarity. At the deeper psychic level there is profound fear: "my god, there will be nothing

but chaos if [something] occurs." Migrants will flood across the border. Democracy will be overcome and crushed by an attack from [the right/the left wing]. "There is also profound hope and attraction: "my god, I/we need this change! We will clean out the corruption. They will all be tossed out of office and thrown in jail. Every one of them.!" The January 6, 2021 insurrection was an actual exhibition of the flood. It has been viewed positively by some people and negatively by others. Thus, we find the appeal of an authoritarian perspective in both mythic Jungian narrative and in the real events that are being enacted in our polarized world. The enemy (Tiamat) threatens chaos. This enemy is an imminent threat. This is of great concern and requires our diligent attention. In response, we must find and ally with a powerful warrior and authority figure (such as Marduk) who will restore order.

Another way in which to view authoritarian perspectives as related to internal psychological processes, comes to us from the psychanalysts operating out of the Tavistock Institute in London. Led by Melanie Klein (among many others), the Tavistock analysts write about the Splitting function that occurs in childhood, when we must grapple with the inevitably inconsistent behavior of our parenting ("mothering') figure. We handle this inconsistency as a child by splitting the mothering figure into two intra-psychic representations ("objects") There is the "good mother" and the "bad mother."

While we hopefully grow out of this bifurcated imagery of our main parenting figure as we grow older, there is still the tendency to do some intra-psychic splitting when we are under stress as adults or when we are confronting a powerful authoritative figure or institution ("resembling" our parenting figure). We split off "good authorities" and "good experts" from "bad authorities" and "evil or incompetent experts." The Babylonian wars between Marduk and Tiamat rage inside our own psyche. This is particularly the case with those who see the world through authoritarian lenses. For them, the splitting is pronounced—and the war is rigidly waged forever. The chaos to be found within the authoritarian's psyche includes many contradictions--for some "bad" people do good things and "good people do bad things.

These contradictions are addressed by further splitting, further distortion and the isolation of psychic objects from one another. These internal defensive maneuvers are amplified—and the psychic war is escalated by the profound and pervasive anxiety that is swirling through the authoritarian's head and heart. In an attempt to divest themselves of these internal sources of chaos, the authoritarian will project the competing and contradictory objects outward. With this projection in place, the authoritarian will view their world as a menacing setting in which very few people can be trusted –hence the abundance of lies and conspiracies. The internal wars are now being played out in the authoritarian's external world. The splitting is now between those who hold similar (perhaps even identical) beliefs and those who hold contradictory beliefs (often because they are "not like us.") The "object relations" psychanalysts of Tavistock do indeed have much to say about the psychological dynamics of authoritarianism.

Marxist Perspective: Frederick Jameson

Frederick Jameson brings a neo-Marxist perspective into his own reflections on authoritarianism—as he sees it in a "postmodern" world. For Jameson, authoritarianism is much more a matter of state then of trait—though he would also undoubtedly (like Adorno) find that this perspective has become infused in the heart and soul of many postmodern residents. The penetrating analysis he offers in *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991) is often considered foundational to the contemporary

perspective on postmodernism. It also is considered to be a major contribution to the formulation of a Neo-Marxist critique of Western (particularly American) society.

According to Jameson, postmodern man has acquired a portable and diffuse personal identity—leaving him quite open to authoritarian influences in contemporary societies. This vulnerability seems to be founded in particular on the "troubling ambiguities" that are to be found in all elements of the postmodern world. He illustrates the ambiguity of boundaries in contemporary society through an analysis of a variety of domains, including culture, art, architecture, video, film, novels, economics and marketing—focusing on the *inside* and *outside* of many buildings, as well as the mixing of *high culture* and *mass culture* in contemporary American society. In typical postmodern fashion, Jameson sometimes addresses himself to obscure, experimental art (high culture) and at other times to popular television programs and advertising (mass culture)—the distinction seems unimportant to him.

The Westin Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles, for instance, is used by Jameson to illustrate his conclusion that postmodern architecture produces buildings that are inconsistent with regard to boundaries. Entrances to the Bonaventure Hotel are rather unimpressive, whereas the lobby area (as in many contemporary buildings) is very impressive and spacious. When inside the hotel, one seems to be in a world unto itself (not unlike Disneyland or other popular theme parks). Yet, once within the space of the hotel, other boundaries are diffuse. One feels uneasy riding up and down in glass-enclosed elevators, not knowing whether they, the passengers, are floating in the air or solidly encased in a safe mode of transportation. The revolving, glass-enclosed cocktail lounge at the top of the building similarly leaves one with an uneasy, unclear sense about whether one is inside the building or on top of the building. A further sense of confusion and edginess is created by the absence of any clear markers regarding which of four towers one is in at any one point in time.

Jameson tends to focus on architecture and other graphic media in part because words are readily recognized, whereas visual images are more slowly assimilated.[i] We immediately recognize a song or childhood jingle, while struggling to recognize an old picture from our youth or a postcard from some place that we know we've been. Similarly, Darwin describes how the inhabitants of Easter Island struggled with the recognition of visual images. They were unable to detect the presence of the large British sailing ships in the harbor because they had never seen such large sailing vessels and had no cognitive framework for the perception of such objects. They did, however, recognize the smaller landing vessels when they were launched from the ships, for they had boats of similar size in their own culture. Jameson suggests that auditory stimuli (such as the shouting of men on the large ship or the firing of a large gun) would not be as readily ignored. Thus, in essence, visual messages can be ignored, whereas auditory messages cannot. The growing predominance of auditory messages in postmodern organizations may lead to a condition whereby information can less readily be ignored today then it could a decade ago. We are more likely to answer the phone then answer a letter.

From this Jamesian analysis (as well as many other insights that he offers), we can conclude that our mid-21st Century world is conducive to authoritarian perspectives precisely because this world is filled with the troubling ambiguity (the A in VUCA-Plus) and the interplay between words (that are memorable) and visual images (that slip through our censors). We remember and are mobilized by the words that are being shouted and repeated by the authoritarian tyrant. We are also transfixed (and transformed) by the visual images that are being displayed at rallies—and increasingly on social media. Together, the words and

images yield authoritarian perspectives and practices that are hard to resist—whether coming from the right wing or the left wing of the political spectrum.

Humanistic Perspectives: Gordon Allport

The humanistic/multi-disciplinary perspective offered initially by Henry Murray and later by Gordon Allport, Erik Erikson, Abraham Maslow and Robert White was largely ignored. Yet, the work of Gordon Allport was particularly relevant to the exploration of authoritarian and prejudicial perspectives. In The Nature of Prejudice, Allport has this to say about the authoritarian personality. Some people living in a democracy such as is found in the United States, find its complex and ambiguous conditions and the availability of personal freedom to be untenable. Allport (1954, p. 382) proposes that:

> The consequences of personal freedom they find unpredictable. Individuality makes for indefiniteness, disorderliness, and change. To avoid such slipperiness the prejudiced person looks for hierarchy in society, Power arrangements are definite-something he can understand and count on. He likes authority, and says that what America needs is "more discipline." By discipline, of course, he means outer discipline, preferring, so to speak, to see people's backbones on the outside rather than on the inside. . . .

