

Mentalities and the Global COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

This article explores the interplay between «mentality» and historical distortion, emphasizing the significance of understanding diverse mentalities in the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Linking «mentality» to a general «attitude,» the discussion covers contemporary issues such as racism and authoritarianism, situating them within the pandemic’s framework. The analysis integrates classical sociological perspectives, including Symbolic Interactionism and theories of solidarity. Examining the pandemic’s impact, the article applies theoretical frameworks of risk and uncertainty, emphasizing disruptions to social interactions. It explores the role of information systems, digital technology, and media in shaping perceptions and disseminating misinformation. The latter part investigates global disinformation, resistance, and protests, highlighting varied responses influenced by regional, national, and local conditions.

Keywords

mentality, symbolic interactionism, solidarity, COVID-19, risk, uncertainty, disinformation, global protests

Introduction

Understanding the origins and trajectories of diverse mentalities, or Weltanschauungen on a grand scale, holds significant value. Such comprehension has the potential to mitigate human conflicts, particularly wars arising from opposing interpretations of situations, as exemplified by Samuel Huntington’s incivil «Clash of Civilizations» (Huntingto, 1996). As a more seasoned scholar, I aim to contribute insights rooted in the pre-post-modern Dark

Ages of Sociology, emphasizing the enduring relevance of social and cultural structures. As a pragmatist, for me theory must have a contextual anchor, here I will discuss these interrelated issues in the context of the global COVID-19 Pandemic. To begin, for me, the term "mentality" is best described and discussed as a general "attitude." As it was most often described in the field of social psychology, attitudes are "propensity to act." In this regard, we might think of such current concerns in the United States of America as anti-Black and Asian Racism, Anti-Semitism, Authoritarianism, and other ideologies as negative attitudes or mentalities. Like almost everything else in society, such harmful mentalities/attitudes are created and maintained by a myriad of social and cultural values. Therefore, they are situational, in that their enactment is influenced, if not determined, by the social context or environment in which they take place.

In a nutshell, situationally-informed approaches to the analysis of qualitative data, such as ethnography, are firmly connected to grounded theory and methods, Symbolic Interactionism, and more recently with post-structuralist works such as those of Roland Barthes (1979), Jean Baudrillard (1998), Jacques Derrida (2002), Umberto Eco (1984), Michel Foucault (1995), and Julia Kristeva (1982). As one of the founders of Symbolic Interactionism, a theory in which I am immersed, W.I. Thomas and D. S. Thomas (1928) explained in what became known as the "Thomas Theorem," "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences," (pp. 571-572; see also Thomas, 2002) More simply put: when people believe things to be true (even if they are objectively not) they will be real in the consequences.

According to Charlotte Nickerson (2021) Indiana University was one of the three major Schools of Symbolic Interactionism. The others were the Chicago and Iowa Schools. However, I and my professors there, such as Alfred Lindesmith, were more modest in suggesting that SI at IU was an offshoot of the Chicago School. More to the point of mental attitudes, when I was in graduate school at IU in the 1960s, my Social Psychology professor, Frank Westie, was an expert on race relations. As to attitudes and the power of the situation, his research with Melvin Lafleur (Defleur & Westie, 1958) demonstrated that there was not a perfectly positive correlation between the attitudes expressed by people towards a subject and their behaviors toward the same subject. For example, in reference to intergroup race relations, in an important study of housing discrimination a sample of real estate agents were interviewed to assess their negative attitudes (negative biases) toward Black clients. (Defleur & Westie, 1963) Not so surprisingly, agents who did NOT express negative attitudes toward Black clients during interviews, were just as likely as those who did, NOT to give Black clients the same availability options as they gave to White clients. Essentially, the situation of answering questions during the interview was different from giving clients information. This insight into the primacy of actual social behaviors and actions has influenced all my subsequent academic and activist endeavors.

