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COVID-19 and Zoonotic Disease: Manufacturing and organising ignorance within the animal-industrial complex.

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Introduction

Pandemics such as the COVID-19 outbreak are a predictable and predicted outcome of how people source and grow food, trade and consume animals, and alter environments (Key message 7, United Nations Environment Programme and International Live-stock Research Institute 2020: 7)

Recently, scholars in management and organisation studies (MOS) have been prolific in their focus on the coronavirus pandemic. For example, there is great interest and speculation about the ways in which our day to day working lives will change, and what form this may take (Spicer 2020), as well as important discussions concerning how systemic gender, race and class inequalities have been further illuminated and exacerbated by the working practices adopted during this period (e.g. Milliken et al., 2020). Of particular concern has been frontline workers, whose activity has become enmeshed within debates about what constitutes necessary, or key work, deemed indispensable by the Government to sustain and keep us alive. Paradoxically, the majority of this activity remains synonymous with low skilled labour, the minimum wage, or unpaid invisible work such as caring, such that it is simultaneously constituted as *valuable*, but not *valued*.

These topics are laudable, but despite the proliferation of words that have been devoted to the grave effects of the pandemic, the highly compelling question ‘*How on Earth Did We Get Here?*’ seems conspicuous by its absence; a debate largely eschewed by management and organization studies scholars, the media, and politicians alike. In this chapter, we argue that COVID-19 is merely the canker of a far more serious and endemic disease – misplaced human conceit. One consequence of this is a naturalised and sedimented superiority complex that has encouraged a tendency in humans to treat everything, and everyone, purely as a profitable resource, permitting us to cycle through numerous and relentless means–end calculations and justifications that wreak havoc on our planetary host and its habitability. Our main contribution to this book focuses on COVID-19, and the (deliberate) forms of ignorance that surrounds our relationship with animals, and the consequences that flow from practices that are rooted in *anthropocentrism* – a ‘desire to determine human specificity over and against those beings who/that threaten to undermine that specificity’ (Calarco 2008: 53).

By drawing from the different disciplines of critical animal studies, critical management studies and ecosophy (Guattari 1992) through a marriage, not so much of convenience but of serendipity, we suggest ways to challenge damaging organisational practices, especially those contained within the powerful animal-industrial complex (henceforth AIC). We also explore how different forms of *agnoses* (ignorance) are fundamental for the survival of the AIC, while simultaneously closing down posthuman, alternative, or necessary ‘truths’ about our place in a

wider entangled network. The latter could be harnessed as antidotes, to both anthropocentrism and the (neglected) problem of speciesism, to promote an awakening, or reconstitution, of how to live a good and sustainable life alongside the Others with whom we share our planet. In short, this chapter provides support and momentum for transforming our scholarly work into growing a theoretical and practical field of ‘multispecies organization studies’ as suggested by Coulter (2022: ?).

Asymmetrical Animal-Human Relationships

The animals of the world exist for their own reasons. They were not made for humans any more than black people were made for white, or women were created for men (Walker 1982: 14)

We have sketched out how the current pandemic has its roots located in an anthropocentric preoccupation with exclusively human concerns. Notwithstanding the efforts of the animal rights, vegan and environmental movements, the dominant historical trajectory has been the accelerating instrumentalisation of the planet and the life it sustains, as a resource pool to be drained solely for human benefit. Paula Arcari argues that the COVID-19 pandemic ‘should be a moment that instigates serious reflection on our profligate use and careless treatment of other animals’ (2021: 187). However, at the time of writing the experience of COVID-19 has not been marked by a thoroughgoing process of human self-reflection on the damage wrought by this historical intensification of anthropocentrism. Conversely, discourses foregrounding human health above any other consideration predominate (Taylor et al. 2021). In many cases, the agnoscs that preceded the pandemic have intensified. This has included relative inattention to millions of laboratory animals sacrificed in pursuit of COVID-19 vaccines, abandoned companion animals used and then discarded as temporary sops for lockdown-induced loneliness, and the millions of victims that are one consequence of “‘meat”¹ packing’ being declared ‘essential’ work. Human supremacism was perhaps nowhere more starkly illustrated than in the mass murder of millions of nonhuman animals held captive in ‘fur farms’, shortening their already truncated and immiserated lives (Taylor et al. 2021).

