

Loneliness, conviviality and resilience - ontological dislocations in the Anthropocene

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Abstract

The COVID pandemic has played out against a backdrop of an already-acknowledged pandemic of loneliness. This loneliness pandemic is often at least partly blamed on processes of industrial capitalism leading to urbanisation and a failed promise of cosmopolitanism – a cosmopolitanism that has not delivered for great swathes of people the kind of conviviality or support that one might hope Diogenes’s vision would naturally lead to. Instead, for many, certain aspects of industrial capitalism have created enclaves, ghettos, closed shops, etc., putting up barriers as much as enabling flows.

This article takes as its starting point the assertion that the processes of industrial capitalism have not been conducive for conviviality. Conviviality in this context refers not to contemporary Western ideas of friendship, e.g. finding one’s soulmates or seamlessly pulled towards one’s ‘consumer tribe’ (Maffesoli 1995), but to a much earlier idea of friendship, seen for example in Stoic thought, as embedded in mutual reliance and civic action. The article suggests that conviviality contributes towards resilience, because the disconcerting globalized ‘stranger in our midst’ (Rumford 2013) can plausibly become a friend, enabling collective civic action and communality which is key to our future survival. In acknowledging this however, the article suggests we need to think of the globe as an entirety, with a radically changed understanding of our own place in the universe.

Introduction: The loneliness pandemic

Long before the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was already much talk of, and research into, a pandemic of loneliness. Researchers and policy makers increasingly acknowledged that loneliness is increasingly prevalent in industrialized urban society - especially in the global north – and that it is a serious and urgent social issue. Many studies seek to highlight this. (For example, see UK Government report 'A Connected Society, 2018, and the recent policy paper 'Loneliness Annual report 2020'.) Such studies frequently find a correlation between loneliness and poor physical health. For example, Holt-Lunstad et al., (2015) find that actual and perceived social isolation are both associated with an increased risk of early mortality that is comparable to well-established mortality risk factors. Shankar et al., (2011) seek to discover to what extent isolation and loneliness are independently associated with negative health impacts. They find that both social isolation and loneliness were

associated with a greater risk of being inactive, smoking, and various other health-risk behaviors. Similarly, Valtorta et al., (2017) find a correlation between loneliness and social isolation and coronary heart disease and stroke, and Steptoe et al., (2004) between loneliness and neuroendocrine, cardiovascular, and inflammatory stress responses in middle-aged men and women.

In addition, many studies analyze the obvious link between loneliness and poor mental health and wellbeing, and as a result between loneliness and a lack of resilience to crisis or change due to poor well-being (see Aiden, 2016). Loneliness is also associated with a greater likelihood of dementia (see Tilvis et al., 2004, and Wilson et al., 2007). Pearl Dykstra (2009) usefully distinguishes between emotional and social loneliness (or what is often termed social isolation). Whilst emotional loneliness is about missing an intimate attachment and feeling there's no-one to turn to, social loneliness is about a lack of companionship and community. So, a person can suffer from emotional loneliness despite company. In addition, as Victor and Yang (2012) point out, loneliness is about quality of social contact as much as quantity and matters more at different stages of adulthood. So, social loneliness or social isolation is much easier to tackle and can sometimes lead to the formation of relationships or the sense of community that addresses emotional loneliness too.

In the UK, in 2011, former Prime Minister Theresa May set her sights on combating loneliness and even appointed a minister of loneliness, launching the Campaign to end Loneliness. The campaign drew together experts in the field, and since 2011 has developed a growing evidence base for the knock-on effects of loneliness and research on how to tackle chronic loneliness. (See <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/>.) The COVID-19 pandemic played out against this context of loneliness, exacerbating it by requiring people to be separated from each other, and indeed in some cases, *stuck with* each other but no less lonely for it. Indeed, being locked down with someone negative to one's own well-being became increasingly acknowledged as a source of existential loneliness, not to mention a risk to one's own mental and sometimes physical well-being.