We find in this proposal anticipation of the VUCA-Plus conditions that we identified previously. It seems that Allport foresaw the conditions in American society that would increasingly threaten (or at lease confuse) many members of this society. He focuses, in particular, on a phrase used by Else Frenkel-Brunswick: "intolerance of ambiguity." As the "A" in VUVA-Plus, this intolerance is found by Frenkel-Brunswick (and Allport) in not just the ambiguity to be found in an individualistic, democratic society, but also in the much more basic processing of ambiguous visual images and elusive ideas that are found in all societies.

Allport (1954, p. 382) notes further that:

> This need for authority reflects a deep distrust of human beings. . . . .[T]he essential philosophy of democracy . . . tells us to trust a person until he proves himself untrustworthy. The prejudiced person does the opposite. He distrusts every person until he proves himself trustworthy. . . .   To the prejudiced person the best way to control these suspicions is to have an orderly, authoritative, powerful society.

However, it is important to note that he only offers these insights after devoting considerable time to broader contextual issues—primarily regarding the ongoing processing of information and dynamics of social groups in the formation of prejudicial attitudes. While Allport is primarily regarded as a leading figure in the formulation of personality theory, he devotes most of his attention to sources of prejudice that reside outside the personality. He considers preferential thinking (attitudes and beliefs that produce prejudgment), the formation of in-groups and out-groups, and resultant victimization and scapegoating. Only after entering such diverse psychological domains as cognitive processes, linguistics, culture, and introducing the interplay between frustration and aggression does he consider the role played by an authoritarian personality.

Even in the chapter where the concept of authoritarianism is introduced, Allport first sets the stage by framing his analysis as "functional prejudice" and introducing the concept of "threat orientation" that was first introduced by Theodore Newman (1950) a noted social psychologist. As noted in the quotation

we offered above, functional prejudice (and an authoritarian perspective) is engaged when one is threatened. An anxious appraisal of outside forces, filtered through pre-judgmental lens, institutional "truths" and externalization of internal fears, produces prejudice. Allport (1954, p. 381) specifically proposes that prejudice is "not merely a bundle of negative attitudes." Rather, the prejudiced person "is trying to do something: namely to find an island of institutional safety and security."

Given this focus outside the domain of personality, we might conclude that Allport is embracing a state perspective regarding authoritarianism. However, on closer inspection, it seems that Allport is siding with those who consider authoritarianism to be a hybrid of state and trait. In his case the state of group dynamics leads some members of a group to take an authoritarian stand. These would be those members who are aligned with an external locus of control—meaning that they are likely to be particularly attuned to and are likely to comply with the perspectives and actions taken by the group.

The interaction between trait and state is also likely to take place among some members of society who are particularly intolerant of ambiguity (and the emerging VUCA-Plus conditions) that Allport identifies. Finally, we find Allport embracing the perspective offered by Erich Fromm, our psychoanalyst who often offers a humanistic view of human nature. Both Allport and Fromm propose that some people are fearful of freedom and seek to escape from freedom by aligning with an authoritarian regime that offers structure and assurance as a substitute for freedom. The "threat orientation" comes not just from specific elements and events in the authoritarian' world, but from a much less tangible (but perhaps even more powerful and pervasive) sense that the chaos of freedom is awaiting them at their front door.

There is another important feature that distinguishes Allport's analysis of authoritarian personality from that offered by many other social analysts. Allport places his analysis of authoritarian personality within a specific context—namely the prejudice that is to be found with specific regard to one group: Jews. Antisemitism was the driving force behind the initial study of the authoritarian personality. While prejudice regarding other specific racial and ethnic groups is a focus for Allport and, by extension, was a focus for the California Study Group, it is important to remember that the original focus was placed on prejudice against Jewish people. With this focus comes a source of fear and contempt that is particularly deep and historical in Western history. It involves not just social, political and cultural differences between Jews and Christians, but also a two millennial theological schism between Christians and "Christ-killing" Jews (based on a profoundly distorted recounting of the Crucifixion)

There is one additional observation made by Allport this is a unique and important contribution to the study of authoritarian personality. This observation is decidedly humanistic in nature and provides a "solution" to the counter-productive tendency of authoritarian personality studies to be saturated in political biases. For Allport, the opposite of authoritarianism is not a politically - liberal point of view. Rather, Allport borrows from two of his humanistic colleagues. He identifies the "productive" personality—making use of a term often used by Erich Fromm (1960). For both Allport and Fromm, a productive person is one who embraces rather than seeks to escape from freedom. Allport also borrows from Abraham Maslow (2014), in suggesting that the other end of the authoritarian spectrum is the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs – namely self-realization. Specifically, Allport identifies a pattern of qualities that stands in direct contrast to the authoritarian personality. These qualities: "comprise what is sometimes called a 'democratic,' a 'productive,' or a 'se1f—actualizing' personality pattern." (Allport, 1958, p. 383) He devotes an entire chapter later in *The Nature of Prejudice* to an expansion on this description of the opposing personality.

Social Psychological Perspective: Milton Rokeach

While the original study of the Authoritarian Personality was directly aligned with psychoanalysis and the Frankfurt school, most of the work following this initial study was done by researchers and theorists who were fully aligned with an empirically-steeped tradition of social psychology—and particularly the study of attitudes and belief systems. Milton Rokeach was certainly one of the leaders of this sector of social psychology. His later work--after *The Open and Closed Mind*: (Rokeach, 1960)—reflects this continuing exploration of authoritarian attitudes. It also reflects an expansion in the study of beliefs and attitudes that went well beyond the study of personality—yet added some additional insights and perspectives regarding the close-minded authoritarian personality.

Specifically, Rokeach moved beyond his focus on open and closed minds to a broader reflection on (and conducted research regarding) the nature of beliefs and attitudes. He was ultimately interested in the identification of processes associated with changes in beliefs and attitudes. Rokeach first conducted a remarkable experiment in which three mental patients were brought together who all believed that they were Jesus Christ. Rokeach (1964) described how the beliefs of these three men changed over time. If we were to shift Rokeach's attention back to the closed (authoritarian) mind, then we might bring together three people who had all devoted their lives to a specific authoritarian figure who they discover has advocated contradictory opinions regarding a critical issue.

For instance, one of our devotees would have heard the authoritarian leader indicate that he is absolutely certain that God condemns abortions and would sentence anyone to Hell who performed an abortion, had an abortion themselves or even advocated for pro-choice policies. The pronouncements of this authority about abortion are extensively documented on newsreels and in written essays and news releases.