The AIC is the anthropocentric ‘organisation’ par excellence, insofar as it represents the conceit that humans are the sole legitimate organisers – mostly for profit motives – of the lives and deaths of the other inhabitants of the planet. In other words, the AIC is the inverse of Alice Walker’s famous quotation that opens this section; its anthropocentric commitment to subjugating nonhuman animals to human interests is the basis of the abyssal asymmetry of power that characterises human-nonhuman animal relations. In the context of critical animal studies, the term AIC was coined by anthropologist Barbara Noske in 1989, indicating the extent to which nonhuman animal exploitation was industrialised as well as organised by interlocked state and non-state actors in a ‘complex’. More recently, sociologist Richard Twine defined the AIC as a ‘partly opaque and multiple set of networks and relationships between the corporate (agricultural)

¹ In this chapter we place ‘meat’ (and like terms) in quotation marks, to denote its status as a euphemism for the flesh of nonhuman victims of the AIC. The ubiquity of such euphemisms are intrinsic to the perpetuation of agnoscs that obscure the anthropocentric roots of zoonotic disease.

sector, governments, and public and private science. With economic, cultural, social and affective dimensions it encompasses an extensive range of practices, technologies, images, identities and markets' (2012: 23). Simply put, Big Agriculture has vested interests in securing their business as usual through, and beyond the current pandemic, turning animal bodies into profitable commodities via the production of agnoses, and adiaphorization (Clarke and Knights 2021) regarding pain and death, complacency and exceptionalism.

A key problem in challenging this state of affairs is how the consumption of animal products has taken on a sedimented sense of being 'natural', as ever greater quantities of consumption have become normalised. The more animal products are consumed, the more profits can be generated from them. such that normalising their consumption right from childhood makes good business sense (Cole and Stewart 2014). To this end Big Agriculture pours huge resources into marketing, shaping our tastes through the manipulation of the symbolic meanings of animal products, and by conferring an aura of high status, luxury and the good life, despite mass production cheapening the products (and nonhuman animals' lives). Alongside the AIC, such endeavours are supported by the media and the state, through direct promotion (Molloy 2011; Nibert 2016) or tacitly via nutrition guidelines, education curricula or school meals. The nexus of shared AIC interests creates and sustains 'invented needs' (Marcuse (2002 [1964]) for animal products. One example is the hegemonic assumption that dogs must eat flesh-based 'pet food', which now accounts for nearly 25% of flesh product consumption (Ward and Oven 2019). The flipside of the promotion of animal products is the denial of the harms they cause, to humans (chronic diseases of consumption, and as we'll see, zoonotic diseases); to the planet (climate change, deforestation, pollution and the squandering of land, soil and fresh water) and most of all, to other animals themselves – the animals caught in the AIC, and those exterminated as their natural habitats are destroyed to sustain increasing demand.

Organizing Animal Resources and Ignoring the Consequences: A Sting in the Tale/Tail

I think we're challenged as mankind has never been challenged before to prove our maturity and our mastery, not of nature, but of ourselves (Carson 1962: 427)

If the conceit of human-animals (Clarke and Knights 2021) stretches towards an imaginary where the exploitation of nonhuman animals, and the biosphere more generally, has no repercussions then surely this erroneous view must now be unravelling? (Wright and Nyberg, 2015). In spite of mounting evidence concerning our anthropogenic practices and their effects (e.g forest fires, rising tides, species extinction, plastic pollution, global heating, melting ice caps and the current COVID-19 pandemic), it remains unclear as to if, rather than when, there will be any cessation in our hubris that *we* are masters of the universe (Plumwood 2002).

