

Views on Covid measures, the making of science, and our modern controlling societies

A collection of short essays and articles making the case for wisdom, humanity, caution and political autonomy refusing to take side between official authorities and unfounded conspiracies

“Barbary follows us like our own shade. As soon as society works without thinking it produces the worst possible evil. The machines won’t help: we will be equally unjust with the airplane as with the catapult and the ram. Everything would rot without the radical salt, without the individual who refuses to bleat according to the tone and the time. The individual who thinks against the society that sleeps, that is the eternal story, and spring always has the same winter to overcome.”

Words on Powers, Alain, French philosopher, 24.04.1911

Content

The Coronation.....	3
The Reflex of Control.....	5
The Conspiracy Narrative.....	8
The War on Death.....	11
What world shall we live in?.....	13
Life is Community.....	15
The Coronation.....	18
The Conspiracy Myth.....	22
A Conspiracy with No Conspirators.....	26
Which side are you on?.....	28
A Call for Humility.....	29
About science and research in times of ecological collapse.....	32
Covidism and human regression.....	34
"Freedom or Death".....	35
Death and life, two sides of the same coin.....	35
To inhabit the Earth, not just to exist in the digital world.....	36
Mob Morality and the Unvaxxed.....	39
Something Must be Done.....	40
Representatives of Pollution.....	41
Hijacking Morality.....	44
Moving the Masses.....	46
Beyond Industrial Medicine.....	50
Coronavirus crisis: interview with toxicologist Jean-Paul Bourdineaud	57

March 2020, Charles Eisenstein, public speaker and philosopher

The Coronation

For years, normality has been stretched nearly to its breaking point, a rope pulled tighter and tighter, waiting for a nip of the black swan's beak to snap it in two. Now that the rope has snapped, do we tie its ends back together, or shall we undo its dangling braids still further, to see what we might weave from them?

Covid-19 is showing us that when humanity is united in common cause, phenomenally rapid change is possible. None of the world's problems are technically difficult to solve; they originate in human disagreement. In coherency, humanity's creative powers are boundless. A few months ago, a proposal to halt commercial air travel would have seemed preposterous. Likewise for the radical changes we are making in our social behavior, economy, and the role of government in our lives. Covid demonstrates the power of our collective will when we agree on what is important. What else might we achieve, in coherency? What do we want to achieve, and what world shall we create? That is always the next question when anyone awakens to their power.

Covid-19 is like a rehab intervention that breaks the addictive hold of normality. To interrupt a habit is to make it visible; it is to turn it from a compulsion to a choice. When the crisis subsides, we might have occasion to ask whether we want to return to normal, or whether there might be something we've seen during this break in the routines that we want to bring into the future. We might ask, after so many have lost their jobs, whether all of them are the jobs the world most needs, and whether our labor and creativity would be better applied elsewhere. We might ask, having done without it for a while, whether we really need so much air travel, Disneyworld vacations, or trade shows. What parts of the economy will we want to restore, and what parts might we choose to let go of? Covid has interrupted what looked to be like a military [regime-change operation](#) in Venezuela – perhaps imperialist wars are also one of those things we might relinquish in a future of global cooperation. And on a darker note, what among the things that are being taken away right now – civil liberties, freedom of assembly, sovereignty over our bodies, in-person gatherings, hugs, handshakes, and public life – might we need to exert intentional political and personal will to restore?

For most of my life, I have had the feeling that humanity was nearing a crossroads. Always, the crisis, the collapse, the break was imminent, just around the bend, but it

didn't come and it didn't come. Imagine walking a road, and up ahead you see it, you see the crossroads. It's just over the hill, around the bend, past the woods. Cresting the hill, you see you were mistaken, it was a mirage, it was farther away than you thought. You keep walking. Sometimes it comes into view, sometimes it disappears from sight and it seems like this road goes on forever. Maybe there isn't a crossroads. No, there it is again! Always it is almost here. Never is it here.

Now, all of a sudden, we go around a bend and here it is. We stop, hardly able to believe that now it is happening, hardly able to believe, after years of confinement to the road of our predecessors, that now we finally have a choice. We are right to stop, stunned at the newness of our situation. Of the hundred paths that radiate out in front of us, some lead in the same direction we've already been headed. Some lead to hell on earth. And some lead to a world more healed and more beautiful than we ever dared believe to be possible.

I write these words with the aim of standing here with you – bewildered, scared maybe, yet also with a sense of new possibility – at this point of diverging paths. Let us gaze down some of them and see where they lead.

* * *

I heard this story last week from a friend. She was in a grocery store and saw a woman sobbing in the aisle. Flouting social distancing rules, she went to the woman and gave her a hug. "Thank you," the woman said, "that is the first time anyone has hugged me for ten days."

Going without hugs for a few weeks seems a small price to pay if it will stem an epidemic that could take millions of lives. Initially, the argument for social distancing was that it would save millions of lives by preventing a sudden surge of Covid cases from overwhelming the medical system. Now the authorities tell us that some social distancing may need to continue indefinitely, at least until there is an effective vaccine. I would like to put that argument in a larger context, especially as we look to the long term. Lest we institutionalize distancing and reengineer society around it, let us be aware of what choice we are making and why.

The same goes for the other changes happening around the coronavirus epidemic. Some commentators have observed how it plays neatly into an agenda of totalitarian control. A frightened public accepts abridgments of civil liberties that are otherwise hard to justify, such as the tracking of everyone's movements at all times, forcible medical treatment, involuntary quarantine, restrictions on travel and the freedom of assembly, censorship of what the authorities deem to be disinformation, suspension of habeas corpus, and military policing of civilians. Many of these were underway before Covid-19; since its advent, they have been irresistible. The same goes for the

automation of commerce; the transition from participation in sports and entertainment to remote viewing; the migration of life from public to private spaces; the transition away from place-based schools toward online education, the destruction of small business, the decline of brick-and-mortar stores, and the movement of human work and leisure onto screens. Covid-19 is accelerating preexisting trends, political, economic, and social.

While all the above are, in the short term, justified on the grounds of flattening the curve (the epidemiological growth curve), we are also hearing a lot about a “new normal”; that is to say, the changes may not be temporary at all. Since the threat of infectious disease, like the threat of terrorism, never goes away, control measures can easily become permanent. If we were going in this direction anyway, the current justification must be part of a deeper impulse. I will analyze this impulse in two parts: the reflex of control, and the war on death. Thus understood, an initiatory opportunity emerges, one that we are seeing already in the form of the solidarity, compassion, and care that Covid-19 has inspired.

The Reflex of Control

Nearing the end of April, official statistics say that about 150,000 people have died from Covid-19. By the time it runs its course, the death toll could be ten times or a hundred times bigger. Each one of these people has loved ones, family and friends. Compassion and conscience call us to do what we can to avert unnecessary tragedy. This is personal for me: my own infinitely dear but frail mother is among the most vulnerable to a disease that kills mostly the aged and the infirm.

What will the final numbers be? That question is impossible to answer at the time of this writing. Early reports were alarming; for weeks the official number from Wuhan, circulated endlessly in the media, was a shocking 3.4%. That, coupled with its highly contagious nature, pointed to tens of millions of deaths worldwide, or even as many as 100 million. More recently, estimates have plunged as it has become apparent that most cases are mild or asymptomatic. Since testing has been skewed towards the seriously ill, the death rate has looked artificially high. [A recent paper](#) in the journal Science argues that 86% of infections have been undocumented, which points to a much lower mortality rate than the current case fatality rate would indicate. A [more recent paper](#) goes even further, estimating total US infections at a hundred times current confirmed cases (which would mean a CFR of less than 0.1%). These papers involve a lot of fancy epidemiological guesswork, but a [very recent study](#) using an antibody test found that cases in Santa Clara, CA have been underreported by a factor of 50-85.

The story of the [Diamond Princess](#) cruise ship bolsters this view. Of the 3,711 people on board, about 20% have tested positive for the virus; less than half of those had symptoms, and eight have died. A cruise ship is a perfect setting for contagion, and there was plenty of time for the virus to spread on board before anyone did anything about it, yet only a fifth were infected. Furthermore, the cruise ship's population was heavily skewed (as are most cruise ships) [toward the elderly](#): nearly a third of the passengers were over age 70, and more than half were over age 60. A research team [concluded](#) from the large number of asymptomatic cases that the true fatality rate in China is around 0.5%; more recent data (see above) indicates a figure closer to 0.2%. That is still two to five times higher than seasonal flu. Based on the above (and adjusting for much younger demographics in Africa and South and Southeast Asia) my guess is about 200,000-300,000 deaths in the US and 2 million globally. Those are serious numbers, comparable to the [Hong Kong Flu](#) pandemic of 1968/9.

Every day the media reports the total number of Covid-19 cases, but no one has any idea what the true number is, because only a tiny proportion of the population has been tested. If tens of millions have the virus, asymptotically, we would not know it. Further complicating the matter is that Covid-19 deaths may be [overreported](#) (in many hospitals, if someone dies *with* Covid they are recorded as having died *from* Covid) or [underreported](#) (some may have died at home). Let me repeat: no one knows what is really happening, including me. Let us be aware of two contradictory tendencies in human affairs. The first is the tendency for hysteria to feed on itself, to exclude data points that don't play into the fear, and to create the world in its image. The second is denial, the irrational rejection of information that might disrupt normalcy and comfort. As [Daniel Schmachtenberger asks](#), How do you know what you believe is true?

Cognitive biases such as these are especially virulent in an atmosphere of political polarization; for example, liberals will tend to reject any information that might be woven into a pro-Trump narrative, while conservatives will tend to embrace it.

In the face of the uncertainty, I'd like to make a prediction: The crisis will play out so that we never will know. If the final death tally, which will itself be the subject of dispute, is lower than feared, some will say that is because the controls worked. Others will say it is because the disease wasn't as dangerous as we were told.

To me, the most baffling puzzle is why at the present writing there seem to be no new cases in China. The government didn't initiate its lockdown until well after the virus was established. It should have spread widely during Chinese New Year, when, despite a few travel restrictions, nearly every plane, train, and bus is packed with people traveling all over the country. What is going on here? Again, I don't know, and neither do you.

Whatever the final death toll, let's look at some other numbers to get some perspective. My point is NOT that Covid isn't so bad and we shouldn't do anything. Bear with me. As of 2013, [according to the FAO](#), five million children worldwide die every year of hunger; [in 2018](#), 159 million children were stunted and 50 million were wasted. (Hunger was falling until recently, but has started to rise again in the last three years.) Five million is many times more people than have died so far from Covid-19, yet no government has declared a state of emergency or asked that we radically alter our way of life to save them. Nor do we see a comparable level of alarm and action around suicide – the mere tip of an iceberg of despair and depression – which kills over a million people a year globally and 50,000 in the USA. Or drug overdoses, which kill 70,000 in the USA, the autoimmunity epidemic, which affects 23.5 million (NIH figure) to 50 million (AARDA), or obesity, which afflicts well over 100 million. Why, for that matter, are we not in a frenzy about averting nuclear armageddon or ecological collapse, but, to the contrary, pursue choices that magnify those very dangers?

Please, the point here is not that we haven't changed our ways to stop children from starving, so we shouldn't change them for Covid either. It is the contrary: If we can change so radically for Covid-19, we can do it for these other conditions too. Let us ask why are we able to unify our collective will to stem this virus, but not to address other grave threats to humanity. Why, until now, has society been so frozen in its existing trajectory?

The answer is revealing. Simply, in the face of world hunger, addiction, autoimmunity, suicide, or ecological collapse, we as a society do not know what to do. That's because there is nothing external against which to fight. Our go-to crisis responses, all of which are some version of control, aren't very effective in addressing these conditions. Now along comes a contagious epidemic, and finally we can spring into action. It is a crisis for which control works: quarantines, lockdowns, isolation, hand-washing; control of movement, control of information, control of our bodies. That makes Covid a convenient receptacle for our inchoate fears, a place to channel our growing sense of helplessness in the face of the changes overtaking the world. Covid-19 is a threat that we know how to meet. Unlike so many of our other fears, Covid-19 offers a plan.

Our civilization's established institutions are increasingly helpless to meet the challenges of our time. How they welcome a challenge that they finally can meet. How eager they are to embrace it as a paramount crisis. How naturally their systems of information management select for the most alarming portrayals of it. How easily the public joins the panic, embracing a threat that the authorities can handle as a proxy for the various unspeakable threats that they cannot.

Today, most of our challenges no longer succumb to force. Our antibiotics and surgery fail to meet the surging health crises of autoimmunity, addiction, and obesity. Our guns and bombs, built to conquer armies, are useless to erase hatred abroad or keep domestic violence out of our homes. Our police and prisons cannot heal the breeding conditions of crime. Our pesticides cannot restore ruined soil. Covid-19 recalls the good old days when the challenges of infectious diseases succumbed to modern medicine and hygiene, at the same time as the Nazis succumbed to the war machine, and nature itself succumbed, or so it seemed, to technological conquest and improvement. It recalls the days when our weapons worked and the world seemed indeed to be improving with each technology of control.

What kind of problem succumbs to domination and control? The kind caused by something from the outside, something Other. When the cause of the problem is something intimate to ourselves, like homelessness or inequality, addiction or obesity, there is nothing to war against. We may try to install an enemy, blaming, for example, the billionaires, Vladimir Putin, or the Devil, but then we miss key information, such as the ground conditions that allow billionaires (or viruses) to replicate in the first place.

If there is one thing our civilization is good at, it is fighting an enemy. We welcome opportunities to do what we are good at, which prove the validity of our technologies, systems, and worldview. And so, we manufacture enemies, cast problems like crime, terrorism, and disease into us-versus-them terms, and mobilize our collective energies toward those endeavors that can be seen that way. Thus, we single out Covid-19 as a call to arms, reorganizing society as if for a war effort, while treating as normal the possibility of nuclear armageddon, ecological collapse, and five million children starving.