The second devotee would have heard the same revered leader declare in no uncertain terms that abortion is fully acceptable to God. The decision to abort an unwanted fetus is assigned by God to the pregnant woman and her physician. God declares that anyone seeking to prevent a woman for having control over her own body is disobeying divine guidance and is contemned to Hell. The third "true believer" who has devoted their heart and soul to our authoritarian figure has heard this man declare that there is no God. Anyone who believes that there is a God is foolish and is to be despised—especially if they somehow associated their belief in God with some important policy regarding health and life.

What happens to these three people when they are brought together for an extended period of time. Do they eventually come to disabuse themselves of their allegiance to and belief in the integrity of the authoritarian leader's statement and beliefs? How do they now feel about this leader? Do they hate him? And what about the person/researcher who brought the three ardent believers together. Do they hate this person even more than the "dishonesty" authority?

In his later work, Rokeach offers a general theory regarding beliefs, attitudes and values. He (Rokeach, 1976, p. 5) identifies four levels (or scope) of belief ranging from fundamental existential beliefs (regarding one's own existence and identity) to beliefs regarding preferences and tastes. We would suggest that closed-minded (authoritarian) beliefs will inevitably reside at the highest (existential) level and at Rokeach's second level which concerns shared beliefs about existence and identity.

From this initial classification of beliefs, Rokeach (1976, pp. 6 -13) goes on to describe five classes of belief that relate to the centrality of the belief. Type A concerns primitive beliefs to which everyone in a

society will ascribe. These are basic truths regarding physical reality ("this is a table") that bring constancy into our life. Rokeach indicates that is a matter of trust in these primitive beliefs and constancies that enable us to navigate through our life. It is interesting to note that certain discoveries in physics (primarily quantum mechanics and the study of sub-atomic particles) bring these primitive beliefs into question. We are all closed-minded when it comes to living with the "reality" that there is there no "table" there (only energy and widely separated particles) and that entities can relate to one another in a noncausal manner. Perhaps we can gain greater empathy for the sense of bewilderment and the angst found among closed-minded authoritarians when reflecting on our own reactions to findings of the "new sciences." What happens when basic trust is pulled out from under our feet (or the feet of the authoritarian)?

For Rokeach there is a second type of belief (Type B) that is primitive but holds no consensus. These beliefs reside at the heart of a particular kind of close-minded authoritarianism. These beliefs are held personally and are rarely disclosed (hence are rarely open to refute). Rokeach offers the following phrase to summarize this type: "I believe, but no one else could know. It therefore does not matter what others believe." This type of belief system and authoritarian perspective is often associated with religion (and we would suggest with religious conversion experiences). While Rokeach has moved beyond a focus on the close-minded belief, it would seem that Type B authoritarianism is the most impervious to change. The "authority" resides in our heart, so should be of "no concern" to anyone else!

Type C beliefs are those associated with shared commitments to some specific source of authoritarian "truth". In fleshing out Type C belief systems we return to William Perry, a psychologist (and counsellor) who we have already referenced regarding rugged development. Perry (1998) identifies a "dualistic" frame of reference which is to be found among most people in the world—at least when they are faced with anxiety-producing challenges (such as are found in VUCA-Plus environments). The dualist believes that there are "right" and "wrong" beliefs and that there are "good" and "bad" people in the world.

Furthermore, there are "correct' authority figures and institutions in any society and "those" who are not "correct" and belong on the "wrong" and "bad" side of the ledger. While Type C dualism is prevalent, a closed-minded authoritarian perspective tends to be all-encompassing of this dualism. Everything is placed on the ledger and actions are taken exclusively based on the closed belief regarding the "truth" of any opinion and the "authoritative" or "nonauthoritative" source of this "truth."

The fourth type of belief (D) comes from our acceptance of authoritative opinions offered by outside sources (media, speeches, books, etc.) This source of belief is common to all of us living in mid-21st Century societies. These are "derived" beliefs that come from secondary sources rather than from our own personal experiences or some specific source of authority on which we rely exclusively. Ironically (and disturbingly) we find that many members of contemporary societies do rely on a single source and do not exemplify the diversified sources that Rokeach identifies in Type D.

The final type of belief (E) that Rokeach identifies is that which is "nonconsequential." We have certain arbitrary preferences and develop "tastes" over time that determine which cereal we eat, which wine we buy and, more importantly, which house we buy. We would suggest that a cluster of Type E beliefs can be consequential if this cluster determines where we choose to live (segregated or nonsegregated community) and how we choose to vote. With the polarization that is saturating many of our mid-21st Century societies, the clustering is becoming more common and more pronounced. Coupled with an

authoritarian bent, a cluster can guide us toward ethnocentrism, sexism, antisemitism and other forms of virulent attitudes and actions.

We wish to mention two other contributions that Milton Rokeach makes to the expanded exploration of authoritarianism. First, he moves from beliefs to attitudes and notes that attitudes are organized belief systems. Each attitude (and belief system) has three components: cognitive, affective and behavioral. Furthermore, an attitude serves one or more of four functions: (1) instrumental, adjustive or utilitarian, (2) ego-defensive, (3) value-expressive and/or (4) structure of knowledge. (Rokeach, 1976, p. 130). Based on research done on the authoritarian personality, we suggest that the second function is most common among those who manifest this personality trait (at least according to Adorno and his psychodynamic colleagues). More contemporary researchers and theorists of a social psychological bent might suggest that authoritarian personalities prevail in a collective setting when the other three functions are being engaged.

The final major contribution made by Rokeach in his later work (Rokeach, 1976, p. 141) concerns the distinction to be drawn between two kinds of attitudes. First, there are attitudes about specific "objects" (people, organizations, policies, etc.). Second, there are attitudes about the situation in which the objects are operating (autocratic, laissez-faire, egalitarian, etc.). We would engage this distinction in providing our own insights regarding attitudes (and belief systems). These insights are founded in something called "attribution theory" (Jones, 1972). Each of us attributes the cause of certain behavior to either something happening inside a specific person or to something happening inside the environment in which this person is operating. These two attributes align directly with Rokeach's two types of attitude. Furthermore, we can add some "locus of control" theory (Rotter, 1966) to the mix.

When attitudes are focused on the individual object and what is happening inside a person, then it is assumed that there is an Internal Locus of Control. Behavior can be attributed to what is happening in the head and heart of a specific person, organization or political party. Conversely, an External Locus of Control is assumed when the focus of one's attitude is on the setting in which the person, organization or political party is operating. From the perspective of an External Locus of Control it is all about the reward and reinforcement to be found in the environment. Behaviorism and State theory rule the roost and those non-empirical psychodynamic theories and the focus on personality traits are cast out.

Rokeach recognizes the potential of change to be found in strategies involving each of the four combinations of object and situation attitude: (1) focus on change in the object, (2) focus on change in the situation, (3) focus on change in both object and situation, and (4) focus on change involving neither object nor situation. While Rokeach acknowledges all four strategies, he tends to focus as a social psychologist on the situational variables when seeking to bring about change in attitude. We need only look back at his "experiment" with the three mental patients who each thought they were Jesus Christ. Rokeach changed the situation (brought the three patients together) and looked for change.

