

Afterthoughts: Transnormal, the “New Normal” and Other Varieties of “Normal” in Postnormal Times

World Futures Review
2021, Vol. 0(0) 1–17
© The Author(s) 2021
Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/19467567211025755
journals.sagepub.com/home/wfr



Ziauddin Sardar¹

Abstract

What is normal? And what constitutes “the new normal”? This article argues that the much vaunted “new normal” is nothing more than a return to the status quo ante, life before COVID-19, with a few extra appendages. After discussing the notion of the complex normal, the article suggests that what lies at the other end of postnormal times is best seen as the domain of the transnormal: over and beyond capitalism and neoliberalism, modernity, and postmodernism, almost most of what we can possibly conceive as normal or “the new normal.” The route to a transnormal world is a process of systematic movement leading to transposition: acts of changing relationships, structures, and values that interactively and collectively relocate humanity to a trans, or stable, state or realm of existence. The article suggests that we use the concepts of transmodernity and mutually assured diversity as tools to navigate toward the transnormal and our way out of postnormal times.

Keywords

postnormal times, normal, complexity, the new normal, transnormal, transmodernity, mutually assured diversity

“The last normal photo.” In May 2020, Robyn Vinter, a journalist based in Leeds for *Yorkshire Post*, started the hashtag #lastnormalphoto (Bakare 2020). It went viral: she received thousands of replies, with people across the world posting the last picture they took before the COVID-19 global lockdown. Amongst the photos were music concerts, football matches, shopping, restaurant dinners, plates piled up with food glorious food, people meeting elderly relatives, revellers on the beach, fashion, and a truckload of celebrity selfies. Other hashtags followed, including #happiertimes, #beforesocialdistancing, and #misstheolddays,

all confirming an instant nostalgia for something called “the normal.”

But what is this “normal” that is so desired by so many people? Conspicuously missing from the last normal photos are pictures of people living from hand to mouth, plates with

¹Centre for Postnormal Policy and Futures Studies, London, UK

Corresponding Author:

Ziauddin Sardar, Centre for Postnormal Policy and Futures Studies, 1 Orchard Gate, London NW9 6HU, UK.
Email: zia@cppfs.org

little or no food, migrant and refugees living in squalor, and the homeless living on the streets. We do not see this as “normal.” But as [Pope Francis \(2020\)](#) points out, this too is normal for a substantial segment of the global population—a reality we cannot deny: “to discover such a large number of people who are on the margins... And we don’t see them, because poverty is bashful... they have become part of the landscape; they are things.” There is a great deal more that is “part of the landscape” that we do not see as normal: devastation caused by climate change; the megafires in Australia and the United States; cities, such as Male and Jakarta, drowning underwater; the rising tide of far right in Europe, the United States, India, and elsewhere; gross inequality within and between nations; the incompetence of political and business elite; authoritarian regimes arresting, beating, or torturing dissidents; and the hoarding of global wealth in ever fewer hands. The nostalgic perception of pre-COVID-19 days is thus a rather truncated, myopic normal. The normal, as Indian writer and activist, [Roy \(2020\)](#), points out, “is the wreckage of a train that has been careening down the tract for years.” Indeed, from the perspective of those who are suffering from the direct impact of climate change, or migrants and refugees fleeing oppression, or millions of those who lost their jobs due to automation and AI, or those millions who are thrown in internment camps or declared non-citizens simply because of their faith, the pre-COVID-19 world was rather abnormal: this is not how things ought to be, you can hear them scream.

Return to Normal

The clamor for life to get “back to normal,” as evident on the front pages of newspapers as on the news channels and social media, is a demand for return to the status quo ante: the “normal” state of affairs before COVID-19. But as graffiti in Hong Kong, and elsewhere, declared: “there can be no return to normal because normal was the problem in the first place.” Indeed, way back in 1983, singer Bruce

Cockburn told us that the normal gets worse and worse:

Strikes across the frontier and strikes for higher wage
Planet lurches to the right as ideologies engage
Suddenly it’s repression, moratorium on rights
What did they think the politics of panic would invite?
Person in the street shrugs “Security comes first”
But the trouble with normal is it always gets worse.

For [Nichol \(2020\)](#), a California-based novelist, “normal life” was certainly getting crueller and crueller. She had to live through “the last year’s fire, and the fires the year before that, and the fires year before that.” During 2018, she informs us, “fires burned nearly two million acres in California. And in 2017, fire ravaged a significant portion of my hometown. When the university where I teach recently closed for the semester because of shelter-at-home orders, it was the fourth closure in three years.” The Indian intellectual [Mishra \(2020\)](#) suggested that even bigger “systematic crisis” lay ahead, and as such, return to imagined normal was not on the cards. [Baker \(2020\)](#) concludes his “long read” article in the *Guardian*, “we can’t go back to normal,” by suggesting “we are not watching a movie, we are writing one, together, until the end.”

What then lies at the end of the COVID-19 tunnel depends on your perception and outlook—whether you are a pessimist or an optimist, politically on the left or the right, realist or a dreamer, or looking at short term or long term futures. In the short run, the “the new normal,” [Park \(Park 2020\)](#) tells us in *Time*, means “the death of the handshake,” “rethinking how self-isolation fits into broader policy decisions,” and “microbial threats like coronaviruses will inevitably move from the bottom to the top of public health priority lists, and the danger of infectious diseases will loom large on our collective conscious.” According to numerous reports in the *Guardian*, the “new normal” will include social distancing for years

to come, more people working from home, common use of face masks, swift shutdowns, health checks when flying, and end of business travel—namely, the old normal with a few restrictions. Beyond that, the optimistic view suggests that the experience of COVID-19 could enhance our understanding of climate change, there will be mass protests for change, and “moments of solidarity” could be transformed into “the broader political sphere.” The pessimists believe that surveillance will intensify, authoritarian regimes will become even more draconian, distrust between government and citizens will increase, neoliberal capitalism will run wild, and there will be more deaths and suffering worldwide. However, it could take some time before we are out of the crisis. As journalist [Young \(2020\)](#) suggests in the *Atlantic*, the “end game” has three possible outcomes. First, there is an international unity and collaboration to concurrently stamp out the virus but this does not look likely. Second, people develop “herd immunity” but this will “come at a terrible cost,” and “it would likely leave behind many millions of corpses and a trail of devastated health systems.” The third potential outcome is that the virus is extinguished here and there until a viable vaccine is developed; something that may take “very long.” We will have to learn to live with the virus until such time.

The Changing Normal

Whatever happens, Yuval Noah Harari argued in a much-quoted article in *Financial Times* that we will never be the same again. Short “emergency measures will become a fixture of life,” we could “give legitimacy to a terrifying new surveillance system,” and, on the up side, we would probably trust science and expert opinion much more ([Harari 2020](#)). Journalist [Wintour \(2020\)](#) reported that in Europe, the United States, and Asia, almost everything is up for debate: “the trade-off between trashed economy and public health, the relative virtues of centralized or regionalized health systems, the exposed fragility of globalization, the future of the EU, populism, the advantages of authoritarianism.”