This article attempts to place loneliness in the context of the ecological and resulting societal challenges we face, and will increasingly face, in the not-so-distant future. It begins by examining loneliness in light of discourses on cosmopolitanism, in particular popular imaginaries around the notion of friendship. It then assesses how such understandings play into debates on resilience and community, specifically in regard to the need to be prepared for potential crises. Finally, it asks whether thinking about loneliness therefore inevitably

questions our own existential understandings of our place in the world. It suggests that in the era of the Anthropocene, if we are to enable resilience, a different kind of citizen subject needs to emerge, especially in the urbanized global north – and that tackling loneliness is key to this emergence.

Cosmopolitanism, friendship and conviviality

Biologist E. O. Wilson (2013) argues that we are living in the Eremocene – the age of loneliness – due to the number of species that industrial expansion is causing to become extinct. This is a pertinent point as it underscores the way in which industrial capitalism is arguably the root cause of much loneliness (albeit a loneliness usually understood as being about relations between humans). Studies into loneliness almost explicitly address it as a phenomenon rooted in the urban centres of the global north. Indeed, many of the suggested cultural antidotes to loneliness hail specifically from areas of the global south, including minority (and often less industrialized) cultures and contexts. Examples might include the body of scholarship and activism connected with the *Buen Vivir*ⁱ movement in South America, or the Ubuntuⁱⁱ culture across Africa.

The way in which loneliness is connected to the industrialized, urban centres, and is therefore a phenomenon more widespread in the global north than the global south, points to a failure on the part of industrial capitalism to deliver the kind of cosmopolitan ideal conjured by Diogenes. This was a vision in which specific and local attachments to family, community, *ethnos*, or religion should not be considered more important than membership of a universal humanity. Diogenes famously declared himself to be a citizen of the world first and foremost, insisting local identities were secondary (Inglis 2012, 13). Such thinking was originally inspired by the Cynicsⁱⁱⁱ, of which Diogenes was one, who believed a person should first and foremost be affiliated with rational humanity, and only then with ties of class, status, nationality, or gender. The Cynics^{iv} are credited with inventing cosmopolitanism. The Stoics built on this view, creating the idea of the world-citizen who dwells in both the local community of their birth, and the community of humanity; the latter being fundamental to moral and social obligations. In more recent times, Martha Nussbaum (1997, 5-6), a key scholar on cosmopolitanism, has argued, as did Diogenes, that specific and local attachments to family, community, *ethnos*, or religion should not be considered more important than membership of a universal humanity.

Under this logic, cities have often been depicted as the ultimate proof of cosmopolitanism - convivial cultural melting pots where opportunities to be social and feel a sense of belonging abound. In present-day reality however, as a specific form of organized industrial capitalism, the city throws up unique challenges for addressing loneliness. Corcoran and Marshall (2018, 133) argue that ‘we have lost the art of place-making for prosocial cohabitation within our cities and through the economic model of place, we are building lonely urban environments focused on the individual rather than community.’ For them, the growth agenda is to blame, and they suggest that urban social loneliness would be reduced if places were built with a vision ‘to attract happiness first, followed by business, and to promote cohesion not materialism’ (Corcoran and Marshall 2018, 136). Returning to smaller cities is essentially the answer for them:- ‘Given our knowledge of the impacts that 20th century cities have had on our health and mental well-being, in the 21st century, we need to reinstate the understanding of the people as the city; a ‘living environment’, as practiced by the Ancient Greeks, instead of the ‘built environment’ that is current practice (Corcoran and Marshall 2018, 133). They explain how Greek cities were small and set within productive landscapes ‘that involved everyone in co-production and co-operation for survival as a single identifiable community’ (2018, 133). They argue social loneliness would be minimal in these environments. They go on to say ‘industrialisation and technological advance has given rise to rapid urban growth across the planet where different communities are layered and tend to compete for resources within vast urbanised landscapes. Here some communities inevitably become subjugated, their positive identity lost or insignificant. The complexities of economic stratification, commuting and zonal planning conspire against the survival of the viable community and even family groups’ (2018, 133).