Many years later (1977), while conducting activist-research on racial discrimination against African Americans in Brooklyn, New York, I spoke with a neighbor of mine, Mel Leventhal, who had served as lead counsel for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Legal Defense Fund in Mississippi during the tumultuous years of 1969-1974. At the time we were living in a neighborhood that was stigmatized because it had undergone residential racial change, from predominately White to predominately Black. In the course of our discussion of the racial bias and discrimination from which our neighborhood was suffering, he explained that the NAACP's practical policy goals were less aimed toward changing people's negative attitudes and negative stereotypes of Black Americans than it was preventing biased people from harmful actions against Black Americans. He explained that this legal strategy was an outgrowth of the experiences and ideas of Thurgood Marshall (1908-1993). Marshall was the United States Supreme Court's first African-American Justice, and was noted for having successfully argued several cases before the Supreme Court, including

the momentous *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) while he was head of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. *Brown v. Board of Education* made illegal the *de facto* racial discrimination in public facilities that was rampant in the American South and only less so in Northern States, such as New York. This priority of preventing, or changing, actions as opposed to changing attitudes was a powerful lesson that I learned which influenced my own future activism in and out of academe. As a result, I cared less about what people thought, or said they thought, about others but to concentrate on how they behaved/acted towards others.

(Despite my reservations about the use of racial terms, it should be noted that Melvyn Rosenman Leventhal (white), was the spouse of the renowned author Alice Walker, (black) for a decade. They held the distinction of being the inaugural legally wed interracial couple in the history of Mississippi.)

Method

This research adopts a multi-disciplinary approach encompassing sociological, psychological, and media studies methodologies to comprehensively examine the intertwined dynamics of «mentality» and the distortion of history within the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Literature Review:** A thorough review of existing literature on mentality, symbolic interactionism, and theories of solidarity serves as the foundation. This establishes a theoretical framework for understanding mental attitudes, historical distortion, and their relevance in contemporary society.
- **Case Study Analysis:** Utilizing case studies, particularly focusing on instances of racism, authoritarianism, and misinformation during the pandemic, we extract real-world manifestations of mentalities. These cases provide insights into the situational nature of attitudes and their impact on behavior.
- **Theoretical Application:** Applying classic sociological theories, including those of Max Weber (1922/1966) and Emile Durkheim (1977), helps contextualize societal responses to the pandemic. The analysis explores how differing rationalities and types of solidarity contribute to conflicting mentalities, hindering collaboration in addressing global challenges.
- **Global Protest Tracking:** Incorporating data from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace's Global Protest Tracker to examine protests related to the pandemic worldwide. This quantitative approach enables the identification of patterns, regional variations, and the role of societal factors in shaping resistance movements.
- **Media Analysis:** A media analysis component investigates the role of information systems, digital technology, and traditional media in disseminating information and misinformation during the pandemic. This involves scrutinizing key narratives, identifying influencers, and assessing the impact on public perception.

Through the integration of these methodological components, this paper aims to provide an understanding of how mentalities, influenced by historical distortion and societal factors, shape responses to the challenges posed by the global COVID-19 pandemic. Let's move into classical theoretical underpinnings essential for grasping socially problematic attitudes and mentalities.

Results and Discussion

From a modernist perspective, much of the conflict and competition over ideas and ideologies in contemporary society revolve around conflicting notions of rationality and irrationality.

What seems to us to be irrational in the attitudes and actions of people who are not like us, or with whom we disagree, can be completely rational for them, and vice versa. Simply-speaking, Max Weber (1922/1966) categorized social actions into four "ideal" types: "instrumentally rational" where the conduct is oriented toward a specific goal, "value-rational," where the goal is the value itself, and "affectual," where the goal or outcome is emotional and "traditional" where the conduct is habitual. Of course, these were not exhaustive. Weber also offered three bases for the legitimacy of social authority Traditional, Legal-Rational, and Charismatic, which need no further elaboration as they generally correspond with the ideal types of rationalities. In these regards, it is easy to see how these differing bases for "common knowledge" can result in radically conflicting mentalities, and how difficult, if not impossible, it can be to come to agreement on and to collaborate on important issues. Of course, in real life, perfect correspondence within or between these ideal types is seldom found. For example, we can see this in the influence of traditions even within highly bureaucratized organizations, and the bureaucratization of traditional values. We should also note here that different bureaucrats within the same organization can hold different traditional values. Such intersectionality is increasingly the case in our globalized and increasingly digitalized economies. Obviously, these competing structures are impediments to building solidarity in complex societies in which the number of permutations and combinations of mentalities/attitudes/ideologies/beliefs, etc., is vast. As in the normalization of intra and international conflicts in today's tempestuous world, bringing people together, building solidarity, and finding common bases for agreement is major problem.

