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West Papua: Ontological Cages and Colonial Consent

Myth, power, and the colonial structuring of perception and reality

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ABSTRACT

This essay presents, expands, and concretises the central theoretical arguments advanced by Yamin Kogoya in *We Are All Inmates: The Cage Just Has Different Names*, situating it within the broader Psycho-Cosmocide framework as developed by Kogoya. The essay opens with a critical clarification that the framework does not romanticise pre-colonial or Cosmobian worlds as conditions of paradise. Those original natural worlds contained suffering, conflict, mortality, and unresolved existential difficulty no less than any other human formation on this... planet — borrowing Fanon’s word “wretched”. What they possessed, distinctively, was the capacity to dwell within unresolved existence without constructing totalising systems of false certainty around it. From this clarification, the essay develops the framework’s foundational structural distinction between two existential cages—the primordial cage of irreducible physical and biological being, and the civilisational cage manufactured through symbolic systems, institutional power, and ideological conditioning. It then draws on mythological archetypes from Gilgamesh, Plato, Camus, Ecclesiastes, and Beckett to demonstrate that civilisational consciousness has persistently attempted to deny the first cage while rendering the second invisible. The essay applies these structural analyses concretely to West Papua, examining how Indonesian colonial occupation has deployed the second cage with particular brutality against Papuan consciousness, and how a stratum of colonially-formed Papuan elites has been produced who function as donkeys on Pleasure Island, Pinocchios in the belly of the beast, appointed kings and queens of Neverland, and slow-boiling frogs—psychologically enclosed within the very system that is consuming them. It concludes with the Procrustean principle as the operational mechanism of civilisational forced violence and Wonesis as the framework’s proposed ontological response. The essay draws on comparative mythology, decolonial philosophy, and ontological analysis as mutually reinforcing methodological registers.

Keywords: Psycho-Cosmocide, ontological cages, colonial consent, West Papua, Wonesis, civilisational enclosure, decolonial philosophy, colonised elite

What This Framework Does Not Claim

Before the theoretical architecture of the Psycho-Cosmocide framework proceeds, one clarification demands to be stated at the outset. Without it, the entire project is susceptible to a fundamental misreading that has historically been used to silence decolonial critique before it can be heard: the charge of romanticism.

This framework does not claim that Indigenous, land-based, or nature-oriented peoples—what Kogoya broadly designates Cosmobian societies—lived in paradise. It does not romanticise pre-colonial existence as a condition of perfect harmony, perpetual peace, metaphysical completion, or freedom from suffering. Those worlds contained fear, conflict, war, betrayal, violence, grief, uncertainty, illness, and death. They faced the same unresolved existential questions that this framework traces across civilisational history: the question of suffering, of mortality, of meaning, of cosmological origin, and of the irreducible uncertainty surrounding existence. They did not possess final answers to these questions — nor has any human civilisation, philosophy, religion, or scientific system. The capacity to resolve the deepest conditions of the first cage—death, suffering, uncertainty, ecological vulnerability—has never belonged to any human formation, however powerful, ancient, and sophisticated.

However, what distinguished many Cosmobian worlds was not the absence of suffering, uncertainty, or existential difficulty, but a fundamentally different orientation toward them: the capacity to inhabit unresolved existence without erecting totalising systems of artificial certainty or waging war against the natural order. This difference is not superficial; it represents two cosmologically opposed modes of being. Much of the history of dominant civilisational projects can be understood as the history of consciousness attempting to escape the first cage of existential uncertainty by constructing increasingly elaborate, coercive, and ideological forms of the second cage. Cosmobian societies, by contrast, tended to sustain relational equilibrium within ancestral, ecological, and cosmological frameworks, living with existence as it actually unfolded rather than reshaping reality to satisfy systems of abstraction, domination, or ideological management. This does not mean such worlds were free from conflict, tragedy, or limitation. It means their structural relationship to reality, nature, and existence itself operated according to a fundamentally different cosmological logic. This logic cosmologically prevented them from destroying the natural world.

I also acknowledge the paradox at the centre of this work: the framework itself could not exist outside the historical conditions produced by civilisation. The ability to write, to theorise, to publish, to circulate ideas across continents, to sit with sufficient material stability to conduct sustained intellectual labour—all of this is inseparable from the very civilisational structures being analysed and critiqued. This is not a contradiction that the framework attempts to conceal or minimise.

It is a methodological honesty: the critique emerges from within the structure it analyses, using the tools that structure has produced, and remains accountable to that condition.¹

¹The paradox of critique-from-within is a recurring methodological problem in decolonial and critical theory. For key formulations see Walter Dignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 1–39; and Sylvia Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of

Accordingly, Psycho-Cosmocide does not reject civilisation as a human impulse toward cooperation, organisation, survival, creativity, or material improvement. What it critiques is the specific and recurring form that dominant civilisational projects assumed across history: projects constructed upon metaphysical hierarchies claiming that certain human groups were more advanced, rational, moral, or historically destined than others. Whether expressed through imperial conquest, missionary expansion, racial doctrine, developmental ideology, theological salvation narratives, or civilising missions, these projects shared a common and deeply dangerous assumption: that those carrying the project possessed a superior mode of existence, while those subjected to it were primitive, deficient, irrational, incomplete, or in need of correction, salvation, management, or elimination.²

This is the delusion the framework identifies, names, and refuses. The problem is not civilisation itself. The problem is the cultural and metaphysical arrogance embedded within its most destructive expressions: the belief that some human beings have transcended the universal conditions of existence while others remain trapped beneath them. The belief that some possess final authority over truth, morality, history, salvation, rationality, or human destiny—despite the fact that no civilisation has ever resolved the deepest questions of existence itself. No empire has abolished death. No theological system has ended suffering. No ideology has delivered permanent liberation. The first cage remains intact beneath every civilisational claim to have escaped it, and the violence of that claim falls disproportionately upon those designated as inferior, primitive, or in need of rescue.

What Psycho-Cosmocide ultimately refuses, therefore, is not the difficulty or imperfection of existence. It refuses the lie that some human beings have been exempted from that difficulty while others deserve to remain beneath it—and the immense historical violence that has been justified through that belief. This refusal is the ethical and philosophical foundation upon which everything that follows is built.

Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257–337. Wynter’s argument that Western humanism’s overrepresentation of “Man” as the universal human subject produces an epistemic condition in which critique must be conducted through the very apparatus being critiqued is particularly resonant with the methodological position articulated here.

²The concept of “civilising missions” as a legitimating ideology for colonial violence is extensively documented. See Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000); and Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, trans. Howard Greenfeld (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991). For the specific deployment of developmental ideology in the Indonesian context, see Ariel Heryanto, “The Development of ‘Development,’” trans. Nancy Lutz, *Indonesia* 46 (1988): 1–24.

TWO CAGES: THE PRIMORDIAL AND THE CIVILISATIONAL

The Psycho-Cosmocide framework, as elaborated through these kinds of philosophical writings, attempts to diagnose civilisational existence produced within contemporary decolonial thought. At its foundation lies a deceptively simple but ontologically decisive distinction: there are, this framework argues, two kinds of cages within which all living beings exist, and the failure to distinguish between them constitutes one of the deepest pathologies of civilisational consciousness.³⁴ This failure is not accidental. It is cultivated, maintained, and reproduced across generations precisely because it serves the interests of those who benefit from the second cage—which is to say, those who have constructed their systems of power upon the pretension that their particular version of civilisational enclosure is not a cage at all but the natural order of the world. This thinking is what I have argued elsewhere as the “Civilisational Psycho-Cosmocide Virus”—a virus that has poisoned the human psyche and produced a collective civilisational psychosis, which in turn produces cosmological anomie: the collapse of the collective human psychological coherent system.⁵

The first cage is what this paper designates the primordial or cosmic cage. It is not manufactured by any human institution, ideology, or system of power. It is existence itself—the original structure of being alive. Into this cage every organism is born without consent, without negotiation, and without any possibility of prior evaluation. Birth, embodiment, mortality, ecological dependency, vulnerability, hunger, time, ageing, uncertainty, and death: these are the irreducible conditions of any living creature’s existence, regardless of species, culture, historical period, or civilisational achievement. The cattle standing beside the highway in the rain, the fish drawn up into a net, the bird enduring winter storms, the human being sitting with the knowledge of its own eventual death—all are equally inmates of this first cage. It does not discriminate. It does not grant exemptions. Its conditions fall upon all life with identical impartiality.