He cites President Emmanuel Macron of France who declared: “many certainties and convictions will be swept away. Many things we thought were impossible are happening.” The most obvious “impossible” thing that is all too evident is the return of the big state after a 30-year retreat. In many countries, states have provided support for its citizens, forced by COVID-19 to isolate; in some countries, even small and big businesses have been rescued and stopped from going bankrupt. Nationalization, another recent “impossible,” is now on the cards: Spain considered and then postponed nationalizing private hospitals, France is keen to nationalize large businesses, and in Britain, there is a strong possibility of nationalizing some parts of public transport. However, it may take a few years before we can declare the end of COVID-19 days.

In a massive dossier, with contributions from a host of American and European academics and writers, *Politico* magazine provides a long catalog of how “Coronavirus will change the world permanently.” The suggestions from the good and the great include the obvious—we will be more reluctant to touch people, there will be less communal dining and more cooking, we will work more from home, and virtual meetings will become common—to not-so-obvious positive and negative predictions. These include polarization and individualism: “the coronavirus pandemic marks the end of our romance with market society and hyper-individualism.” Or, we could also go the other way: become less communal and more authoritarian. “Regulatory barriers to online tools will fall,” and Big Tech would become omnipotent. Governments could become Big Pharma and themselves research and manufacture medicines and vaccines. Cultural critic Virginia Heffernan suggests we will be released from “the tyranny of habit”: our fantasy of “optimizing” life with emphasis on “peak performance, productivity, efficiency” could give way to “stop taking the streetcar, working for money, bowling, and going to the movies” and devote more time to “imaginative and unconventional” pursuits. Filmmaker Astra Taylor points out that the rules that have shaped

our lives are now mostly irrelevant. And, Matthew Continetti, journalist and resident Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, predicts that we are heading for a “paradigm shift” which will actually change our understanding of change (Politico Magazine 2020).

The dominant perception of the normal is also challenged by a short campaigning film by UNESCO. Shown on several networks (including NBC, Euronews, Al Jazeera, France Télévisions, Canal+, IPS, as well as on YouTube) across the world, it juxtaposes certain facts we take for granted with other facts that we do not regard as normal. For example:

1. Air pollution causes eight million early deaths a year—*normal*
2. During COVID-19, Himalayan peaks become visible for the first time in thirty years—*not normal*
3. One child dies of pneumonia every twenty-nine seconds—*normal*
4. Coronavirus leads scientists and tech companies to open source their patents—*not normal* (UNESCO n.d.).

The film concludes by declaring: “Now is the time to build a better normal” and suggests: “it all starts with education, science, culture, information.” One can logically ask: are the existing values and structures of science and education, or the dominant paradigms capable of producing a “better normal”? And is a “better normal” actually a, or indeed the, new normal?

“The New Normal”

While COVID-19 has made “the new normal” ubiquitous, the term itself is not particularly new. It has a long history in education going back to the late 19th and early 20th century when American text books were rewritten, undated, and modernized. There we will find such titles as *The New Normal History of the United States* (Henry 1904), *The New Normal Music Course* (Taft, Holt, and Marshall 1910), and *The New Normal Mental Arithmetic* (Brooks 1873) More recently, in a 2003 report,

the US NGO Human Rights First described the post-9/11 American landscape as “the new normal of US governance,” which is defined by “the loss of particular freedoms for some, and worse, a detachment for the rule of law as a whole” (Doherty and Pearlstein 2003). So, some forms of “the new normal” have existed for some time!

However, what can we say about the post-COVID-19 new normal? There has been a veritable avalanche of scenarios and prediction of potential futures from various outlooks and perspectives. One can argue that the new normal is what you want it to be, as can be seen in *Aftershocks and Opportunities: Scenarios for a Post-Pandemic Future* (Talwar et al. 2020) where futurists provide a variety of predictions and forecasts on a range of subjects, from an array of perspectives. But most of the scenarios in *Aftershocks and Opportunities* and in other places are firmly focused on economic recovery. For example, Talwar, Wells and Whittington suggest that “the shape of economic recovery” gives us four scenarios:

1. The Long Goodbye (poorly contained pandemic, deep and prolonged downturn),
2. The VIP Economy (poorly contained pandemic, vibrant economic rebound),
3. Safe but Hungry (eradication of the pandemic, deep and prolonged downturn), and
4. Inclusive Abundance (eradication of the pandemic, vibrant economic rebound).

McKinsey & Company, the global management company, offers a similar four-stage analysis for emergence of the new normal. The first stage, resolve, will require governments and businesses to assess the scope, scale, and depth of action that is required. The second state, resilience, a period of financial stress, requires businesses to develop plans to accommodate the shock. Stage three, return, requires supply chains to be strengthened so the economy can return to pre-COVID-19 levels of production and sales. And finally, stage four, re-imagination, where shifts have to be made on the way we live, work, and how we use new

and emerging technologies (Sneider and Singhal 2020). In contrast, Simon Mair paints a somewhat different picture of the new normal as four possible futures. On the BBC Future website, Mair asserts that the dominant economic paradigm is based on two interlinked beliefs: “the market is what delivers a good quality of life, so it must be protected” and “the market will always return to normal after short periods of crisis.” Mair wants to emphasize value and centralization in shaping his post-COVID-19 four potential futures:

1. State capitalism: centralized response, prioritizing exchange value
2. Barbarism: decentralized response, prioritizing exchange value
3. State socialism: centralized response, prioritizing the protection of life
4. Mutual aid: decentralized response, prioritizing the protection of life.

Mair (2020) favors state socialism where “the state steps in to protect the parts of the economy that are essential to life: the production of food, energy, and shelter for instance, to ensure that the basic provisions of life are no longer subject to the whims of the market” and “mutual aid” future where “we adopt the protection of life as the guiding principle of our economy” and “individuals and small groups begin to organize support and care within their communities.”

Whatever the new normal, what we can say about it with some confidence is that it is a contested territory: a future-oriented struggle over different visions from different perspectives. The very concept of the “new normal” is a fantasy that provides a false sense of certainty in a time of deep uncertainty, an intentional move to remain at the level of surface uncertainty when postnormal times requires delving into the depths. Or, as Canadian critical theorist Haiven (2020) puts it, the post-COVID-19 future will be “defined by either the desperate drive to “return to normal” or a great refusal of that normal” (204). Indeed, if the new normal is simply an extension of the neoliberal, free-market, technocratic worldview, then

Haiven’s warning is worth heeding. “In the wake of the pandemic,” he writes,

there will almost certainly be efforts by those vastly enriched and empowered in the last decades, notably in the intertwined technology and financial sectors, to leverage their influence and resources, as well as the weakness and disarray of traditional institutions, to lead the reorganization of society along neo-technocratic lines. They will continue to generously offer the services of their powerful and integrated surveillance, logistics, financial and data empires to “optimize” social and political life. This corporate dystopia can wear a human face: basic income, hypervigilance for new epidemics, personalized medicine. Already they arrive, bearing gifts to help us in this emergency: tracking disease vectors, banning disinformation, offering states help with data and population management. Underneath the mask will be the reorganization of society to better conform to the hyper-capitalist meta-algorithm which, though driven by capitalist contradictions, will essentially be nonfeudal for most of us: a world of data and risk management where only a small handful enjoy the benefits (Haiven 2020, 206).