Again, a classic reference is pertinent. Like Weber (1922/1966), Emile Durkheim (1893) had an over-generalized set of conditions for societal cohesiveness (social glue). The first instance, historically as well as logically, was Mechanical Solidarity, or the social cohesiveness of small, undifferentiated societies derived from the homogeneity of individuals, who people feel connected to each other due to similar work, education, religious training, and lifestyle. This type of solidarity is usually found "traditional" and small-scale societies. For example, in less complex tribal societies, kinship and familial networks are the social adhesives. Durkheim also described Organic Solidarity that can exist (note "can" exist) in and societies with complex divisions of labor. The cohesiveness derives from the necessary interdependence of those engaged in specialized labor and other important social relations. Here difference requires complementary (symbiotic) relations which he saw as developing in the complex divisions of labor found in "modern" and "industrial" societies (Durkheim, 1893). As is true of Weber's typologies, there are degrees as well as mixing of potential types of solidarity in actual societies. For example, within a modern industrial society, traditional groups and systems can, and do exist; in some cases, even as parallel social worlds. For example, while some forms of organic solidarity might dominate, in corporate business worlds, at the same time corporate executives might go home to their very traditional domiciles, families, places of worship, etc... At macro-societal levels, we can think of the difference between "instrumentally rational" economic bases for warfare versus "value-rational," ethnic ones, and consider how do these structural differences impact both the prevention as well as the solution of large-scale conflicts.

As a sort of theoretical *déjà vu*, Emile Durkheim (1893), also had in-between state of affairs which he obviously was witnessing in the 19th Century mega-technological and political transitions. While society is in flux, norms and values, weaken and become less effective as mechanisms of social control. New norms and values, such as those needed for the future (ideally organic) basis for solidarity, are either not yet developed or widely shared. The term for this socio-cultural vacuum is "anomie," which is often translated as "normlessness," even though society is never completely without rules (Merton, 1968) This unstable state of affairs seems to be permanent in postmodern society, and therefore it is impossible to single out the dominant discourse. I am certain that we currently exist during a time of global anomie,

and perhaps I have been living in it for my entire life. I guess, I have to get used to it, as I occasionally ask myself “What is solidarity today? As it seems that people no longer have shared definitions in order to justify personal or group sacrifices for the common good. But, as we are still social beings, we must belong to something connect with others. For too many people, this need is resolved by allegiance to authoritarian personalities or ideas which are both cause and effects of historical distortions and propaganda; as in contemporary Fake News and disinformation.

The Case of the Global COVID-19 Pandemic

Mahmoud Dhaouadi (2021) argues that the pandemic has “struck at the most basic social parameter of human collective existence: social interaction.” “Stay home” became the key global message, and as a result, normal social interactions between individuals, groups, collectivities, and societies around the world have been damaged in all societies. For example, in individualistic western advanced societies social media networks have hardened the core of that individualism. Anti-corona measures favoring social isolation also strengthened individualism and loneliness in non-Western societies.

Reviewing an enormous library of studies about responses to the global pandemic it seems that two major theoretical themes dominate; that of Risk (Beck, 2017) and Uncertainty (Luhmann, 1979; Bauman, 2000). Jens Zinn (2021) discussed the main theoretical approaches such as rational to non-rational approaches to risk in everyday life, othering social groups, inequality, cosmopolitanism, legitimacy, as well as the fake news and conspiracy theories that have also infect public discourses around the world. As to risks, Saskia Sassen (2007) argued that risks have become even more complex due to our reliance on the dominant techno-scientific rationality and related trust in expert systems (Giddens, 1990). Ironically, contemporary psychic investments in scientific expertise have not eliminated the unpredictability of danger, as it seems that both distrust and uncertainty (Luhmann, 1979; Bauman, 2000) have increased. Few will argue today that the processes that constitute globalization have not made society riskier. Juergen Habermas (1998) might ascribe this uneasy attitude toward the increased differences encountered in everyday life as a new cosmopolitanism. And as Ulrich Beck has averred, these collective risks cross social as well as territorial borders and therefore we must adapt by becoming more accustomed to them (Beck, 2017; Adam & Beck, 2000; Tooze, 2020).