Rokeach found attitude change at the study site (a mental hospital located in Ypsilanti Michigan) — though we wonder at what cost the attitude change took place. Did psychological damage accompany the gradual realization of each man that they were not Christ. One of us [WB] witnessed something that closely resembles that which occurred in Ypsilanti. He was working at a mental hospital in Boston Massachusetts during the early 1960s. One of his patients believed that she was Jacqueline Kennedy. Then the president was shot. My patient had to deal with the fact that her husband was now dead. What had been a protective illusion for this woman (who had lived a life of domestic abuse and trauma)

21

had suddenly been shattered. She was once again abused. Violence had once again visited her psyche. I witnessed the horrible suffering that followed the death of this patient's loved "husband". We witnessed not only her grieving of a dead husband but also the grieving of a dead illusion. We can imagine what the suffering was like for the three Christs of Ypsilanti.

Neuropsychological Perspectives: Antonio Damasio

While most of the attention (and bias) associated with the study of authoritarianism has tended over the years to be focused on the cognitive systems associated with this phenomenon, the neurobiologists have weighed in (at least indirectly) during the past two decades as they explore the internal mechanisms of the brain in processing information and in seeking to integrate thoughts and feelings (especially as related to human interactions). Antonio Damasio has been at the forefront of this emergent social neurobiology field. We are attending to his work because Damasio has focused on this integration in *Feeling and Knowing* (Damasio, 2021) – which provides us with further insights regarding the rigid single-mindedness of authoritarians.

We should first note that Damasio adds a third element to his analysis of feelings and thoughts. His third element is Being. This third element, in fact, represents the first stage in what Damasio identifies as evolutionary stages. As our consciousness evolved as human beings, we were first able to acknowledge our own existence ("being") as independent sentient beings. Then came feelings and thought.

Feelings as Bridge from Being to Thinking I: Damasio identifies and honors the critical role played by feelings in the life of all sentient species and in the evolution of human consciousness. He (Damasio, 2021, p. 28) notes that:

> Feelings provide organisms with *experiences* of their own life. Specifically, they provide the owner organism with a scaled assessment of its relative success at living . . .

Even at this early point, we begin to glean some insights from Damasio regarding the source of an authoritarian perspective. If feelings provide one with a sense of relative life success, then what is likely to be the impact of someone's sense that their life is a failure (because of the "enemy's powerful and malevolent impact") and that they are prevented from entering the community of those who have the power as a member of the undeserving "elite"?

Unconventional Feelings: Damasio devotes a considerable amount of attention to his neurobiologically-based conclusions regarding the nature of feelings—and the power they hold in the functioning of the human being. He (Damasio, 2021, p. 76) indicates that:

> Feelings are *interactive perceptions*. Compared with visual perceptions—the canonical example of perception—feelings are *unconventional*. Feelings gather their signals "inside the organism" and even "inside the objects located in that inside" rather than simply around the organism. Feelings depict actions that occur in our interior, as well as their consequences, and let us catch a glimpse of the viscera involved in those actions. Little wonder that feelings exert a special power over us.

Thus, the feelings of an authoritarian that are associated with an alienated and failed life are likely to be particularly powerful and determinative.

Damasio (2021, p.88) goes on to offer another insightful comment regarding the unique role played by feelings:

> Because the actual *object* of the feeling/perception is none other than a part of the organism itself, that object is in fact located *within* the *subject/perceiver*. Astonishing! Nothing comparable occurs with our external perceptions, for example, visual or auditory.

For the authoritarian this means that their feelings are fully in their control. Given that these men and women rarely have control over other parts of their life, the role played by their feelings takes on even great importance.

Feelings as Bridge from Being to Thinking II: In becoming aware of our feelings, we find a bridge to our awareness of being a thinking species (homo sapiens). As Damasio (2021, p. 97) observes, feelings enable us to make important thinking-based assessments that inform our subsequent actions:

> Arising as they do in the interior of our adjustable and dynamic organisms, feelings are both qualitative and quantitative. They exhibit *valence*—the quality rankings that make their warning and advice be worth the effort and also motivate our actions as needed.

Most importantly, feelings provide a signal function—letting us know that we must be alert to something happening inside or outside ourself (be it threatening or benevolent). Damasio (2021, p. 95) puts it this way:

> . . . [F]eelings operate as altering sentinels. They *inform each mind*—fortunate enough to be so equipped—*of the state of life within the organism to which that mind belongs. Moreover, feelings give that mind an incentive to act according to the positive or negative signal of their messages*.

Feelings enable us to go even further in our assessments. We can make thinking-based judgements about relative amounts of something in our environment (Damasio, 2021, p. 53):

> The information provided by feelings points to "qualities" of things or states – good or not so good- as well as "quantities" of those quality: really awful versus not so bad.

In these observations made by Damasio, we find even more important (and disturbing) implications regarding the role played by feelings in the lives of those with an authoritarian personality. Their alienation-based feelings are likely to be "trigger-happy" with regard to slights from those who are among the "elites" as well as perceived threats from those who are "not like us."

There are powerful valences associated with the fear, anger, hate and envy of the authoritarian. Everything is elevated—and a VUCA-Plus world doesn't help. The profound and pervasive anxiety associated with VUCA-Plus serves as an accelerator of the authoritarian's valances.

Damasio points us to the bridge that leads us to thought. The bridge is composed of feelings (Damasio, 2021, p. 122):

> Feelings let the mind know, automatically, without any questions being asked, that mind and body are together, each belonging to the other. The classic void that has separated physical bodies from mental phenomena is naturally bridged `thanks to feelings.

Thus, the ancient argument about mind and body as either composed of either one or two domains is answered for Damasio. Mind and body come together as one entity via the bridge built between them by feelings. Unfortunately, the bridge is poorly designed for authoritarians. There rarely is safe crossing into the real world—thus increasing the chances that the authoritarian will view their own life as being unsuccessful (and that they will blame others for their failure).

Integration via Neuro-mapping: At this point Damasio begins to frame a remarkable portrait of integration in the human psyche. Being, feelings and thoughts come together as integrated images through a process of neurobiological mapping (Damasio (2021, p.. 56):

> . . . [N]eurobiological "mapped patterns' turn into the "Mental events" we call images. And when these events are part of a context that includes feeling and self-perspective, then, and only then, they become *mental experiences*, which is to say that they become conscious.

These mapped patterns show up as neuro images that bear some resemblance to actual entities out in the world. Furthermore, according to Damasio, these neuro Images serve as our basic sense of reality.

Here is where specific frameworks and categorization systems come to play a prominent role in the life of the authoritarian. These men and women have created an integrated, rigidly-held map of the "threatening world in which they live and work. It is a world that is filled with people who intend to do them harm – or at the very least intend to exclude and despise them. Each part of their map conveniently reinforces every other part. Thus, the map is invulnerable to change. Any dissonance to be found regarding one element of the map can be eliminated (or at least isolated) through the protective and justifying intervention of other map elements.