Anthropogeny

Depicted elsewhere as 'the revenge of Gaia' – describing a time when the Earth fights back (Lovelock 2007), Michael Moore, director of '*Planet of the Humans*', suggests that COVID-19 should be viewed as a form of moratorium, as though 'Mother Nature has put us in the time-

out room’ to consider our actions (The Hill 2020). Notwithstanding our reservations in terms of how both Lovelock and Moore construct ‘nature’ as somehow separate from human, which itself is surely part of the problem, we concur that anthropocentric practices of organizing and exploiting so-called resources have serious and *known* consequences, even if this knowledge is not widely shared. One such consequence created the conditions of possibility for COVID-19 to emerge. Zoonotic disease² is reported to account for 60% of known human infectious disorders, but new and emerging zoonoses are increasing in frequency and severity and responsible for 75% of all novel diseases (Morse et al. 2012). Without radical change, requiring new and ‘ambitious lines of enquiry’ (UNEP 2020: 4), additional pathogenic diseases – especially if they cannot be treated through antibiotics – are likely to engender even more lethal pandemics, with possible death rates exceeding 50% for those infected (Smart and Smart 2017; Greger 2020). As the next pandemic waits in the wings, the inseparable, entangled issues of climate change promise other horrific events, even extinction, unless ‘humans are capable of stemming their drive to species suicide’ (Chomsky 2021).

Considering such prophecies of omnicide from zoonotic pathogens, and/or climate disaster, perhaps the most vital question for organizational scholars is ‘*how can we stop ourselves returning again to a similar situation in the future?*’. Institutions such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) have already identified and provided ample empirical evidence concerning the destructive consequences of specific contemporary ways of organizing, particularly in relation to the treatment of nonhuman animals. In their report ‘*Preventing the Next Pandemic: Zoonotic diseases and how to break the chain of transmission*’ (UNEP 2020), they identify seven drivers of zoonotic disease. All are anthropogenic,³ and linked with the AIC:

1. Increasing demand for animal protein
2. Unsustainable agricultural intensification
3. Increased use and exploitation of wildlife
4. Unsustainable utilization of natural resources accelerated by urbanization, land use change and extractive industries
5. Travel and transportation (humans and other animals)
6. Changes in food supply chain
7. Climate change

Quammen (2012) explains how these complex problems are primarily due to ‘the convergence of two [ecological and medical] forms of crisis on our planet’, such that when they ‘intersect, their joint consequences appear as a pattern of weird and terrible new diseases’ (p.39). Similarly, Smart and Smart describe zoonoses as emerging ‘from complex constellations of very disparate influences’ (2017: 33) that are already well documented, which demonstrates how the emergence of COVID-19 was expected, rather than exceptional. As no single driver of zoonotic disease alone can explain the emergence of COVID, explanations must necessarily be nuanced

² Zoonotic disease is where infectious diseases in nonhuman animals cross over or ‘jump’ to humans and infect them. Many zoonotic diseases are potentially lethal.

³ Relating to, or as a result of the activities of human beings in relation to ‘nature’

by incorporating a broad number of contributors. Nevertheless, we have already witnessed the (preferred) option of identifying something/someone to blame, through increased racial abuse towards Chinese nationals ‘responsibilised’ for the COVID outbreak (e.g. Elias et al. 2021).