According to Beck, as modern societies shifted from industrial society risks became endemic due to natural and human-made changes. Of course, risks and related uncertainties, are not limited to environmental and health domains but inhere to other changes and hazards such as fluid employment patterns, heightened job insecurity and the waning influence of tradition and custom in family patterns as well as personal relations. The management of risk is the major feature of what some refer to as post-modern society. The Covid 19 pandemic (in our neoliberal world) is merely another risk, with its many complication permutations and combinations, to be managed in our Global Risk Society. Marina Ciampi (2021) noted that the pandemic has changed even the common ways we live in our domestic worlds by modifying the understandings we have of concepts such as distance/proximity, public/private, community/society, inside/outside, and open/closed. Thusly, the pandemic resulted in a “New Relationship between body and space.”

Risks and uncertainly are enhanced by information systems, and help explain why even the most outrageous statements about Covid 19 are so commonly taken as truth or facts. In this regard, Manuel Castells (1996) noted that because power is information, societal “Spaces of Places” have been superseded by networks of information or “Spaces of Flows, which he (naively/hopefully) felt had liberating potential. As we have seen however, these spaces also

have been essentially appropriated by the usual suspects. Advanced digital technology has made it easier to produce false reality, fake news, alternative facts, and the perfect consumer. With a faint nod to Jean Baudrillard (1998), these we might see that simulation technologies also makes it possible to commodify "virtually" everything including Pandemics. Social, and non-social media like *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram*, etc... and virtual emporia like *Amazon*, produce followers (buyers) as well as influencers (sellers). Users, knowingly or not, share their personal data which are used to produce algorithms to which selective information flows. A major function of the mass media is the sale of advertising and the consumers themselves; simulated as algorithms. This process creates perfect consumers, who are themselves consumable. In fact, algorithms make it possible for us to consume each other and ourselves (auto-cannibalism). As opposed to George Orwell's *1984* and Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* because people have learned to share their personal data, we have moved toward an oppressive *voluntary*, as opposed to *involuntary*, surveillance society or panopticon (Bradbury, 1953; Orwell, 1949). (For panopticon see: Jeremy Bentham, and Foucault, 1995). Fake news and misinformation regarding COVID-19 has also been manufactured and disseminated in more traditional as well as cable television, radio, and print media. Speaking of such "freedom," for Juergen Habermas (1975), social structures are free from constraint only when for all participants there is a symmetrical distribution of chances to select and employ speech acts, and an effective equality of chances to assume dialogue roles. "Truth," therefore, cannot be analyzed independently of "freedom" and "justice."

Since we base our decisions on the information we have learned, even the freedom of free choices is problematic. Much of this intentionally misguiding information should simply be seen as propaganda. A half century ago, Alfred McClung Lee and Elizabeth Brian Lee wrote *The Fine Art of Propaganda* (1939). The Lees saw propaganda as not limited to ideology but as part any individual's or a group's drive to advance what it regards as its own interests. In essence, propaganda is advertising (Duggal, n.d.). Ever since Plato's "Socratic Method," most educators and learning theorists have understood the importance of uncertainty in the form of questions or doubt for effective learning. Tomatsu Shibutani (1966) in his study of rumor analyzed a common manifestation of uncertainty. Shibutani studied the development of rumors in 60 case studies of historically ambiguous events. He found that they were not, as many would think, irrational, pathological social traits, but the result the search for meaningful interpretations, especially when questions are raised in stressful situations. As already noted, in the 1980s, Ulrich Beck (1992) wrote "Modern society has become a risk society in the sense that it is increasingly occupied with debating, preventing and managing risks that it itself has produced." Like Castell's misplaced optimism in spaces of flows, Beck saw in this new problem an opportunity for freedom from structural constraints and an opportunity for new forms of solidarity like the as of yet unfulfilled promise of Emile Durkheim's "Organic Solidarity" (Durkheim, 1997).

In "Why people believe Covid conspiracy theories: could folklore hold the answer?" Leach and Probyn (2021) wrote about researchers who used artificial intelligence (AI) and a model of Danish witchcraft folklore, to analyse thousands of social media posts to map the web of onnections underpinning coronavirus conspiracy theories. The tool enabled them to find the key people, things and relationships and piece together the underlying stories in coronavirus conspiracy theories. Bill Gates was discovered to be the reason why conspiracy theorists connect 5G technology to the virus. His world-wide prominence in computer technology and vaccination programs closed the link. Timothy Tangherlini, one of the researchers whose specialism is Danish folklore, saw a lesson for today in how conspiratorial witchcraft folklore took hold in the 16th and 17th centuries (Leach, & Probyn, 2021).