Covert and Overt Intelligences: We can take a step backward in conveying something about what Damasio is offering us. He distinguishes between what he calls covert and overt "intelligences". Covert intelligences are hidden and concealed processes. They are based on chemical/bioelectrical processes in organelles and cell membranes. These covert processes are not explicit, yet they have a powerful impact on how we feel, think and action. Damasio often addresses these intelligences in his writing. For instance, in *Descartes's Error*, Damasio (2005) writes about the somatic templates that inform our moment-to-moment assessment of mood and help to influence decisions we make at any one point intime.

By contrast, Damasio's overt intelligences are manifest, explicit, and based on spatially mapped neural patterns which "represent and resemble" objects and actions. They are "imagetic" and easily confounded with the "real thing." We are reminded of Michael Polanyi's (2009) description of what he calls "tacit knowledge." This form of "knowing" shows up in our biases and hunches, as well as your vague awareness of having met someone before or getting an "intuitive" sense that something isn't right—such as the intuitive processes described by Jonah Lehrer (2009) in *How We Decide*.

While these neural maps help guide us through our daily life—as the "fast-thinking" processes identified by Daniel Kahneman (2011)—they can also lead us astray. Most importantly, these maps are big and complex. According to Damasio (2021, pp. 35-36):

> Explicit human intelligences are neither simple nor small. Explicit human intelligences require a mind and the assistance of mind-related developments: *feeling* and *consciousness*. They require

perception and *memory*, and *reasoning*. The contents of minds are based on *spatially mapped patterns* that represent objects and actions.

Damasio (2021, pp. 142-144) goes on to identify the impressive span of universes contained in each image:

> The image contents of minds hail largely from three principal universes. One universe concerns the world around us. . . . . The second universe concerns the old world inside us. . . . . A third universe of mind also pertains to a world within the organism but involves an entirely different sector: the bony skeleton, the limbs and the skull, body regions that turn out to be protected and animated by skeletal muscles.

While the first of these universes plays an important role in all of our lives, the second university (the old world) is likely to be particularly important in the life of the authoritarian. They long for the "good old days" (that probable never actually existed). The third universe—which relates directly to the somatic template that Damasio identified in his earlier publication—seems to also play a particularly influential role in the life of the authoritarian if they are always under stress (threatened by many enemies) and finding little in their life to enjoy.

With all of the challenges that we can gleam about the authoritarian from what Damasio has identified, there is a real "ringer" that Damasio offers near the conclusion of *Feeling and Knowing* He provide an insight that speaks directly to the rigidity of a unifying authoritarian perspectives (Damasio, 2021, p. 150):

> The fact that the organism owns the mind has an intriguing consequence: all that occurs in the mind—the maps of the interior and the maps of the structures, actions, and spatial positions of other organisms/objects that exist and take place in the surrounding exterior – is constructed, of necessity, by adopting *the organism's perspective*.

Based on Damasio's observations, we can conclude that the authoritarian has adopted a specific integrative map. This map provides a perspective that unifies their feelings and thoughts – as well as their fundamental sense of being. While all human being, according to Damasio, build maps that help to orient their life, the authoritarian has built their map on the basis of an unclear (and often VUCA disrupted) sense of self. The bridge they build between being and thinking is composed of destabilizing feelings such as fear, anger and envy—that arise in turn from anomy and alienation.

These feelings further distort not only the authoritarian's sense of being, but also their thoughts – and ultimately the map they construct. We would propose that their maps remain firmly in place (despite their misalignment with reality) because elements of the map are reinforced by the distorted thoughts and suspicion-filled feelings that form the basis of the map. Put simply, the maps constructed by authoritarians are both self-fulling (self-justifying) and self-sealing (shared only in authority-dominated silos and echo-chambers).

Conclusions: Building a Bridge Over the Divide

As we have done in other essays/chapters, we introduce a tool that could be of value in addressing the challenges associated with authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, rigidity – and the other attendant issues of

our time that seem to fall into deeply divided camps. In these camps there are no experts except those aligned with our camp. There is no authority, no criteria for evaluation other than those fully vetted by and affiliated with our camp.

Polarity-Management

We propose that the challenges associated with authoritarianism and the crisis of expertise can be addressed at least in part by means of a process initially identified by Barry Johnson (1996)—this is *polarity management*. Johnson's perspectives and his related tools can guide our actions in the future. I specifically envision a hypothetical forum or series of forums convened to slowly and thoughtfully formulate a viable pandemic policy for the future.

Johnson suggests that polarity management can be used in handling everyday dilemmas. It can also be of great value in addressing major societal contradictions—settings in which there are two or more legitimate but opposite forces at work. Can polarity management help us gain a purchase on problems associated with expertise? We believe it can and turn specifically to the highly polarizing policies regarding our recent (and ongoing) crisis of COVID-19.

Both/And Rather Than Either/Or: Many of those involved already in the deliberation regarding a pandemic policy have framed the policy as an either/or option. To quote Howe (2019), those offering the herd option are taking the follow stand: ". . . the fact remains that herd immunity isn't merely a possible strategy. In the long run it is the only strategy.

The question, then, is how to get there responsibly." The proponents of Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPI) and social distancing offer an even more absolutist stance: "the withdrawal of a social distance policy is unethical and immoral. It is counter to everything we hold precious as human beings."

We will frame our analysis around these two polar-opposite stances and begin by identifying some of the benefits and disadvantages associated with each policy. The benefits in both cases yield short-term (tactical) and long-term (strategic) outcomes. The disadvantages I offer relate to what we don't know and what might be an unexpected and devastating outcome.

BENEFITS:

NPI/SOCIAL DISTANCE POLICY

- Preserve commitment to focus on welfare of each individual person
- Reduce pressure on health care workers and facilities
- Establish new social norms and interpersonal behavior patterns that can endure for a long time.

BENEFITS:

HERD IMMUNITY POLICY

- Build a sustainable world community with most if not all people being immune
- Set realistic expectations regarding short-term impact of virus on human health.
- Set hard but realistic policies regarding health priorities with specific populations.

DISADVANTAGES:

NPI/SOCIAL DISTANCING POLICY

- May lead to recurrent outbreaks of the virus and ultimately more deaths
- Will sustain global uncertainty about long-term status of human health
- We don't know if social distancing can be sustained by most societies
- May set precedence for short-term solutions to pandemic outbreaks in the future

DISADVANTAGES:

HERD IMMUNITY POLICY

- We don't know if human societies can really tolerate large scale death rates without reverting to short term actions.
- We don't know what this policy would do in terms of its impact on the ethics and soul of human societies.
- Who would make the decision about who lives and who dies?

These initial summary statements regarding the pull between two public policies can be framed as a polarity. What tends to occur is that we linger briefly on the advantages inherent in one of the options (in this case the NPI/social distancing policy). Then we begin to recognize some of the disadvantages associated with this option.

We are pulled to the second option. If social distancing and other preventative actions are not the answer, then we must embrace a herd immunization policy. Yet, as we linger on this second option, we discover that this policy also has its flaws and disadvantages. We are led back to the first policy—and must again face the disadvantages inherent in this first option.