Since all seven drivers of zoonotic disease are anthropogenic and relate to our treatment of nonhuman animals, it appears that governing authorities have learned few lessons over the last three decades. This is despite multiple zoonotic dress rehearsals, most notably: ‘mad cow’ disease (where herbivores were fed cows’ brains to become cannibals) (Adams 1997); AIDS; swine flu; avian flu; MARS; SARS; and Ebola. With future pandemics being predicted in terms of *when*, not *if* (Benatar 2007; Greger 2020; UNEP 2020) why do so few of us know about the risks concerning animals and pandemics, and why is this vital issue not being debated within the context of COVID-19? Even were we to ignore (how could we?) the suffering and anguish resulting from 3.1 million *confirmed* human deaths at the time of writing (29/4/2021), and move straight to the so-called rational bottom line, in economic terms the pandemic is devastating – estimated to be in the region of trillions of dollars. As prevention clearly seems preferable to any cure (UNEP 2020; Greger 2020), on this basis alone it is perplexing and unconscionable that transparent debate about risk factors and future pandemics have not taken place in the public domain. To explore the reason for this absence we revisit the intensive (and potentially dangerous) organisational practices underpinning the trillion USD of the animal-industrial complex (‘meat’ production alone is worth USD 1640 billion (OECD FAO 2021)), to examine how knowledge is unevenly disseminated.

Knowledge/Power relations

In their book *Agnology – the making and unmaking of ignorance*, Proctor and Scheibinger (2008) suggest that like knowledge, ignorance comes in various forms that are never natural or neutral but distributed in specific ways. In its purest and most basic form, ignorance is simply *knowledge-not-yet-discovered*, or an *absence-of-knowledge*, for example the question of what happens to us when we die. By contrast, the question of what causes a pandemic cannot be an *absence-of-knowledge*, since clear documented evidence from multiple peer-reviewed sources regarding the link between pandemic risk and the ways we treat and eat nonhuman animals existed long before COVID-19 broke (Smart and Smart 2017; Morse et al. 2012; Madhav et al. 2018). One of many examples, can be found within the article ‘*The Chickens Come Home to Roost*’ (Benatar 2007) warning us of the high probability that a zoonotic disease emerging from the wet markets in China could cause a pandemic. Of particular interest is the author’s observation about how the root cause is persistently sidestepped:

changing the way humans treat animals – [...] ceasing to eat them, or at the very least, radically limiting the quantity of them that are eaten – is largely off the radar as a significant preventive measure (Benatar 2007: 1545).

While there can be little doubt that such knowledge already existed, how many of us were aware of the risks associated with industrial farming? Since Benatar’s work was published, a full-blown global pandemic, with the most likely cause just as predicted has struck, so how has this changed our knowledge of human-animal relations? Greger writes:

In this new Age of Emerging Diseases, there are now billions of animals overcrowded and intensively confined in filthy factory farms for viruses to incubate and mutate within. Today's industrial farming practices have given viruses billions more spins at pandemic roulette. How can we stop the emergence of pandemic viruses in the first place? Whenever possible, *treat the cause* (Greger 2021: 1; our emphasis)

In the same 2007 publication, Benatar accurately prophesied how following an actual pandemic outbreak, public debate and discourse would focus almost exclusively on the creation and rollout of a vaccine scheme, largely because 'this relieves humans of any need to improve their treatment of animals at all' (p.1546). Tendencies towards *apathy* not only prevent us from taking action, for example considering alternatives such as plant-based food, but also prohibits us from examining the root cause of pandemic outbreaks and thereby sustains ignorance in relation to zoonotic risks associated with the mass consumption of 'meat'. The last 18 months of deep immersion in a global pandemic confirms that this debate remains firmly off the agenda (Taylor, 2021).

As we have argued, an *absence-of-knowledge* does not adequately account for this current state of affairs, so we must consider other explanations. Proctor suggests the term *absent knowledge* – the 'deliberate production of ignorance in the form of strategies to deceive' (2008: 8), which can be deliberately crafted, and used as both an '*active construct*' or '*strategic ploy*' (p.8) to intentionally censor, fail to disclose, or conceal information, for example those techniques used by the tobacco industry to stall empirical confirmation of the causal link between cigarettes and lung cancer. Similar tactics can be found on the topic of climate change and denialism funded by oil corporations, exploiting what Bowden et al. call 'the production of reflexive ignorance, which reinforces skepticism around scientific authority and defends particular economic interests' (2021: 397). All forms of absent knowledge can spread ignorance, through a variety of techniques including 'secrecy, stupidity, apathy, censorship, disinformation, faith, and forgetfulness' (Proctor 2008: 2), which must be actively and continually reinforced and remade, to prevent particular forms of knowledge becoming widely *knowable*.

Within the animal-industrial complex, the proven link between pandemics and our treatment of nonhuman animals could be construed as *concealed absent knowledge*, concerning the damaging, yet profitable organizational practices that OS scholars and lay persons have broadly failed to identify. Proctor states that 'many companies cultivate ignorance as a kind of insurance policy: if what you don't know can't hurt you' (2008: 25), but this is dangerous as it often serves to obfuscate a form of structured truth that should be interrogated. Regarding the AIC, we argue that our enemy is complacency and ignorance, while their allies are in *knowledge suppression*:

One of the best things modern animal agriculture has going for it is that most people...haven't a clue how animals are raised and 'processed.'the less the consumer knows... the better (Cheeke 2003)

In his book, *How Not To Die in a Pandemic*, later updated in an article, Greger describes Avian (or Bird) Flu as a far more lethal form of zoonotic disease than COVID-19, with the potential to kill being far higher than COVID-19, which he refers to as a mere 'dress rehearsal'.

Given the weight of scientific evidence establishing the link between our treatment of animals and the emergence of zoonotic disease, it is clear that those organising corporate slaughterhouses or industrial chicken factories in which animals/birds suffer, do so by taking *calculated risks*, rather than out of scientific ignorance. It has long been apparent that a lack of ventilation and space cause stress and lower immune systems in animals (Urrutia 1997), yet we continue to adopt a strategy of profit maximization simply because the cost of improvements might be outweighed by the loss in production (Bell et al., 2004). The process of manufacturing ignorance also requires the naturalization, the seduction and constitution of particular practices, such as eating ‘meat’-based junk food, as appearing to be so taken for granted that they lie beyond challenge. Consider this quote from the editor of *Poultry*:

I’m not as worried about the U.S. human population dying from bird flu, as I am that there will be no chicken to eat (Thaxton, 2005 as cited in Greger 2020: 336).

Organisations engaged in the AIC hope to externalise the risk of potential zoonoses on society and thereby escape accountability. As illustrated by COVID-19, this calculated risk has so far paid off, for when zoonotic disease morphs into global devastation the economic costs are shifted from the industry onto public health departments. In confining our explanations to the effects on people however, ‘many important features will be missed’ (Smart and Smart 2017: 27), not least the set of organising practices that will usher in the next pandemic, as well as ‘the ecological catastrophe into which we are hurtling on our present trajectory’ (chapter 2 of this book: ??). In a most anthropocentric manner, we declare ‘war’ on the coronavirus, while ignoring our own actions in bringing it into being, lest we must confront those uncomfortable changes required in enacting our daily lives. Partly through the perpetuation of different forms of *agnoses*, animal consumption is not only naturalised, habitual, and experienced by many as a – culturally constructed – pleasant gastronomical experience, it is also big business. For instance, the AIC through ‘meat’ production makes around USD1640 billion a year (OECD FAO 2021), not including the extremely profitable ‘pet’ food industry whose products are increasingly ‘meat’-based, and account for a staggering *one-quarter* of all the meat consumed in the United States, equivalent to the meat devoured by twenty-six million Americans’ (Ward and Oven 2019: ix).

We suggest that this might partly account for Benatar’s bewilderment as to why tackling the root cause is consistently off the radar. Further, we contend that profit and the protectionist practices by the agri-industry may also inform some of the perplexing contradictions found within the UNEP report, insofar as it clearly sets out 7 anthropogenic and zoonotic drivers of the pandemic, alongside 10 specific policy recommendations, yet is carefully crafted so that words such as ‘vegan’, ‘vegetarian’ ‘plant-based’ or even ‘reduced consumption of “meat”’ never feature explicitly. In addition, on page 32 of the report, concerns are expressed due to the ‘over-exploitation’, rather than the *exploitation of* animals, while simultaneously furnishing the reader with the Convention of Migratory Species statement – the biggest ‘threat affecting most species’ is their ‘consumptive use’ (UNEP 2020). This amplification and suppression of parts of the story are what Proctor describes as the uneven geographical and political distribution of knowledge because ‘like ignorance it occupies space and takes us down one path rather than another...has a face, a house and a price – there are people attached, institutions setting limits, and costs in the form of monies or opportunities lost’ (2008: 26).

While we would not go so far as to claim the UNEP report is a form of what Proctor (2008) calls ‘*alibi research*’ – that which purports to be studying the issue, but not really addressing it in practice – it is certainly a partial and anthropocentric view on how to maintain and regulate, rather than disband, particular harmful consumptive practices. For example, there is an inevitable emphasis on tightening regulations and inspection practices (which have already been proven not to be adhered to) by advocating a ‘*farm to fork*’ approach along the ‘*entire consumptive chain*’ for the purpose of ensuring that ingesting animals will not harm human-animals (UNEP 2020: 47; our emphasis). While the complex processes involved in transporting animals from their rearing location to the plate is problematised, it simultaneously normalises how billions of nonhuman animals are bred for the explicit purpose of ending up on our forks while ignoring the stressing and immune-lowering effects on them (O’Keefe 2005). What initially looks like an encouraging, evidenced-base reporting on the drivers of zoonotic disease, could also be interpreted as a set of anthropocentric recommendations and actions to sustain these exploitative practices. Perhaps the agenda becomes obvious when we notice that the report aims is to understand ‘the threats [zoonoses] pose to *human health*’ (UNEP 2020: 4; our emphasis).

Despite the UNEP’s declared intentions, does it satisfy the question of ‘how to minimize the risk of further devastating outbreaks?’ and pursue ‘an ambitious line of enquiry?’. We argue it does not, as it eschews more radical ways to ‘address the root causes’ of zoonotic emergence’ (UNEP 2020: 50) and fails to protect us from future threats. Moreover, the suggestions merely help us consume animals-as-resources while also identifying how this is risky and problematic. One effect is that the UNEP report contributes to a form of ‘reflexive ignorance’ (Bowden et al. 2021) by not addressing the central issue of the mass consumption of ‘meat’. Furthermore, the UNEP’s claim about the reduction of risk is disingenuous in that ‘according to the CDC, the leading candidate for the next pandemic is a bird flu virus known as H7 N9, which is a hundred times deadlier than COVID-19. With an apparent case fatality rate of nearly 40%... as a flu virus, [it] has the potential to blanket the globe’ (Greger 2021: 3). Were the report to sincerely follow an ambitious line of enquiry, it should at least consider a more radical rethink of human-animal relations; how we can reduce, even abolish, our routine practices of consuming nonhuman animal’s parts by replacing them with alternatives e.g. plant based products. Suggestions such as these would contribute to the alleviation of the zoonotic drivers referred to as 1, 2, 3, 5,6 and 7, and perhaps also number 4 (UNEP 2020: 15; Greger 2021). At the very least the UNEP report could have recognised that not radically transforming human animal relations – within the framework of the AIC – would involve reproducing the current level of zoonotic risk, identify default ‘no action’ strategies perpetuate and increase zoonotic threats.

Returning to Proctor’s ideas (2008) around knowledge and ignorance, we must pay attention to the questions they pose: ‘who is ignorant and why?’ and ‘what keeps ignorance in one place, and why?’. We have shown how this is not an *absence-of-knowledge-not-yet-discovered* because ‘the public health community has been shouting from the rooftops for years about the risks posed by factory farms’ (Greger 2021: n.p.). Rather it is a deliberate suppression of a lucid recognition of the risk of the AIC and its concomitant practices. In the final section of this chapter, in the context of ecosophy and MOS we briefly consider how to address the coalescence of the widespread and often deliberate ignorance vested on consumers, the protectionist mechanisms surrounding the AIC, and the anthropocentric tendencies underpinning our organisation of nonhuman animals and scholarly work.

Towards multispecies organization?

At the heart of our response to zoonoses and the other challenges humanity faces should be the simple idea that the health of humanity depends on the health of the planet and other species. If humanity gives nature a chance to breathe, it will be our greatest ally as we seek to build a fairer, greener and safer world. (UNEP 2020: 4)

While agreeing with the spirit and intention of this quote (which aims to move beyond the agnoscs strategies of the AIC which we discussed earlier), particularly the first part, we also recognise how it exemplifies precisely the anthropocentrism it might seek to avoid; the idea that as humans we can suddenly ‘take’ full and rational control of any remedial action required, while also deciding what a ‘fair’ world might look like, to who, and who for is highly problematic (e.g. chapter 1 of this book; Clarke and Knights 2021; Barthold and Bloom 2020). In other words, now that zoonotic disease (and climate issues) threaten the very survival of human-animals we must take urgent action and assert our autonomy, primarily *to save ourselves*. However, in acknowledging how we have already made a mess of ‘controlling’ environmental resources by extracting far more than we have contributed, this ontological divide between nature and humans is sustained (Bonneuil and Fressoz 2016), and we are once again urged to rely on the same (slightly altered) practices to remedy the very problem we created. Further, the use of the word ‘nature’ constitutes it as somehow *apart from* ‘humanity’, which feeds the fundamental misrecognition of ourselves as discrete autonomous individuals (Lacan 2006), rather than acknowledging how we are always already entangled and ‘as interrelated and indispensable to each other as the different organs in our body’ (Watts, 2011; see also Latour, 2017). As Butler (2021: n.p.) observes ‘Who now could deny that to be a body at all is to be bound up with other living creatures, with surfaces, and the elements, including the air that belongs to no one and everyone?’, and yet the acknowledgement of being vulnerable to zoonotic disease easily punctures our fragile constructions of detachment. It also reminds us that we are animals, just like other animals, and there is no biological barrier between the pangolin and us, an inconvenient truth that our anthropocentrism seeks to dampen or obscure.

In response to agnoscs about the AIC and zoonotic diseases, one alternative way of viewing the world would be to amplify ‘ecosophical’ (Bignall et al. 2016) perspectives that radically ‘challenge the conceptual foundations upon which modern Western philosophy rests’ (p.456). In recognising how each and every part of the planet forms the whole, these provide an antidote to the anthropocentric tendencies of viewing ourselves at the top of a hierarchy, entitled to treat everything and everyone as a means to an end; even when this involves damaging the earth system that sustains all forms of life. Posthumanism (Wolfe 2010) is one such ecosophical perspective, for it respects diversity and difference (Diprose 1994) and seeks to dismantle dominant hierarchies that lead to Othering and violence, in order to facilitate ethical and embodied engagement with the Other, and all the others. Without such embodiment (e.g. Braidotti 2011; Pullen and Rhodes 2014), there is a danger that everything, and everyone is capable of being transformed into a mere object, as evidenced by the neoliberal-capitalist ideologies of ‘service benefit’ accounting (Bignall et al. 2016) and towards a solely ‘logical control of the world’ (Negri 2004: 4). Were we to recognise that each and every species within our universe is *always already*

mutually entangled, (Barad 2007: 141), we would be no more inclined to inflict harm on others (be it animal, vegetable or mineral) than pit our own bodily organs against each other. For this reason, a posthumanist perspective has potential to provide an alternative and beneficial body of knowledge to address particular agnoses' techniques that have brought us the anthropocene, particularly misinformation, about ecological practices that need not inflict harm, violence or disaster on others (Braidotti 2019; Smart and Smart 2017).