³Yamin Kogoya, *We Are All Inmates: The Cage Just Has Different Names* (Wone Press, 2024). The primordial or cosmic cage as developed here draws on Kogoya’s fundamental distinction between the irreducible conditions of biological existence and the manufactured structures of civilisational enclosure. This distinction is not merely descriptive but ontologically decisive: the failure to maintain it produces one of the deepest pathologies of civilisational consciousness, namely the treatment of historically contingent arrangements of power as though they were as natural and unavoidable as death itself.

⁴This First Cage/Second Cage distinction is developed into a fuller seven-part architecture, with the Second Cage unfolding into four Historical Cages and the whole distinction reframed as the Given and the Constructed, in Yamin Kogoya, “The Given and The Constructed: Seven Existential Cages of Psycho-Cosmocide Theory,” Working Paper No. 29, Kurumbi Wone Working Paper Series (PhilPapers, 2026). For the same First/Second Cage distinction developed independently as a philosophical argument in dialogue with Plato, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Camus, see Yamin Kogoya, “We Are All Inmates of Different Cages: Psycho-Cosmocide and Civilisational Captivity,” Working Paper No. 25, Kurumbi Wone Working Paper Series (PhilPapers, 2026).

⁵The concept of the CPCV (Civilisational Psycho-Cosmocide Virus) is developed in *milneXus* [Kurumbi Wone], “The Architecture of Colonial Domination.” The designation of civilisational psychosis as producing “cosmological anomie”—the collapse of a collective psychological coherence system organised around cosmological orientation—draws on and extends Émile Durkheim’s sociological concept of anomie, radicalising it from a description of social disintegration to an account of ontological disorientation at the civilisational scale. See Émile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, trans. John A. Spaulding and George Simpson (New York: Free Press, 1951), 241–276.

According to Kogoya, this condition is not a punishment, not evil, and not the consequence of any historical failure or moral deficiency. It is simply the original terms of being alive.

For thousands of years, the framework argues, humanity attempted to psychologically escape this first cage through religion, metaphysics, empire, utopian ideology, technological dreams, and salvation myths of every variety. The project of transcendence—of escaping mortality, suffering, and existential uncertainty through symbolic or institutional means—constitutes one of the most persistent themes in human civilisational history. Yet the first cage was never dismantled by any of these attempts. Human beings remained mortal, embodied, ecological, and vulnerable. The construction of pyramids did not abolish death. Humans built the Tower of Babel but did not reach the heavens. The formulation of salvation doctrines did not end suffering. The development of medical technology extended life but did not resolve the existential condition that life ends. The first cage cannot be escaped precisely because it is not a construction: it is existence itself.⁶

The second cage is something categorically different—just like that of the human-constructed freshwater lake—and the distinction must be pressed with full analytical force. Civilisation constructed a cage inside the first one: a manufactured enclosure built upon and within the irreducible conditions of existence, but serving entirely different and far more historically contingent purposes. This second cage is entirely the product of human systems: symbolic structures with myths, images, written words, symbols, colours, institutional conditioning, economic dependencies, religious hierarchies, colonial categories, racial classifications, educational apparatuses, media systems, legal frameworks, aesthetic standards, and the accumulated manufactured meanings through which civilisation gradually replaced direct encounter with living reality. Unlike the first cage, the second cage has a history—and that is why it has been asserted that history begins with the first recorded stories within civilisational walls. It was built at specific historical moments, by specific interests, for specific purposes, and it can be traced, documented, named, and in principle dismantled.⁷

Its most dangerous property is its invisibility. Those inside the second cage believe they are free while being psychologically conditioned, epistemologically governed, behaviourally programmed, and morally skewed while participating in systems of profound ecological and human destruction, and always possessing this innate tendency of advancing, improving, progressing, evolving, and becoming superior while destroying the conditions—the

⁶The framework's analysis of civilisational consciousness as characterised by the compulsive attempt to escape mortality through symbolic, institutional, and technological means has resonances with Ernest Becker's argument in *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1973), though the Psycho-Cosmocide framework extends this analysis from individual psychology to the level of civilisational structure, arguing that death-denial is not merely a personal psychological mechanism but one of the primary organising logics of dominant civilisational projects. The Tower of Babel episode cited in the text is drawn from Genesis 11:1–9 (NRSV).

⁷The concept of the second cage as a system that renders itself invisible by presenting itself as natural reality corresponds closely to Louis Althusser's theory of ideological state apparatuses, particularly his account of how ideology "represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence." See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 127–186. The Psycho-Cosmocide framework, however, goes further than Althusser in locating the operation of this invisibility not merely within ideological state apparatuses but within the deep structure of civilisational consciousness itself.

ecosystem—that actually sustain life. The second cage does not announce itself as oppressive or destructive. It operates most effectively by convincing its inhabitants that it is not a cage at all, but simply reality itself—natural, inevitable, better, superior, moral, and indeed the preferable arrangement of human existence. This is precisely the mechanism through which Psycho-Cosmocide perpetuates across generations: not through brute force alone, but through the production of consciousness so thoroughly enclosed that the cage becomes indistinguishable from the horizon.

The framework further argues that the most insidious dimension of the second cage is not its external violence, catastrophic as that violence has been. It is the internal work the cage performs upon the consciousness of those it encloses—including, and especially, those whom it has subjected most completely to its governing fictions. This is where Psycho-Cosmocide as a concept earns its full analytical weight: not merely as a description of physical or political domination, but as an account of how civilisational systems destroy the psychological and cosmological integrity of those they colonise, replacing living cosmological consciousness with a manufactured substitute that serves the coloniser's ontological project.⁸

The nightmare of this invisible civilisational psychocosmocidal project lies in its capacity to reprogramme the colonised into participating in their own destruction by offering them precisely what they have been conditioned to desire. Its logic operates like a physician who first manufactures the illness, then diagnoses the suffering it created, and finally prescribes an antidote that deepens the disease rather than curing it. In this structure, the colonised host is not conquered solely through force, but through the gradual transformation of consciousness itself—where the very pathways presented as liberation, development, salvation, civilisation, progress, or inclusion become mechanisms through which the foundations of ancestral existence are dissolved. The horror is therefore not external domination, but the production of a condition in which the victim increasingly internalises the worldview of the system consuming them, mistaking the instruments of disintegration for the promises of survival.

THE MYTHS THAT REMEMBER THE CAGE

The Psycho-Cosmocide framework does not read mythology as decoration or as the primitive imaginative residue of pre-scientific minds. It treats the great mythological and philosophical archetypes of human civilisation as structural witnesses—recurring recognitions emerging whenever consciousness confronts the double problem of existence and civilisational illusion. These narratives were not invented as deliberate theoretical statements. They emerged, across vastly different cultural contexts and historical periods, as expressions of something that

⁸The “Grammar of Unknowing” is developed as a theoretical concept in Yamin Kogoya, “West Papua and the Grammar of Colonial Unknowing,” NATAKA Research Institute Discussion Paper, 2024. The concept designates not simple ignorance but the systematic organisation of consciousness around its own inability to perceive the conditions of its enclosure—an epistemic structure that actively prevents the recognition of the cage as cage. This concept is related to but distinct from Michel Foucault's analysis of epistemes in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1970), in that it foregrounds colonial power as the primary mechanism through which the grammar of unknowing is produced and maintained.

civilisational consciousness kept encountering and never fully resolving: the recognition that humanity is trapped inside conditions it did not create, does not fully understand, and cannot escape by the means it most frequently reaches for.

Gilgamesh and Enkidu: The First Seduction into the Civilisational Cage

The *Epic of Gilgamesh* can be understood within this framework as one of the earliest mythological witnesses to the transition from participatory, nature-based existence into the estrangement of civilisation.⁹ Enkidu represents humanity before incorporation into the second cage: a being living in direct relational participation with the living world—integrated with animals, land, ecological rhythm, and the immediate conditions of existence itself. He exists outside the symbolic machinery of civilisation. His consciousness has not yet been organised through institutional systems, ideological abstractions, imperial hierarchies, or manufactured structures of meaning. In the language of the framework, Enkidu exists within Wone—embedded within the relational ground of existence rather than separated from it through symbolic substitutes and civilisational enclosures.

The turning point of the story emerges through seduction. Enkidu is not conquered first through violence, but through inducement into the civilisational order by the temple prostitute—one of the most powerful archetypal symbols in the history of civilisation.¹⁰ The significance of this episode lies not merely in sexuality itself, but in what the temple prostitute represents: civilisation's capacity to seduce cosmopolitan beings away from their original cosmological ground through desire, glamour, status, comfort, symbolic prestige, and promises of elevated existence. This is what a companion study names the Shamhat Mechanism: the use of counterfeit transcendence—symbolic, social, and spiritual substitutes for cosmic connection—to detach the cosmopolitan being from its original world while presenting the detachment as fulfilment.¹¹ Through this induction, Enkidu becomes alienated from the world he once inhabited. The animals no longer recognise him, and the equilibrium that once sustained him is broken. Within the framework, this archetype mirrors the historical pattern through which many colonised, nature-based Cosmopolitan societies were absorbed into civilisational systems.

⁹*The Epic of Gilgamesh*, trans. Andrew George (London: Penguin, 2003). The George translation is used here as the standard scholarly edition in English. For analysis of Enkidu's role as representing pre-civilisational humanity, see Jeffrey H. Tigay, *The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 182–197. The framework's reading of Enkidu as embodying what it designates "Wone"—direct participatory existence within the relational ground of the living world—represents an ontological rather than merely literary or anthropological interpretation of the text.

¹⁰The seduction of Enkidu by the temple prostitute (Shamhat in most translations) is narrated in Tablet I of the standard Babylonian version of the epic. See George, *Epic of Gilgamesh*, 7–8. The framework's reading of this episode as a paradigmatic model of civilisational seduction—the inducement of cosmopolitan beings away from their original cosmological ground through desire, status, and the promise of belonging—finds resonance in Lewis Mumford's argument that the city, not military conquest, was the primary instrument of early civilisational incorporation. See Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961), 29–53.

¹¹On the Shamhat Mechanism and its place within a wider structure of participatory extinction—in which the seduced being comes to collaborate in its own displacement—see Yamin Kogoya, "Gilgamesh and Enkidu: Participatory Extinction and the Seduction of the Cosmopolitan Being," Working Paper No. 20, Kurumbi Wone Working Paper Series (PhilPapers, 2026).

The first agents of incorporation were often not external armies alone, but indigenous intermediaries and elites seduced by the material and symbolic rewards of the dominant order—wealth, power, luxury, institutional recognition, spiritual legitimacy, and participation in imperial structures. Like the archetypal harlot of empire, civilisation extends promises of fulfilment while simultaneously severing the colonised from the ancestral foundations that once sustained their existence. The tragedy is therefore not only military conquest, but cosmological seduction: the gradual transformation of guardians of the living world into instruments of the very system dissolving that world.

Gilgamesh, by contrast, represents the emergence of civilisation in its most seductive and dangerous form: the king, the builder, the one who inscribes his name upon walls and whose legacy is the monument. The walls of Uruk are the second cage made stone and mortar. They are beautiful, impressive, and entirely artificial. Enkidu's seduction and transformation—drawn into the city and its symbolic system through desire, through pleasure, through the allure of civilisational belonging—becomes the paradigmatic model for humanity's own historical movement into the second cage: the gain of abstraction, institution, and empire alongside the loss of primordial belonging, ecological integration, and direct participation in the living world.

The tragedy crystallises when Enkidu dies and Gilgamesh is forced, for the first time, into unmediated confrontation with the first cage. No amount of civilisational achievement—no wall, no record, no glory, no divine favour—can abolish mortality. This is the moment at which civilisation's fundamental pretension is exposed: the walls of Uruk were built partly as a symbolic answer to death, but death does not recognise the answer. The remainder of the epic becomes humanity's desperate journey to find the plant of immortality—and its loss. The framework reads the entire Gilgamesh cycle as one of the earliest civilisational recognitions that humanity simultaneously inhabits the primordial cage of existence and the constructed cage of its own making, and that the compulsion to confuse the two—to treat civilisational achievement as a solution to existential conditions that no civilisational achievement can resolve—is the source of its most enduring and most destructive forms of suffering.

Plato's Cave: When the Cage Becomes Reality

Plato's allegory of the cave in *The Republic* stands, within Kogoya's framework, as one of the most profound philosophical representations ever articulated of the second cage.¹² The prisoners inside the cave are not individuals consciously aware of their imprisonment. They have been confined there since birth. The shadows projected upon the wall are not perceived as shadows, illusions, or representations; they constitute reality itself as far as the prisoners can understand it. The cave does not merely restrict perception—it establishes the entire horizon within which perception becomes possible. Because the prisoners have never encountered

¹²Plato, *The Republic*, trans. G. M. A. Grube, rev. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992), 514a–520a. The allegory of the cave appears in Book VII of the Republic. The framework's reading of the cave as a structural model of the second cage diverges from Plato's own interpretation—which treats the escape from the cave as the philosopher's ascent to genuine knowledge of the Forms—by refusing the Platonic hierarchy that privileges abstract reason over embodied, participatory existence. Where Plato sees the cave as the condition of ordinary human consciousness awaiting philosophical rescue, Kogoya reads it as the condition of civilisational consciousness as such, including the philosophical traditions that claim to have escaped it.

existence beyond its boundaries, they possess no experiential reference point from which to recognise the enclosure as enclosure. They believe they are perceiving the world directly, when in fact they are perceiving only the projection system of the cage itself.

Within the framework, modern civilisational consciousness operates in precisely this manner. Human beings are born into vast symbolic architectures composed of religion, nationalism, consumerism, racial hierarchy, economic systems, institutional authority, and ideological narratives that collectively define the limits of visible reality. These structures generate the “shadows” through which existence is interpreted and organised. The shadows are named, categorised, moralised, institutionalised, and transformed into the objects of sophisticated systems of thought. Entire academic disciplines, legal orders, theological traditions, media systems, and political ideologies have emerged to analyse, defend, and regulate the shadows while rarely interrogating the projection apparatus that produces them. This is what the framework identifies as the Grammar of Unknowing: not simple ignorance, but the systematic organisation of consciousness around its inability to perceive the conditions of its own enclosure.

The prisoner who leaves the cave undergoes what the framework describes as psycho-cosmocidal awakening.¹³ Plato is unflinchingly honest about the nature of this transition. Awakening is not comforting. The encounter with reality beyond the cave is disorienting, painful, and psychologically destabilising. The light blinds before it illuminates.

The individual who perceives the structure of the cage does not return as a celebrated liberator welcomed by the chained cave’s community. Instead, Plato recognises a tragic dynamic that Kogoya emphasises throughout his interpretation of the allegory: those who attempt to reveal the nature of the cave are often met with ridicule, hostility, delegitimisation, or destruction by those whose identities and psychological stability depend upon the shadows remaining intact. A dedicated study of this allegory applies it directly to the Papuan case, reading the chains as Psycho, the cave itself as Cosmocide, and the shadow figures projected on the wall as the colonially-formed elite discussed below—Papuan presented back to their own people as models of realised humanity, while the fire that casts the shadows remains, structurally, unseen¹⁴ Civilisations therefore preserve their projection systems not only through institutions of force, but through the deep psychological investment of their inhabitants in the symbolic world those systems produce. The shadows become inseparable from identity, morality, meaning, belonging, and reality itself. To question the cave is therefore seen not just as disagreement, but as a threat to the entire way people understand reality itself.

