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Journal 3

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Last week in class we dove into the world of risk society and some of the very important concepts discussed in Beck’s book, “Risk Society.” We discussed some of the key concepts in class by breaking up the chapters and assigning them to pairs.

After reading Beck I have a much better understanding of risk. “Risks concern the possibility of future occurrences and developments,” so risk is anticipation. It seems there is an inherent tension when discussing risk, which is either due to the heightened attention to the word risk, or simply the potential for an event that will have a big impact. Risk is a possibility, and events that may or may not occur, but because of their potential impact communication and awareness about the potential for risk is vital.

Another important concept was that of ambivalence. The danger, as I understand it, of ambivalence is in understanding the risk and the implications of any danger associated with risk, but believing it to be unstoppable. This acceptance of suck risk, or risky events, leads to non action. Non action is dangerous not only because it may lead to the very event that is seen as inevitable. My point here is that non action is not an appropriate response.

My group worked on chapter 3, which was challenging. The key concepts of chapter 3 revolve around understanding ambivalence. Ambivalence is the difference between new and old threats. You can’t treat new threats as you did old threats. You also can’t be ambivalent to threats, or risk. All actions must confront risk.

World risk is unwanted, because the result is the new cosmopolitan that will overcome boundaries. It will force countries, etc. people to talk and interact that would not normally do so. This is unwanted because it challenges or questions the normative behavior of these countries, people, etc.

The important concept discussed in Beck’s book that I struggled with the most was new cosmopolitan. When reading Beck on my own I wasn’t sure of how to approach this concept. Throughout discussion in class I came to understand it as the overcoming of boundaries by only judging something against the alternatives. You don’t judge against past solutions or approaches. Stay in the moment, and address risk against current alternatives. The new cosmopolitan will overcome boundaries.

The concept I was most interested in was that of definition and power. I think we like to view risk as something big, the catastrophe, etc., but it exists in everything, and we see that easily in definition and power. When an event happens, who dictates the narrative, and who reinforces the narrative by repeating it or reporting it again?