The swing has begun from left top to left bottom to right top, to right bottom, back again to left top. We are whipped back and forth. As anxiety increases regarding the COVERT-19 virus and future pandemic viruses, the vacillation also increases in both intensity and rapidity. This is what the dynamics of polarization is all about. There is inadequate time and attention given to each option.

The Polarity Graphic: Here is what the polarity-based dynamics of our policy deliberations might look like if mapped on a polarity graph:

Compassion AND Consideration

FORMULATION OF A VIABLE PUBLIC POLICY

Action Steps
How will we gain or maintain the positive results from focusing on this left pole? What? Who? By When? Measures?

Values = positive results of focus on the left pole

Upsides/Positives
1. Preserve commitment to focus on welfare of each individual person
2. Reduce pressure on health care workers and facilities.
3. Establish new social norms and interpersonal behavior patterns that can endure for a long time.

COMPASSION and CONSIDERATION

Values = positive results of focus on the right pole

Upsides/Positives
1. Build a sustainable world community with most if not all people being immune.
2. Set realistic expectations regarding short-term impact of virus on human health.
3. Set hard but realistic policies regarding health priorities with specific populations.

Action Steps
How will we gain or maintain the positive results from focusing on this right pole? What? Who? By When? Measures?

A. Establish uniform public policy regarding social distancing when around other people.
B. Identify ways to effectively monitor conformity to this policy.
C. Clearly identify the conditions under which it is appropriate to leave one's home.
D. Accurately test all citizens to see if they are infected or free of infection to determine when social distancing policy can be withdrawn.

1. Reduce or eliminate the social distancing policy.
2. Accurately test all citizens to determine the infection status for everyone. Carefully monitor status of the virus infections in terms of specific populations
3. Provide caring, palliative care to all citizens who are infected and are likely to die.
4. Prepare studies of the infection patterns and identify lessons to be learned regarding future pandemics.

1. Growing debate about the failure of the social distancing policy.
2. Vascilation with continual refinement the policy followed by continuing failure.
3. Growing wide-spread sense of helplessness and hopelessness.

Downsides/Negatives
1. May lead to recurrent outbreaks of the virus and ultimately more deaths.
2. Will sustain global uncertainty about long-term status of human health.
3. We don't know if social distancing can be sustained by most societies
4. May set precedence for short-term solutions to pandemic outbreaks in the future

Fears = negative results of over-focus on the left pole **to the neglect** of the right pole
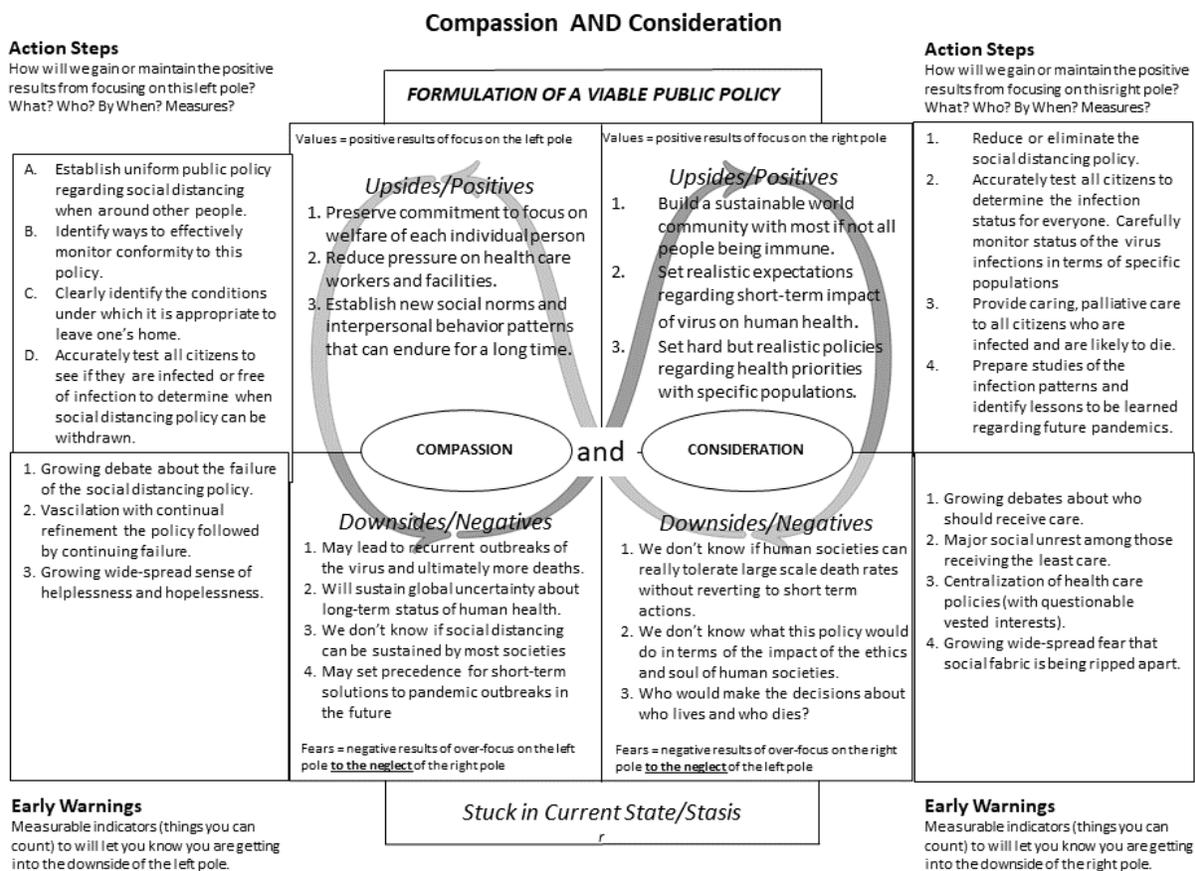
Downsides/Negatives
1. We don't know if human societies can really tolerate large scale death rates without reverting to short term actions.
2. We don't know what this policy would do in terms of the impact of the ethics and soul of human societies.
3. Who would make the decisions about who lives and who dies?

Fears = negative results of over-focus on the right pole **to the neglect** of the left pole

1. Growing debates about who should receive care.
2. Major social unrest among those receiving the least care.
3. Centralization of health care policies (with questionable vested interests).
4. Growing wide-spread fear that social fabric is being ripped apart.

Stuck in Current State/Stasis

Early Warnings
Measurable indicators (things you can count) to will let you know you are getting into the downside of the left pole.

Early Warnings
Measurable indicators (things you can count) to will let you know you are getting into the downside of the right pole.

A Polarity Analysis: With this preliminary framing and charting completed, we turn to what happens when we try to *maximize* the benefits of either side at the expense of the other side. In the case of sustaining the NPI/social distancing policy, the maximization of social distancing and related preventive measures would (as the epidemiological models indicate) tend to delay but ultimately accelerate the rate of infections and ultimately virus-related deaths. Furthermore, we now know that the masks don't necessarily prevent the virus from spreading. The virus comes in through the sides of the masks which

most people wore during the COVID-19 crisis (much as water comes in through the edges of our googles, not through the glass). We would soon be in despair regarding the failure of this NPI/social distancing policy. At some point, we might adopt the herd policy, but would probably find that it is too late.

Conversely, if we completely override the NPI/social distancing policy and fully adopt the herd infection policy, then we would witness massive death rates and would be deeply concerned within a short period of time (throughout the world) regarding the "heartlessness" of this policy. We would inevitably find that projections about the potential number of people who would die before herd immunization was established are staggering. We would feel deeply wounded about the decisions being made. If we are religious and view ourselves as culpable, then we might ask our deity for forgiveness. Other members of our society would be inclined to launch a vitriolic attack against those who enacted this grotesque policy. As a result, we are likely to return to a NPI/social distancing policy—though only after many deaths. And the NPI/social distancing policy would still be flawed.

Barry Johnson warns that we must not try to maximize the appeal of any one side; rather we must carefully *optimize* the degree to which we are inclined toward one side or the other as well as the duration of our stay with consideration and enactment of this side. How serious are we about focusing on this one side and how long are we going to sustain this focus? Optimizing also means that we must find a reasonable and perhaps flexible set-point as we act in favor of one side or another. Finding these acceptable optimum responses and repeatedly redefining them is the key to polarity management. This strategy is aligned with the suggestion made by many health policy experts that with future pandemic virus we should periodically adopt a NPI policy, rather than abandoning it all together.

The fundamental recommendation to be made in managing this particular polarity is to remain in the positive domain of each policy option long enough to identify all (or at least most) of the key benefits and potential actions to be taken that maximize these benefits. Time should also be devoted to and attention directed (in a slow and systemic manner) toward identification of potential ways in which the two policies can be brought together on behalf of an integrated response to the pandemic challenge. Consideration and compassion potentially join hands.

This polarity management recommendation is not easily enacted—especially when the stakes are high (as they certainly were in 2020 regarding COVID-19 and will be with any future pandemic crises). As Johnson and others engaged in polarity management have noted, effective management of polarities requires a constant process of vigilance, negotiation, and adjustments. The second option regarding future pandemic invasions that is offered by public health policy experts seems to be aligned with this recommendation of dynamic vigilance. In agreement with the polarity management experts, those advocating the second option suggest that we must continuously seek and refine a dynamic, flexible balance between consideration and compassion. Each side's beneficial contributions can be enjoyed without engendering serious negative consequences. We must accompany this balance with some immediate, tangible correctives, such as wide-spread distribution of better-designed masks, increased testing and improved tracing.

Policy Alarm Systems: Johnson has one more important point to make regarding the management of polarities. He identifies the value inherent in setting up an alarm system as a safeguard against overshooting either side of the polarity. It would be prudent to build in an alarm system that warns us when we may be trying to maximize one side and are on the verge of triggering the negative reactions.

The alarm signal for the NPI policy might a growing debate regarding failure of this policy and the continual refinement of this policy by leaders in politics and business. We would observe a struggling system: abundant vacillation, frequent reversal of existing policy, and very short-term implementation, criticism, and abandonment of revised social distancing policies and stay-at-home orders. The signal might also be apparent at a deeper, psychological level. There would be a growing sense of helplessness and hopelessness.

The alarm system for safeguards against the herd immunization policy might be increasing occurrence of debates about who should receive the most care and who should "tragically" be allowed to die (for the sake of the "herd"). Major social unrest might arise among those populations receiving the least care and witnessing what seems to be cavalier societal disregard for their welfare. Control of health care policies might become more centralized and embedded in vested social and economic interests. At this point, the herd policies might be saving lives in the long term—but destroying (forever) the social fabric of the communities in which these policies are being implemented.

Hopefully, with the safeguards in place and the alarm signals clearly articulated, we can address the negative consequences of each option in a constructive manner. As a result, we might even be in a place to formulate an integrative, global policy regarding the handling of recurrent global pandemics (which will occur inevitably in our boundaryless world). Optimally, this formulation could be thought through in a slow and thoughtful manner—with appropriate experts on each side of the issue being heard and their perspective being appreciated. Appropriate authority rather than authoritarianism gains a foothold.

Identifying and Managing the VUCA-Plus Polarities

We can now move beyond the specific example we have offered of polarities management in addressing the challenges of Covid-19 to the more general and pervasive issues associated with VUCA-Plus challenges. What are the two sides of each VUCA-Plus Challenge and how is expertise most appropriately engaged in confronting each of these challenges?

Volatility: refers to the dynamics of change: its accelerating rate, intensity and speed as well as its unexpected catalysts. The Left Column perspective on volatility would be centered on *Commitment* in the midst of volatility. This perspective concerns being faithful to one's commitments by taking action in a consistent and sustained manner that other people can understand and predict. What about the Right Column? The focus from this perspective would be on *Contingency* in the midst of volatility. This perspective concerns being flexible by keeping options open and allowing learning to occur in order to modify the actions taken.

The appropriate engagement of expertise would involve emphasis on the intentions (goals, vision, values, purposes) associated with the issue being addressed. Which of these intentions should (must) remain constant and which can change depending on the shifting circumstances associated with this issue. The metaphor of anchors might be introduced.

There are anchors attached to the boat (principal issue) which are embedded in the seafloor. These are often called *Ground Anchors*. These are the large anchors with heavy flukes that dig into the ground. Or they are slabs of concrete to which a ship is attached when moored. These anchors are meant to be permanent—just as some intentions aligned with a specific issue are meant to remain stationary and are never to be modified (let alone discarded).

Often called a "drogue", the *Sea Anchor* contrasts with the ground anchors in that it is intended not to hold a boat (principal issue) in place but rather to align a ship with the wind and slow down it's movement in any one direction. Often shaped like an umbrella, the sea anchor provides flexible anchorage in the midst of shifts in tidal action and wind. Those intentions that operate like sea anchors similarly provides alignment and direction for an organization or society as it shifts gradually with changes in the environment surrounding the presentation of a specific issue.

The polarity is addressed by the expert acknowledgement of benefits inherent in both the ground and sea anchor. Experts can help us focus on the appropriate use of each type of anchor/intention.

*Uncertainty***:** refers to the lack of predictability, the increasing prospects for surprising, "disruptive" changes that often overwhelm our awareness, understanding and ability to cope with events. In this case, the Left Column perspective on Uncertainty would center on the *Assimilation* of changes into existing framework. This perspective concerns making sense of and finding meaning in what is occurring in the present reality. By contrast, a Right Column perspective on Uncertainty would center on *Accommodation* to changes by adjusting or reworking existing framework. This perspective concerns learning from and adapting to what is occurring in the present reality.

The appropriate engagement of expertise in managing this polarity would involve the creation and maintenance of a *Learning Organization* (Argyris and Schon, 1978). Emphasis is placed In such an organization (or society) or the learning that takes place after either a success or failure in addressing issues associated with uncertain conditions. Experts can help us recognize the inevitable mistakes being made when uncertainty is prevalent. The key goal is to not make the same mistake a second time. We can't avoid mistakes, but we can learn from them. If we don't then a "stupid" organization (or society) has been created.

Similarly, we can learn from our successes. It is not enough to celebrate when we happened to get it right in spite of uncertainty. We need to spend time reflecting on what occurred and what we did that influenced the desirable outcomes. In other words, we should "catch them [us] when they [we] are doing it right!" Those with expertise in appreciative inquiry can be very helpful in this regard (Srivastava, Cooperrider and Associates, 1990; Bergquist, 2003; Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005).

The polarity is addressed by the expert recognition that learning always involves structures and concepts that already exist (assimilation) as they bring in and incorporate new information that, in turn, brings

31

about change in the existing structures and concepts (accommodation). An expert in learning (especially adult learning) can prove to be invaluable in bringing about this joint assimilation/accommodation process.

Complexity: entails the multiplex of forces, the apparently contradictory information flow, the sensitive interdependence of everything we touch, leading to the sense of confusion in which it's hard to make smart decisions, steeped as we are in the moving dance of reality. A Left Column perspective on Complexity would center on being *Clear-minded* in the midst of confusion. The central concern is sorting out what is most relevant and most easily confirmed while dancing with reality. The opposing Right Column perspective on Complexity would center on being *Open-minded* in the midst of confusion. From this perspective, we would be primarily concerned with recognizing and holding on to the multiple realities that reside in the dance with reality.

Expertise can be appropriately and effectively used in addressing this polarity by encouraging the slow, reflective thinking that is described and advocated by the behavioral economists – particularly Daniel Kahneman (2011). Slow thinking incorporates both clarity of thought (identifying and setting aside biases and sloppy heuristics) and open-mindedness (consideration of alternative perspectives, practices and options). In the midst of pervasive anxiety associated with complex conditions (and the other VUCA-Plus conditions), it is critical that thinking and decision-making slow down.

The polarity between clear and open mindedness can be effectively managed with the expert use of tools that are provided by Kahneman—as well as those action learning tools offered by Chris Argyris and Don Schon.

*Ambiguity***:** refers to the 'haziness' in which cause-and-effect are hard to attribute, relativity seems to trump established rules, weighing heavily on our ability to hold contradictory data and still function and make choices. An accompanying Left Column perspective on Ambiguity would focus on *Engaging* the Haziness. The primary concern is with establishing a viable "truth" and "reality" upon which one can base and guide their actions. The Right Column perspective stands in opposition. This perspective would focus on *Tolerating* the haziness. The primary concern would center on being patient and willing to remain in a state of "limbo" until such time as the haze clears and actions can be taken.

Appropriate expertise can be applied in addressing the ambiguity polarity by introducing multiple templates for assessing the nature of any challenging issue. One of these templates concerns the identification and analysis of both the immediate issue (the figure) and the context within which this issue is situated (the ground). A second template concerns the special distance from which a specific issue is being addressed. It should be examined close up (as an intimate narrative) (proximal perspective) and at a distance (as a broad landscape) (distal perspective). The third template involves temporal distance. The issue should be examined as it is currently being experienced (the present time) and as it will probably be (or could be) present at some point ahead of us (the future time).

The polarity of engagement and tolerance is managed when these three templates are applied in an expert manner. The convening issue can be viewed from multiple perspectives which allows for both

immediate engagement and tolerance of certain immediate circumstances—as well as longer term and "bigger picture" engagement and tolerance.

Turbulence: exists in the "white water" world where four conditions of change intermingle: rapid change, cyclical change, non - change (stagnation) and chaotic change. A Left Column perspective would focus on *Centering* in the midst of multiple conditions of change. This perspective primarily concerns a search for and finding the core, orienting place that provides one with balance and direction. The Right Column perspective focuses on *Agility* in the midst of multiple conditions of change. From this perspective, we must allow for and participate in multiple points of balance and direction in our work and life.

Expertise that addresses this polarity in an appropriate and effective manner (in keeping with the white - water metaphor) concerns anticipation of what is likely to happen around the next bend in the river. Specifically, this means using the centering—and the agility—to think outside of the immediate box and to "lean into the future." Otto Scharmer (2019) offers a "Theory U" way of thinking about and acting in a world of turbulence. He writes about "learning into the future." In order to do this anticipatory learning, Scharmer suggests that we must first seek to change the system as it now exists. IN this regard, Scharmer is emulating John Dewey's suggestion that we only understanding something when we give it a kick and observe it's reaction. However, Scharmer goes further than Dewey. He suggests that we must examine and often transform our own way of thinking in the world—which requires both balance and agility—if this change is to be effective and if we are to learn from this change in preparation for the future.

From the perspective of whitewater navigation, this would mean that we experiment with different ways of engaging our kayak in our current whitewater world. We particularly try out some changes that might make sense in terms of how the river is likely to operate around the next bend. Will there be more rocks, greater drop in elevation, more bends, etc. We take "notes" on how our kayak is behaving in response to changes in our use of the paddle, our way of sitting in the kayak, etc.

Sharmer requires that we not only try out several ways of kayaking, and take notes on these trials, but also explore and embrace new ways of thinking about the kayak and the dynamic way it operates in the river's turbulence. These new ways are activated by what we have learned from the current trials. The new ways, in turn, influence other changes we might wish to try out before reaching the next bend in the river. Effective learning, in other words, becomes recursive and directed toward (leaning toward) the future.

None of this learning is easy. Furthermore, it is hard to determine which changes to make and how best to reflect on these changes. These processes are particularly challenging to engage when we are still navigating the current white-water world. An expert on white water navigation might join us in the kayak (without tipping it over!). They can help us manage the real-time interplay between balance and agility. It takes a particularly skillful expert who is herself both centered and agile if she is to be of benefit in the management of this dynamic, turbulent polarity. The request should read: "Expert is needed who is willing to travel—on a white-water river—and is willing to learn in real time alongside their client. A proclivity toward leaning into the future is prerequisite."

*Contradiction***:** exists when we are presented with two or more perspectives or sets of practices that are of equal validity and are equally useful -yet differ in significant ways from one another and are not readily reconciled. The Left Column perspective would focus on *Discerning* the value of each viewpoint or practice in order to choose the best one. The primary concern from this perspective is to determine where the greatest truth is to be found and which option is most aligned with fundamental human welfare. The Right Column offers an alternative perspective. It concerns *Integrating* the diverse perspective and practices. The primary concern from this perspective is recognition that there is one (and only one) unified reality which can be viewed from multiple, complementary perspectives.

Appropriate expertise with regard to this final VUCA-Plus conditions brings us to a level of meta-learning. We learn about the management of polarity by spending time reflecting on and learning from the way in which we identify, analyze and manage the contradictions inherent in polarities associated with the other five conditions.

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