The new normal, then, is the same old way of colonizing the future. It could result in the tech giants—what Amy Webb describes as *The Big Nine* (Google, Amazon, Facebook, Microsoft, IBM, Apple, Technet, Baidu, and Alibaba)—(Webb 2019) becoming even more powerful and entrenched than before the crisis started. Indeed, as Meserole (2020), of the Brookings Institution points out, “techlash” could evaporate into thin air: as we become more and more reliant on smartphone data location, Zoom meetings, and shops online, anti-trust activity against the largest technology companies will wane, and regulation of these giants will be eased or may even disappear. The new normal, then, could turn out to be, to use the words of Haiven, “vindictive normal.”

Many of the optimistic scenarios and visions for a more just and equitable post-COVID-19 world underestimate the resilience of neoliberal capitalism. It has deep roots and can bounce

back even after a deep recession; “the market will always return to normal after short periods of crisis” may be a belief, as Mair notes, but it is a belief based on entrenched economic system with formidable momentum. In general, systems—including global economic system—are structured to return to established, entrenched norms. The COVID-19 pandemic has loosened or decoupled the system, unhinged aspects of systems’ interconnections. It may even have freed up space momentarily for alternative actions. But this is a temporary phenomenon; the system will readjust rapidly to re-solidify in old patterns. Prodigious entrenched resources are focused on re-inscribing old systems. The COVID-19 affair is an extreme event, defined as “a dynamic occurrence within a limited timeframe that impedes the normal functioning of a system or systems” (Broska, Pogonietz, and Vögele 2020), which has to be seen in all its complexity, but it does not necessarily mean that it will overturn the entire system. There is, however, a probability that the new normal could turn out to be even worse than the old normal!

The Complex Normal

There is, however, something special about the COVID-19 pandemic. We have never experienced anything like it in living memory. It has brought the entire world to a screeching halt. It has shown, as journalist Meek (2020) suggests, that “the boundary between the normal and abnormal, between the state of social security and social breakdown, is elusive.” It has displayed how science and ignorance go hand-in-hand. It has demonstrated, to the extent that even the most myopic can see, that the curtailment of human activities has a profound impact on the environment (Allan 2020). It has exposed the belief that “we have achieved mastery over nature” and thus can “exercise control over events” as a superannuated illusion (Lal 2020). It has generated a host of “new moral questions,” ranging from the ethics of social distancing (Evans 2020); to the interaction between climate chaos, ecosystem collapse, and the pandemic (Moore and Nelson 2020); to the

importance of communitarian ethics (Furman 2020). And, what is particularly special about the pandemic is that it is the first global, clearly recognizable, postnormal event.

In her introduction to the special issue of *Futures* on Postnormal Times, Merryl Wyn Davies asked: “are we there yet?” Davies (2011) argued that evidence for post-normality was not particularly strong and that perhaps it was too early to suggest that “the specific features of postnormal times (are) unlike anything encountered in the past?” This question has been answered by a number of “extreme weirding” (Sweeney 2016) events over the last decade. Indeed, as *New York Times* columnist Manjoo (2020) has noted, “the world has become unmoored, crazier, somehow messier. The black swans are circling; chaos monkeys have been unleashed.” But if there was still any doubt about the arrival of post-normal times, COVID-19 has resolved them (Serra et al. 2020).

Postnormal times is an in-between, transitory period but how long the transition will last is anyone’s guess. The transition is from what we have thought of, and may still think of, as normal, what we may contemplate as the “new normal,” the multitudes of new normals that may emerge in the future, toward a radically different world. As such, all the normals and new normals will be integral parts of the extensive age of postnormal times. COVID-19 has clearly moved the planet toward the edge of chaos, but it has not actually brought us to the tipping point. There will be other postnormal events in the future, each nudging the globe closer and closer to the edge of chaos. Right at the very edge of chaos, the tipping point itself, there are only two options: collapse or a new order.

While postnormal times are a product of our complex, interconnected world, with instantly and constantly generating feedback loops, complex societies themselves are not particularly unusual. As anthropologist Stephen Lansing and geneticist Murray Cox show in *Islands of Order*, emergent complexity is evident in even historic societies presumed to be “simple.” They look at the historic societies of

the Malay archipelago and the wider Pacific; examine language, kinship, large-scale population movement, genetic makeup, cultural change, and racial topology; and the impact of colonialism and show that the complex patterns of these societies are not random; rather, order and chaos emerge out of non-linear dynamics or complexity. In a non-linear, complex situation, states of stable equilibrium—such as persistent language communities—“appear as Islands of order in a sea of change” (Lansing and Cox 2019). Out of equilibrium, social dynamics, often produced by contradictions within societies, lead to chaos and collapse. Collapse can occur for many reasons from resource depletion and environmental change but, as Tainter (1988) demonstrates in his monumental study, *The Collapse of Complex Societies*, complexity is a “continuous variable.” Both a sharp increase as well as a sudden decline (as we witnessed with the global COVID-19 lockdown) in complexity can lead to collapse. Complexity makes it more and more difficult for organization to function adequately. Eventually, complex societies reach a point of “declining marginal returns” when things begin to fall apart, leading to collapse.

To some extent, it does look like we are following the footsteps of the Mayans, the Aztecs, the Chacoans, and the Roman Empire. As Patrick Wyman suggests in an article in *Mother Jones*, we are witnessing the fall of an empire: “the end of a polity, a socioeconomic order, a dominant culture, or the intertwined whole (Wyman 2020).” The “empire” in question is Western civilization, which requires limitless resources in a finite earth to keep itself afloat. But in *This Civilization is Finished*, philosopher Rupert Read and sustainability expert Samuel Alexander argue the global capitalist system, the foundation of this civilization, “will come to an end, destroyed by its own ecological contradictions” (Read and Alexander 2019). In *The Precipice*, moral philosopher Ord (2020) marshals strong evidence in support of a string of existential threats: climate change, environmental damage, nuclear weapons, pandemics, “unaligned artificial intelligence,” nanotechnologies,

and dystopian scenarios which can have self-fulfilling affect or even be desired by certain groups of people. The “Declaration of Rebellion” by the global non-violent environment movement, *Extinction Rebellion* (2019), declares that humanity is facing “our darkest hour”: “humanity finds itself embroiled in an event”—sixth mass extinction, also known as Holocene—“unprecedented in its history, one which, unless immediately addressed, will catapult us further into the destruction of all we hold dear.” In the *Extinction Rebellion* handbook, environmentalist Jem Bendell suggests:

we should be preparing for social collapse. By that I mean an uneven ending of our normal modes of sustenance, security, pleasure, identity, meaning and hope. It is very difficult to predict when a collapse will occur, especially given the complexity of our agricultural and economic systems. My guess is that, within ten years from now, a social collapse of some form will have occurred in the majority of countries around the world (Bendell 2019).