Despite this, as Ruth Fincher and Kurt Iveson (2015, 24) argue, there are some places in urban environments where there is ‘potential for social encounters to be experienced as a kind of conviviality with strange others.’ They posit conviviality as ‘the purposeful sharing of activities by individuals who may not necessarily be known to each other’ and give examples such as libraries, playing on the street, and the use of community centers (2015, 24). Similarly, Lisa Peattie (1998, 248) argues, ‘conviviality can take place with few props: the corner out of the wind where friends drink coffee together, the vacant lot which will become a garden ... Conviviality cannot be coerced, but it can be encouraged by the right rules, the right props, and the right places and spaces.

Indeed, this kind of casual urban conviviality described above forms the setting for

many of our most loved popular culture images. For example, soap operas such as British production *EastEnders* typically center around a pub, with places such as laundrettes, cafés, and parks being additional social spaces. Equally, sitcoms such as the classic *Cheers*, or *Friends* have bars or cafes that form the backdrop for most of the action. Yet, these examples are interesting as their locations are presented as convivial, but in many ways depict a very narrow form of conviviality that does not adhere to Diogenes version of what it is to be cosmopolitan. In *Friends*, for example, we are presented with six allegedly very different personalities who share apartments in a New York block. However, they are not really that dissimilar – the class difference between Joey and Ross for example, is not so great that it precludes Joey from living in the same block as Ross; nor holidaying to the same places; he is after all a struggling actor, as opposed to a street cleaner. There is no difference in race, no great difference in age or life-stage, no difference in sexuality, or ability/disability. If the six friends were living out Diogenes’s vision they would be far more different from each other and would have less already in common; finding common ground instead in a sense of belonging in a common surrounding. Perhaps not surprisingly, there is never any real crisis that tests the resilience of these friends as a group able to cope with unexpected challenges. Of course, *Friends* is a sitcom and not in the business of throwing up global challenges for its characters to deal with, but one could argue their friendships might not fare that well.

What becomes apparent when analysing contemporary images of conviviality is that they are based on a very Western idea of friendship. As Barbara Caine (2014) skillfully argues via the various essays in her edited book on the history of friendship book, since the mid-nineteenth century, there has been a turn to understanding the notion of the friend as that of someone most like us – a soulmate. Indeed, in recent decades, sociological theory has acknowledged groups whose friendship is consolidated based on lifestyle or consumption preferences. Classic amongst these is Maffesoli’s (1995) work on ‘consumer tribes’, in which he argues that mass society is made up of many small groups united by their purchasing preferences, lifestyles, and tastes. This is not to say of course that current-day friendships are not powerful and real, but rather that that they tend to be inward-looking, as opposed to community-focused. In older versions of friendship, embedded as they were in mutual reliance and civic action, as opposed to consumptive choices, it is possible to see more clearly how the notion of the friend plays into the cosmopolitan ideal. In Epicurus’s Garden community for example, conviviality was based on genuine diversity around the table; philosophers and ex-slaves sat together – hence how controversial Epicurus was in his day.

‘The Garden’ was the name of the house and grounds where Epicurus set up his ‘school’

and allowed people to live as what he called ‘a society of friends’, deliberately separated from the rest of society. In his ‘Sententia Vaticana’ Epicurus praises friendship, arguing it is an ‘immortal good’ that makes our whole lives blessed (O’Keefe 2009,148). He explains that this is because engaging in friendship guards against negative emotions such as jealousy or rage and therefore enables the kind of inner peace that is required if one is to live the good life. More practically, Epicurus explains that friendship releases us from fear of the future because knowing we can rely on our friends to help us out in times of need enables us to face the future. Therefore, as Tim O’Keefe (2009, 148) explains, ‘the main reason given by Epicureans for the importance of friendship is that it provides safety: with friends to protect you, your life will be secure from danger, whereas the friendless life is beset with risks.’ In return of course, we must help out our friends in their times of need – friendship as a kind of mutual aid. Thus, friendship in this conception had very little to do with seeing the world in a similar way or having things in common. Indeed, as O’Keefe (2009, 148) explains, Epicurean friendship is ‘communal’ and places emphasis ‘not on the one-to-one interaction between friends, but on how having a network of friends who look out for one another is beneficial to all.’. Therefore, it is much more to do with the actions taken towards one another in the endeavor of mutual reliance that will, in turn, lead to the good life.

Of course, the classic vision of cosmopolitan conviviality is not without its critics – perhaps most pertinent here the criticism levelled at Nussbaum for celebrating what was seen as an uncritical White and Western version of cosmopolitanism. (See Nussbaum 1996, 1997, and 2000.) However, returning to an older version of friendship and a Diogenic version of cosmopolitanism does not necessarily disenable a critical cosmopolitanism. Key to enabling critical cosmopolitanism but fostering a more meaningful friendship and community is to assert that far from being soulmates, friends can and should also be *unlike* each other. Only with friends who are unlike each other do we build truly resilient communities; communities that have a chance of tackling loneliness. In some ways this is an argument that seems easy to accept, after all, in times of trouble, people survive better if they can draw on the strengths and skills of all those around them, not just those who are similar to them. Yet, it has been many decades since any emphasis was placed on the idea of having friends unlike us – strangely so considering the emphasis on diversity.

In part, having friends unlike us, requires the effort and nerve to forge what Bruno Latour (2004, 22) calls ‘risky attachments.’ Rather than reducing risk or insuring ourselves against it, Latour suggests a focus on creating relations that embrace risk and the possibilities it brings. For Latour, ‘risk-free objects, the smooth objects to which we had been accustomed

up to now ... are giving way to risky attachments, tangled objects' (2004, 22). As Instone (2015, 30) puts it, 'risky attachments are not so much about danger, but about possibility; the possibilities that emerge from acknowledging our entanglements in and with things.' To propose we dare to make risky attachments is to directly address Ulrich Beck's argument that risk society revolves around the unpleasant surprise felt when apparently benign everyday things such as food or activities turn out to be risky, and to therefore look to calculability and certainty (Instone 2015, 30). Lesley Instone builds on Latour's thinking, applying it to the Anthropocene, and arguing that 'risky attachments cut across the modernist categories of nature and culture, they stretch out to make connections with unlike and unlikely others, they cross boundaries between humans and nonhumans, the organic and inorganic, and displace humans as the only actor' (Instone 2015, 32).

As part of acknowledging and indeed encouraging ourselves to make risky attachments, it might perhaps be time to re-evaluate our notions of friendship and how they play into the cosmopolitan apparent ideal vision. Perhaps a resilience born out of a conviviality less colored by consumerism and 'lifestyle', would be a more powerful form – stable enough to survive future economic and social crises. This is to envisage an environment in which the disconcerting globalized 'stranger in our midst' (Rumford 2013) can plausibly become a friend, and to suggest that this may be key to our future survival. For Rumford (2013), strangeness was about the past surety of the categories of 'them' and 'us'; and of the fading sense that 'we' are definitely not the strangers in 'our' own society. The new kind of 'stranger' that Rumford's work tried to explain, was one who felt themselves to be at home, and yet, not at home, everywhere. This meant one no longer knew if one were a stranger or not, or indeed who 'us' and 'they' were - a 'generalized condition of societal strangeness' in which such differentiations are increasingly problematic (2013). Befriending such 'strangers' (including those that are 'us') is indeed a risky attachment. However, it is also an attachment that would lead to more deeply attached and more resilient communities.

Community and resilience

Contemporary urban life in the context of the Global North tends to create loneliness for a variety of reasons, besides lifestyle. For example, the high churn of residents in any given neighbourhood due to precarity of employment and/or accommodation makes it more difficult for neighbors to know each other. Mara Ferreri's (2021) study in London, UK, tackles this issue, arguing against the normalization and glamorization of temporary or 'ephemeral'

urbanism which hides the reality of precarity. In certain neighborhoods there are perceptions that it may not be safe to mix too widely outside of one's trusted social circle - who may well not be one's neighbors, indeed are more likely to be one's work colleagues (see Rumford 2013). Additionally, urban design, such as high-rise blocks, may mean there is less possibility of meeting neighbors (see Gifford 2007). These aspects suggest that individual subjects are less likely to *automatically* respond to a crisis with solutions or coping mechanisms based on mutuality. Should disaster strike, they would have to learn new ways not only of being, but of *thinking*. As Cheshire (2015) finds in her Queensland, Australia study, 'neighboring practices and relationships prior to a disaster influence the nature and extent of support from neighbors when disaster strikes.' This is why, she argues, community resilience policies encourage urban dwellers to get to know their neighbors, in order that should climate disaster happen, communities would be as resilient as possible.

It is also important to note that the pattern of internal migration out of rural areas into cities has meant much property in rural areas is bought up as second homes and remains empty for much of the time, and occupied by visitors who are not invested in knowing the local community the rest of the time. Therefore, urbanizing leads to less cohesive, communities in both urban and rural areas. Yet despite the reality of such trends, the idea of community has consistently been one employed strategically and often politically. As Nathaniel O'Grady et al., (2022, 32) argue, the notion of community has been used in two specific ways by local and national authorities in their own narrations of how they responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. Firstly, they argue, community 'was deployed as a discursive mechanism that offered a particular framing of the vulnerabilities the pandemic instigated.' Specifically, it enabled a move away from describing people's identities by demographic categories, and towards a way of understanding the pandemic's effects in terms of 'the different, yet coexistent, vulnerabilities it brought to the surface for people' (2022, 32). Secondly, the term community was used to address 'a register of collective social life between individuals and the state' and it enabled a decentralised form of emergency governance (2022,32). For O'Grady et al., (2022, 32) this is part of a strategy that enables government to increase resources in order to deal with the pandemic, when in reality its consequences threatened to exceed the governments' capabilities. In other words, community can be deployed rather cynically by authorities who need capacity to be delivered by members of the public as opposed to pre-existing, funded, official services. Viewed in this light the relationship between community, or at least the *idea* of community, and resilience is brought into stark contrast – the latter requires the former, and in some

renditions, the former exists only to serve the latter as opposed to for its own sake or for the sake of conviviality and its many benefits.

In fact the emphasis on resilience, and the accompanying use of the notion of community, is a telling sign of the way in which there has been an ontological shift in terms of how governments understand their relationship with broader environment in which emergencies take place (see Aradau and van Munster, 2012, Davoudi, 2014, Grove, 2014, Joseph, 2013, Wood, 2008). As Ensor et al.,(2021) argue, ‘in its modernist incarnation, governance rests on anthropocentric mythologies of human mastery over all else’ and seeks to develop contingency measures that prepare, prevent and mitigate the effects of emergencies. In contrast, the turn to resilience reflects an understanding of environments and the events that emerge from them as indeterminate and *beyond human control*. Exceeding logics of predictability that have rooted themselves into governmental calculi for some time, ontologies of resilience understand emergencies to unfold as events underpinned by uncertainty. (See Ensor et al., 2021; Amore, 2013; O’Grady, 2018). Key here is how our understanding of our autonomy in the world is changing. Emergencies, including the pandemic, show us we are not in control and must create our own ways of surviving. As Val Plumwood (2007, 1) puts it, ‘we struggle to adjust because we’re still largely trapped inside the enlightenment tale of progress as human control over a passive and “dead” nature that justifies both colonial conquests and commodity economies.’ O’Grady et al., build on this with their ideas as to how emergencies might be harnessed for positive change, arguing that ‘rather than being conceived solely as an aberration from a linear path of “progress”, emergencies might be understood through resilience to present new trajectories for development’ (O’Grady et al., 2022, 33).

