

# Crisis and Apocalypse

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“Collective trauma is a cataclysmic event that shatters the basic fabric of society.” (Hirschberger, 2018)

The idea of an impending apocalyptic event is not a new one. Yet, very few events are as universal and in vivid memory as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Most wars, natural disasters, or major industrial accidents are very local and make it easy to an outside observer to maintain emotional distance. The COVID-19 pandemic however is among the few events that affect virtually every living person. It is a perfect example of collective trauma.

Such trauma can disrupt established social structures, surface un-remembered personal trauma, and trigger the imagination of people in both constructive and destructive ways, e.g. by motivating movements for more social justice or by hijacking the imagination into creating conspiracy theories as a defense against the experienced crisis (Kalsched, 2021).

The psychological effects of major crises are among the primary reasons why I wanted to study psychology. I believe there will be even more need for research and demand for therapeutic treatment in the near and long-term future as the true impact of the pandemic, ongoing political struggles, and violent conflicts of our time become apparent.

I think it is critical for modern psychology to understand how the global environment affects the mental state of the people living in it, especially as there is no practical way to withdraw from this environment when it becomes harmful. A person experiencing personal trauma may or may not have the option to leave the environment that harmed them, but for the foreseeable future Earth is the only planet we can live on.

At the same time, humanity is in the process of changing this environment in destructive ways. The term Anthropocene is often used to describe a new geological age that is shaped significantly by human influence, manifesting in climate change and a new mass extinction event (Wagler, 2011).

We are only beginning to see the effects of this global change and it's easy to imagine it as a cataclysmic event, one that the COVID-19 pandemic pales to in comparison. How this will affect people psychologically and what mental healthcare can do to support people through it, is of great interest to me and I hope to explore these topics in the “Crisis and Apocalypse” seminar.

## References

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