Sisyphus: Civilisation's Endless Attempt to Solve the Unsolvable

¹³The dynamic by which those who reveal the structure of the cave are met with hostility, ridicule, or destruction by its inhabitants is narrated by Plato in Republic 517a. Plato goes further in the allusion to the fate of Socrates (who is not named but clearly indicated), suggesting that the philosopher who attempted to free the prisoners “would be killed.” This tragic dimension of awakening—the social and existential cost of naming the cage—is a structural feature of the Psycho-Cosmocide analysis.

¹⁴Yamin Kogoya, “Plato’s Cave and the Architecture of Psycho-Cosmocide in West Papua,” Working Paper No. 8, Kurumbi Wone Working Paper Series (PhilPapers, 2026), secs. VII–VIII.

Albert Camus's Sisyphus serves a distinct and precisely calibrated function within the framework.¹⁵ Sisyphus is not primarily a figure of heroic defiance, nor of simple despair. He is a figure of repetition—and it is the repetition that carries the analytical weight. Civilisation endlessly builds empires, economies, institutions, ideologies, and revolutions. Each new construction claims to be the resolution of what previous constructions failed to achieve. The Roman Empire claimed to have superseded the barbarism of what came before it. Christian civilisation claimed to have superseded Roman paganism. Enlightenment modernity claimed to have superseded theological darkness. Industrial capitalism claimed to have superseded pre-modern scarcity. Colonial civilising missions claimed to have superseded indigenous primitiveness. Each new civilisational formation carries the stone up the hill with genuine effort and genuine belief in its own ultimate justification. And the stone always descends.

The stone descends because civilisation keeps attempting to solve ontological conditions—the irreducible conditions of the first cage—through symbolic constructions that are necessarily detached from the living ground of existence itself. The attempt to abolish mortality through monumental legacy, to abolish suffering through ideological discipline, to abolish existential uncertainty through doctrinal certainty—these projects produce enormous quantities of institutional architecture, political violence, and psychological enclosure, but they do not resolve what they claim to resolve. The stone returns.

Yet Camus's insistence that meaning must emerge within confrontation rather than through fantasies of transcendence or rescue resonates directly with the framework's proposal of Wonesis: not the promise of rescue from the first cage, but the recovery of participatory existence within conditions as they actually are.

Ecclesiastes: When Civilisation's Promises Become Vanity

Ecclesiastes¹⁶ performs perhaps the most devastating ancient excavation of civilisational illusion. Its systematic dismantling of wealth, labour, pleasure, wisdom, achievement, kingship, legacy, and ambition—the repeated declaration that all is vanity, that all is breath—becomes, in the framework's analysis, the testimony of a consciousness that has passed through the full inventory of what civilisation offers and found it insufficient to the conditions of the

¹⁵Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Vintage, 1955), 119–123. Camus's reading of Sisyphus—"one must imagine Sisyphus happy"—proposes that the absurd hero finds meaning not through transcendence of his condition but through the confrontation with it. The Psycho-Cosmocide framework diverges from Camus at a crucial point: where Camus emphasises individual consciousness confronting the absurd, Kogoya's analysis foregrounds the structural, civilisational dimensions of the repetition, arguing that it is not primarily the individual who is condemned to push the stone, but civilisational consciousness itself, and that the stone descends because civilisational systems keep attempting to resolve ontological conditions through symbolic constructions detached from the living ground of existence.

¹⁶Ecclesiastes 1:2; 1:14; 2:11; 2:17 (NRSV). The attribution of Ecclesiastes to "Qohelet," often translated as "the Teacher" or "the Preacher," and the scholarly uncertainty surrounding authorship, date, and precise historical context does not diminish the text's function within the framework's analysis, which is structural and philosophical rather than exegetical. For the scholarly context, see Michael V. Fox, *A Time to Tear Down and a Time to Build Up: A Rereading of Ecclesiastes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999). The framework reads the recursive refrain of "hevel" (vapour, breath, vanity) as a sustained structural diagnosis of the second cage's incapacity to bear the ontological weight it claims to support.

first cage. The author of Ecclesiastes is not a simple pessimist. He is a rigorous investigator who has tested the propositions of civilisational value and documented the results. The wise die alongside fools and are forgotten equally quickly. Generations come and dissolve into anonymity. Empires rise and leave traces that later generations cannot read. Human striving is cyclical repetition beneath a sun that continues regardless.

What Ecclesiastes reveals is not that existence is worthless but that the symbolic architecture civilisation constructs around existence is structurally incapable of sustaining the weight it claims to bear. The second cage, with all its accumulated glory, does not resolve the conditions of the first.¹⁷ Yet crucially, Ecclesiastes does not collapse into nihilism. The text returns persistently to ordinary existence: eat, drink, find companionship, labour with your hands in the time available to you. This is not resignation. It is a structural recognition that the living itself—the immediate, embodied, relational reality of ordinary existence—possesses a dignity and sufficiency that civilisational ambition systematically obscures without replacing. This movement back toward the living directly anticipates what Wonesis proposes: not the construction of a superior symbolic system, but the recovery of direct participation in existence itself.

Waiting for Godot: The Psychology of Colonial Deferral

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* closes this mythological sequence as its most precise modern formulation, and the one that most directly illuminates the condition of colonised peoples who have been trained to wait for external resolution of their condition.¹⁸ Vladimir and Estragon wait for a figure who never arrives. Their waiting is not incidental to the play: it is the entire structure of their existence. They wait because without the waiting there is nothing else—or rather, there is the living itself, which the waiting successfully prevents them from encountering. Every human decision, every possibility of action, every form of direct engagement with their actual situation, is deferred in favour of the expectation that Godot will arrive and that his arrival will resolve what their own agency cannot.

The framework identifies Godot as the master symbol of civilisational deferral in all its forms: the messiah, the revolution, the technological breakthrough, the perfect ideology, the utopian

¹⁷Ecclesiastes 9:7–9 (NRSV). The text's return to the ordinary—eating, drinking, companionship, labour—has been read variously as hedonism, quietism, or wisdom resignation. The Psycho-Cosmocide framework reads it as something structurally more significant: the recognition that direct, embodied, relational existence possesses a dignity and sufficiency that civilisational ambition systematically obscures without replacing. This reading has resonances with Hannah Arendt's distinction between "labor," "work," and "action" in *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), though the framework situates the recovery of the ordinary within an explicitly cosmological and decolonial rather than a political-philosophical register.

¹⁸Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (London: Faber and Faber, 1956). The framework's reading of Vladimir and Estragon's waiting as the structural model of colonially produced deferral draws on but significantly extends existing Beckett scholarship. For the political dimensions of Beckett's work see David Lloyd, "Beckett's Thing," in *Beckett and Nothing: Trying to Understand Beckett*, ed. Daniela Caselli (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 121–148. The framework's specific contribution is to read the psychology of waiting not as a universal existential condition (as in most Beckett criticism) but as a structure deliberately produced by colonial and civilisational systems in those they subjugate, for the precise purpose of preventing action from the ground of existing reality.

future, the developmental programme, the international legal recognition, the divine intervention, the civilisational rescue that is always arriving and never arrives. This is not an observation about individual psychological weakness. It is a structural analysis of how civilisational and colonial systems deliberately produce the psychology of waiting in those they subjugate. If the colonised can be made to wait—for integration, for independence, for development, for recognition, for justice through the coloniser’s legal apparatus—they will not act from the ground of their own existing reality. The tragedy is not only that Godot never arrives. The deeper tragedy is that the waiting itself is the mechanism through which direct participation in existence—and direct resistance from the ground of that existence—is perpetually postponed.

Walter Benjamin identified a structurally identical pattern in secular history: a homogeneous, empty time in which redemption is endlessly awaited rather than seized, so that each present generation defers its own reckoning to the next¹⁹. The vocabulary changes—eschatological, revolutionary, technological—but the formal function does not: responsibility for confronting the present is displaced onto an imagined future agent, and the present itself becomes a waiting room rather than a place of decision.

Wonesis, by explicit contrast, refuses the psychology of waiting at its root.²⁰ There is no saviour approaching who will abolish the first cage. There is no perfect civilisation arriving to eliminate existential uncertainty. There is no international tribunal that will restore what the machinery of Psycho-Cosmocide has consumed.

The refusal to wait is not nihilism: it is the first ontological act of return to the living ground from which genuine resistance and genuine renewal become possible.

WEST PAPUA: THE COLONIAL MANUFACTURE OF THE SECOND CAGE

The theoretical structures developed in the preceding sections are not abstract philosophical propositions. They are analyses of mechanisms that can be observed operating with devastating precision in specific historical and political contexts. West Papua represents one of the most acute and least acknowledged sites of ongoing Psycho-Cosmocide in the contemporary world: a territory occupied, administered, and ideologically managed by the Indonesian state since 1963, in which a full and continuing apparatus of the second cage has been deployed against a

¹⁹Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), theses IX and XIV. On deferral as one of the principal defence mechanisms of the second cage, see Yamin Kogoya, “We Are All Inmates of Different Cages: Psycho-Cosmocide and Civilisational Captivity,” Working Paper No. 25, Kurumbi Wone Working Paper Series (PhilPapers, 2026), “The Mechanics of Deferral: Bridges, Paradises, Saviours.”

²⁰The concept of Wonesis as the framework’s proposed ontological response to the psychology of waiting is developed at length in milineXus [Kurumbi Wone], “The Architecture of Colonial Domination,” and elaborated across the NATAKA Research Institute Working Papers series. Wonesis designates not a return to a pre-colonial past (which the framework explicitly refuses as romanticism) but a conscious re-entry into participatory existence—the recovery of direct relationship with land, memory, kinship, ancestral knowledge, and embodied life as the ground from which genuine resistance and renewal become possible.

people whose cosmological, ecological, and ancestral worlds are systematically denied, erased, and replaced.²¹

West Papua is not merely a political problem—a question of sovereignty, international law, or decolonisation processes, though it is certainly all of these. It is a Psycho-Cosmocidal problem: a situation in which the full machinery of the second cage has been applied to a people whose cosmological consciousness is rooted in direct relationship with land, ancestral memory, and the living ecology of one of the most biodiverse environments on earth. The occupation did not simply seize a territory. It seized the ontological ground upon which Papuan being was organised, and replaced it with a colonial symbolic system whose governing fictions designated Papuan worlds as primitive, underdeveloped, irrational, and in need of management by those who claimed to possess a more advanced mode of existence.

The consequences of this Psycho-Cosmocidal operation are visible at every level of Papuan society.²² The land has been classified as a national resource and subjected to extractive industries at a scale that constitutes ongoing ecological destruction. The ancestral languages and oral knowledge systems that carried Papuan cosmological consciousness have been systematically displaced by Indonesian as the only legitimate administrative and educational medium. The customary governance structures that organised Papuan communities in relation to land, kinship, and ancestral obligation have been superseded by state-imposed administrative categories. The spiritual and cosmological frameworks that sustained Papuan understanding of existence have been dismissed as superstition. And the Papuan people themselves have been subjected to demographic transformation through transmigration programmes that have made them a minority in their own land.²³

²¹West Papua's incorporation into Indonesia was formalised through the New York Agreement of 1962 and the Act of Free Choice of 1969, widely regarded by scholars of international law and decolonial studies as a deeply compromised process. See Pieter Drooglever, *An Act of Free Choice: Decolonisation and the Right to Self-Determination in West Papua* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009); and John Saltford, *The United Nations and the Indonesian Takeover of West Papua, 1962–1969: The Anatomy of Betrayal* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003). The Indonesian state's administration of the territory since 1963 has been documented by human rights organisations as involving systematic violence, population transfer, and the suppression of Papuan political, cultural, and ontological expression.

²²The designation of Papuan land as a “national resource” subject to extractive industry has been the basis for one of the most extensive processes of ecological destruction in the Indo-Pacific region. The Freeport-McMoRan Grasberg mine, one of the largest gold and copper deposits in the world, is the most prominent instance of this pattern. For documentation see Stuart Kirsch, *Mining Capitalism: The Relationship between Corporations and Their Critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 55–82. The systematic displacement of Papuan ancestral languages by Indonesian as the sole legitimate administrative and educational medium is documented in Danilyn Rutherford, *Raiding the Land of the Foreigners: The Limits of the Nation on an Indonesian Frontier* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

²³The transmigration programme (transmigrasi), through which the Indonesian state relocated large populations from Java, Bali, and Madura to West Papua, fundamentally altered the demographic composition of the territory. By the early 2000s, indigenous Papuans constituted a minority in many of the territory's urban centres. See Chris Manning and Michael Rumbiak, “Irian Jaya: Economic Change, Migrants, and Indigenous Welfare,” in *Unity and Diversity: Regional Economic Development in Indonesia since 1970*, ed. Hal Hill (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989), 77–120; and Benny Giay and John Rumbiak, *Memory, Manipulation, and the Papuan Cause* (Jayapura: ELSHAM, 2000).

The Colonised Elite: Donkeys on Pleasure Island

Within this broader context of colonial Psycho-Cosmocide, one of the most analytically significant and least theoretically examined phenomena is the emergence of a stratum of colonially-formed Papuan elites: individuals who have been educated within the colonial system, inducted into its institutional structures, granted positions of apparent authority within its administrative apparatus, and who have consequently become the most effective vectors through which the second cage reproduces itself within Papuan society. The framework analyses this phenomenon through a sequence of mythological archetypes whose structural precision is remarkable: the donkeys of Pleasure Island, Pinocchio in the belly of the beast, the appointed kings and queens of Neverland, and the slow-boiling frog.

In Carlo Collodi's *Pinocchio*, the Pleasure Island episode depicts boys who are lured to a place where every desire is gratified, every constraint is removed, and every form of disciplined self-understanding is replaced by unlimited, consequence-free indulgence.²⁴ The island is not a prison in any recognisable sense. It offers no visible bars, no guards, no overt coercion. It offers pleasure, status, and the sensation of freedom. Yet the consequence of this seduction is transformation: the boys become donkeys—animals fitted for labour, stripped of intelligence, incapable of articulating what has happened to them, and sold into servitude. The pleasure itself became the mechanism of enclosure.

The Psycho-Cosmocide framework applies this structure with analytical precision to the colonially-formed Papuan elite. These are individuals who have been offered access to the pleasures of the colonial system: education in its universities, employment in its bureaucratic and administrative structures, the social status conferred by proximity to colonial power, the economic rewards of institutional participation, and the psychological comfort of belonging to what the second cage presents as the legitimate, modern, and progressive order of the world. The seduction is genuine. The pleasures are real. The careers are real. The salaries are real. The status is real within the symbolic economy of the colonial cage. But the structural consequence is identical to Pleasure Island: those who accept the terms of this seduction are progressively transformed into instruments of the colonial system—administrators of its programmes, legitimisers of its narratives, managers of their own people's dispossession, and, above all, proof that the cage is not a cage but an opportunity.

The donkey transformation is not sudden. It is gradual, pleasant, and institutionally rewarded at every stage.²⁵ Each academic qualification obtained within the colonial system represents a

²⁴Carlo Collodi, *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, trans. Geoffrey Brock (New York: New York Review Books, 2009), 109–134. The Pleasure Island episode appears in chapters 30–33 of the original Italian text (*Le avventure di Pinocchio*, 1883). The framework's use of this episode as a structural model of colonial seduction has resonances with Frantz Fanon's analysis of the colonised elite in Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 97–144, where Fanon argues that the national bourgeoisie produced by colonial education becomes not a progressive force for decolonisation but a comprador class whose interests are structurally aligned with the continuation of the colonial order that formed them.

²⁵Fanon's analysis of the colonised intellectual in *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 1–26, is directly relevant here. Fanon describes the assimilated colonised subject as inhabiting a condition of ontological ambiguity: simultaneously excluded from the full humanity the colonial system claims to offer and alienated from the ancestral world the colonial system has designated as inferior.

further integration into its symbolic order. Each administrative position accepted represents a further investment in the legitimacy of the structure that grants it. Each public statement endorsing the colonial narrative represents a further enclosure of the consciousness that made it. By the time the transformation is complete, the colonially-formed elite often cannot perceive it as transformation at all. They experience themselves as educated, modern, progressive, and concerned with the genuine improvement of their people's material conditions. They have become donkeys who do not know they are donkeys, because the transformation was accomplished through pleasure rather than pain, through reward rather than punishment, through the satisfaction of ambition rather than the frustration of it.