However, it is important to note that there are more cynical ways in which the emphasis on resilience is used to deploy services differently. As O’Grady et al., say ‘this supposedly “transformative” form of resilience, remobilises emergencies as opportunities, for instance, to integrate new anticipatory and planning measures into emergency governance (UNDRR 2015) or redevelop infrastructure” (B´en´e et al., 2012; Ensor et al., 2018; Frerks et al., 2011). Some thinkers have seen the combination of resilience rhetoric and actual communities as the best mitigation against this kind of cynical strategizing on the part of local and national governments. For example, DeVerteuil et al., (2021) argue that the responses to events such as hurricane Katrina reflect the possibility for co-constitutive resilience practices produced through the synchronisation of ‘top-down’ government action and the ‘bottom-up’ improvisations made by local communities. These forms of synthesis between different groups

in which resilience opens up as a possibility, is elaborated in David Godschalk's (2003) theorisation of urban resilience as grounded in the development and consolidation of multiple connections between different communities of practice and expertise that exist in cities. For Freitag et al., (2014, 34) creating such networks would pave the way for what they call 'whole community resilience' that seeks to integrate non-state based, local perspectives. This emphasis on community, enables the enactment of resilience on a particular scale too. As Rose and Miller (2008, 39-40) argue, community addresses a 'rendition of collective life that mediates between individual sovereignty on one hand and the activity of the state on the other'. Community allows those governing to 'orchestrate decentralised actors in the name of establishing resilience' and this emphasis on community was crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic to coordinating formal and informal practices that developed to mitigate its effects.

Conclusion: Radical dislocation and the de-centered subject

This special issue is concerned with the lived experiences of dislocation across the globe, whether that is as a result of the COVID pandemic, or the economic, social and environmental manifestations of capitalist industrialization. In some ways this article has appeared to focus on what could be viewed as a form of social dislocation; the ways in which living in contemporary industrial urbanism in the global North often causes dislocation of people from places, lifestyles, and meaningful friendships with other social beings. However, there is nothing radical about the existence of these dislocations. On the contrary, they are in fact the inevitable consequences of global capitalistic processes and systems; they are truisms of their age. One might usefully suggest tackling them with an array of relatively radical alternative ways of living and being and one might call this a form of radically dislocating oneself from the main thrust of economic and social pathways. For example, one might question what makes a social life (or what makes a life social), what is it to have things in common (which things matter?), what provides a sense of belonging or a belief that another person is a friend. One might even, use this array of new ideas and practices to forge change and greater resilience through a social life that is radically dislocated from that which went before it. All of this would be extremely valid and useful. In some ways though it stops at the level of reactionary, relatively practical interventions. It is not an existential change.

In contrast, existential change would change our relationships *with ourselves*. Scott Hamilton (2017:579) brilliantly explores this idea via the concept of 'ontological security'. He argues that whilst the Anthropocene certainly threatens our physical security, it also threatens

‘our deep and normalized conceptions of humanity and what it means to be a human “self” in a stable and continuous world’ – our ontological security. Or as Browning (2016, 31) puts it, ‘understood broadly, ontological security is a subject’s capacity to uphold a stable view of its environment and thereby ‘go on’ with everyday life.’ Hamilton explains this further by saying that in modernity the foundation of our ontological security was the uncertainty of death (importantly, death seen as an event controlled externally from ourselves), whereas in the time of the Anthropocene ontological security is the result of our own actions. As he puts it, ‘the Anthropocene thus manifests the need to secure humanity from humanity, or the paradox of securing oneself *from* oneself’ (2017, 579). In this replacing of what was the primary concern of security – avoiding death – with saving ourselves from ourselves, the human being becomes a new geological entity which ‘rather than protecting itself from physical threats in an external world ... now subsumes that world by making itself the simultaneous subject/object of security’ (2017, 580). Therefore, argues Hamilton, a paradox forms in that there is ‘an existential discontinuity, in which humanity must secure itself in the future from itself in the present’ (2017, 580).