Whereas in the past, witches were accused of using herbs to create potions that caused miscarriages, today we see stories that Gates is using coronavirus vaccinations to sterilise people. A version of this story that omits Gates but claims the vaccines have caused men's testicles to swell, making them infertile, was repeated by American rapper Nicki Minaj (Leach, & Probyn, 2021).

A less amusing understanding of the phenomenon was provided almost a century ago by Bronislaw Malinowski who recognized among primitive people and their primitive “science,” that magic, religion, and myth all developed to explain the unexplainable. Their social function, or role, was to help social groups to deal with stress, disruptions of social order, and to deal with unpredictable circumstances and control, at least symbolically, uncontrollable situations (Malinowski, 1948).

Max Fisher (2022), writing in *The New York Times* commented on the epidemic of misleading revisionist history as something that is plaguing both autocracies and democracies. In this regard the practice is aimed not simply to “correct” the past but to shape the future of uneasy societies. One cited research study found the most effective propaganda messages use appeals to group identities such as ethnicity, race or religion. For example, Christian Americans who were told that Christianity itself was under attack, were more likely to accept American historical and political disinformation. In this regard, University of California propaganda scholar Andrew T. Little (2017) noted: “We want to believe that we are capable and decent, that our friends and favored relatives share these traits, and that the groups we belong to are on the right side of conflicts.”

With a sharp focus on Italy, Mariella Nocenzi (2002) analyzed the evolution of “risk society” in Italy in the 1990s through a wide spectrum of sociological literatures. She drew out relevant ideas that can help us to understand the ways that risk, uncertainty, and societal evolution are inexorably intertwined from theorists beginning with Auguste Comte. Because we increasingly live in societies dominated by mass communication as a force independent of its content, Nocenzi showed how risk is conveyed to the masses via the media through the prisms of influentials in various fields. Special notice was taken of how public trust in the source of information is undermined when, like today, “scientific” experts disagree with each other. Her timely examples were about the risk to people of eating genetically modified food products and the danger of microwave towers, but can easily be applied to pandemic misinformation. As today in America, the ever-wary Italian public then already had come to mistrust economic, political and mass media institutions; therefore, uncertainty generated even more risk and added to the growth of a culture where risk comes to be expected as an aspect of everyday life. Observing how the Covid 19 pandemic has impacted social life in Italy, Giuliana Prato (2020) noted some interesting, and puzzling, contradictions. On one hand it brought out a shared sense of civic responsibility. On the other hand, according to Prato, governments appeared use the ‘state of emergency’ to establish new forms of control (for a more local perspective see Krase & Krase, 2019).

Disinformation and Resistance around the World

Disinformation about COVID 19 and resistance to public and private prevention and mitigation efforts is a global problem. Although they share many features in common, their iterations can vary greatly because of different regional, national, and local political, economic, and cultural conditions. Fabrizio Di Mascio et al. (2021) focused on false information “...deliberately created and disseminated for economic gain or to intentionally deceive the public.” and toward which The EU and national governments have responded. European social media companies, for example, have come under attack for allowing disinformation to circulate

during the 2016 Brexit referendum vote, the 2017 French presidential and 2019 European Parliament elections. They also noted that the uncertainty surrounding the novel coronavirus gave rise to an "infodemic" characterized by a mix of facts, rumors, and speculations, which in turn created the realization that governments needed to better communicate with their publics (Coombs, 2020). At first, governments promoted improved media literacy and visibility of authoritative content, these softer efforts were not successful and resulted in stricter approaches. Fabrizio Di Mascio et al's analyses of EU national policies demonstrated a shift to Covid-19 disinformation, because disinformation made efforts to achieve public acceptance of mitigation measures and vaccination more difficult. The infodemic peaked when online spread of false claims so great they could no longer be ignored. "The urgency of the crisis led policymakers to focus on the platforms supplying disinformation in the short-term to provide the impression that they are quickly responding to the infodemic while measures focusing on the demand for disinformation have remained comparatively weak as they pay off in the long run" (Di Mascio, 2021).

Some mention of the more dangerous claims must be made in the context of misinformation. Arwa Mahdawi (2022) provided some rather bizarre, examples of misinformation about Covid cures, stressing the importance of holding spreaders of dangerous falsehood to account which undermine trust in vaccines. Among the examples she cites are the following:

Christopher Key, the leader of an anti-Covid-19 vaccine group called the "Vaccine Police", posted videos online extolling the health benefits of what he described as "urine therapy". According to the wizard of wee, there is "tons and tons of research ... [and] peer-reviewed published papers on urine"; so if you do your own pee-search you will discover it is God's own antidote to Covid-19. "This vaccine is the worst bioweapon I have ever seen," Key said. "I drink my own urine!"

Former US President Donald Trump had barely distanced himself from statements that malaria treatment could cure Covid -19 before moving on to a more unorthodox suggestion.

On Thursday night White House officials shared pretty predictable findings: that sunlight and common cleaning supplies can kill a virus within minutes when applied to different surfaces. But then the president had to take it to another level: "I see the disinfectant where it knocks it out in a minute," Trump said. "One minute! And is there a way we can do something, by an injection inside or almost a cleaning? Because you see it gets in the lungs and it does a tremendous number on the lungs, so it'd be interesting to check that. So, that you're going to have to use medical doctors with, but it sounds interesting to me" (Noor, 2020)

Poppy Noor (2020) also noted the Ivermectin-mania of 2021 as well as conservative media personalities such as Fox News's Tucker Carlson touting Viagra as a potential cure, as well as Candace Owens and Infowars founder Alex Jones who hype colloidal silver as a virus preventive. Mahdawi (2020) wrote however, that despite these dangerous ideas, pharmaceutical companies and wealthy nations, by hoarding vaccines, were the greatest contributors global spread of Covid-19.

On November 21, 2021 the British Broadcasting Company International News program reported on "Huge protests across Europe" over new Covid restrictions. In response to the restrictions, and lockdowns, marches, demonstrations, and occasionally riots took place in Belgium, Croatia, France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, and the United Kingdom (BBC News, 2021). In November, Yan Zhuang (2021) reported in *The New York Times*, in cities across Australia crowds rallied against vaccine mandates and pandemic restrictions. For example, protesters gathered in Melbourne to oppose a bill that would allow state officials in Victoria to enforce rules well after the area's state of emergency lapses.

As of December 9, 2021, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace's Global Protest Tracker had recorded more than twenty-five significant protests directly related to the coronavirus pandemic (*Global Protest Tracker*, n.d.). In October 2021, the Council on Foreign Relations reported that the pandemic was shaking up politics in Southeast Asia where it was undermining confidence in governments (Kurlantzick, 2021).

Although there are many methods that government use to control dangerous behavior during the current pandemic, local police in The Peoples Republic of China has employed some rather unique ones. As reported in *The Guardian* in Jingxi, armed police paraded four alleged violators of Covid rules through the streets "... wearing hazmat suits and bearing placards showing their name and photos designed to deter 'border-related crimes'" (Guardian Staff Reporters, 2021). A common practice during the Cultural Revolution, such shaming was officially banned but reemerged locally in efforts to enforce China's zero-tolerance Covid policy. Following public reports on the incident, there were 350m views and more than 30,000 comments on the topic.

Ever since the start of the pandemic in 2019 The Peoples Republic of China has used its centralized system of power to use extraordinarily strict measures to the successfully limit the impact, especially per capita deaths, due to Covid-19 and its mutations. It has also gathered a great deal of negative attention from outside. Although criticism from the inside is seldom reported, a few examples should suffice to outline their unique methods and resulting issues. As noted by Oleg Maltsev (2021), Jean Baudrillard offered an understanding, but not a solution, to the (purposive) constant state of risk and uncertainty. As quoted by Maltsev (2021):

The social game of human relations in a bureaucratic society is different from the terrible hypocrisy of Swift's servants. It is a gigantic model of "simulation" of absent reciprocity. It is not stealthy, but functional simulation. The minimum life of social communication is achieved only at the cost of this relationalist training in which everyone is included — a magnificent optical illusion designed to mask the objective attitude of alienation and distance directed from everyone to everyone. (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 163)

In essence, Baudrillard's work provides an understanding, not a solution, of the situation of the current hyperrealities created by simulations and simulacra that guarantee there is no escape from the structural, as well as post-structural, risks and uncertainties that abound within the real and imaginary global COVID-19 Pandemic.

Conclusion

As societies grapple with risks, uncertainties, and the evolving nature of solidarity, this examination provides insights into the challenges we face in deciphering and addressing the intricate web of mentalities that shape our collective existence. The article prompts reflection on the imperative of critical thinking, information literacy, and a nuanced understanding of the socio-cultural landscapes that influence our perceptions and behaviors.

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