Pinocchio in the Belly of the Beast: When Captivity Becomes Home

The second archetype in this sequence carries the analysis into an even deeper level of enclosure.²⁶ In Collodi's story, Pinocchio and his father Geppetto are swallowed by a giant fish and trapped inside its belly. Yet the deeper tragedy is not Pinocchio's loss of hope, but Geppetto's. Inside the beast, Geppetto slowly adapts to captivity. He continues fishing, building, surviving, and organising life within the belly as though it were now the permanent structure of reality itself. The cage becomes normalised. The prison becomes home.

Pinocchio's role inside the belly does not merely escape, but awakening. He must awaken his father to the fact that they are inside the beast. He must make him recognise that continuing to fish, build, and settle within the belly only deepens adaptation to captivity. To leave the beast requires more than survival skills within the enclosure; it requires the willingness to abandon the structures, comforts, routines, and psychological investments constructed inside it. The boats, tools, habits, and systems built for survival within the beast must ultimately be sacrificed in order to escape. Freedom becomes impossible so long as consciousness remains committed to preserving life inside the cage.

This becomes a metaphor for colonised consciousness formed entirely within the structures of the colonial order. The problem is not simply oppression from outside, but adaptation from within. Many colonially-formed elites no longer perceive the colonial structure as historical, constructed, or contingent. The belly of the beast appears to them as the natural order of existence: as modernity, progress, development, rationality, and political realism. From this vantage point, independence struggles appear irrational or dangerous, ancestral systems appear primitive, and traditional ecological relationships appear inefficient or obsolete. What remains unseen is that the very categories through which this analysis is conducted are themselves

This double bind is structurally reproduced in the colonially-formed Papuan elite, who are incorporated into the Indonesian administrative system as evidence that integration is possible, while the cosmological and territorial dimensions of their Papuan identity are systematically managed to prevent them from constituting a ground for political resistance.

²⁶The figure of Geppetto continuing to fish inside the belly of the beast draws on Collodi, *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, chapters 34–35. The framework's reading of this episode as a model of normalised captivity has resonances with Orlando Patterson's concept of "social death" in *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), though the framework extends the concept beyond chattel slavery to describe the broader condition of colonially produced consciousness that has normalised the structures of its own enclosure to the point where captivity and home become indistinguishable.

products of the beast's internal machinery. The language of "progress," "development," "modernity," and "integration" functions as the digestive system through which the colonial order reproduces its legitimacy and absorbs the consciousness of those swallowed and living within it. The beast does not sustain itself through force, but through definition—what gets swallowed is already defined as food. The tragedy, then, is not only that the colonised are trapped inside the beast as food, but that many have learned to survive, adapt, and even build identities within its belly as though they are human beings with agency, without recognising the enclosure as enclosure, like Geppetto fishing inside the darkness, they continue constructing lives within the system while forgetting that the system has defined them as its sustenance."

Kings and Queens of Neverland: The Performance of Colonial Legitimacy

The third archetype addresses the political dimension of colonial enclosure with particular clarity.

In J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, Neverland appears magical, meaningful, and sovereign to those living within it.²⁷ It contains kings, captains, heroes, territories, and hierarchies. Yet the entire world exists only within a structure imagined and controlled by another authority. Its rulers exercise power within boundaries they did not create and cannot ultimately control. Their sovereignty is real only inside the world that permits it to exist. Outside that structure, it disappears.

Within the Psycho-Cosmocide framework, this becomes a metaphor for the colonial appointment and incorporation of indigenous political elites into the administrative machinery of the occupying system. Governors, regents, parliamentary figures, bureaucrats, and institutional representatives of Papuan identity may appear to hold authority, prestige, and leadership, yet their positions operate entirely within a political and territorial framework designed, controlled, and authorised by the Indonesian state. Their authority exists only insofar as the colonial structure recognises and permits it.

Their power is therefore functional but conditional. They may influence policies, allocate resources, manage institutions, or shape local affairs, but the deeper architecture of sovereignty—the authority over land, territorial delimitation, military control, legal order, and ultimate political legitimacy—remains external to them. Like the kings and queens of Neverland, their rule exists within a constructed reality whose boundaries were established elsewhere.

The deeper consequence of this arrangement is psychological as much as political. Those incorporated into the colonial structure become increasingly invested in preserving the very

²⁷J. M. Barrie, *Peter and Wendy* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911). The framework's reading of Neverland as a structural model of colonial sovereignty draws on the distinction between nominal and substantive authority that is central to theories of indirect rule. See Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 16–61, for an analysis of how colonial states produced "decentralised despotism" through the incorporation of indigenous political structures into the colonial administrative apparatus in ways that granted apparent authority while retaining substantive control at the level of territorial sovereignty, law, and ultimately violence.

system that grants them recognition. Their careers, status, relationships, identities, and sense of purpose become tied to the continuation of the framework itself. To challenge the system is therefore not merely to risk political instability, but to destabilise the foundations upon which their personal identity and social existence have been constructed. The cage becomes indistinguishable from authority itself. The palace appears as achievement, prestige, and responsibility, while concealing the fact that its walls are part of the enclosure itself.

The tragedy of this arrangement lies in the illusion of sovereignty. The kings and queens appear to govern, but the kingdom they rule is structurally dependent upon the authority of the occupying order.

The performance of power substitutes for actual self-determination. This is what a fuller taxonomy of power identifies as ontological power specifically: not the capacity to compel behaviour or control resources, but the capacity to redefine the being of the colonised—to determine, at the level of existence itself, who they are appointed to be²⁸ This becomes one of the most effective mechanisms of imperial and colonial domination throughout history: the production of colonised elites who are symbolically crowned within systems they do not truly control, yet who are encouraged to perceive themselves as legitimate rulers over territories whose sovereignty has already been absorbed elsewhere. In this way, colonial authority no longer needs to rely solely on external force. It reproduces itself internally through local intermediaries who help maintain the legitimacy of the structure from within. The deeper tragedy is not that colonised peoples are incapable of recognising this condition, but that prolonged psycho-cosmocidal conditioning reshapes perception itself. Over generations, the symbolic world of the colonial order becomes normalised as reality, making it increasingly difficult to distinguish between genuine sovereignty and participation within a carefully managed performance of sovereignty.

The Slow-Boiling Frog: When Enclosure Becomes Normal

The fourth archetype in the framework's analysis of the colonised elite addresses the temporal dimension of Psycho-Cosmocidal enclosure: the process by which gradual normalisation produces consciousness incapable of registering the conditions of its own destruction.²⁹ The

²⁸On ontological power as the deepest and most consequential form of colonial power, see Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257–337; and, for the fuller taxonomy distinguishing ontological power from coercive, symbolic, epistemic, ecological, and civilisational power, Yamin Kogoya, "The Metaphysics of Power: Indigenous Survival and Lani Cosmology," Working Paper No. 5, Kurumbi Wone Working Paper Series (PhilPapers, 2026).

²⁹The metaphor of the boiling frog, while of disputed empirical accuracy as a description of actual frog behaviour, has been used extensively as a heuristic for gradual normalisation in social and political analysis. For the framework's purposes, its analytical value lies not in its biological accuracy but in its structural description of how incremental change, individually imperceptible, can produce cumulative conditions that would have triggered alarm if encountered all at once. The temporal dimension of Psycho-Cosmocidal enclosure—its operation across a biography and across generations—is one of its most politically significant features, as it produces the condition described by Ngugi wa Thiong'o as the "decolonisation of the mind." See Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: James Currey, 1986), 1–33.

slow-boiling frog does not leap from the water not because it cannot leap, but because the temperature increase has been sufficiently gradual that no single moment triggered the instinctive response that would have prompted escape. Each incremental increase was small enough to be absorbed. By the time the water is at a lethal temperature, the capacity for alarm has been systematically habituated out of existence.