For Hamilton, this paradox of the Anthropocene – that humans are a new geological entity and therefore part of Nature, and yet are asking themselves to solve the problem of Nature – can perhaps best be solved by humans recognizing that they are actually psychologically still disentangled from nature. In arguing this though, he does not mean that entanglement is not a truth, but that we are, in a neo-Newtonian way, still creating of ourselves a separate entity. As he puts it, ‘by elevating itself to the status of a present and future global security problem, the human is neither entangled nor entwined with nature, but only with its own classical knowledge of nature (2017, 581). In other words, humans erroneously believe themselves to be separate from nature. There is therefore, according to Hamilton, a space for humans to take responsibility and make ethical decisions about something they *perceive to be* outside of themselves – Nature. We can, he argues, ‘embrace humanity’s dis-entanglement from Nature as a social space, within which to recognize and act ethically against humanity’s catastrophic effects on the planet. This requires grasping the quantum lesson that humanity will never be fully enmeshed or entangled with Nature...’ (2017, 581).

Radical dislocation comes of gradually recognising that we are not all-powerful; that smart solutions will only go so far; that it is absolutely our resilience to cope with whatever other forces throw at us that is our strongest skill. This is *not* to say we have not caused the future crisis by our own actions, as that almost falls into a rhetoric of climate change fatalism

where there is nothing we can do so we may as well carry on as we like. Rather, it is to acknowledge that the consequences of our actions in the era of the Anthropocene will be unexpected – flash floods, tsunamis, draughts, etc., and that resilience is not born of our industrial expansion/globalization as we know it, but out of a new way of engaging with that reality/situation as *global* citizens.

If resilience in the face of potential challenges and disasters in the Anthropocene is best manifested by living in more convivial ways, humans will inevitably have to be prepared to make risky attachments as Latour suggests. Furthermore, as Instone (2015:36) argues, ‘paradoxically the dangers and risks that the Anthropocene heralds may be best addressed not with insurance and control, but through reaching out and risking attachment with all manner of unlike others. In risking attachment, we risk our thoughts and feelings, and plunge ourselves into a world of matters of concern...’ Indeed, living *in* concern, or what might be called an ethics of care, will need to be the de-centered existential position of the Anthropocenic human. It is a position intrinsically linked to dealing with loneliness, both in terms of those feeling indifference towards others, and those experiencing the indifference *of* others.

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ⁱ Buen vivir is the Spanish name for ‘sumak kawsay’ – a way of doing things that is rooted in the world view of the Quechua peoples of the Andes. Buen vivir believes in organising things in ways that are community-centric, ecologically-balanced and culturally-sensitive. In English, buen vivir loosely translates as ‘living well’, but this gives a sense of Western notions of wellbeing that are about the individual, whereas buen vivir sees the individual only in the social context of their community and in a unique environmental situation.

ⁱⁱ Ubuntu is a Bantu term meaning ‘humanity’. It can be defined as a set of values and practices in which an authentic individual human being is seen as part of a larger and more significant relational, communal, societal, environmental and spiritual world. This emphasis on the collective is often said to be epitomised by the popular Ubuntu culture expression ‘I am because we are’.

ⁱⁱⁱ Cynicism (third century BC) is a school of thought in ancient Greek philosophy. According to Cynicism, one should live simply and free from all social constraint. The Cynics therefore rejected all conventional desires for wealth, power, social status, and conformity. Diogenes lived a life of poverty on the streets of Athens.

^{iv} The Stoics came after the Cynics and viewed the world as one great city – as a unity. They believed that humans, as world citizens, had an obligation and loyalty to all things in that city, and must play an active role in world affairs.