However, as futurist Jim Dator has repeatedly pointed out, we should not see all collapses as negative. Indeed, some types of collapses are essential for a major transformation to occur: for example, the collapse of capitalism, which Dator (2009) argues may be welcomed by those who desire an end to the “economic rat race,” the laborers and wage earners who struggle daily to put food on the table. The collapse of destructive dominant paradigms may be necessary for new ones to emerge. Moreover, the postnormal condition has also brought certain societies to the threshold of collapse. The United States is unraveling fast, may descend into civil war (Raymond 2019), or move toward fascism (Churchwell 2020), and could collapse suddenly (Acemoglu 2020). The European Union too could be heading toward collapse (Kearns 2019). We have witnessed the collapse of Syria due to civil war, the economic collapse of Greece as a result of the 2008 financial crisis, the collapse of the Rohingya through genocide, and the Maldives due to sea level rises. Many

indigenous cultures and non-Western societies have experienced collapse during the last century. Digital media expert, Abigail De Kosnik, points out:

I am from the Philippines, a twice colonised archipelago, and I grasp very well that when a foreign people have arrived on your shores, taken over your lands and waters, banned your language, changed your names, killed and injured millions, forced you to convert to their religion, seized control of your economic, political and cultural systems, labelled you subhuman, and imposed colonialism and other forms of racial/ethnic and national hierarchies, your society has known Collapse (De Kosnik 2020)

It would thus be hardly surprising if most of the non-West felt a sense of relief with the collapse of Western civilization. Actually, that date may not be too far, as recent work at MIT, based on the World One computer model originally devised by Jay Forrester for the 1972 *Limits to Growth* study, predicts the “end of civilization” around 2040 (Durden 2018).

There is, however, a key difference between collapse of historic empires and civilization and collapse that may greet us at the finale of postnormal times. Earlier collapses were societal, local, regional, and civilizational in nature. There may be similar collapses, in degrees or stages, in the future. Societies, economies, cultures, paradigms, and world-views may collapse. But a universal Collapse—as De Kosnik (2020) points out, “will not be confined to either Global North or Global South; it would be global Collapse.” It thus presents an existential threat to both—humanity and the planet. When Western civilization goes down, it will also take the rest of people and the planet with it!

Transnormal

The challenge of postnormal times is to navigate from our current unstable state to another more structurally stable state without reaching the tipping point where overall Collapse of apocalyptic proportion causing immense misery

and suffering becomes inevitable. This is a process of systematic movement leading to transposition: acts of changing relationships, structures, and values that interactively and collectively relocate humanity to a trans, or stable, state or realm of existence. *Trans* confirms the meaning of “going beyond” the current positions in all fields of human behavior, thought, and endeavors to reach a state of dynamic equilibrium. To go beyond—rise above, cut across, leave behind, and surpass—is also to prudently navigate our way to the other side of postnormal times. The world beyond postnormal times will be a radically different world; not so much a world of “new normal” but a transnormal world. We do not know what it will look like, but we do know what we need to transcend to get there!

The transnormal has two dimensions: the logical imperatives needed to avoid the real possibility of collapse and the visionary element that involves the collective and collaborative visions of most, if not all of us, of viable, thriving futures of humanity on an ecologically healthy Earth. Here, I am concerned with the logical imperatives to avoid collapse and lay the foundations for wholesome and inclusive social and cultural notions which could form the basis of futures’ visions.

What exactly do we need to transcend? There is no lack of candidates in postnormal times. But let us begin with the black elephant that all, other than the most myopic, can see: planetary boundaries, of which climate change is only one limit. As Goodell (2020) points out in *Rolling Stone* magazine, “climate change isn’t an ‘event’ or an ‘issue’. It’s an era, and it is just beginning.” The era began when we started to violate planetary boundaries. According to the Stockholm Resilience Centre, there are nine planetary boundaries which regulate the stability and resilience of the Earth system and bind us to a circumference within which we can survive and thrive: climate change, change in biosphere integrity (biodiversity loss and species extinction), stratospheric ozone depletion, ocean acidification, biogeochemical flows (phosphorus and nitrogen cycles), land-system change (e.g., deforestation), freshwater use,

atmospheric aerosol loading (microscopic particles in the atmosphere that affect climate and living organisms), and the introduction of novel entities (e.g., organic pollutants, radioactive materials, nanomaterials, and microplastics). Four of these boundaries have already been crossed: climate change, loss of biosphere integrity, land-system change, and altered biogeochemical cycles, presenting a serious risk to the entire Earth system and the survival of humanity ([stockholmresilience.org](https://www.stockholmresilience.org) 2015). To transcend climate change is to return to the planetary boundaries—a journey that requires profound changes in all spheres of life—a logical necessity to avoid further turmoil, even collapse, and ensure sustainable survival of all life.

Climate change, and associated environmental problems, is a consequence of how we perceive and treat nature. The notion that nature has to be dominated, indeed tortured to yield its secret, that emerged from Western thought has now become a universal philosophy. The emergence of COVID-19 has been described as a “message from nature” by many environmentalists. However, the realization that our attitudes to nature are producing an unsustainable world is not new. In its modern form, it can be traced back to the famous 1967 article, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis” by Lynn White. “What we do about ecology depends on our ideas of the man-nature relationship,” wrote White. “More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecologic crisis” (White 1967). White suggested a return to the metaphysics of Saint Francis of Assisi. A year later, in his 1968 book, *The Encounter of Man and Nature*, Nasr (1968) argued that “there is everywhere the desire to conquer nature, but in the process the value of the conquer himself, who is man, is destroyed and his very existence threatened.” Nasr suggested a return to non-Western metaphysics of Islamic, Hindu, and Chinese traditions. Whether we opt for White’s recommendation or the Nasr option is beside the point; what is important is the realization that metaphysics is “the essential ingredient that’s gone missing” (Tudge 2020) from our

attitude to nature. So, transnormal is also trans domination of nature and requires us to re-integrate metaphysics into our approach to nature.

The unbridled exploitation of nature is a consequence of neoliberal capitalism, a system based on cruelty, competition, and contradictions, promoting extreme inequality. Capitalism monetizes everything: human actions, desires, indeed human beings themselves as well as flora and fauna, and the environment to extract maximum value and profit (Collier 2018; Mason 2015; Wilmott and Orrell 2017). It is a system based on the logic of perpetual growth and continuous linear “progress” leading to rampant deforestation, devastating industrial agriculture, caustic-intensive farming, and corrosive infrastructure developments. As Abbey (1991) has said: “growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell.” But it is also not a question of low growth or even zero growth; planetary boundaries now demand degrowth (D’Alisa, Demaria, and Kallis 2015). Progress based on everlasting growth, which has brought us to the precipice, has to be abolished and replaced with homeostatic progress, a dynamic state of balance between human activities and ecological imperatives. Transnormal then is also trans capitalism, trans inequality, trans growth, and trans progress.