For the colonially-formed Papuan elite, this gradual normalisation operates across an entire biography and across generations. The child who is educated in the colonial system is not subjected to a sudden, violent imposition of colonial values: they are inducted, incrementally and with considerable institutional kindness, into a symbolic world in which those values appear as common sense, as the obvious markers of intelligence and sophistication, as the legitimate aspirations of anyone serious about improving their situation. Each stage of educational advancement represents a further degree of temperature increase that is individually imperceptible but cumulatively lethal to the cosmological consciousness that the colonial system is designed to replace. By the time the process is complete—by the time the colonially-formed elite has achieved its doctoral degrees, its ministerial positions, its international conference invitations—the water is boiling, and the capacity to recognise it as boiling has been entirely habituated away.

What makes the slow-boiling condition particularly significant within the Psycho-Cosmocide framework is that those who have been most thoroughly subjected to it frequently become the most effective opponents of those who attempt to name it. The colonially-formed elite who has invested a lifetime in the construction of a career within the colonial system has powerful psychological, social, and material reasons to experience any challenge to the legitimacy of that system as an attack on themselves personally. Psycho-Cosmocidal awakening, from their vantage point, appears not as liberation but as destabilisation, not as clarity but as extremism, not as return to the living but as retreat into a romanticised past that their education has taught them to regard with condescending affection. This is the most complete form of the second cage: the cage that its inhabitants defend with genuine conviction, because they have internalised its terms so thoroughly that the cage and the self-have become indistinguishable.

The Procrustean Principle: Forcing Life to Fit the System

To understand how the second cage operates in its most coercive and destructive form, the framework introduces what Kogoya calls the Procrustean Principle.³⁰ This principle describes the way civilisational systems do not merely enclose reality, but actively reshape, compress, mutilate, and force living existence to conform to pre-established ideological structures.

³⁰The myth of Procrustes is narrated by Plutarch in *Life of Theseus* 11.1, in *Plutarch's Lives*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914), 23. Procrustes (also called Damastes or Polypemon in some traditions) is described as a bandit who forced travellers to fit an iron bed, stretching those who were too short and cutting the limbs of those who were too tall. The framework uses this myth not as mere illustration but as structural diagnosis: the Procrustean method—forcing reality to conform to a pre-existing structure rather than adjusting the structure to fit reality—is identified as one of the primary operating logics of dominant civilisational projects.

Violence, within this framework, is therefore not an accidental by-product of civilisation, but one of its fundamental organising mechanisms.

In Greek mythology, Procrustes was the bandit of Attica who forced every traveller into his iron bed: those too short were stretched until they fit; those too tall had their limbs cut away. The hospitality was impeccable, the bed was available to all, and the violence was absolute. The individual traveller did not matter and the traveller's actual dimensions did not matter. What mattered, exclusively, was conformity to the pre-existing structure. For Kogoya, this myth is not an analogy that merely resembles civilisational practice. It is a structural diagnosis of one of civilisation's primary operating logics. Civilisation constructs conceptual beds—systems, ideologies, institutions, doctrines, economies, categories, racial hierarchies, national identities, educational standards, productivity metrics, legal frameworks, and symbolic narratives—and then forces human beings, communities, cosmologies, ecologies, and reality to conform to their dimensions. Whatever does not fit is not treated as evidence that the bed is the wrong size. It is treated as evidence that the person lying in it requires correction. Whatever does not conform is stretched, cut, criminalised, pathologised, colonised, medicated, imprisoned, or erased. The mechanism is not incidental to civilisation's most dominant expressions. It is one of their primary operating logics.

In the context of West Papua, the Procrustean principle operates with particular clarity and particular brutality.³¹ The Indonesian state's bed for the territory was constructed before the territory was understood—constructed, in fact, before Papuan consent was solicited or Papuan cosmological frameworks were acknowledged as carrying any legitimate claims upon the structure. The bed of national integration, development, and modernisation was manufactured according to dimensions that Javanese political culture, Indonesian national mythology, and international Cold War geopolitics had determined in advance. The Papuan people were then required to lie in it. Those aspects of Papuan existence that could be stretched into conformity—formal administrative participation, selective economic integration, carefully managed cultural display—were stretched. Those aspects that could not be accommodated without threatening the bed's dimensions—territorial sovereignty, cosmological autonomy, ecological governance, the living relationship between Papuan people and Papuan land—were cut away.

The modern educational system becomes Procrustean in the West Papuan context in ways that deserve specific examination.³² Children whose intelligence is organised by intimate

³¹The New York Agreement (1962) and the Act of Free Choice (1969) constitute the legal framework within which West Papua's incorporation into Indonesia was formalised. Neither instrument provided meaningful expression of Papuan political will: the 1969 "act" involved a selection of approximately 1,025 individuals (out of a population of approximately 800,000) who were reported to have unanimously endorsed integration under conditions documented as involving coercion. See Drooglever, *An Act of Free Choice*, 607–699; and Saltford, *The United Nations and the Indonesian Takeover*, 134–162.

³²The Procrustean function of colonial educational systems in West Papua is documented in, among other sources, Benny Giay, *Zakheus Pakage and His Communities: Indigenous Religious Discourse, Socio-Political Resistance and Ethnohistory of the Me of Irian Jaya* (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1995). For the broader theoretical analysis of colonial education as the production of consciousness fitted to the requirements of the colonial order, see Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 236–248; and Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 100–117. The framework's specific contribution is to analyse this process not merely as the imposition of colonial content but as the restructuring of intelligence itself.

knowledge of land, by oral memory, by ancestral obligation, and by cosmological frameworks that embed human life within ecological relationship are brought into a system that measures intelligence exclusively by the capacity to reproduce and extend the symbolic apparatus of the coloniser. Those who succeed by this measure—who are, in the framework’s terms, most successfully stretched into the bed — are celebrated as examples of Papuan advancement. Those who resist, who retain primary orientation toward ancestral frameworks, who cannot or will not reorganise their consciousness around the colonial symbolic order, are labelled deficient, uneducated, or unprepared for the modern world. The colonial bed produces its own definition of who is civilised and who requires further correction.

The most dangerous dimension of the Procrustean principle, as it operates upon both the Papuan population generally and the colonially-formed elite specifically, is its perceptual effect. Civilisation eventually reshapes consciousness so thoroughly that the bed is mistaken for the natural shape of a human body. Whatever does not conform to the colonial framework is perceived not as evidence that the framework is inadequate but as evidence that reality itself requires further adjustment. This is the precise mechanism by which Psycho-Cosmocide propagates across generations and within the same individual across a lifetime: reality is forced into systems, life is forced into abstractions, human beings are forced into categories, ecological existence is forced into economic value, and whatever resists is cut away—until even those being cut can no longer perceive the cutting as violence because the bed is all they have ever known.

The framework is unsparing in its diagnosis:³³ forests are not timber reserves; rivers are not resources; human beings are not labour units or demographic categories in a national development plan; ancestors are not historical artefacts to be preserved in museums; language is not merely a communication technology that can be swapped for a more administratively convenient one without loss. Existence itself exceeds every symbolic structure that civilisation constructs around it. The consequences of centuries of Procrustean civilisation are now visible in West Papua at a scale that constitutes an ongoing emergency: the systematic destruction of the Papuan ecosystem, the accelerating loss of Papuan languages and oral knowledge systems, the demographic marginalisation of the Papuan people within their own territory, the psychological fragmentation produced by living within a system that treats your most fundamental modes of existence as the primary obstacles to your own improvement.

³³The ecological dimensions of Psycho-Cosmocidal destruction in West Papua constitute an environmental emergency of global significance. West Papua contains approximately 70 percent of the remaining forest cover of the island of New Guinea, one of the three largest tropical forest systems on earth and a region of exceptional biodiversity, including thousands of endemic species. Its systematic destruction through extractive industry, plantation agriculture, and transmigration-related land clearance constitutes not only an assault on Papuan cosmological and ancestral existence but a catastrophe for global ecological systems. See Erik Meijaard et al., “Conservation in Conflict: Is the Global Conservation Agenda Working for or Against Papuan Communities?” *Ecology and Society* 18, no. 1 (2013): 22.

WONESIS: RETURN TO THE LIVING GROUND

The framework's response to this analysis is not the construction of another system. This is not a minor caveat: it is a structural necessity. Any new system constructed as the solution to the systems being critiqued would risk becoming another Procrustean bed, another Neverland, another Pleasure Island with a different name and a different currency of seduction. Wonesis—the framework's concept for ontological return, cosmological reactivation, and the conscious re-entry into participatory existence—does not promise escape from the first cage. It does not offer immortality, transcendence, utopian perfection, the abolition of suffering, or metaphysical rescue. These are precisely the promises that the second cage makes in order to justify its own existence and the violence of its imposition. Wonesis refuses them not because they are undesirable but because they are structurally impossible, and the pursuit of what is structurally impossible is one of the primary mechanisms by which the second cage perpetuates its enclosure.

The Wone principle represents the ontological ground from which civilisation has progressively severed human consciousness—not a mythological past to be recovered unchanged, but a living, relational, participatory reality that is always already present beneath and within the symbolic machinery of the second cage, awaiting the withdrawal of the projections that obscure it. In the West Papuan context, Wone is not merely a philosophical abstraction. It is the actual living relationship between Papuan people and Papuan land—the land that ancestral memory has named, that cosmological frameworks have situated within a living relational order, that ecological knowledge has made the ground of survival and meaning for countless generations. It is the oral traditions that carry a form of knowledge that no Indonesian administrative document, no development plan, and no colonial educational curriculum contain or could contain. It is the kinship structures and ancestral obligations that organised Papuan communities in forms of accountability and relationship that the colonial system has systematically dismantled precisely because they constituted an alternative and incompatible ground of authority.

Where Procrustes forces life into artificial form, Wone allows existence to emerge according to its own primordial relational order. Wonesis is the movement of return to that ground: not backward into a romanticised prehistory that the framework explicitly repudiates, but forward through conscious re-engagement with what actually exists—land, memory, relationship, ecological continuity, ancestral knowledge, embodied existence, the immediate and unmediated conditions of living itself. For the colonially-formed Papuan elite in particular, Wonesis is the most psychologically demanding proposition the framework makes: it asks those who have invested most thoroughly in the colonial symbolic system to perceive the system, to name what it has cost, and to reorient toward the living ground that their formation was designed to sever them from. This is not a small request. It requires the willingness to look at what one has become, and to ask whether that becoming has been at the expense of what one actually is.

Wonesis is not a utopian proposal. The first cage remains unchanged and unchangeable. Mortality, vulnerability, ecological dependency, and existential uncertainty are not dissolved by any amount of ontological reorientation. The Papuan land that has been seized will not be

returned by philosophical argument. The languages that have been lost will not be fully recovered. The ecological systems that have been destroyed will not be restored simply by recognising that their destruction was wrong. The consequences of Psycho-Cosmocide are real, historical, and in many dimensions irreversible. The framework does not pretend otherwise.

But the second cage was built by human systems at specific historical moments for specific historical purposes. It can therefore be seen, named, resisted, and partially dismantled. The philosophical task, as Kogoya frames it, is therefore not transcendence but perception: to see the cages clearly and with sufficient precision that the seeing itself constitutes a form of resistance. To stop waiting for Godot to arrive and resolve the colonial situation through international legal processes. To refuse the Pleasure Island seduction and its transformation of consciousness into the instrument of its own dispossession. To recognise the belly of the beast from within it, and to work toward the conditions under which exit becomes possible. To leap from the water while the capacity to leap remains.

CONCLUSION

The theoretical architecture developed in this essay constitutes a single, interlocking ontological argument constructed across five distinct but inseparable analytical movements. The necessary clarification establishes the framework's epistemic honesty: it neither romanticises pre-colonial worlds as paradise nor accepts the colonial claim that the destruction of those worlds was improvement. The two-cage distinction provides the structural foundation: the conditions of existence are not the same as the conditions of domination, and confusing them is one of the primary mechanisms through which domination perpetuates itself. The mythological witnesses—Gilgamesh, Plato, Camus, Ecclesiastes, Beckett—demonstrate that civilisational consciousness has been circling this recognition for millennia without managing to act upon it with sufficient consistency or courage. The West Papuan analysis applies these structural insights to a specific, ongoing, and urgent historical situation, showing how the full apparatus of the second cage operates in one of its most acute contemporary expressions, and how the colonially-formed elite functions simultaneously as victim and vector of Psycho-Cosmocidal enclosure.

And the Procrustean principle names the operational mechanism through which all of this is accomplished: the violent reduction of living reality to the dimensions of artificial systems, and the production of consciousness that cannot perceive the reduction as violence.

The framework does not conclude with despair, and this is not an optimistic gesture but a structural argument. Despair is itself a product of the second cage: the experience of a consciousness that has accepted the terms of the cage so thoroughly that it cannot imagine existence outside them, and therefore experiences the cage's failures as the failures of existence itself. The second cage, because it was built, can be seen. And to see it clearly—to name its mechanisms with conceptual precision, to trace its operations across history and mythology and specific political contexts, to recognise its seductions and refuse its deferred salvations, to identify the donkey transformation and choose differently, to climb out of the belly of the beast and name it from outside—is already the beginning of Wonesis.

The living has not yet been entirely consumed. The land in West Papua still holds, in its ecological complexity and in the memory of those who have refused the full terms of colonial enclosure, the ground from which return becomes possible. The languages, though damaged, still carry cosmological knowledge that no colonial administrative system contains. The ancestral obligations, though suppressed, still structure relationships that the colonial apparatus has not fully dissolved. Return remains possible. But it requires, first and above all, the willingness to look at every cage—the primordial cage that all life shares and must learn to inhabit honestly, and the colonial cage that was built upon living bodies and living worlds and that must be seen, named, and refused—and to call each one precisely by its name.

The cage that must be broken with force is not yet the deepest one. For colonised West Papua, the deepest cage is the one built inside the very people it was built to contain—decorated, defended, and called home.

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About the Author

Yamin Kogoya is a Papuan philosopher, writer, and independent researcher from the Central Highlands of New Guinea (West Papua), currently based in Australia.

His work investigates one of the most enduring questions of human existence: how worlds are created, transformed, and destroyed. He is the originator of the Psycho-Cosmocide paradigm, an interdisciplinary philosophical framework that examines the destruction of human worlds not only through physical violence, occupation, or ecological devastation, but through the systematic reorganisation of perception, memory, meaning, and reality itself. Within this framework, he argues that words, images, symbols, signs, colours, institutions, and technologies do not merely represent the world—they participate in creating, reorganising, and erasing the conditions through which human beings inhabit it.

Kogoya introduced the concepts of the Cosmobian World and the Synthobian World to distinguish two fundamentally different modes of human existence. The Cosmobian World refers to forms of life constituted through reciprocal relationships with land, ancestry, kinship, memory, ecology, language, and the cosmos. The Synthobian World refers to synthetic, engineered systems of existence organised through abstraction, institutions, technology, production, and civilisational processes. The relationship between these two worlds forms the central philosophical architecture of his research.

Drawing upon Indigenous cosmologies together with philosophy, anthropology, history, religion, mythology, and civilisation studies, Kogoya develops original conceptual frameworks for interpreting the contemporary human condition. His work re-examines humanity's foundational myths, epics, tragedies, religions, and philosophical traditions as enduring civilisational architectures through which societies organise reality, negotiate meaning, confront mortality, remember the past, imagine the future, and participate in their own survival or extinction. Although grounded in the historical experience of West Papua, his research addresses broader philosophical questions concerning civilisation, consciousness, memory, belonging, power, and the future of human worlds.

He holds a Master of Applied Anthropology and Participatory Development from the Australian National University. His academic background also includes Religious Studies, Indigenous Studies, and Asia-Pacific Studies, and he undertook advanced study in epistemology at the University of Oxford. His research and commentary have appeared in *SBS News*, *RNZ Pacific*, *Asia Pacific Report*, *The Fiji Times*, and *The Jakarta Post*.

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