The Conspiracy Narrative

Because Covid-19 seems to justify so many items on the totalitarian wish list, there are those who believe it to be a [deliberate power play](#). It is not my purpose to advance that theory nor to debunk it, although I will offer some meta-level comments. First a brief overview.

The theories (there are many variants) talk about Event 201 (sponsored by the Gates Foundation, CIA, etc. last October), and a 2010 Rockefeller Foundation white paper detailing a scenario called “Lockstep,” both of which lay out the authoritarian response to a hypothetical pandemic. They observe that the infrastructure, technology, and legislative framework for martial law has been in preparation for many years. All that was needed, they say, was a way to make the public embrace it,

and now that has come. Whether or not current controls are permanent, a precedent is being set for:

- The tracking of people's movements at all times (because coronavirus)
- The suspension of freedom of assembly (because coronavirus)
- The military policing of civilians (because coronavirus)
- Extrajudicial, indefinite detention (quarantine, because coronavirus)
- The banning of cash (because coronavirus)
- Censorship of the Internet (to combat disinformation, because coronavirus)
- Compulsory vaccination and other medical treatment, establishing the state's sovereignty over our bodies (because coronavirus)
- The classification of all activities and destinations into the expressly permitted and the expressly forbidden (you can leave your house for this, but not that), eliminating the un-policed, non-judicial gray zone. That totality is the very essence of totalitarianism. Necessary now though, because, well, coronavirus.

This is juicy material for conspiracy theories. For all I know, one of those theories could be true; however, the same progression of events could unfold from an unconscious systemic tilt toward ever-increasing control. Where does this tilt come from? It is woven into civilization's DNA. For millennia, civilization (as opposed to small-scale traditional cultures) has understood progress as a matter of extending control onto the world: domesticating the wild, conquering the barbarians, mastering the forces of nature, and ordering society according to law and reason. The ascent of control accelerated with the Scientific Revolution, which launched "progress" to new heights: the ordering of reality into objective categories and quantities, and the mastering of materiality with technology. Finally, the social sciences promised to use the same means and methods to fulfill the ambition (which goes back to Plato and Confucius) to engineer a perfect society.

Those who administer civilization will therefore welcome any opportunity to strengthen their control, for after all, it is in service to a grand vision of human destiny: the perfectly ordered world, in which disease, crime, poverty, and perhaps suffering itself can be engineered out of existence. No nefarious motives are necessary. Of course they would like to keep track of everyone – all the better to ensure the common good. For them, Covid-19 shows how necessary that is. "Can we afford democratic freedoms in light of the coronavirus?" they ask. "Must we now, out of necessity, sacrifice those for our own safety?" It is a familiar refrain, for it has accompanied other crises in the past, like 9/11.

To rework a common metaphor, imagine a man with a hammer, stalking around looking for a reason to use it. Suddenly he sees a nail sticking out. He's been looking

for a nail for a long time, pounding on screws and bolts and not accomplishing much. He inhabits a worldview in which hammers are the best tools, and the world can be made better by pounding in the nails. And here is a nail! We might suspect that in his eagerness he has placed the nail there himself, but it hardly matters. Maybe it isn't even a nail that's sticking out, but it resembles one enough to start pounding. When the tool is at the ready, an opportunity will arise to use it.

And I will add, for those inclined to doubt the authorities, maybe this time it really is a nail. In that case, the hammer is the right tool – and the principle of the hammer will emerge the stronger, ready for the screw, the button, the clip, and the tear.

Either way, the problem we deal with here is much deeper than that of overthrowing an evil coterie of Illuminati. Even if they do exist, given the tilt of civilization, the same trend would persist without them, or a new Illuminati would arise to assume the functions of the old.

True or false, the idea that the epidemic is some monstrous plot perpetrated by evildoers upon the public is not so far from the mindset of find-the-pathogen. It is a crusading mentality, a war mentality. It locates the source of a sociopolitical illness in a pathogen against which we may then fight, a victimizer separate from ourselves. It risks ignoring the conditions that make society fertile ground for the plot to take hold. Whether that ground was sown deliberately or by the wind is, for me, a secondary question.

What I will say next is relevant whether or not SARS-CoV2 is a genetically engineered bioweapon, is [related to 5G](#) rollout, is being used to prevent “disclosure,” is a Trojan horse for totalitarian world government, is more deadly than we've been told, is less deadly than we've been told, originated in a Wuhan biolab, originated at [Fort Detrick](#), or is exactly as the CDC and WHO have been telling us. It applies even if [everyone is totally wrong](#) about the role of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in the current epidemic. I have my opinions, but if there is one thing I have learned through the course of this emergency is that I don't really know what is happening. I don't see how anyone can, amidst the seething farrago of news, fake news, rumors, suppressed information, conspiracy theories, propaganda, and politicized narratives that fill the Internet. I wish a lot more people would embrace not knowing. I say that both to those who embrace the dominant narrative, as well as to those who hew to dissenting ones. What information might we be blocking out, in order to maintain the integrity of our viewpoints? Let's be humble in our beliefs: it is a matter of life and death.

The War on Death

My 7-year-old son hasn't seen or played with another child for two weeks. Millions of others are in the same boat. Most would agree that a month without social interaction for all those children a reasonable sacrifice to save a million lives. But how about to save 100,000 lives? And what if the sacrifice is not for a month but for a year? Five years? Different people will have different opinions on that, according to their underlying values.

Let's replace the foregoing questions with something more personal, that pierces the inhuman utilitarian thinking that turns people into statistics and sacrifices some of them for something else. The relevant question for me is, Would I ask all the nation's children to forego play for a season, if it would reduce my mother's risk of dying, or for that matter, my own risk? Or I might ask, Would I decree the end of human hugging and handshakes, if it would save my own life? This is not to devalue Mom's life or my own, both of which are precious. I am grateful for every day she is still with us. But these questions bring up deep issues. What is the right way to live? What is the right way to die?

The answer to such questions, whether asked on behalf of oneself or on behalf of society at large, depends on how we hold death and how much we value play, touch, and togetherness, along with civil liberties and personal freedom. There is no easy formula to balance these values.

Over my lifetime I've seen society place more and more emphasis on safety, security, and risk reduction. It has especially impacted childhood: as a young boy it was normal for us to roam a mile from home unsupervised – behavior that would earn parents a visit from Child Protective Services today. It also manifests in the form of latex gloves for more and more professions; hand sanitizer everywhere; locked, guarded, and surveilled school buildings; intensified airport and border security; heightened awareness of legal liability and liability insurance; metal detectors and searches before entering many sports arenas and public buildings, and so on. Writ large, it takes the form of the security state.

The mantra “safety first” comes from a value system that makes survival top priority, and that depreciates other values like fun, adventure, play, and the challenging of limits. Other cultures had different priorities. For instance, many traditional and indigenous cultures are much less protective of children, as documented in Jean Liedloff's classic, *The Continuum Concept*. They allow them risks and responsibilities that would seem insane to most modern people, believing that this is necessary for children to develop self-reliance and good judgement. I think most modern people, especially younger people, retain some of this inherent willingness to

sacrifice safety in order to live life fully. The surrounding culture, however, lobbies us relentlessly to live in fear, and has constructed systems that embody fear. In them, staying safe is over-ridingly important. Thus we have a medical system in which most decisions are based on calculations of risk, and in which the worst possible outcome, marking the physician's ultimate failure, is death. Yet all the while, we know that death awaits us regardless. A life saved actually means a death postponed.

The ultimate fulfillment of civilization's program of control would be to triumph over death itself. Failing that, modern society settles for a facsimile of that triumph: denial rather than conquest. Ours is a society of death denial, from its hiding away of corpses, to its fetish for youthfulness, to its warehousing of old people in nursing homes. Even its obsession with money and property – extensions of the self, as the word "mine" indicates – expresses the delusion that the impermanent self can be made permanent through its attachments. All this is inevitable given the story-of-self that modernity offers: the separate individual in a world of Other. Surrounded by genetic, social, and economic competitors, that self must protect and dominate in order to thrive. It must do everything it can to forestall death, which (in the story of separation) is total annihilation. Biological science has even taught us that our very nature is to maximize our chances of surviving and reproducing.

I asked a friend, a medical doctor who has spent time with the Q'ero in Peru, whether the Q'ero would (if they could) intubate someone to prolong their life. "Of course not," she said. "They would summon the shaman to help him die well." Dying well (which isn't necessarily the same as dying painlessly) is not much in today's medical vocabulary. No hospital records are kept on whether patients die well. That would not be counted as a positive outcome. In the world of the separate self, death is the ultimate catastrophe.

But is it? Consider this perspective from [Dr. Lissa Rankin](#): "Not all of us would want to be in an ICU, isolated from loved ones with a machine breathing for us, at risk of dying alone- even if it means they might increase their chance of survival. Some of us might rather be held in the arms of loved ones at home, even if that means our time has come.... Remember, death is no ending. Death is going home."

When the self is understood as relational, interdependent, even inter-existent, then it bleeds over into the other, and the other bleeds over into the self. Understanding the self as a locus of consciousness in a matrix of relationship, one no longer searches for an enemy as the key to understanding every problem, but looks instead for imbalances in relationships. The War on Death gives way to the quest to live well and fully, and we see that fear of death is actually fear of life. How much of life will we forego to stay safe?

Totalitarianism – the perfection of control – is the inevitable end product of the mythology of the separate self. What else but a threat to life, like a war, would merit total control? Thus Orwell identified perpetual war as a crucial component of the Party’s rule.

Against the backdrop of the program of control, death denial, and the separate self, the assumption that public policy should seek to minimize the number of deaths is nearly beyond question, a goal to which other values like play, freedom, etc. are subordinate. Covid-19 offers occasion to broaden that view. Yes, let us hold life sacred, more sacred than ever. Death teaches us that. Let us hold each person, young or old, sick or well, as the sacred, precious, beloved being that they are. And in the circle of our hearts, let us make room for other sacred values too. To hold life sacred is not just to live long, it is to live well and right and fully.

Like all fear, the fear around the coronavirus hints at what might lie beyond it. Anyone who has experienced the passing of someone close knows that death is a portal to love. Covid-19 has elevated death to prominence in the consciousness of a society that denies it. On the other side of the fear, we can see the love that death liberates. Let it pour forth. Let it saturate the soil of our culture and fill its aquifers so that it seeps up through the cracks of our crusted institutions, our systems, and our habits. Some of these may die too.

What world shall we live in?

How much of life do we want to sacrifice at the altar of security? If it keeps us safer, do we want to live in a world where human beings never congregate? Do we want to wear masks in public all the time? Do we want to be medically examined every time we travel, if that will save some number of lives a year? Are we willing to accept the medicalization of life in general, handing over final sovereignty over our bodies to medical authorities (as selected by political ones)? Do we want every event to be a virtual event? How much are we willing to live in fear?

Covid-19 will eventually subside, but the threat of infectious disease is permanent. Our response to it sets a course for the future. Public life, communal life, the life of shared physicality has been dwindling over several generations. Instead of shopping at stores, we get things delivered to our homes. Instead of packs of kids playing outside, we have play dates and digital adventures. Instead of the public square, we have the online forum. Do we want to continue to insulate ourselves still further from each other and the world?

It is not hard to imagine, especially if social distancing is successful, that Covid-19 persists beyond the 18 months we are being told to expect for it to run its course. It is

not hard to imagine that new viruses will emerge during that time. It is not hard to imagine that emergency measures will become normal (so as to forestall the possibility of another outbreak), just as the state of emergency declared after 9/11 is still in effect today. It is not hard to imagine that (as we are being told), reinfection is possible, so that the disease will never run its course. That means that the temporary changes in our way of life may become permanent.

To reduce the risk of another pandemic, shall we choose to live in a society without hugs, handshakes, and high-fives, forever more? Shall we choose to live in a society where we no longer gather en masse? Shall the concert, the sports competition, and the festival be a thing of the past? Shall children no longer play with other children? Shall all human contact be mediated by computers and masks? No more dance classes, no more karate classes, no more conferences, no more churches? Is death reduction to be the standard by which to measure progress? Does human advancement mean separation? Is this the future?

The same question applies to the administrative tools required to control the movement of people and the flow of information. At the present writing, the entire country is moving toward lockdown. In some countries, one must print out a form from a government website in order to leave the house. It reminds me of school, where one's location must be authorized at all times. Or of prison. Do we envision a future of electronic hall passes, a system where freedom of movement is governed by state administrators and their software at all times, permanently? Where every movement is tracked, either permitted or prohibited? And, for our protection, where information that threatens our health (as decided, again, by various authorities) is censored for our own good? In the face of an emergency, like unto a state of war, we accept such restrictions and temporarily surrender our freedoms. Similar to 9/11, Covid-19 trumps all objections.

For the first time in history, the technological means exist to realize such a vision, at least in the developed world (for example, [using cellphone location data](#) to enforce social distancing; [see also here](#)). After a bumpy transition, we could live in a society where nearly all of life happens online: shopping, meeting, entertainment, socializing, working, even dating. Is that what we want? How many lives saved is that worth?

I am sure that many of the controls in effect today will be partially relaxed in a few months. Partially relaxed, but at the ready. As long as infectious disease remains with us, they are likely to be reimposed, again and again, in the future, or be self-imposed in the form of habits. As Deborah Tannen says, contributing to a [Politico article](#) on how coronavirus will change the world permanently, 'We know now that touching things, being with other people and breathing the air in an enclosed space can be risky.... It could become second nature to recoil from shaking hands or touching our

faces—and we may all fall heir to society-wide OCD, as none of us can stop washing our hands.” After thousands of years, millions of years, of touch, contact, and togetherness, is the pinnacle of human progress to be that we cease such activities because they are too risky?

Life is Community

The paradox of the program of control is that its progress rarely advances us any closer to its goal. Despite security systems in almost every upper middle-class home, people are no less anxious or insecure than they were a generation ago. Despite elaborate security measures, the schools are not seeing fewer mass shootings. Despite phenomenal progress in medical technology, people have if anything become less healthy over the past thirty years, as chronic disease has proliferated and life expectancy stagnated and, in the USA and Britain, started to decline.

The measures being instituted to control Covid-19, likewise, may end up causing more suffering and death than they prevent. Minimizing deaths means minimizing the deaths that we know how to predict and measure. It is impossible to measure the added deaths that might come from isolation-induced depression, for instance, or the despair caused by unemployment, or the lowered immunity and deterioration in health that [chronic fear](#) can cause. Loneliness and lack of social contact has been shown to increase [inflammation](#), [depression](#), and [dementia](#). According to [Lissa Rankin, M.D.](#), air pollution increases risk of dying by 6%, obesity by 23%, alcohol abuse by 37%, and loneliness by 45%.

Another danger that is off the ledger is the deterioration in immunity caused by excessive hygiene and distancing. It is not only social contact that is necessary for health, it is also contact with the microbial world. Generally speaking, microbes are not our enemies, they are our allies in health. A diverse gut biome, comprising bacteria, viruses, yeasts, and other organisms, is essential for a well-functioning immune system, and its diversity is maintained through contact with other people and with the world of life. Excessive hand-washing, overuse of antibiotics, aseptic cleanliness, and lack of human contact might do [more harm than good](#). The resulting allergies and autoimmune disorders might be worse than the infectious disease they replace. Socially and biologically, health comes from community. Life does not thrive in isolation.

Seeing the world in us-versus-them terms blinds us to the reality that life and health happen in community. To take the example of infectious diseases, we fail to look beyond the evil pathogen and ask, What is the role of [viruses in the microbiome](#)? (See [also here](#).) What are the body conditions under which harmful viruses proliferate? Why do some people have mild symptoms and others severe ones

(besides the catch-all non-explanation of “low resistance”)? What positive role might flus, colds, and other non-lethal diseases play in the maintenance of health?

War-on-germs thinking brings results akin to those of the War on Terror, War on Crime, War on Weeds, and the endless wars we fight politically and interpersonally. First, it generates endless war; second, it diverts attention from the ground conditions that breed illness, terrorism, crime, weeds, and the rest.

Despite politicians’ perennial claim that they pursue war for the sake of peace, war inevitably breeds more war. Bombing countries to kill terrorists not only ignores the ground conditions of terrorism, it exacerbates those conditions. Locking up criminals not only ignores the conditions that breed crime, it creates those conditions when it breaks up families and communities and acculturates the incarcerated to criminality. And regimes of antibiotics, vaccines, antivirals, and other medicines wreak havoc on body ecology, which is the foundation of strong immunity. Outside the body, the massive spraying campaigns sparked by [Zika](#), Dengue Fever, and now Covid-19 will visit untold damage upon nature’s ecology. Has anyone considered what the effects on the ecosystem will be when we douse it with antiviral compounds? Such a policy (which has been implemented in various places in China and India) is only thinkable from the mindset of separation, which does not understand that viruses are integral to the web of life.

To understand the point about ground conditions, consider some mortality [statistics from Italy](#) (from its National Health Institute), based on an analysis of hundreds of Covid-19 fatalities. Of those analyzed, less than 1% were free of serious chronic health conditions. Some 75% suffered from hypertension, 35% from diabetes, 33% from cardiac ischemia, 24% from atrial fibrillation, 18% from low renal function, along with other conditions that I couldn’t decipher from the [Italian report](#). Nearly half the deceased had three or more of these serious pathologies. Americans, beset by obesity, diabetes, and other chronic ailments, are at least as vulnerable as Italians. Should we blame the virus then (which killed few otherwise healthy people), or shall we blame underlying poor health? Here again the analogy of the taut rope applies. Millions of people in the modern world are in a precarious state of health, just waiting for something that would normally be trivial to send them over the edge. Of course, in the short term we want to save their lives; the danger is that we lose ourselves in an endless succession of short terms, fighting one infectious disease after another, and never engage the ground conditions that make people so vulnerable. That is a much harder problem, because these ground conditions will not change via fighting. There is no pathogen that causes diabetes or obesity, addiction, depression, or PTSD. Their causes are not an Other, not some virus separate from ourselves, and we its victims.

Even in diseases like Covid-19, in which we can name a pathogenic virus, matters are not so simple as a war between virus and victim. There is an alternative to the germ theory of disease that holds germs to be part of a larger process. When conditions are right, they multiply in the body, sometimes killing the host, but also, potentially, improving the conditions that accommodated them to begin with, for example by cleaning out accumulated toxic debris via mucus discharge, or (metaphorically speaking) burning them up with fever. Sometimes called “terrain theory,” it says that germs are more symptom than cause of disease. As one meme explains it: “Your fish is sick. Germ theory: isolate the fish. Terrain theory: clean the tank.”

A certain schizophrenia afflicts the modern culture of health. On the one hand, there is a burgeoning wellness movement that embraces alternative and holistic medicine. It advocates herbs, meditation, and yoga to boost immunity. It validates the emotional and spiritual dimensions of health, such as the power of attitudes and beliefs to sicken or to heal. All of this seems to have disappeared under the Covid tsunami, as society defaults to the old orthodoxy.

Case in point: California acupuncturists have been forced to shut down, having been deemed “non-essential.” This is perfectly understandable from the perspective of conventional virology. But as one acupuncturist on Facebook observed, “What about my patient who I’m working with to get off opioids for his back pain? He’s going to have to start using them again.” From the worldview of medical authority, alternative modalities, social interaction, yoga classes, supplements, and so on are frivolous when it comes to real diseases caused by real viruses. They are relegated to an etheric realm of “wellness” in the face of a crisis. The resurgence of orthodoxy under Covid-19 is so intense that anything remotely unconventional, such as [intravenous vitamin C](#), was completely off the table in the United States until two days ago (articles still abound “debunking” the “myth” that vitamin C can help fight Covid-19). Nor have I heard the CDC evangelize the benefits of elderberry extract, medicinal mushrooms, cutting sugar intake, NAC (N-acetyl L-cysteine), astragalus, or vitamin D. These are not just mushy speculation about “wellness,” but are supported by extensive research and physiological explanations. For example, NAC ([general info](#), double-blind placebo-controlled [study](#)) has been shown to radically reduce incidence and severity of symptoms in flu-like illnesses.

As the statistics I offered earlier on autoimmunity, obesity, etc. indicate, America and the modern world in general are facing a health crisis. Is the answer to do what we’ve been doing, only more thoroughly? The response so far to Covid has been to double down on the orthodoxy and sweep unconventional practices and dissenting viewpoints aside. Another response would be to widen our lens and examine the entire system, including who pays for it, how access is granted, and how research is

funded, but also expanding out to include marginal fields like herbal medicine, functional medicine, and energy medicine. Perhaps we can take this opportunity to reevaluate prevailing theories of illness, health, and the body. Yes, let's protect the sickened fish as best we can right now, but maybe next time we won't have to isolate and drug so many fish, if we can clean the tank.

I'm not telling you to run out right now and buy NAC or any other supplement, nor that we as a society should abruptly shift our response, cease social distancing immediately, and start taking supplements instead. But we can use the break in normal, this pause at a crossroads, to consciously choose what path we shall follow moving forward: what kind of healthcare system, what paradigm of health, what kind of society. This reevaluation is already happening, as ideas like universal free healthcare in the USA gain new momentum. And that path leads to forks as well. What kind of healthcare will be universalized? Will it be merely available to all, or mandatory for all – each citizen a patient, perhaps with an invisible ink barcode tattoo certifying one is up to date on all compulsory vaccines and check-ups. Then you can go to school, board a plane, or enter a restaurant. This is one path to the future that is available to us.

Another option is available now too. Instead of doubling down on control, we could finally embrace the holistic paradigms and practices that have been waiting on the margins, waiting for the center to dissolve so that, in our humbled state, we can bring them into the center and build a new system around them.

The Coronation

There is an alternative to the paradise of perfect control that our civilization has so long pursued, and that recedes as fast as our progress, like a mirage on the horizon. Yes, we can proceed as before down the path toward greater insulation, isolation, domination, and separation. We can normalize heightened levels of separation and control, believe that they are necessary to keep us safe, and accept a world in which we are afraid to be near each other. Or we can take advantage of this pause, this break in normal, to turn onto a path of reunion, of holism, of the restoring of lost connections, of the repair of community and the rejoining of the web of life.

Do we double down on protecting the separate self, or do we accept the invitation into a world where all of us are in this together? It isn't just in medicine we encounter this question: it visits us politically, economically, and in our personal lives as well. Take for example the issue of hoarding, which embodies the idea, "There won't be enough for everyone, so I am going to make sure there is enough for me." Another response might be, "Some don't have enough, so I will share what I have with them." Are we to be survivalists or helpers? What is life for?

On a larger scale, people are asking questions that have until now lurked on activist margins. What should we do about the homeless? What should we do about the people in prisons? In Third World slums? What should we do about the unemployed? What about all the hotel maids, the Uber drivers, the plumbers and janitors and bus drivers and cashiers who cannot work from home? And so now, finally, ideas like student debt relief and universal basic income are blossoming. “How do we protect those susceptible to Covid?” invites us into “How do we care for vulnerable people in general?”

That is the impulse that stirs in us, regardless of the superficialities of our opinions about Covid’s severity, origin, or best policy to address it. It is saying, let’s get serious about taking care of each other. Let’s remember how precious we all are and how precious life is. Let’s take inventory of our civilization, strip it down to its studs, and see if we can build one more beautiful.

As Covid stirs our compassion, more and more of us realize that we don’t want to go back to a normal so sorely lacking it. We have the opportunity now to forge a new, more compassionate normal.

Hopeful signs abound that this is happening. The United States government, which has long seemed the captive of heartless corporate interests, has unleashed hundreds of billions of dollars in direct payments to families. Donald Trump, not known as a paragon of compassion, has put a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions. Certainly one can take a cynical view of both these developments; nonetheless, they embody the principle of caring for the vulnerable.

From all over the world we hear stories of solidarity and healing. One friend described sending \$100 each to ten strangers who were in dire need. My son, who until a few days ago worked at Dunkin’ Donuts, said people were tipping at five times the normal rate – and these are working class people, many of them Hispanic truck drivers, who are economically insecure themselves. Doctors, nurses, and “essential workers” in other professions risk their lives to serve the public. Here are some more examples of the love and kindness eruption, courtesy of [ServiceSpace](#):

*Perhaps we're in the middle of living into that new story. Imagine Italian [airforce](#) using Pavoratti, Spanish [military](#) doing acts of service, and street police [playing guitars](#) -- to *inspire*. Corporations [giving](#) unexpected wage hikes. Canadians [starting](#) "Kindness Mongering." Six year old in Australia [adorably gifting](#) her tooth fairy money, an 8th grader in Japan making 612 [masks](#), and college kids everywhere [buying groceries](#) for elders. Cuba sending an army in "[white robes](#)" (doctors) to help Italy. A landlord allowing tenants to [stay](#) without rent, an Irish priest's [poem](#) going*

viral, disabled activists [producing](#) hand sanitizer. Imagine. Sometimes a crisis mirrors our deepest impulse -- that we can always respond with compassion.

As Rebecca Solnit describes in her marvelous book, *A Paradise Built in Hell*, disaster often liberates solidarity. A more beautiful world shimmers just beneath the surface, bobbing up whenever the systems that hold it underwater loosen their grip.

For a long time we, as a collective, have stood helpless in the face of an ever-sickening society. Whether it is declining health, decaying infrastructure, depression, suicide, addiction, ecological degradation, or concentration of wealth, the symptoms of civilizational malaise in the developed world are plain to see, but we have been stuck in the systems and patterns that cause them. Now, Covid has gifted us a reset.

A million forking paths lie before us. Universal basic income could mean an end to economic insecurity and the flowering of creativity as millions are freed from the work that Covid has shown us is less necessary than we thought. Or it could mean, with the decimation of small businesses, dependency on the state for a stipend that comes with strict conditions. The crisis could usher in totalitarianism or solidarity; medical martial law or a holistic renaissance; greater fear of the microbial world, or greater resiliency in participation in it; permanent norms of social distancing, or a renewed desire to come together.

What can guide us, as individuals and as a society, as we walk the garden of forking paths? At each junction, we can be aware of what we follow: fear or love, self-preservation or generosity. Shall we live in fear and build a society based on it? Shall we live to preserve our separate selves? Shall we use the crisis as a weapon against our political enemies? These are not all-or-nothing questions, all fear or all love. It is that a next step into love lies before us. It feels daring, but not reckless. It treasures life, while accepting death. And it trusts that with each step, the next will become visible.

Please don't think that choosing love over fear can be accomplished solely through an act of will, and that fear too can be conquered like a virus. The virus we face here is fear, whether it is fear of Covid-19, or fear of the totalitarian response to it, and this virus too has its terrain. Fear, along with addiction, depression, and a host of physical ills, flourishes in a terrain of separation and trauma: inherited trauma, childhood trauma, violence, war, abuse, neglect, shame, punishment, poverty, and the muted, normalized trauma that affects nearly everyone who lives in a monetized economy, undergoes modern schooling, or lives without community or connection to place. This terrain can be [changed](#), by [trauma healing](#) on a personal level, by systemic change toward a more compassionate society, and by transforming the basic narrative of separation: the separate self in a world of other, me separate from you, humanity

separate from nature. To be alone is a primal fear, and modern society has rendered us more and more alone. But the time of Reunion is here. Every act of compassion, kindness, courage, or generosity heals us from the story of separation, because it assures both actor and witness that we are in this together.

I will conclude by invoking one more dimension of the relationship between humans and viruses. Viruses are integral to evolution, not just of humans but of all eukaryotes. Viruses can [transfer DNA](#) from organism to organism, sometimes inserting it into the germline (where it becomes heritable). Known as horizontal gene transfer, this is a primary mechanism of evolution, allowing life to evolve together much faster than is possible through random mutation. As Lynn Margulis once put it, we are our viruses.

And now let me venture into speculative territory. Perhaps the great diseases of civilization have quickened our biological and cultural evolution, bestowing key genetic information and offering both individual and collective initiation. Could the current pandemic be just that? Novel RNA codes are spreading from human to human, imbuing us with new genetic information; at the same time, we are receiving other, esoteric, “codes” that ride the back of the biological ones, disrupting our narratives and systems in the same way that an illness disrupts bodily physiology. The phenomenon follows the template of initiation: separation from normality, followed by a dilemma, breakdown, or ordeal, followed (if it is to be complete) by reintegration and celebration.

Now the question arises: Initiation into what? What is the specific nature and purpose of this initiation? The popular name for the pandemic offers a clue: coronavirus. A corona is a crown. “Novel coronavirus pandemic” means “a new coronation for all.”

Already we can feel the power of who we might become. A true sovereign does not run in fear from life or from death. A true sovereign does not dominate and conquer (that is a shadow archetype, the Tyrant). The true sovereign serves the people, serves life, and respects the sovereignty of all people. The coronation marks the emergence of the unconscious into consciousness, the crystallization of chaos into order, the transcendence of compulsion into choice. We become the rulers of that which had ruled us. The New World Order that the conspiracy theorists fear is a shadow of the glorious possibility available to sovereign beings. No longer the vassals of fear, we can bring order to the kingdom and build an intentional society on the love already shining through the cracks of the world of separation.

For links to references, please visit: <https://charleseisenstein.org/essays/the-coronation/>

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The Conspiracy Myth

The other day I was amused to read a critique of [The Coronation](#) in which the author was absolutely certain that I am a closet conspiracy theorist. He was so persuasive that I myself almost believed it.

What is a conspiracy theory anyway? Sometimes the term is deployed against anyone who questions authority, dissents from dominant paradigms, or thinks that hidden interests influence our leading institutions. As such, it is a way to quash dissent and bully those trying to stand up to abuses of power. One needn't abandon critical thinking to believe that powerful institutions sometimes collude, conspire, cover up, and are corrupt. If that is what is meant by a conspiracy theory, obviously some of those theories are true. Does anyone remember Enron? Iran-Contra? COINTELPRO? Vioxx? Iraqi weapons of mass destruction?

During the time of Covid-19, another level of conspiracy theory has risen to prominence that goes way beyond specific stories of collusion and corruption to posit conspiracy as a core explanatory principle for how the world works. Fuelled by the authoritarian response to the pandemic (justifiable or not, lockdown, quarantine, surveillance and tracking, censorship of misinformation, suspension of freedom of assembly and other civil liberties, and so on are indeed authoritarian), this arch-conspiracy theory holds that an evil, power-hungry cabal of insiders deliberately created the pandemic or is at least ruthlessly exploiting it to frighten the public into accepting a totalitarian world government under permanent medical martial law, a New World Order (NWO). Furthermore, this evil group, this illuminati, pulls the strings of all major governments, corporations, the United Nations, the WHO, the CDC, the media, the intelligence services, the banks, and the NGOs. In other words, they say, everything we are told is a lie, and the world is in the grip of evil.

So what do I think about that theory? I think it is a myth. And what is a myth? A myth is not the same thing as a fantasy or a delusion. Myths are vehicles of truth, and that truth needn't be literal. The classical Greek myths, for example, seem like mere amusements until one decodes them by associating each god with psychosocial forces. In this way, myths bring light to the shadows and reveal what has been repressed. They take a truth about the psyche or society and form it into a story. The truth of a myth does not depend on whether it is objectively verifiable. That is one reason why, in *The Coronation*, I said my purpose is neither to advocate nor to debunk the conspiracy narrative, but rather to look at what it illuminates. It is, after all, neither provable nor falsifiable.

What is true about the conspiracy myth? Underneath its literalism, it conveys important information that we ignore at great peril.

First, it demonstrates the shocking extent of public alienation from institutions of authority. For all the political battles of the post-WWII era, there was at least a broad consensus on basic facts and on where facts could be found. The key institutions of knowledge production -- science and journalism -- enjoyed broad public trust. If the New York Times and CBS Evening News said that North Vietnam attacked the United States in the Gulf of Tonkin, most people believed it. If science said nuclear power and DDT were safe, most people believed that too. To some extent, that trust was well earned. Journalists sometimes defied the interests of the powerful, as with Seymour Hersh's expose of the My Lai massacre, or Woodward & Bernstein's reporting on Watergate. Science, in the vanguard of civilization's onward march, had a reputation for the objective pursuit of knowledge in defiance of traditional religious authorities, as well as a reputation for lofty disdain for political and financial motives.

Today, the broad consensus trust in science and journalism is in tatters. I know several highly educated people who believe the earth is flat. By dismissing flat-earthers and the tens of millions of adherents to less extreme alternative narratives (historical, medical, political, and scientific) as ignorant, we are mistaking symptom for cause. Their loss of trust is a clear symptom of a loss of trustworthiness. Our institutions of knowledge production have betrayed public trust repeatedly, as have our political institutions. Now, many people won't believe them even when they tell the truth. This must be frustrating to the scrupulous doctor, scientist, or public official. To them, the problem looks like a public gone mad, a rising tide of anti-scientific irrationality that is endangering public health. The solution, from that perspective, would be to combat ignorance. It is almost as if ignorance is a virus (in fact, I have heard that phrase before) that must be controlled through the same kind of quarantine (for example, censorship) that we apply to the coronavirus.

Ironically, another kind of ignorance pervades both these efforts: the ignorance of the terrain. What is the diseased tissue upon which the virus of ignorance gains purchase? The loss of trust in science, journalism, and government reflects their long corruption: their arrogance and elitism, their alliance with corporate interests, and their institutionalized suppression of dissent. The conspiracy myth embodies the realization of a profound disconnect between the public postures of our leaders and their true motivations and plans. It bespeaks a political culture that is opaque to the ordinary citizen, a world of secrecy, image, PR, spin, optics, talking points, perception management, narrative management, and information warfare. No wonder people suspect that there is another reality operating behind the curtains.

Second, the conspiracy myth gives narrative form to an authentic intuition that an inhuman power governs the world. What could that power be? The conspiracy myth locates that power in a group of malevolent human beings (who take commands, in some versions, from extraterrestrial or demonic entities). Therein lies a certain psychological comfort, because now there is someone to blame in a familiar us-versus-them narrative and victim-perpetrator-rescuer psychology. Alternatively, we could locate the “inhuman power” in systems or ideologies, not a group of conspirators. That is less psychologically rewarding, because we can no longer easily identify as good fighting evil; after all, we ourselves participate in these systems, which pervade our entire society. Systems like the debt-based money system, patriarchy, white supremacy, or capitalism cannot be removed by fighting their administrators. They create roles for evildoers to fill, but the evildoers are functionaries; puppets, not puppet masters. The basic intuition of conspiracy theories then is true: that those we think hold power are but puppets of the real power in the world.

A couple weeks ago I was on a call with a person who had a high position in the Obama administration and who still runs in elite circles. He said, “There is no one driving the bus.” I was a little disappointed actually, because there is indeed part of me that wishes the problem were a bunch of dastardly conspirators. Why? Because then our world’s problems would be quite easy to solve, at least in principle. Just expose and eliminate those bad guys. That is the prevailing Hollywood formula for righting the world’s wrongs: a heroic champion confronts and defeats the bad guy, and everyone lives happily ever after. Hmm, that is the same basic formula as blaming ill health on germs and killing them with the arsenal of medicine, so that we can live safe healthy lives ever after, or killing the terrorists and walling out the immigrants and locking up the criminals, all again so that we can live safe healthy lives ever after. Stamped from the same template, conspiracy theories tap into an unconscious orthodoxy. They emanate from the same mythic pantheon as the social ills they protest. We might call that pantheon Separation, and one of its chief motifs is the war against the Other.

That is not to say there is no such thing as a germ -- or a conspiracy. Watergate, COINTELPRO, Iran-Contra, Merck’s drug Vioxx, Ford’s exploding Pinto coverup, Lockheed-Martin’s bribery campaign, Bayer’s knowing sale of HIV-contaminated blood, and the Enron scandal demonstrate that conspiracies involving powerful elites do happen. None of the above are myths though: a myth is something that explains the world; it is, mysteriously, bigger than itself. Thus, the Kennedy assassination conspiracy theory (which I will confess, doubtless at cost to my credibility, to accepting as literally true) is a portal to the mythic realm.

The conspiracy myth I'm addressing here, though, is much larger than any of these specific examples: It is that the world as we know it is the result of a conspiracy, with the Illuminati or controllers as its evil gods. For believers, it becomes a totalizing discourse that casts every event into its terms.

It is a myth with an illustrious pedigree, going back at least to the time of the first century Gnostics. Gnostics believe that an evil demiurge created the material world out of a preexisting divine essence. Creating the world in the image of his own distortion, he imagines himself to be its true god and ruler.

One needn't believe in this literally, nor believe literally in a world-controlling evil cabal, to derive insight from this myth -- insight into the arrogance of the powerful, for example, or into the nature of the distortion that colors the world of our experience.

What is it that makes the vast majority of humanity comply with a system that drives Earth and humankind to ruin? What power has us in its grip? It isn't just the conspiracy theorists who are captive to a mythology. Society at large is too. I call it the mythology of Separation: me separate from you, matter separate from spirit, human separate from nature. It holds us as discrete and separate selves in an objective universe of force and mass, atoms and void. Because we are (in this myth) separate from other people and from nature, we must dominate our competitors and master nature. Progress, therefore, consists in increasing our capacity to control the Other. The myth recounts human history as an ascent from one triumph to the next, from fire to domestication to industry to information technology, genetic engineering, and social science, promising a coming paradise of control. That same myth motivates the conquest and ruin of nature, organizing society to turn the entire planet into money -- no conspiracy necessary.

The mythology of Separation is what generates what I named in *The Coronation* as a "civilizational tilt" toward control. The solution template is, facing any problem, to find something to control -- to quarantine, to track, to imprison, to wall out, to dominate, or to kill. If control fails, more control will fix it. To achieve social and material paradise, control everything, track every movement, monitor every word, record every transaction. Then there can be no more crime, no more infection, no more disinformation. When the entire ruling class accepts this formula and this vision, they will act in natural concert to increase their control. It is all for the greater good. When the public accepts it too, they will not resist it. This is not a conspiracy, though it can certainly look like one. This is a third truth within the conspiracy myth. Events are indeed orchestrated in the direction of more and more control, only the orchestrating power is itself a zeitgeist, an ideology... a myth.

A Conspiracy with No Conspirators

Let us not dismiss the conspiracy myth as *just* a myth. Not only is it an important psychosocial diagnostic, but it reveals what is otherwise hard to see from the official mythology in which society's main institutions, while flawed, are shepherding us ever-closer to a high tech paradise. That dominant myth blinds us to the data points the conspiracy theorists recruit for their narratives. These might include things like regulatory capture in the pharmaceutical industry, conflicts of interest within public health organizations, the dubious efficacy of masks, the far-lower-than-hyped death rates, totalitarian overreach, the [questionable utility](#) of lockdown, [concerns](#) about non-ionizing frequencies of electromagnetic radiation, the benefits of natural and holistic approaches to boosting immunity, bioterrain theory, the dangers of [censorship](#) in the name of "combatting disinformation," and so forth. It would be nice if one could raise the numerous valid points and [legitimate questions](#) that alternative Covid narratives bring to light without being classed as a right-wing conspiracy theorist.

The whole phrase "right-wing conspiracy theorist" is a bit odd, since traditionally it is the Left that has been most alert to the proclivity of the powerful to abuse their power. Traditionally, it is the Left that is suspicious of corporate interests, that urges us to "question authority," and that has in fact been the main victim of government infiltration and surveillance. Fifty years ago, if anyone said, "There is a [secret program](#) called COINTELPRO that is spying on civil rights groups and sowing division within them with poison pen letters and fabricated rumors," that would have been a conspiracy theory by today's standards. The same, 25 years ago, with, "There is a [secret program](#) in which the CIA facilitates narcotics sales into American inner cities and uses the money to fund right-wing paramilitaries in Central America." The same with government infiltration of [environmental groups](#) and [peace activists](#) starting in the 1980s. Or more recently, the infiltration of the [Standing Rock](#) movement. Or the real estate industry's decades-long conspiracy to redline neighborhoods to keep black people out. Given this history, why all of a sudden is it the Left urging everyone to trust "the Man" -- to trust the pronouncements of the pharmaceutical companies and pharma-funded organizations like the CDC and WHO? Why is skepticism towards these institutions labeled "right wing"? It isn't as if only the privileged are "inconvenienced" by lockdown. It is devastating the lives of tens or hundreds of millions of the global precariat. The UN World Food Program is warning that by the end of the year, 260 million people will [face starvation](#). Most are black and brown people in Africa and South Asia. One might argue that to restrict the debate to epidemiological questions of mortality is itself a privileged stance that erases the suffering of those who are most marginalized to begin with.

“Conspiracy theory” has become a term of political invective, used to disparage any view that diverges from mainstream beliefs. Basically, any critique of dominant institutions can be smeared as conspiracy theory. There is actually a perverse truth in this smear. For example, if you believe that glyphosate is actually dangerous to human and ecological health, then you also must, if you are logical, believe that Bayer/Monsanto is suppressing or ignoring that information, and you must also believe that the government, media, and scientific establishment are to some extent complicit in that suppression. Otherwise, why are we not seeing NYT headlines like, “Monsanto whistleblower reveals dangers of glyphosate”?

Information suppression can happen without deliberate orchestration. Throughout history, hysterias, intellectual fads, and mass delusions have come and gone spontaneously. This is more mysterious than the easy conspiracy explanation admits. An unconscious coordination of action can look very much like a conspiracy, and the boundary between the two is blurry. Consider the weapons of mass destruction (WMD) fraud that served as a pretext for the invasion of Iraq. Maybe there were people in the Bush administration who knowingly used the phony “yellowcake” document to call for war; maybe they just wanted very much to believe the documents were genuine, or maybe they thought, “Well, this is questionable but Saddam must have WMD, and even if he doesn’t, he wants them, so the document is basically true...” People easily believe what serves their interests or fits their existing worldview.

In a similar vein, the media needed little encouragement to start beating the war drums. They knew what to do already, without having to receive instructions. I don’t think very many journalists actually believed the WMD lie. They pretended to believe, because subconsciously, they knew that was the establishment narrative. That was what would get them recognized as serious journalists. That’s what would give them access to power. That is what would allow them to keep their jobs and advance their careers. But most of all, they pretended to believe because everyone else was pretending to believe. It is hard to go against the zeitgeist.

The British scientist Rupert Sheldrake told me about a talk he gave to a group of scientists who were working on animal behaviour at a prestigious British University. He was talking about his research on dogs that know when their owners are coming home, and other telepathic phenomena in domestic animals. The talk was received with a kind of polite silence. But in the following tea break all six of the senior scientists who were present at the seminar came to him one by one, and when they were sure that no one else was listening told him they had had experiences of this kind with their own animals, or that they were convinced that telepathy is a real phenomenon, but that they could not talk to their colleagues about this because they

were all so straight. When Sheldrake realised that all six had told him much the same thing, he said to them, “Why don’t you guys come out? You’d all have so much more fun!” He says that when he gives a talk at a scientific institution there are nearly always scientists who approach him afterwards telling him they’ve had personal experiences that convince them of the reality of psychic or spiritual phenomena but that they can’t discuss them with their colleagues for fear of being thought weird.

This is not a deliberate conspiracy to suppress psychic phenomena. Those six scientists didn’t convene beforehand and decide to suppress information they knew was real. They keep their opinions to themselves because of the norms of their subculture, the basic paradigms that delimit science, and the very real threat of damage to their careers. The persecution and calumny directed at Sheldrake himself demonstrates what happens to a scientist who is outspoken in his dissent from official scientific reality. So, we might still say that a conspiracy is afoot, but its perpetrator is a culture, a system, and a story.

Is this, or a deliberate conspiratorial agenda, a more satisfying explanation for the seemingly inexorable trends (which by no means began with Covid) toward surveillance, tracking, distancing, germ phobia, obsession with safety, and the digitization and indoor-ization of entertainment, recreation, and sociality? If the perpetrator is indeed a cultural mythology and system, then conspiracy theories offer us a false target, a distraction. The remedy cannot be to expose and take down those who have foisted these trends upon us. Of course, there are many bad actors in our world, remorseless people committing heinous acts. But have they created the system and the mythology of Separation, or do they merely take advantage of it? Certainly such people should be stopped, but if that is all we do, and leave unchanged the conditions that breed them, we will fight an endless war. Just as in bioterrain theory germs are symptoms and exploiters of diseased tissue, so also are conspiratorial cabals symptoms and exploiters of a diseased society: a society poisoned by the mentality of war, fear, separation, and control. This deep ideology, the myth of separation, is beyond anyone’s power to invent. The Illuminati, if they exist, are not its authors; it is more true to say that the mythology is their author. We do not create our myths; they create us.

Which side are you on?

In the end, I still haven’t said whether I think the New World Order conspiracy myth is true or not. Well actually yes I have. I have said it is true as a myth, regardless of its correspondence to verifiable facts. But what about the facts? Come on, Charles, tell us, is there actually a conspiracy behind the Covid thing, or isn’t there? There must be an objective fact of the matter. Are chemtrails a thing? Was SARS-COV2

genetically engineered? Is microwave radiation from cellphone towers a factor? Are vaccines introducing viruses from animal cell cultures into people? Is Bill Gates masterminding a power grab in the form of medical martial law? Does a Luciferian elite rule the world? True or false? Yes or no?

To this question I would respond with another: Given that I am not an expert on any of these matters, why do you want to know what I think? Could it be to place me on one side or another of an information war? Then you will know whether it is OK to enjoy this essay, share it, or have me on your podcast. In an us-versus-them war mentality, the most important thing is to know which side someone is on, lest you render aid and comfort to the enemy.

Aha -- Charles must be on the other side. Because he has created a false equivalency between peer-reviewed, evidence-based, respectable scientific knowledge on the one hand, and unhinged conspiracy theories on the other.

Aha -- Charles must be on the other side. Because he has created a false equivalency between corporate-government-NWO propaganda on the one hand, and brave whistle-blowers and dissidents risking their careers for the truth on the other.

Can you see how totalizing war mentality can be?

War mentality saturates our polarized society, which envisions progress as a consequence of victory -- victory over a virus, over the ignorant, over the left, over the right, over the psychopathic elites, over Donald Trump, over white supremacy, over the liberal elites.... Each side uses the same formula, and that formula requires an enemy. So, obligingly, we divide ourselves up into us and them, exhausting 99% of our energies in a fruitless tug-of-war, never once suspecting that the true evil power might be the formula itself.

This is not to propose that we somehow banish conflict from human affairs. It is to question a mythology -- embraced by both sides -- that conceives every problem in conflict's terms. Struggle and conflict have their place, but other plotlines are possible. There are other pathways to healing and to justice.

A Call for Humility

Have you ever noticed that events seem to organize themselves to validate the story you hold about the world? Selection bias and confirmation bias explain some of that, but I think something weirder is at work as well. When we enter into deep faith or deep paranoia, it seems as if that state attracts confirmatory events to it. Reality organizes itself to match our stories. In a sense, this IS a conspiracy, just not one perpetrated by humankind. That might be a third truth that the conspiracy myth harbors: the presence of an organizing intelligence behind the events of our lives.

In no way does this imply the New Age nostrum that beliefs create reality. Rather, it is that reality and belief construct each other, coevolving as a coherent whole. The intimate, mysterious connection between myth and reality means that belief is never actually a slave to fact. We are facts' sovereign -- which is not to say their creator. To be their sovereign doesn't mean to be their tyrant, disrespecting and over-ruling them. The wise monarch pays attention to an unruly subject, such as a fact that defies the narrative. Maybe it is simply a disturbed trouble-maker, like a simple lie, but maybe it signals disharmony in the kingdom. Maybe the kingdom is no longer legitimate. Maybe the myth is no longer true. It could well be that the vociferous attacks on Covid dissent, using the "conspiracy theory" smear, signal the infirmity of the orthodox paradigms they seek to uphold.

If so, that doesn't mean the orthodox paradigms are all wrong either. To leap from one certainty to another skips the holy ground of uncertainty, of not knowing, of humility, into which genuinely new information can come. What unites the pundits of all persuasions is their certainty. Who is trustworthy? In the end, it is the person with the humility to recognize when he or she has been wrong.

To those who categorically dismiss any information that seriously challenges conventional medicine, lockdown policies, vaccines, etc., I would ask, Do you need such high walls around your kingdom? Instead of banishing these unruly subjects, would it hurt to give them an audience? Would it be so dangerous to perhaps tour another kingdom, guided not by your own loyal minister but by the most intelligent, welcoming partisans of the other side? If you have no interest in spending the several hours it will take to absorb the following dissenting opinions, fine. I'd rather be in my garden too. But if you are a partisan in these issues, what harm will it do to visit enemy territory? Normally partisans don't do that. They rely on the reports of their own leaders about the enemy. If they know anything of Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s or Judy Mikovitz's views, it is through the lens of someone debunking them. So give a listen to [Kennedy](#), or if you prefer MD's only, to [David Katz](#), [Zach Bush](#), or [Christiane Northrup](#),

I would like to offer the same invitation to those who reject the conventional view. Find the most scrupulous mainstream doctors and scientists you can, and dive into their world. Take the attitude of a respectful guest, not a hostile spy. If you do that, I guarantee you will encounter data points that challenge any narrative you came in with. The splendor of conventional virology, the wonders of chemistry that generations of scientists have discovered, the intelligence and sincerity of most of these scientists, and the genuine altruism of health care workers on the front line who have no political or financial conflict of interest in the face of grave risk to themselves, must be part of any satisfactory narrative.

After two months of obsessively searching for one, I have not yet found a satisfactory narrative that can account for every data point. That doesn't mean to take no action because after all, knowledge is never certain. But in the whirlwind of competing narratives and the disjoint mythologies beneath them, we can look for action that makes sense no matter which side is right. We can look for truths that the smoke and clamor of the battle obscures. We can question assumptions both sides take for granted, and ask questions neither side is asking. Not identified with either side, we can gather knowledge from both. Generalizing to society, by bringing in all the voices, including the marginalized ones, we can build a broader social consensus and begin to heal the polarization that is rending and paralyzing our society.

For links to reference, please visit <https://charleseisenstein.org/essays/the-conspiracy-myth/>

About science and research in times of ecological collapse

Trips to Mars, 5G and autonomous cars or a good life on Earth? We have to choose.

The degrowth movement aims to deal with the root of the problem. Why are we experiencing an ecological collapse today?

After careful observation, the answer is: because of economic growth. As economic growth increases, so do the impacts on the climate and the environment. It's a [fact](#) .

A second fact is that our whole society is built on growth. Without growth, individuals, companies, states can not repay loans and debts, banks will collapse over time, and the economic crisis will begin.

So, on the one hand, growth is destroying us, and on the other we need it as salt. Two conflicting facts. So what's next?

Degrowth starts when you ask yourself this question. In other words: how to separate prosperity and the "good life" from economic growth? The whole point of degrowth is to invite society as a whole to start thinking about this issue. Since the path of (green) economic growth is doomed to fail, we must find another path.

Unfortunately, most of the degrowth activists' forces are dedicated to explain the first fact. Belief in "green" growth, technological progress, innovation is so strong that we must constantly repeat the same [arguments and facts](#) that no one has yet been able to convincingly overturn. That is why we are talking about the [religion of growth / progress](#). Despite all the facts, the proponents of growth do not change their attitude. So we understand that this is not about reason, but about (blind) faith.

However, if we want to have a chance to reverse the ecological collapse and mitigate climate change, we need all possible brains to address the issue of separating prosperity from economic growth. Instead, scientists and researchers are currently addressing the development of smart networks, 5G, nanotechnology, transgenic technologies, artificial intelligence, autonomous cars, trips to Mars, hi-tech gadgets, hi-tech military weapons, drones, geoengineering, human adaptation to the development of all these technologies, human adaptation to climate change and

deteriorated environment, while politicians, with the help of economists and industrialists are focusing on how to "restart" the economy.

In other words, we live today in an absurd situation where industrialists and politicians are adding petrol to the fire that is destroying our common house, some researchers are looking for ways to make gasoline an even more flammable substance, and some researchers are working to adapt the rest of humanity to life in fires.

" **Science discovers, industry implements, man follows** ." It's the slogan of the World's Fair in Chicago, "A Century of Progress," in.... 1933! Almost 100 years later, nothing has changed. The ideology of progress is not modern at all.

Why is it still so?

When it comes to private research, the answer is simple: companies need to get their money back on research investments.

When it comes to publicly funded research, it is a question of ideology and the fear of losing power and wealth.

In liberal ideology, technology and innovation are key to economic growth. Growth is to bring geopolitical power. If you don't have high growth, you don't have a place in the G7 or G20 club. At the same time, growth has always been an excuse to postpone the issues of wealth redistribution. Their rhetoric is: "*If you are poor, it is not because we have over-enriched, it is because you are not working hard enough. We need the economy to grow so that you can get rich like we did.*"

Therefore, almost all private and public money invested in research is dedicated to finding things that can benefit the industry. And thus for economic growth. So we are very far from the question: "How to separate prosperity and the good life from economic growth?".

However, when ecosystems collapse and poverty and unrest spread among the population, it doesn't matter which country has a bigger penis - sorry, growth - than the other.

For our future, for nature protection and for the common good, it is high time that we implement a strong democratic control over the direction and speed of the development of science, research and technology.

Translated from Slovak by Google Translate, and corrected by Nicolas Giroux.

For links to reference please visit <https://dennikn.sk/blog/2115082/o-vede-a-vyskume-v-dobe-ekologickeho-kolapsu/>

February 2021, Nicolas Giroux, activist for environmental protection

Covidism and human regression

The extent of the reduction in freedoms on behalf of COVID is not proportionate to the risk posed by the virus. The way in which freedoms are reduced on behalf of COVID is not compatible with democratic principles. Reason and humanity have disappeared in the cold numbers and algorithms that have been deciding for us for several months. Current scientific logic does not understand the sensitivity of the human psyche, the importance of culture, social life and the reality of human experience. It does not understand that it is not possible to reduce human life to its biological part.

This simple truth needs to be recalled: Science is only a light that explains the reality of our lives. What we do with this reality is related to our values and our morality. The COVID crisis cruelly shows how fast we are heading as a society to an anti-humanist dead-end.

Welcome to the new sad reality. Man has become only a piece of meat, a substance of biological life, which must be protected and extended **at all costs**. The highest value of society is the protection of biological life. Technology has been given the messianic task of saving our lives. Just one more step and eugenics and transhumanism will shamelessly become a social priority. Digital technologies are profoundly transforming and impoverishing interpersonal relationships, education and social life. The state and those who make decisions, without a vision of human emancipation, without any philosophy and ideological skeleton, without a memory of the past and visions of the future, have set "the protection of biological life here and now" as the highest value that decides everything. China is admired and praised for its response to COVID.

These techno-totalitarian trends have existed for years. Ivan Illich wrote as early as 1971: "*The triumph of hygiene is becoming the current ideal. We will have to live in a sterilized world where all contacts between people, between man and his environment, will be the subject of infallible predictions and manipulations.*"

With COVID, we have made a huge leap that will have far-reaching effects on human society and the collective psyche.

In direct conflict with humanistic teachings, we have forgotten all the other elements that make human life full, dignified, meaningful and full-fledged. Freedom, democracy, interpersonal relations, love, culture, education, spiritual life, personal development, symbolic life. We are willing to sacrifice all this to protect biological life. If biological life is a condition for the manifestation of full human life, it must not be its destroyer.

"Freedom or Death"

The cult of "naked life" (Walter Benjamin) leads to the loss of its meaning. We exist, but we no longer live. If our highest value is "protection of life", then what are we willing to sacrifice our lives for? Why do we actually live? I call "Covidism" the dangerous tendency to make health the alpha and omega of human life, when health should be just the alpha. For a healthy society, there must be values that are the omega of our lives, that is, the values for which we are willing to sacrifice our lives. For freedom, for justice, for the rule of law, for democracy, for our children, for a certain humanistic vision, or for God. If the highest value is "protection of life", then life, whole and meaningful, is already lost, and thus we do not actually protect any life. We only protect existences. It doesn't matter if the existence makes sense.

"Freedom or death" was a motto of the French revolutionaries in 1789. The partisans set values such as freedom, dignity, bravery and were willing to fight for these values until death. In 1985, Václav Havel said: *"The inability to risk one's life to protect its meaning and human dimension leads not only to a loss of meaning in life but ultimately to a loss of life itself"*(1)

In other words: *"If life is everything, then it is nothing"* (Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine). Health is a great treasure. However, freedom is a treasure as great (as can education, democracy, culture, etc.). Health without freedom makes no sense, and freedom without health neither. Our decisions should ensure a healthy balance between these values.

Death and life, two sides of the same coin

One of the reasons for the current situation is our rejection of any kind of suffering and our civilizational denial of death. The advancement of medicine and technology and the overall long-term state of peace in Europe have given birth to a frightened society that is allergic to suffering and does not accept death as part of life. We try to move away death as far away from us as possible, in time and space. We are artificially maintained in physical comfort at the expense of the environment and the Southern countries, and in mental illusory comfort via connected screens.

Death is never funny. She is always tragic. Just like life. However, the death of old people is a natural thing. Death is not only a part of life, it is also its condition. He who fears death is also afraid of life and does not really live. He only passively survives its human existence and moves through time just like a ghost moves through space, without holding anything. But that is our current horizon.

Strict measures were understandable a year ago. We didn't know the virus, we didn't know what to expect. Today, however, the situation is different. As of 31.01.2021, the total mortality from COVID in Slovakia is 0.085% (8.5 people per 10,000) and 96% of people who die of COVID are over 55 years old. 0.06% of people (6 people per 10,000) go to the hospital due to a disease associated with COVID (numbers found from databases on korona.gov.sk).

These numbers show that we need to take COVID seriously (without a response from us, they would be much worse). However, it is no longer appropriate to continue to spread fear, to infantilize society with orders, to stop whole areas of life and to be satisfied with the long-term massive digitization of our lives, which from a humanistic point of view represents the greatest regression of humanity in its history. For example, no matter how much the "progress" fanatics try, it will always be true that a child's harmonious development depends on the quantity, intensity and quality of human contact.

Due to our inability to accept death, we take unreasonable risks: we do not want to wait for vaccines created by proven technology. We are massively vaccinated with new genetic vaccines and thus accept the risk that the drug causes [more harm than good](#) .

The quality of human life cannot be quantified by numbers and therefore politicians do not take into account the side effects of their measures. Where are psychologists and philosophers in the circle of current people in power?

To inhabit the Earth, not just to exist in the digital world

All the reasons why emergency measures were implemented a year ago still exist and will continue to exist. COVID will be with us for a long time. It will probably never disappear at all. The time has come for us to learn to live with him. Really live. Just like we must learn to live with death. I know it's very difficult. Especially when we live in fear on a daily basis. I think politicians are trying to do their best, the best way they know how with the tools they have. Of course, it is not a matter of returning to "normal". However, if we pay attention to freedom, to education, to our children, to the mentally weaker, a slightly higher mortality rate must be accepted. It's tragic, I

know. But if we do not emerge from this structural fear of death, the state of emergency, today's state, may become our new normality.

It is a normality in which we no longer inhabit our Earth, we only exist in a virtual, digital world. It is a normality in which the past and the future do not exist. Only an eternal presence where we constantly respond from week to week and adapt to the development of Covid. And if it will not be Covid, it will be a different risk: terrorism, polluted air, another virus. In the long run, this is neither sustainable nor acceptable.

Therefore, democratic and decentralized crisis management must be collectively opposed to covidism in order to better balance measures against Covid. For example, some municipalities could give young people more freedom and let the elderly decide for themselves whether they want to take a risk. We are sacrificing the future of our children as a result of climate change. Now are we also sacrificing their present time during a moment of their lives, in which social contacts are essential for their personal development and personality formation? Decisions must also take into account the side effects on mental health, on children and students, on the quality of life, on nature (somehow it has been forgotten!) and on the values for which we are willing to sacrifice our lives. Do we still have some? No decision will ever be ideal and it will always be at the expense of something. It is therefore extremely important that these decisions be the result of collective debates in accordance with democratic principles.

Freedom is not something we gain once and work is done. Freedom must be constantly fought for. It's like a garden. Without regular care, the garden falls apart and chaos ensues. In human societies, carelessness for freedom leads to absolutism and barbarism.

If we do not do this, after this nightmare called COVID, we will wake up in a dystopic world, where small businesses will disappear completely, leaving only large and international companies. People will be constantly afraid of other people, they will be totally isolated and they will live exclusively over the Internet. They will be educated, socialized, working, shopping, dealing with administrative life, protesting, eating and making love through the computer. All life replaced by bits, clics, algorithms. Depression will be a new epidemic. For the oppressed in the factories, their helplessness will be total. In the name of the "greatest good" and for the "protection of the weakest," the "dictatorship of kindness" will be accepted. Economic growth will no longer be discussed, we will continue to defile, pollute and plunder nature. As a result of this increasing digitalisation, we will continue to exploit the Southern countries and mine rare earths. As a result of the logical ecological collapse that has already begun, an eco-dictatorship will emerge, which will naturally add up to the

current techno-hygienic dictatorship. Fascist slogans such as "the aim justifies the means" will become commonplace. No one will be ashamed to praise China.

Humanity, humility, solidarity, reason and freedom, deeply repressed in our subconscious, will await a new enlightenment.

(1) Quote used by philosopher Alexander Laignel-Lavastine in La Décroissance magazine no. 176, Feb 2020. I did not find the original quote so it is translated here from the French translation.

Translated from Slovak by Google Translate, and corrected by Nicolas Giroux.

For links to reference please visit <https://dennikn.sk/blog/2267746/covidizmus-a-regresia-ludstva/>

Mob Morality and the Unvaxxed

Propaganda must facilitate the displacement of aggression by specifying the targets for hatred.

– Joseph Goebbels

We would like to think that modern societies like ours have outgrown barbaric customs like human sacrifice. Sure, we still engage in scapegoating and figuratively sacrifice people on the altar of public opinion, but we don't actually kill people in hopes of placating the gods and restoring order. Or do we?

Some scholars believe we do. Following the thought of the late philosopher Rene Girard, they argue that human sacrifice is still with us today in the form of capital punishment (and incarceration – a removal from society). Girard believed that human sacrifice arose in response to what he called a “sacrificial crisis.” The original sacrificial crisis – the greatest threat to early societies – was escalating cycles of violence and retribution. The solution was to redirect the vengeance away from each other and, in violent unanimity, toward a scapegoat or class of scapegoats. Once established, this pattern was memorialized in myth and ritual, applied preemptively as human sacrifice, and carried out in response to any other crisis that threatened society.

In this view, capital punishment originated in human sacrifice and it *is* human sacrifice. It performs the same function: to forestall reciprocal violence through unanimous violence. It does so by monopolizing vengeance, truncating the cycle of retaliatory violence at the first iteration. *This works whether the subject of execution or incarceration is guilty of a crime or not.* Justice is a cover story for something more primal. Theologian Brian K. Smith [writes](#),

The subject of a modern execution might also be carrying multivalent significations. Among other things (i.e., racial and economic metonymic potentialities), such a figure might serve as the representative of all crime, of "disorder" and social "chaos," of the "breakdown of values," etc. Apart from any utilitarian deterrent effect capital punishment might have, it is one, rather drastic, response to a social problem – illegal and illicit violence.

In other words, what we rationalize in the language of justice and deterrence is actually a blood ritual, in which a person, whether guilty or not, becomes a symbol. Ritual springs up irrepressibly around executions: the last meal, the “dead man walking” to the special execution chamber, the witnesses, the medical procedures, the presiding physician, the signed papers, the last rites, the covering of the head, the precise timetable, the final words, and the exacting attention to detail all mark off the execution as separate, special... sacred.

Something Must be Done

In a lucidly argued [paper](#), legal scholar Roberta Harding offers several examples from the deep South during Jim Crow where judge, jury, and prosecutor well knew that the accused black man was innocent of the charge of raping a white woman. However, because the white supremacist social order was threatened by consensual interracial intercourse, they executed the accused anyway; if they failed to do so promptly he was lynched. Partly this was to set an example and terrify the black population, but partly it was because *something had to be done*.

By the same token, it mattered little that Afghan villagers or Iraqi politicians had no culpability for 9/11; nor did it matter that bombing them would have no practical effect on future terrorism (except to further inflame it). Obviously, the United States was using 9/11 as a pretext to accomplish larger geopolitical aims. Yet it worked as a pretext only because of broad public agreement that “something must be done.” And, enacting the age-old pattern, we knew what to do: find some target of unifying violence that cannot effectively retaliate. I was dismayed in 2001 when, at Quaker Meeting of all places, one of the Quakers said, “Of course, a forceful response of some kind is necessary.” What, I wondered, does “forceful” mean? It means bombing someone. In other words, we must find someone upon whom to visit violence. He may also have mentioned addressing the imperialist causes of terrorism, but those were not the subject of “of course.” Nearly everyone instinctively took for granted the necessity of finding sacrificial victims. We were definitely going to bomb someone – the only question was whom.

The 9/11 attack exemplifies what Harding calls a triggering incident, which “resuscitates dissensions, rivalries, jealousies and quarrels within the community,” leading to a sacrificial crisis. A recent such incident was the murder of George Floyd. The latent conflicts it exposed have been festering for so long that it takes little provocation for them to erupt into an active crisis. The response to Floyd’s murder is a classic illustration of the calming power of violent unanimity, as Derrick Chauvin’s conviction and sentencing temporarily quelled the racialized civil unrest that the killing sparked. Something was done – but only to quell the unrest, not to solve the

complex, heavily ramified problem of police killings. It no more addressed the source of America's race problems than killing Osama Bin Laden made America safe from terrorism.

Not just any victim will do as an object of human sacrifice. Victims must be, as Harding puts it, "in, but not of, the society." That is why, during the Black Death, mobs roamed about murdering Jews for "poisoning the wells." The entire Jewish population of Basel was burned alive, a scene repeated throughout Western Europe. Yet this was not mainly the result of preexisting virulent hatred of Jews waiting for an excuse to erupt; it was that victims were needed to release social tension, and hatred, an instrument of that release, coalesced opportunistically on the Jews. They qualified as victims because of their in-but-not-of status.

"Combatting hatred" is combatting a symptom.

Scapegoats needn't be guilty, but they must be marginal, outcasts, heretics, taboo-breakers, or infidels of one kind or another. If they are too alien, they will be unsuitable as transfer objects of in-group aggression. Neither can they be full members of society, lest cycles of vengeance ensue. If they are not already marginal, they must be made so. It was ritually important that Derrick Chauvin be cast as a racist and white supremacist; then his removal from society could serve symbolically as the removal of racism itself.

Just to be clear here, I am not saying Derrick Chauvin's conviction for George Floyd's murder was unjust. I am saying that justice was not the only thing carried out.

Representatives of Pollution

Aside from criminals, who today serves as the representative of Smith's "disorder," "social chaos," and "breakdown of values" that seem to be overtaking the world? For most of my life external enemies and a story-of-the-nation served to unify society: communism and the Soviet Union, Islamic terrorism, the mission to the moon, and the mythology of progress. Today the Soviet Union is long dead, terrorism has ceased to terrify, the moon is boring, and the mythology of progress is in terminal decline. Civil strife burns ever hotter, without the broad consensus necessary to transform it into unifying violence. For the right, it is Antifa, Black Lives Matter protesters, critical race theory academics, and undocumented immigrants that represent social chaos and the breakdown of values. For the left it is the Proud Boys, right wing militias, white supremacists, QAnon, the Capitol rioters, and the burgeoning new category of "domestic extremists." And finally, defying left-right categorization is a promising new scapegoat class, the heretics of our time: the anti-vaxxers. As a readily identifiable subpopulation, they are ideal candidates for scapegoating.

It matters little whether any of these pose a real threat to society. As with the subjects of criminal justice, their guilt is irrelevant to the project of restoring order through blood sacrifice (or expulsion from the community by incarceration or, in more tepid but possibly prefigurative form, through “canceling”). All that is necessary is that the dehumanized class arouse the blind indignation and rage necessary to incite a paroxysm of unifying violence. More relevant to current times, this primal mob energy can be harnessed toward fascistic political ends. Totalitarians right and left invoke it directly when they speak of purges, ethnic cleansing, racial purity, and traitors in our midst.

Sacrificial subjects carry an association of pollution or contagion; their removal thus cleanses society. I know people in the alternative health field who are considered so unclean that if I so much as mention their names in a Tweet or Facebook post, the post may be deleted. Deletion is a certainty if I link to an article or interview with them. The public’s ready acceptance of such blatant censorship cannot be explained solely in terms of its believing the pretext of “controlling misinformation.” Unconsciously, the public recognizes and conforms to the age-old program of investing a pariah subclass with the symbology of pollution.

This program is well underway toward the Covid-unvaxxed, who are being portrayed as walking cesspools of germs who might contaminate the Sanctified Brethren (the vaccinated). My wife perused an acupuncture Facebook page today (which one would expect to be skeptical of mainstream medicine) where someone asked, “What is the word that comes to mind to describe unvaccinated people?” The responses were things like “filth,” “assholes,” and “death-eaters.” This is precisely the dehumanization necessary to prepare a class of people for cleansing.

The science behind this portrayal is dubious. Contrary to the association of the unvaccinated with public danger, some experts contend that it is the vaccinated that are [more likely](#) to drive mutant variants through selection pressure. Just as antibiotics result in higher mutation rates and adaptive evolution in bacteria, leading to antibiotic resistance, so may vaccines push viruses to mutate. (Hence the prospect of endless “boosters” against endless new variants.) This phenomenon has been studied for decades, as [this article](#) in my favorite math & science website, Quanta, describes. The mutated variants evade the vaccine-induced antibodies, in contrast to the robust immunity that, according to some scientists, those who have already been sick with Covid have to all variants (See [this](#) and [this](#), more analysis [here](#), compare to Dr. Fauci’s [viewpoint](#).)

It is not my purpose here, however, to present a scientific case. My point is that those in the scientific and medical community who dissent from the demonization of the unvaxxed contend not only with opposing scientific views, but with ancient, powerful

psycho-social forces. They can debate the science all they want, but they are up against something much bigger. Rwandan scientists could just as well have debated the precepts of Hutu Power for all the good that would have done. Perhaps the Nazi example is more apposite here, since the Nazis did invoke science in their extermination campaigns. Then as now, science was a cloak for something more primal. The hurricane of sacrificial violence easily swept aside the minority of German scientists who contested the science of eugenics, and it wasn't because the dissidents were wrong.

We face a similar situation today. If the mainstream view on Covid vaccines is wrong, it will not be overthrown by science alone. The pro-vaccine camp has a powerful nonscientific ally in the collective id, expressed through various mechanisms of ostracism, shaming, and other social and economic pressure. It takes courage to defy a mob. Doctors and scientists who express anti-vaccine views risk losing funding, jobs, and licenses, just as ordinary citizens face censorship on social media. Even a non-polemic essay like this one will likely be censored, especially if I stain it with the pollution of the heretics by linking blacklisted websites or articles by the [disinformation dozen](#) anti-vaxxers. Here, let's try it for fun. [Greenmedinfo!](#) [Children's Health Defense!](#) [Mercola.com!](#) Ah. That felt a little like shouting swear words in public. You'd better not follow these links, lest you be tainted by their pollution (and your browsing history mark you as an infidel).

To prepare someone for removal as the repository of all that is evil, it helps to heap upon them every imaginable calumny. Thus we hear in mainstream publications that anti-vaxxers not only are killing people, but are [raging narcissists](#), [white supremacists](#), [vile](#), spreaders of [Russian disinformation](#), and tantamount to [domestic terrorists](#). These accusations are amplified by cherry-picking a few examples, choosing hysterical-looking photos of anti-vaxxers, and showcasing their most dubious arguments. If the authorities follow the playbook developed to counter other domestic "threats," we can also expect agents-provocateurs, entrapment schemes, government agents voicing violent positions to discredit the movement, and so forth – techniques developed in the infiltration of the civil rights, environmental, and anti-globalism movements.

Concerned friends have advised me to "distance myself" from members of the Disinformation Dozen whom I know, as if they carry some kind of contagion. Well, in a sense they do – the contagion of disrepute. It reminds me of Soviet times when mere association with a dissident could land one in the Gulag with them. It also reminds me of my school days, when it was social suicide to be friendly with the weird kid, whose weirdness would rub off on oneself. In grade school, this contagion was known as "cooties." (In my early teens *I* was the weird kid, and only very brave

teenagers would be friendly to me while anyone was watching.) Clearly, the basic social dynamic pervades society at many levels. A deeply ingrained gut instinct recognizes the danger of membership in a pariah subclass. To defend the pariahs or to fail to show sufficient enthusiasm in attacking them marks one with suspicion; the result is self-censorship and discretion, contributing all the more to the illusion of unanimity.

Hijacking Morality

The same kind of positive reinforcement cycle is what generates a mob. All it takes is a few loud people to incite it by declaring someone or something a target. A portion of the crowd goes along enthusiastically. The rest keep silent and conform in outward behavior even as they are troubled within; to each, it looks like he or she is the only one who disagrees. Writ large to the totalitarian state, the support of a majority of the population is unnecessary. The appearance of support will suffice.

The mechanisms that generate the illusion of unanimity operate within science, medicine, and journalism as well as among the general public. Some conform enthusiastically to the orthodoxy; others complain in whispers to sympathetic colleagues. Those who voice dissent publicly become radioactive. The consequences of their apostasy (excommunication from funding, ridicule in the media, shunning by colleagues who must “distance themselves,” etc.) serve to silence other potential dissidents, who prudently keep their views to themselves.

Notice that here I have not yet said what I personally think about vaccine safety, efficacy, or necessity (be patient); nonetheless, what I have said is enough for anyone to distance themselves from me to keep safe. If I’m not an anti-vaxxer myself, I certainly have their cooties.

Someone on an online forum that I co-host related an incident. His children had a play date scheduled at their friend’s house. A parent called him to ask if his family had been vaccinated. Politely, he said no, and his children were immediately disinvited.

*When the Star-Belly children went out to play ball,
Could a Plain Belly get in the game...? Not at all.
You only could play if your bellies had stars
And the Plain-Belly children had none upon thars.
– Dr. Seuss*

While this parent doubtless believed he was being scientific in canceling the invitation, I doubt science was really the reason. Even the most Covid-orthodox person understands that the non-symptomatic children of non-symptomatic parents pose negligible risk of infection; furthermore, since vaccine believers presumably trust that the vaccine provides protection, rationally speaking they have little to fear from the unvaccinated. The risk is vanishingly small, but the moral indignation is huge.

Many if not most people get the vaccine in an altruistic civic spirit, not because they personally fear getting Covid, but because they believe they are contributing to herd immunity and protecting others. By extension, those who refuse the vaccine are shirking their civic duty; hence the epithets “filth” and “assholes.” They become the identifiable representatives of social decay, ready for surgical removal from the body politic like cancer cells all conveniently located in the same tumor.

Social stability depends on people rewarding altruism and deterring antisocial behavior. These rewards and deterrents are encoded into morals and then into norms and taboos. Performing the rituals and avoiding the taboos of the tribe, and shaming and punishing those who do not, one rests serenely in the knowledge of being a good person. As an added benefit, one distinguishes oneself as part of the moral majority, a full member of society, and not part of the sacrificial minority. Our fear of nonconformity is born of ancient experience so deeply ingrained it has become an instinct. It is hard to distinguish it from morality.

The fear operating in the ostracism of the unvaxxed is mostly not fear of disease, though disease may be its proxy. The main fear, old as humanity, is of a social contagion. It is fear of association with the outcasts, coded as moral indignation.

In any society some people are especially zealous in enforcing group norms, values, rituals, and taboos. They may be controlling types, or they may simply care about the common good. They serve an important function when the norms and rituals are aligned with social and ecological health. But when corrupt forces hijack the norms through propaganda and the control of information, these good folks can become instruments of totalitarian control.



Those doing the scapegoating may honestly, even fervently, believe the narrative of “the unvaccinated endanger others.” Again, while I find the evidence to the contrary persuasive, I won’t try to build a case for it beyond the hints I’ve offered already. As the saying goes, you can’t reason someone out of a position they didn’t reason themselves into to begin with. Furthermore, most of the citations I would use would come from blacklisted sources, which, owing to their heresy, are unacceptable to those who trust official sources of information. If you trust the official sources, why, then you trust their exclusion of the heretical information. When official sources exclude all dissent, then all dissent becomes *a priori* invalid to those who trust them.

Consequently, much of the dissent migrates to dodgy right-wing websites without the resources to check facts and scrutinize sources. One would think, for example, that a highly credentialed scientist like Dr. Peter McCullough, a professor of medicine, author of hundreds of peer-reviewed articles, and president of the Cardio-Renal Society of America, would be able to find a hearing outside the right-wing media ecosystem. But no. He’s been sidelined to places like the right wing Catholic John-Henry Westen show. I wish I could find a link to this persuasive [interview](#) somewhere else, especially because there is actually nothing right-wing about McCullough’s views.

Tragically, the sites that host people like McCullough are quite often home to anti-immigrant and anti-LGBTQ articles that use the same tactics leveled at anti-vaxxers, tap into the same template of dehumanization and scapegoating, and lend themselves to the same fascistic ends.

Moving the Masses

For these reasons, I won’t try too hard to substantiate my belief that – and I may as well say it explicitly as a gesture of goodwill to the censors, who will thus have an

easier time deciding what to do with this article – the Covid vaccines are much more dangerous, less effective, and less necessary than we are told. They also seem not as dangerous, at least in the short term, as some fear. People are not dropping dead in the streets or turning into zombies; most of my vaccinated friends seem to be just fine. So it is hard to know. The science on the issue is so clouded by financial incentives and systemic bias that it is impossible to rely on it to light a way through the murk. The system of research and public health [suppresses](#) generic medicines and nutritional therapies that have been demonstrated to greatly reduce Covid symptoms and mortality, leaving vaccines as the only choice. It also fails to adequately investigate numerous plausible mechanisms for serious long-term harm. Of course, plausible does not mean certain: at this point no one knows, or indeed can know, what the long-term effects will be. My point, however, is not that the anti-vaxxers are right and being unjustly persecuted. It is that their persecution enacts a pattern that has little to do with whether they are right or wrong, innocent or guilty. The unreliability of the science underscores that point, and suggests that we take a hard look at the deadly social impulses that the science cloaks.

To say that official sources exclude *all* dissent overstates the case. In fact, peer-reviewed publications and highly credentialed medical doctors and scientists concur with much of what I've said. Admittedly, they are in the minority. But if they were right, we would not easily know it. The mechanisms for controlling *misinformation* work equally well to control *true* information that contradicts official sources.

The foregoing analysis is not meant to invalidate other explanations for Covid conformity: the influence of Big Pharma on research, the media, and government; reigning medical paradigms that see health as a matter of winning a war on germs; a general social climate of fear, obsession with safety, the phobia and denial of death; and, perhaps most importantly, the long disempowerment of individuals to manage their own health.

Nor is the foregoing analysis incompatible with the theory that Covid and the vaccination agenda is a totalitarian conspiracy to surveil, track, inject, and control every human being on earth. There can be little doubt that some kind of totalitarian program is well underway, but I have long believed it an emergent phenomenon agglomerating synchronicities to fulfill the hidden myth and ideology of Separation, and not a premeditated plot among human conspirators. Now I believe both are true; the latter subsidiary to the former, its avatar, its symptom, its expression. While not the deepest explanation for humanity's current travail, conspiracies and the secret machinations of power do operate, and I've come to accept that some things about our current historical moment are best explained in those terms.

Whether the totalitarian program is premeditated or opportunistic, deliberate or emergent, the question remains: How does a small elite move the great mass of humanity? They do it by aggravating and exploiting deep psycho-social patterns such as the Girardian. Fascists have always done that. We normally attribute pogroms and genocide to racist ideology, the classic example being antisemitic fascism. From the Girardian perspective it is more the other way around. The ideology is secondary: a creation and a tool of impending violent unanimity. It creates its necessary conditions. The same might be said of slavery. It was not that Europeans thought Africans were inferior and so thus enslaved them. It was that thinking them inferior was required *in order* to enslave them.

On an individual level too, who among us has not operated from unconscious shadow motivations, creating elaborate enabling justifications and *post facto* rationalizations of actions that harm others?

Why is fascism so commonly associated with genocide, when as a political philosophy it is about unity, nationalism, and the merger of corporate and state power? It is because it needs a unifying force powerful enough to sweep aside all resistance. The *us* of fascism requires a *them*. The civic-minded moral majority participates willingly, assured that it is for the greater good. Something must be done. The doubters go along too, for their own safety. No wonder today's authoritarian institutions know, as if instinctively, to whip up hysteria toward the newly minted class of deplorables, the anti-vaxxers and unvaccinated.

Fascism taps into, exploits, and institutionalizes a deeper instinct. The practice of creating dehumanized classes of people and then murdering them is older than history. It emerges again and again under all political systems. Our own is not exempt. The campaign against the unvaccinated, garbed in the white lab coat of Science, munitioned with biased data, and waving the pennant of altruism, channels a brutal, ancient impulse.

Does that mean that the unvaccinated will be rounded up in concentration camps and their leaders ritually murdered? No, they will be segregated from society in other ways. More importantly, the energies invoked by the scapegoating, dehumanizing, pollution-associating campaign can be applied to gain public acceptance of coercive policies, particularly policies that fit the narrative of removing pollution. Currently, a vaccine passport is required to visit certain countries. Imagine needing one to go shopping, drive a car, or exit your home. It would be easily enforceable anywhere that has implemented the "internet of things," in which everything from automobiles to door locks is under central control. The flimsiest pretext will suffice once the ancient template of sacrificial victim, the repository of pollution, has been established.

Rene Girard was, from what I've read of his work, something of a fundamentalist. I do not agree with him that *all* desire beyond mere appetite is mimetic or that *all* ritual originates in sacrificial violence, powerful though these lenses are. By the same token, I don't want to reduce our current acceleration toward techno-totalitarianism and a biosecurity state by just one psycho-social explanation, however deep. Yet it is important to recognize the Girardian pattern, so we know what we are dealing with, so that we can creatively expand our resistance beyond futile debate over the issues – and most importantly, so we can identify its operation within ourselves. Any movement that leverages contempt in its rhetoric fits the Girardian impulse. Elements of scapegoating such as dehumanization, rumor-mongering, stereotyping, punishment-as-justice, and mob mentality are alive within dissident communities as they are in the mainstream. Any who ride those powers to victory will create a new tyranny no better than the previous.

There is another way and a better future. I will describe it in Part 4 of this essay although the reader already knows what it is, by feel if not in words. This future reaches into the present and the past to show itself any time that vengeance gives way to forgiveness, enmity to reconciliation, blame to compassion, judgment to understanding, punishment to justice, rivalry to synergy, and suspicion to laughter. Transcendence is in the human being.

For links to reference, please visit <https://charleseisenstein.substack.com/p/mob-morality-and-the-unvaxxed>

Beyond Industrial Medicine

Let's say I'm addicted to prescription pain-killers. You are my concerned friend. "Charles," you say, "you've really got to get off this medication. It's ruining your health, and someday you're likely to OD."

"But I can't stop taking it. I'm in pain all the time. If I don't take it I can't function at all. I have terrible back pain, and my doctor says there is nothing I can do about it."

If you accept the premises of my response, you'll have little to say. If we both accept that there is no other way to reduce the pain, and that the cause of the pain is incurable, then I'm right, I have to keep taking the painkiller.

Now let's talk about glyphosate, the much-maligned herbicide that Monsanto markets as Roundup. Critics make compelling points about its effects on human and ecological health. Defenders rebut those points, at least to the satisfaction of regulators. The debate has raged now for decades. One point that Roundup's defenders make is this: "Look, Roundup is the most effective broad-spectrum herbicide we have. If we stop using it, crop yields would fall. We would have to use other, less effective herbicides that might be even more toxic to human beings and the environment. Roundup is the safest, most economical option available."

Here again, if we accept these premises, we are nine-tenths of the way to conceding the argument. By limiting the debate to Roundup itself, its relative harms and benefits, we implicitly accept as a given the entire system of agriculture of which Roundup is a part. If we take for granted an industrial system of monocrop agriculture, then Roundup's defenders may be correct. We need Roundup, or something like it, to run the current system. If we don't change it, then banning Roundup will just result in a switch to other herbicides: new chemicals or genetic technologies that will have their own dangerous side-effects.

Most critics of glyphosate are not motivated by the desire to replace it with another herbicide. Rather, glyphosate is a focal point for a critique of the entire system of industrial agriculture. If we had a system of small-scale, organic, regenerative, ecological, diversified, local agriculture, glyphosate would not be much of an issue, because it would hardly be necessary. As I amply document in my [Climate book](#), this form of agriculture can outperform industrial agriculture in terms of yield per unit of land (although it requires more labor—more gardeners, more small farmers).

So do we need to keep glyphosate or not? If we take the current system of agriculture for granted, then maybe yes. The conversation we need to be having is about the system itself. If we ignore that, then the glyphosate debate is a distraction. One might still oppose it on technical grounds, but the most powerful critique is not of the chemical itself, but of the system that requires it. The good folks at Monsanto probably take the system for granted, and cannot understand how their diligent efforts to make it work a little better are so misunderstood by environmentalists who cast them as villains.

The same pattern applies to what is called “mental health.” Thirteen years ago I wrote an essay, [Mutiny of the Soul](#), which described various mental conditions like depression and anxiety as forms of rebellion against an insane world. By calling those conditions illnesses and treating them with psychiatric medications, we suppress the rebellion and adjust the individual to fit society as it is.

If we accept society-as-it-is as right and good, then of course a maladjusted individual is a sick individual. If we also take as normal (or fail to see) conditions that make people unhappy, such as social isolation, unresolved trauma, the standard American diet, nature deficit, physical inactivity, or racial, economic, or other forms of oppression, then again we have little alternative but to adjust the individual. And if we exclude from consideration non-pharmacological forms of “adjustment,”¹ then we are left with drugs like SSRIs. Therefore, those who condemned the article and [its sequel](#) were perfectly correct within their frame of reference. “These drugs, while perhaps overused, are powerful and necessary interventions that have rescued many people from depression and allowed them to live normal lives.” Leaving aside studies in which these drugs fail to outperform placebo, if we hold all other variables constant, one could reasonably argue that they are a beneficial technology, just as glyphosate is in the context of industrial agriculture.²

In a similar vein, those who accept the basic goodness, rightness, or inalterability of the current system will see its critics as psychologically infirm. Quite a few people have, with the kindest of intentions and often quite gently, questioned me about whether my skepticism of vaccines and mainstream medical system merely plays out unresolved childhood wounds around authority. Am I rebelling against real injustice, or is medical authority a proxy for my father (who wouldn’t let me stay up past my bedtime to watch “All in the Family,” the old tyrant). I might be suffering from Oppositional Defiant Disorder. To those who accept medical authority as basically good and right, it seems reasonable that my suspicion of it must come from some kind of psychopathology.

The examples of glyphosate and SSRIs illustrate how perfectly decent people can participate in harm simply through their acceptance of the systems and realities that

immerse them. Malice is a poor explanation.³ This is one of the insights that launched my writing career. I spent fifteen years holding a single question in my mind: What is the origin of the wrongness? I found the aforementioned systems and realities to be products of ideologies so deeply woven into the fabric of civilization as to be nearly inseparable from it. Did some evil genius concoct the concept of the discrete, separate self marooned in an arbitrary universe of force, mass, atoms, and void? No, that mythology evolved organically, reaching its culmination in our time. It is in fact over-ripe, yet the fruit—the systems we inhabit and that inhabit us—has yet to fall from the tree. When it does it will split open and the seed of a new kind of civilization will grow.

Okay, Covid vaccines. We could argue about their relative harms and benefits, but again by thus narrowing the conversation we take for granted the system in which they naturally fit. Full disclosure: my personal opinion is that, even holding other variables constant, the risks and harms far outweigh the benefits. Last time I said that in an essay I got a lot of flak for not “documenting that claim,” even though I said it was an opinion and not a claim. I’m not going to claim it now either, nor try to document it, (1) because many of the sources I would use are unacceptable to most of the people who disagree with me, and I would have to unfold a complex discussion of systemic bias in the information environment; (2) because my opinion draws heavily from practitioners in my circles who are seeing damage first-hand, and I can’t cite them using publicly available documents; (3) most importantly, because right now I want to broaden the conversation to the system of industrial medicine, which bears close resemblance in many dimensions to the system of industrial agriculture. Also, since I’m not making false “claims,” the scrupulously logical social media censors won’t be able to take this essay down. Ha! Pwned!⁴

If we accept as a given the current state of public health along with reigning paradigms of modern medicine, then the case for vaccination is at least arguable, just as is the case for glyphosate in the context of industrial agriculture.⁵ We could debate about relative harms, study designs, suppression of information by corporate interests, unlabeled ingredients, underreporting to VAERS, and so on, but in engaging that particular debate, both sides implicitly agree *not* to talk about what lies outside its boundaries.

What lies outside the debate about vaccine safety? Effective natural and alternative treatments for Covid. Superiority of natural immunity to vaccine-induced immunity. The “terrain” of infection: why some people experience serious illness and death, and others do not. The positive role viruses, even pathogenic ones, play in health and evolution. The decline of virulence over time. The sociological implications of handing body sovereignty over to government authorities.

Basically, vaccines are a way to keep society-as-we-know it functioning as usual. The idea is, “Everybody get the jab and we can go back to normal.” It is much like psychiatric medications. Taking for granted a society that makes vast numbers of people miserable, maybe we need those drugs to keep them happy, or at least functioning. They can get back to normal—the life defined by society’s norms. Yet that life is what may have made them miserable to begin with. Similarly, what we have known as normal includes the conditions that result in needing (arguably, anyway) the jab in the first place.

Normal has been a society where autoimmunity, addiction, diabetes, obesity,⁶ and other chronic conditions are at epidemic levels. This epidemic is actually quite new. In the 1950s, the prevalence of diabetes in the United States was a tenth what it is today. Obesity was a third. Autoimmune diseases were medical rarities. As most Covid deaths are in people with diabetes and other chronic conditions, the whole context of vaccine policy includes conditions that are historically aberrant.

Normal has been the disempowerment of people to maintain their own health themselves and in community, making them dependent instead on experts to do things to them. The “patient” is passive, *patiently* enduring what the expert doctor does to her.

Normal has been a ubiquitous death phobia that worships at the altar of safety and would sacrifice anything for the promise of security, even at the cost of civil liberties, personal freedom, and community self-determination.

Normal has been the marginalization of holistic and natural healing modalities that offer effective treatments for Covid and most other conditions. Oops, that sentence will get this flagged as misinformation. Where’s the data, Charles? Well that is part of the problem. Society has not devoted the vast resources into researching and developing herbal, nutritional, vibrational, and other unorthodox therapies that it has into pharmaceutical ones. They don’t fit the funding system and they don’t fit the paradigm. So, evidence at the level of multiple large-scale double-blinded placebo-controlled trials is scarce. Moreover, since many alternative therapies depend on unique relationships between therapist and patient, individualized treatments, or active work by the person being healed, they are inherently unsuitable for standardized trials. Standardized trials that produce the aforementioned “data” require the control of variables. They are part of what I’ve been calling industrial medicine —”industrial” is all about standardization, control, quantification, and scale.

That is not to say that alternative and holistic treatments for Covid or any other disease lack evidence. [Far from it](#). But, to access their full power one must venture into realms beyond industrial paradigms and proofs.

I'd like to imagine, then, a different normal. It departs from industry's dream to remake the earth, life, and the human being in its image. It is the normality of the age of ecology, the age of relationship, the age of community, the age of reunion.

In that future, it is normal to see health as a matter of good relationships within the body and outside it. Society redeploys the hundreds of billions it spends on sick care toward understanding and restoring these relationships. Every conceivable holistic, herbal, homeopathic, nutritional, energetic, etc. therapy is pursued, tried, tested, improved, and if effective, made available.

In that future, it also becomes normal to take responsibility for our own health and to receive support in doing that (because personal willpower is not enough, we are social beings and need support). The support is economic, legal, and infrastructural.

I asked my wife Stella, an extremely effective healer, what she thinks healthcare could become. She said, "We recognize mind and body as a continuum. We don't see illness as a random misfortune. We know that resonant attention and the holding of space for emergent wholeness can heal, and that anyone can do this. We can return medicine to the people." I see Stella help people heal from real medical conditions nearly every day. Sometimes they are conditions doctors say are incurable. The power of these techniques (and so many others in the alternative world) is real, and they can be [taught](#), and a new normal could be built on them.

Yes, we can return medicine to the people. The power to heal ourselves and each other has, like so much of modern life, been professionalized, turned into yet another set of goods and services. We can reclaim that power. The future of medicine is not high-tech. Technology has its place (for example in emergency medicine), but it has usurped the place of other powers: the hand, the herb, the mind, the water, the soil, the sound, and the light. Can we imagine a healthcare system that fulfilled the promise of the medical alternatives that have touched millions of lives in the shadow of the conventional system? These alternatives should stop being alternative. Come on people, these actually work. They have gained momentum over the last half-century despite ridicule, marginalization, lack of funding, and persecution from mainstream institutions. They work. Let's take them seriously. We know how to be healthy. We remake society around that knowledge.

No authority during Covid has said, "People are sick, they need more time outdoors. People are sick, they need more touch. People are sick, they need healthy gut flora. People are sick, they need pure water. People are sick, they need less electromagnetic pollution. People are sick, they need less chemicals in food. People are sick, let's put diabetes warnings on soda pop. People are sick, let's encourage them to meditate and pray more. People are sick, let's get them in the garden. People are sick, let's make

our cities walkable. People are sick, let's clean the air. People are sick, let's provide free mold remediation on all dwellings. People are sick, let's promote education about local herbs. People are sick, let's make the best supplements and practices of the biohackers and health gurus available to all. People are sick, let's heal our agricultural soils." None of these are as hard as keeping every human being six feet apart from every other. So let's do these things. Let's remake society in their image with as much zeal as we remade society in the year of Covid.

Am I saying not to talk about vaccines and focus only the bigger picture? No. Vaccines, their dangers, their shortcomings, and the measures needed to coerce the unwilling are the visible tip of an iceberg, showing us starkly the system they represent. They are a window into a future of technological dependency where we put into our bodies whatever the authorities tell us to, and wonder why the promise of health, freedom, and a return to "normal" is always on the horizon but never here.

Another future beckons. It won't be handed to us by the same authorities and systems that rule today; we have to claim it. We claim it through the choices it offers. Which future does your next step lead toward? