

Editorial

Social Distancing, Covid-19, and Experiential Narratives II

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As we are steering through an unprecedented epoch of Covid-19, desperate attempts have been made to renew existential meanings as an underside to the unbridled meaninglessness and existential defeat in the world outside.

As the “everyday familiarity collapse[d]” and uncanniness or ‘un-home-like’ took over, the spatially constrained and temporally disoriented self began an anxious search for the “metaphor for existence.”¹ Post the global lockdown to ‘tame’ the virus, home has become the site where the metaphor for existence is materially and discursively situated: either *being* at home or longing for one, as with the case of thousands of migrant workers in India who have walked miles – some to death – in search of this metaphor.

Martin Heidegger contends:

In anxiety one feels ‘*uncanny*’. Here the peculiar indefiniteness of that which Dasein finds itself alongside in anxiety, comes proximally to expression: the “nothing and nowhere”. But here “uncanniness” also means “not-being-at-home” ...Being-in enters into the existential ‘mode’ of the “not-at-home”. Nothing else is meant by our talk about ‘uncanniness.’²

In uncanniness, the self flees from the “threat to its everyday lostness” – a withdrawal from the ‘publicness’ and from the absorption in the world - even “though the very world itself is *still*

¹ Hans Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator: Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence*, trans. by S. Rendell (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997).

² Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Translated by J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 233.

‘there’, and ‘there’ more *obtrusively*.³ When the conceptuality – of the uncanny situation and human condition as a result of the former – is itself evasive, a metaphor not only provides the epistemological reserve for the constitution of existential concepts, but also points “back towards the connection with the life-world as the constant motivating support...”⁴

On a similar note Leela Gandhi has made an important point on the conceptuality of a phenomenon. Apart from an expressed skepticism towards almost everything, there has emerged, “a state of consciousness about things we have known for a very long time without bringing to the forefront of understanding...It is an orientation to what is already there but so much in plain view as to be unintelligible”⁵

With these two crucial themes for the viral times – finding a metaphor amidst growing scepticism and for re invoking a consciousness for long distorted, we at Salesian College Publications set the journey to publish a second issue on “Social Distancing, Covid-19, and Experiential Narratives.”

George Thadathil in his paper “Pain: The Door to Agony and Ecstasy in Time of Covid-19 Pandemic” locate pain – mental and physical – at the intersections of spiritual-philosophy and contingencies of viral agony. Through an extrapolation of dialectics of *vipassana* as mode of being and becoming, the paper situates pain through the exegesis of experience and the current pandemic – as an expression immanent within healing.

Saravanan Velusamy in his paper “Media, Power and the Pandemic: Production of Fear, Discipline and a Distraught Self” tries to understand the role of media during pandemic times and

³ Ibid., 233-4.

⁴ Blumenberg cited in Steven Rendall, “Translator’s introduction” to *Shipwreck with Spectator*, 4.

⁵ Leela Gandhi, “Skeptical Conditions”, *Critical Inquiry* 47, 2020: 115-118.

decipher the kind of self it produces given media's strong influence in interpreting the world for its viewers.

Abhijit Ray in the paper "Indian workers in Dubai: City, Fear and Belongingness" analyses two contradictory human experience – belongingness and fear in the context of Indian workers working in Dubai during the pandemic. He argues that the pandemic magnified certain aspects of the workers working in Dubai that often remain invisible in the popular public domain.

Soroj Mullick in "Befriending the Broken Body: Understanding the Post-Pandemic Body" approaches the impact the pandemic has had on innumerable human bodies, with a philosophico-theological reflection, building on the biblical insights into the human body and the changes it has undergone within Christian tradition.

Paul Punii & Dominic Meyieho in their paper "The Poumai Naga agricultural festivities and rituals vis-a-vis folklores: Covid-19 pandemic application" harping on the ethnographic details of Poumai Naga agricultural festivals underlines the impact of Covid-19 on these rituals.

Augustine Joseph *et.al.* in their paper, "A Longitudinal Study on the Psycho-Sociological Impact of COVID -19 lockdown on College Students & Faculty" brings an assessment of the fear and anxiety among the faculty and students of Salesian College. From the data accumulated through a series of online questionnaires, the paper analyses the impact of the lockdown on a diverse range of indicators – that includes boredom, aspects of the future, sociality – conducted with a group of faculty and students of the college.

Anmol Mongia in her general commentary "Will the Circus come to town? : Indian Circus Arts swinging between a Kafka moment and a *nouveau* moment" explores the hope of revival for the once esteemed performing art form – Circus – both as an art form and a life tool.

Vasudeva K. Naidu in the general commentary “Boredom, time and the creative self during a lockdown” explicates on the conceptuality of boredom through a literary-philosophical journey during the lockdown.