Indigenous philosophies provide another ecosophical approach (Guattari 2000) that is arguably more radical than posthumanism insofar as it does not originate from the hegemonic Western post-enlightenment conception of human-animals. Notably, Bignall et al. write that indigenous philosophies 'provide a long tested alternative to Western humanism' and offer relevant remedies for life in the anthropocene because of their 'more than human' perspective, taking as its starting point the belief that human-animals are 'inseparable from a constitutive connection to the natural world' (2016: 457) through a 'sacred ecology' (p.471). Unlike Western humanism, indigenous philosophies experience their relationship with mountains and rivers not merely as a contextual backdrop, but rather as a *living* form of interconnectivity, to the extent that its inhabitants claim to 'experience the wellness or ill-health of the environment as an aspect of their own cultural health as an Indigenous Nation' (p.469; see also Descola 2013).

Arguably, ecosophical approaches would have the potential to inform organisational studies of nonhuman animals, which have mostly failed to interrogate the AIC and are therefore complicit in the oppressive practices of speciesism that underpin the latter (Noske 1989). A marginalised group which has contributed to the study of speciesism in organisations (e.g. Labatut et al. 2016; Cunha et al. 2019; Clarke and Knights 2019, 2021; Krawczyk and Barthold 2018) has not received the attention that MOS bestows on other 'isms', and complicitous silence sustains platitudes of corporate social responsibility and business ethics, obfuscating, rather than radically challenging normative and taken-for-granted modes of anthropocentrism. The consequences of this neglect are significant in rendering us both complacent and ignorant about the organisation of animals and their effects in terms of 'corporate irresponsibility' (Mena et al. 2016).

On a final note, the knowledge produced in these encounters might help resist the construction and weaponisation of ignorance in relation to nonhuman animal exploitation, through the dissemination of academic knowledge in the form of public debate, or for example, through universities' curricula.

Conclusion

But although the logos is common, most people live as if they had their own private understanding" (Cited in Johnstone 2014: 4)

In this chapter we argue that it is incumbent on MOS scholars to engage with important and interdisciplinary challenges that have effects at a local, national and global level. Further, by exploring how zoonotic disease is transmitted, as just one consequence of our treatment and organisation of nonhuman animals, it behoves us to 'unmake' the ignorance surrounding the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic in an attempt to stall or eradicate the certainty of future pandemics. This is perfectly feasible, since these are problems that have both their origins and

solutions in human behaviour, but it must include being cognisant and sharing our understanding of *all* the social, economic and health costs that flow from the AIC. This is vital because not only have states and corporations failed to prepare and protect the world from a crisis they knew was coming, they also knowingly enabled it, by ignoring warnings and through the adoption of profit-maximising strategies in relation to mass scale rearing and slaughtering of nonhuman animals. It is clear we cannot rely on these organisations to keep us safe, but in turn they are shielded by our ignorance, partly through their denial of responsibility but also by withholding knowledge to ensure it is *absent*, rather than knowable.

Something that could be explored in terms of academic knowledge is critical *or agonistic dialogue* (Parker and Parker, 2017) with alternative organizations, which develop processes that are more ethical towards other animals and would thereby mark a departure from the AIC's practices. As one example, this could include vegan organisations that develop economic logics that enable distance from the AIC. Further avenues might include NGOs and social movement organizations (e.g. animal rights activists) that aim to resist the hegemony of the AIC and its effects, in terms of current agnoses. Critical dialogue should include other animals within the framework of socio-material processes (Kalonaityte, 2018; Barthold and Bloom, 2020), as opposed to an anthropocentric conception of dialogue only involving rational white men (e.g. the US Founding fathers). We are also in a privileged position to discuss speciesism and zoonosis with students, which could be disseminated through graduate and post-graduate curricula.

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