The notions of progress, growth, efficiency as well as contemporary economic thought and framework are products of current modes of knowledge production. Contemporary knowledge structures with their associated disciplines are embedded in Western narratives and privilege and give unwarranted acclaim, dominance, and extension to Western culture and its products, at the expense of knowledge systems, ways of thinking, and cultural outputs of non-Western people (Harding 1993; Lal 2002). However, knowledge production is changing rapidly. As I have written elsewhere, knowledge production has now become complex and incorporates knowledge based on Big Data, dubious and opaque mathematical models, racialized artificial intelligence, weaponized disciplines, and what is described as “forbidden

knowledge” (such as genetic engineering and synthetic biology). It has thus acquired a strong toxic component—“the smog of ignorance” (Sardar 2020) which cannot be isolated or quarantined through existing disciplinary structures. Knowledge production then has to embrace social construction of ignorance as one of its central theme; the role of ignorance as a methodology, as a tool for valuing and managing the unknown in science, technology, and medicine; the use of ignorance as power and as an instrument of oppression; ignorance as economic theory, risk management, and security studies (Gross and McGoey 2015) as well as strategic ignorance and the role of ignorance in foresight (McGoey 2014, 2016)—all play a major role in the production of knowledge. We need to rethink what exactly is science and how it should function in “the Anthropocene” (Nowotny et al. 2002; Renn 2020). Trans normal therefore implies trans disciplinary structures; a clear movement toward multi-, inter-, and trans disciplinarity; serious engagement with all varieties of ignorances; and generating new, more diverse and open discourses of knowledge. Trans-normal also requires us to embrace what is uncommon or infrequent, what is unconventional and extraordinary, and come to terms with uncertainty. In a transnormal world, knowledge, ignorance, and uncertainty will be deeply integrated.

Toxic knowledge is also a by-product of technological determinism, the view that technology and innovation must proceed whatever the moral consequence to become the primary drivers of economic, social, cultural, and political change. This dogma turns technology into an ideology. As Weyl and Lanier (2020) categorically state in the technophile *Wired* magazine, “AI is an ideology, Not a technology,” at its core is the “perilous belief that fails to recognize the agency of humans.” Similarly the promotion of synthetic biology, genetic engineering, and killer robots are based on instrumental rationality—the pursuit of ideological goals by any means necessary without moral qualms. “Because our technological creations are challenging historical

limits through climate change, artificial intelligence and synthetic biology,” says the Chinese philosopher Hui (2020), “it is critical to re-examine the diversity of cosmotechnics, or how technology is infused with a worldview.” To go trans from instrumental rationality and technological determinism is to explore “how non-European thought and corollary ways of being can affect the development of technology.”

This brings us to the worldviews that have to be transcended to realize the transnormal: modernity and postmodernism. Modernity can be traced back to the Enlightenment, while postmodernism emerged in the 1970s. Both worldviews have shaped the world and brought us to postnormal times. As Giddens (1990) has shown in his classic work, *The Consequences of Modernity*, the social order of modernity is capitalistic in both its economic system and its other institutions. Modernity “ensures that political, military, and ideological power come together in hitherto unimaginably concentrated form” (Sardar 1992). Postmodernism, with its emphasis on absolute relativism and the collapse of the grand narrative, has led to the fragmentation of the world, increasing strife and discord, and ushered in the post-truth regimes. It has served as a hand-maiden to neoliberalism and the “death cult,” as John Oliver describes it, of free market and has arrived at a globalized levelling of differences which threatens the extinction of culture altogether in what Appingnanesi (2019) has described as “terminal post-culture.” Both modernity and postmodernism are failed projects that have brought us to the postnormal condition. They function, to use the words of Beck (2001), as “Zombie categories,” which govern and direct our thinking, ushering us toward self-destructive outcomes.

The Indian intellectual and cultural theorist, Nandy (1987), described modernity as a secular theory of salvation. Postmodernism attempted to replace modernity by constructing secular liberalism as a new theory of absolutism. Both theories trap us in a manufactured normalcy field: a product of our perception of what is and what is not normal. The postnormal

condition, as Mayo (2020) notes, “is a cultural crisis owed to humanities inability to move beyond a manufactured normalcy that perpetuates a familiar sense of present.” Our desire for stability and certainty, “to de-emphasize change, and make all things normal, fundamentally expedites a sense of crisis,” which itself “nurtures ignorance and fosters uncertainty; the distinguishing characteristics of the postnormal condition.” Thus, the demand for a return to normal, or even an acceptance of a modified new normal, is a yearning for the safe bosom of the manufactured normalcy field.

To locate ourselves in a transnormal domain, we need to break the chains of the manufactured normalcy field and move beyond modernity and postmodernism (Sardar and Sweeney 2016). This demands the creating of a radically novel cultural space that synthesizes the best of tradition, modernity, and tradition; does not privilege any cultural standpoint or orthodoxy; and creates a radically transformed social and cultural dynamics. Transmodernity provides us with such a framework.

Transmodernity and Mutually Assured Diversity

Transmodernity is based on the assumption that cultures do not, and have never, existed in isolation. All cultures interact, and all future actions are located in the interactions of cultures (Sardar 2006a, 2006b, 2012). It is a concept designed to address the positive element of self-renewal and self-reorganization in diverse world cultures. It proposes to encourage change transculturally, and it is de-centered in its scrutiny of trans cultures and characterized by a sense of mobility. Transmodernity aims to produce a *trans* discourse of knowledge which gives equal importance to knowledge systems of non-Western civilizations and cultures, including indigenous cultures, tacit and intuitive methods, and promotes the realization that in a diverse and dynamic world, there are many ways to be human. It looks at cultural diversity “on the move.”

Transmodernity offers the potential of new ways of looking at culture and shaping the world that goes beyond all our conceptions and perceptions of normal and pilots us in the direction of the transnormal domain. More specifically, the *trans* dimension of transmodernity stand for:

1. The continuous and constant trans-formation of all cultures;
2. The ceaseless transmission of cultures between cultures;
3. The incessant and perpetual transitions within cultures;
4. The valid transitive relations within particular cultures;
5. The constant to-and-fro translation of cultures between cultures;
6. The regular translocation of cultures in geographical space in a globalized world;
7. The transparency of power relations between and within cultures;
8. The transference of cultural desires to new cultural goals;
9. Trans disciplinary modes of study and inquiry and understanding cultures; and
10. Transcendence of the given future of modernity and colonized futures of postmodernism into a plethora of viable and desirable, autonomous and interconnected, transmodern futures.

Finally, there is one more relational notion that needs to be transcended: alterity. In its conventional, philosophical, and anthropological sense, alterity refers to “otherness”; something other than “sameness,” outside the dominant worldview, its conventions and principles, external from the given notion of “the normal” and “the new normal.” We are concerned with the fear of the Other, whether the Other is perceived as other people or cultures; or other ways of being, knowing, or doing—other cosmologies. It is about such things as fear of migration and Islamophobia, fear of different ways of life, as well as representations of the Other, and the fear of the

sacred and nature itself. What we end up talking about is the fear of diversity in all its multiple forms.

Both our survival as human communities and cultures and the survival of our planet depends on diversity—the difference that makes the difference between survival and oblivion. Diversity is more than acceptance and respect of other cultures or simply recognizing that each individual, culture, and community is unique. It is also appreciating the simple fact that our own happiness and enrichment depends on the happiness and enrichment of others. We are not just different; but our difference depends on and is connected to all other different cultures and communities. If one different culture becomes extinct, all humanity suffers. That's where the notion of mutually assured diversity (MAD) enters the equation (Sardar 2006a). MAD is based on the assumption that there is no such thing as a distinct culture: all cultures are always diverse and always complex, never static but always adoptive and changing, particularly in a globalized context. Moreover, internally, individual cultures or subcultures are heterogeneous and speak with multiple voices; externally, they do not engage in a dialogue but a polylogue, where different voices are talking simultaneously to each other and Others. Thus, cultural relations are all about maintaining the external and internal diversity of cultures and ensuring that all the different voices can be heard. The notion of mutuality and respect are essential for polylogue and creating spaces for the articulation of different voices and for them to be heard.

But “mutually” in MAD is about more than mutual respect. It is explicitly a definition of what we are being mutual about. And what is mutual is that the human condition is a cultural condition and that culture is an essential relational attribute, an enabling feature of knowing, being, and doing. It is the acceptance that all cultures are equally important, that culture is the source of identity for everyone, and that identity provides a hand and eye to manipulate the kaleidoscope of diversity, both within culture and between cultures. It is the acceptance that for all people everywhere, identity is

not formed in a vacuum but within a cultural realm that comes with values, history, traditions, contradictions, and perennial questions. Mutually assured diversity is the universal acceptance of an obvious fact that there is more than one way to be human; it requires rejecting the notion that there is only one way, the right way; and recognizing the multiple ways the world's people have of seeking meaning, of comprehending values, and means of delivering values in daily life. What needs to be grasped is that all societies, cultures, and civilizations have undergone change and are in a process of negotiating change. What is significant is what kind of change they accept, find problematic, reject, or have mixed feelings about and have alternate responses to, and for what reasons. It is the transmission of identity across change that is the cultural reflex par excellence because identity is the attribute of belonging that grows from knowing oneself so that one has the ability to know others and learn about other cultures.

What are we giving assurance about? The assurance is the universal acceptance of the continuity of cultural identity for everyone on the planet as a negotiated, adaptive, and meaningful space. It is the acknowledgment that for difference to exist as difference, it needs cultural space to be different. It is the proposition that all cultures have the right to know themselves, to understand and interact with their cultural self, and to do this within their own cultural space. In other words, all cultures have a right to enhance their cultural power and to represent their cultures with their own concepts and categories.

Mutually assured diversity is not focused on a single arena or issue. It is a holistic concept, and, as such, to be meaningful, it must operate across a whole range of cultural, social, political, and discursive fields. There are 12 varieties of mutually assured diversities to be considered:

1. Mutually assured definitions: The greatest power we have is the power to define. If we define other people out of existence, then there is no point

- to mutually assured diversity! Other cultures have the right to use the categories and concepts of their own worldview to define what are freedoms, what are rights and responsibilities, what is important and what is not, and what they consider to be immutable. Everyone must be allowed to live by the worldview which seems true to them. This is not about absolute relativism of the postmodern variety but about different ways of being human.
2. Mutually assured dissent: To make difference possible, to ensure the right to critical engagement, and to agree to disagree.
 3. Mutually assured discourse: Each culture has its own way of knowing, being, and doing. We therefore need to appreciate other forms of knowledge and allow the discourses of other cultures to come to the fore.
 4. Mutually assured demarcations: To ensure that difference can exist as difference and boundaries are negotiated. Not just that we do not know how to demarcate, but it is a particularly difficult thing to do in a globalized world. This is something we have to learn.
 5. Mutually assured democracy: Which does not marginalize the minorities or leads to their displacement from power. We need to conceive genuinely participatory democracy which has priority over the orthodox and self-replicating mechanics of politics.
 6. Mutually assured degrowth: Which is essential to ensure sustainable futures for all cultures, future generations, and the ecological survival of the Earth—the terrestrial abode of humans as well as flora and fauna.
 7. Mutually assured dematerialization: Reduction of growth depends on drastic reduction in the sheer quantity of resources and materials used to serve the production and consumption needs of our wasteful society; it is not just a question of reducing carbon emissions but also a dramatic change in our consumer-oriented profligate lifestyles.
 8. Mutually assured defense: It is not just our security that matters. The security of others is equally important. We cannot invade other countries simply to ensure our security. By putting others in danger, we also put ourselves in danger.
 9. Mutually assured dependence: Which is a prerequisite for an interdependent, interconnected, and complex world.
 10. Mutually assured desires: Our desires should not undermine the desires of others. If we consume most of the resources of the planet, we deny others their right to adequate and viable consumption.
 11. Mutually assured dignity: Beyond human rights, we must also ensure that the dignity of other individuals, cultures, and communities are maintained—so that our own dignity is ensured.
 12. Mutually assured destinies: It is not just our future but the futures of all cultures and communities are equally important. The future belongs to every culture and community on the planet, and every culture and community has the right to determine its own future.
- The verities of mutually assured diversities are a connected ensemble. Each enhances the others across a range of human endeavors; collectively, they move us past what [Slaughter \(2020\)](#) calls “the trap our species has created for itself” and the “mosaic-like but almost singular macro-future” that we are hurling toward.
- In the final analysis, transmodernity and MAD are all about power. They seek to undermine the sources, means, and relations of dominance, control, and subordination, as they are enacted in political, social, and cultural processes, and structures and methods of knowing, doing, and being, between cultures

and within cultures. The aim is nothing less than transforming the world, moving it to a new level, where mutual diversity and cultural equality are the norms.

Toward Transnormal

The transformations needed to move forward toward a transnormal world are truly profound. They require abandonment of a great deal of what we have hitherto taken for granted, natural, and normal. Moreover, we feel helpless at the pace of accelerating change, increasing uncertainty and complexity, astounding contradictions, and cumulative chaos. Think how the COVID-19 global pandemic stopped the world in its tracks, isolated us from each other, and made us feel exceedingly vulnerable. Future postnormal events could be even more devastating and thus further enhance our feelings of powerlessness.

But agency has not been lost. Rather, both as individuals and communities, we now have more agency than ever before. Initial conditions and small perturbations are very important in our world of chaos. The action of an individual, or an apparently insignificant event, can have the “butterfly effect”—triggering a chain of reaction that could lead to new developments or even a new order. Think of the Arab Spring, the rapid globalization of the MeToo movement triggered by Harvey Weinstein accusations, and the swift evolution of Black Lives Matter after the murder of George Floyd. Recognizing the legal rights to flora and fauna as living entities, as granted to the Whanganui River in New Zealand (Roy 2017) or to all rivers in Bangladesh, is a small step that can trigger a chain reaction. What we think and do as individuals and communities is important; our actions can multiply in geometric proportions, leading to chaotic events with the potential to usher both positive and negative change. Postnormal time is a period of change: what happens next is up to us. We can use the period of change to elicit the change we want. We need to realize that in these transformative times, “everyone can lead” and that “everybody contributes to,

and in fact cocreates, the world we live in, whether conscious of their agency or not.” The transnormal world will be created through what Montuori and Donnelly (2017) call “transformative leadership” which “invites everybody to ask what kind of a world they are creating through their thoughts, beliefs, actions, and interactions”—to think creatively and imaginatively about their “being, relating, knowing, and doing.”

What distinguishes us from all other species on the planet is our ability to understand that futures exist, our inclination to study and explore alternative futures, and our willingness to shape viable, sustainable, and ethical futures (van Creveld 2020). Postnormal times force us to take our futures seriously. To use all the agency we have wisely and steer our communities and societies toward the transnormal. Historic societies used stars to navigate. Then, maps were provided as additional tools. Nowadays, we rely on GPS (although there are many other technology-based ways of navigating). Navigating postnormal times requires us to use the metaphorical equivalent of all three. Metaphysics and other cosmologies are our guiding stars. Transmodernity and mutually assured diversity provide us with a map of the terrain we need to navigate. Our moral conscience, creativity, and imagination, and our abilities to perceive and shape better futures are our GPS. Collectively, they can guide us toward the transnormal—our destination out of the postnormal times.

In his online 2020 Easter Sermon, Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, reflected on what should happen after the COVID-19 pandemic has been brought under control around the world. “After so much suffering,” he said, “so much heroism” and “so much effort,” “we cannot go back to what was before as if all is normal. There needs to be a resurrection of our common life, something that links to the old, but is different and more beautiful” (Wilby 2020). The transnormal is the first step toward that “more beautiful” world we all ought to be seeking; beyond that, its beauty depends on the magnificence of our collective

visions. The journey to transnormal requires both thoughtful future visions as well as serious future-oriented action.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to my friends Richard Appignanesi and Juliet Steyn who helped shape the ideas on transmodernity and Merryl Wyn Davies who worked on mutually assured diversity and pointed out its connection with transmodernity. Thanks are also due to John Sweeney, Jordi Serra, Liam Mayo, Christopher Jones, and Scott Jordan for their comments and criticisms.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

- Abbey, Edward. 1991. *The Journey Home: Some Words in Defense of the American West*. London: Penguin Books.
- Acemoglu, Daron. 2020. "America's Democratic Unraveling." *Foreign Affairs*, June 15.
- Alan, Levinowitz. 2020. "The Coronavirus Pandemic: Is Nature 'Sending Us A Message?'" *Science Focus*, March: 35.
- Appignanesi, Richard. 2019. "Postculture." In *Critical Muslim 29: Futures*, edited by Z Sardar, 70-87. London: Hurst Publishers.
- Bakare, Lanre. 2020. "'Last Normal Photo': Twitter Callout Taps into Nostalgia for Life before Lockdown." *The Guardian*, May 19.
- Baker, Peter. 2020. "We Can't Go Back to Normal." *The Guardian*, March 31.
- Beck, U. 2001. "Interview with Ulrich Beck." *Journal of Consumer Culture* 1, no. 2: 261-277.
- Bendell, Jim. 2019. "Doom or Bloom: Adopting to Collapse." In *This is Not a Drill*. London: Penguin Books, 75
- Brooks, Edward. 1873. *The New Normal Mental Aethematic*. Philadelphia, PA: Christopher Sower Co.
- Broska, L. H., W.-R. Poganietz, and S. Vögele. 2020. "Extreme Events Defined-A Conceptual Discussion Applying a Complex Systems Approach." *Futures* 115: 102490.
- Churchwell, Sarah. 2020. "Fascism: It Has Happened Here." *The New York Review of Books*, 22 June.
- Cockburn, Bruce. 1983. *The Trouble with Normal*. Album released on True North label
- Collier, Paul. 2018. *The Future of Capitalism*. London: Allan Lane.
- D'Alisa, Giacomo, Federico Demaria, and Giorgos Kallis. 2015. *Degrowth: A Vocabulary for a New Era*. London: Routledge.
- Dator, Jim. 2009. "Alternative Futures at the Manoa School." *Journal of Futures Studies* 14, no. 2: 1-18.
- Davies, Merryl Wyn. 2011. "Introduction: Post-normal Times: Are We there Yet?" *Futures* 43, no. 2: 136-141.
- De Kosnik, Abigail. 2020. "Piracy Is the Future of Culture." *Third Text* 34, no. 1: 62-70.
- Doherty, Fiona, and Deborah Pearlstein, eds. 2003. *Assessing the New Normal: Liberty and Security for the Post-September 11 United States*. New York, NY: Lowyers Committee for Human Rights.
- Durden, Tyler. 2018. "MIT Computer Model Predict Dramatic Drop in Quality of Life to 2020, 'End of Civilization' by 2040." *Zero Edge.com*, August 16.
- Evans, N. G. 2020, The Ethics of Social Distancing, *The Philosophers' Magazine*. Issue 80 Second Quarter, 96-103.
- Extinction Rebellion 2019. *This is Not a Drill*. London: Penguin Books.
- Furman, K. 2020, Keeping Close to Home, *The Philosophers' Magazine*. Issue 80 Second Quarter, 91-95.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Goodell, Jeff. 2020. "The Zero Hour." *Rolling Stone*, April, 38.
- Gross, Matthias, and Linsey McGoey (eds). 2015. *Routledge International Handbook of Ignorance Studies*. London: Routledge.

- Haiven, Max. 2020. *Revenge Capitalism: The Ghosts of Empire, the Demons of Capital, and the Settling of Unpayable Debt*. London: Pluto.
- Harari, Yuval Noah. 2020. "The World after Coronavirus." *Financial Times*, March 20.
- Harding, Sandra (ed). 1993. *The Racial Economy of Science*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Henry, William HF. 1904. *The New Normal History of the United States*. New York, NY: Hind, Noble and Eldredge.
- Hui, Yuk. 2020. "Singularity vs Daoist Robots." *Noemamag*, June 8.
- Kearns, Ian. 2019. *Collapse: Europe After the European Union*. London: Biteback.
- Lal, Vinay. 2002. *Empires of Knowledge*. London: Pluto.
- Lal, Vinay. 2020. "You Shall Dwell Alone: The Passion and Unrequited Love of Covid-19." *Open*, April 6.
- Lansing, J. Stephen, and Murray P. Cox. 2019. *Islands of Order: A Guide to Complexity Modelling for the Social Sciences*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Mair, Simon. 2020. "What will the World be like After Coronavirus? Four Possible Futures." BBC Future site, March 31.
- Manjoo, Farhad. 2020. "Admit It: You Don't Know What Will Happen Next." *New York Times*, February 26.
- Mason, Paul. 2015. *PostCapitalism: A Guide to Our Future*. London: Allen Lane.
- Mayo, Liam. 2020. "The Postnormal Condition." *Journal of Futures Studies* 24 (4): 61-72.
- McGoey, Linsey (ed). 2014. *An Introduction to the Sociology of Ignorance*. London: Routledge.
- McGoey, Linsey. 2016. *The Unknowers: How Strategic Ignorance Rules the World*. London: Zed Books.
- Meek, James. 2020. "The New Normal." *The Guardian Review*, April 4, 20.
- Meserole, Chris. 2020. "COVID-19 and the Future of Techlash." *Brookings*, April 27.
- Mishra, Pankaj. 2020. "Get Ready, A Bigger Disruption is Coming." *Bloomberg.com*, March 16.
- Montuori, Alfonso, and Gabrielle Donnelly. 2017. "Transformative Leadership." In *Handbook of Personal and Organisational Transformation*, edited by J. Neal. New York: Springer.
- Moore, K. D., and M. P. Nelson. 2020. "The Venn Diagram from Hell, *The Philosophers' Magazine*." Issue 80 Second Quarter, 84-90.
- Nandy, Ashis. 1987. "Traditions, Tyranny, and Utopias: Essays in the Politics of Awareness." Delhi, India: Oxford University Press.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. 1968. *The Encounter of Man and Nature*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Nichol, Christina. 2020. "There is No Longer A 'Normal Life'." *The Guardian*, April 23.
- Nowotny, Helga, Peter Scott, and Michael Gibbons. 2002. *Re-Thinking Science: Knowledge and the Public in an Age of Uncertainty*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Ord, Toby. 2020. "The Precipice: Existential Risk and the Future of Humanity." London: Bloomsbury.
- Park, Alice. 2020. "The Right Way Out." *Time*, May 11.
- Politico Magazine. 2020. "Coronavirus will be Change the World Permanently. Here's How." Politico, March 19.
- Pope Francis. 2020. "Take Care of Yourselves for A Future that will Come." interview with *Austen Ivereigh*. The Tablet, April 11.
- Raymond, Adam K. 2019. "How Close Is the U.S. to Civil War? About Two-Thirds of the Way, Americans Say." *New York Magazine*, October 24.
- Read, Rupert, and Samuel Alexander. 2019. *This Civilization is Finished*. Melbourne, Australia: Simplicity Institute.
- Renn, Jurgen. 2020. *The Evolution of Knowledge: Rethinking Science for the Anthropocene*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Roy, Arundhati. 2020. "The Pandemic is a Portal." *Financial Times*, April 3.
- Roy, Eleanor Ainge. 2017. "New Zealand River Granted Same Legal Rights as Human Being." *The Guardian*, March 16.
- Sardar, Z. 1992. "Terminator 2 modernity, post-modernism and the 'other'." *Futures* 24: 493-506.
- Sardar, Ziauddin. 2006a. "Beyond Difference: Cultural Relations in the New Century." In *How Do You Know: Reading Ziauddin Sardar on*

- Islam, Science and Cultural Relations*, edited by E. Masood, 288-309, London: Pluto.
- Sardar, Ziauddin. 2006b. "Transmodernity: Art Beyond Modernity and Multiculturalism." In *Navigating Difference: Cultural Diversity and Audience Development*. London: Art Council England.
- Sardar, Ziauddin. 2012. "Transmodern Journeys: Future Studies and Higher Education." In *European Education at the Crossroads*, edited by A. Curaj, P. Scott, L. Vlasceanu, and L. Wilson, Chapter 48. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer Science.
- Sardar, Z. 2020. "The Smog of Ignorance: Knowledge and Wisdom in Postnormal Times." *Futures* 120: 102554.
- Sardar, Z., and J. A. Sweeney 2016. "The Three Tomorrows of Postnormal Times." *Futures* 75: 1-13.
- Serra, Jordi, Christopher Jones, and Liam Mayo. 2020. "Covid Chronicles: 'The Postnormal Perfect Storm'." <https://postnormaltim.es>.
- Slaughter, R. A. 2020. "Farewell Alternative Futures?" *Futures* 121: 102496.
- Sneider, Kevin, and Shubham Singhal. 2020. "Beyond Coronavirus: The Path to the Next Normal." *McKinsey & Company*, March 23.
- Stockholm Resilience Centre. 2015. "The Nine Planetary Boundaries." <https://stockholmresilience.org>.
- Sweeney, John. 2016. "Extreme Weirder." In *Critical Muslim 17: Extreme*, edited by Z. Sardar. London: Hurst Publishers.
- Taft, John W, Elizabeth H. Holt, and Leonard B. Marshall. 1910. *The New Normal Music Course*. New York, NY: Silver Burdett and Co.
- Tainter, Joseph. 1988. *The Collapse of Complex Societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Talwar, Rohit, Wells, Steve and Whittington, Alexandra, 2020. *Aftershocks And Opportunities: Scenarios for a Post-Pandemic Future*, Fast Future Publishing.
- Tudge, Colin. 2020. *The Great Re-Think*. Tuscany, Italy: Pari Publishing.
- UNESCO. n.d. "The Next Normal." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QR_za7P28bI&feature=youtu.be
- van Creveld, Martin. 2020. *Seeing the Future: A Short History of Predictions*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Webb, Amy. 2019. *The Big Nine*. New York, NY: Public Affairs.
- Weyl, Glen, and Jaron Lanier. 2020. "AI is an Ideology, Not a Technology." *Wired*, March 15. <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2020-03-16/coronavirus-foreshadow-s-bigger-disruptions-in-future>.
- White, L. 1967. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis." *Science* 155: 1203-1207.
- Wilby, Justin. 2020. "The Archbishop of Canterbury's Easter Sermon." <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org>.
- Wilmott, Paul, and Davie Orrell. 2017. *The Money Formula*. Chichester: Wiley.
- Wintour, Patrick. 2020. "Coronavirus: Who will be Winners and Losers in the New World Order." *The Guardian*, April 11.
- Wyman, Patrick. 2020. "How Do You Know If You're Living Through the Death of an Empire?" *Mother Jones*, March 29.
- Young, ed. 2020. "How the Pandemic will End?" *The Atlantic*, March 25.

Author Biography

Ziauddin Sardar, futurist and public intellectual, is Consulting editor of *Futures*. He has published over fifty books, including *Rescuing All Our Futures* (1999), *Future: All That Matters* (2013) and *The Postnormal Times Reader* (2017).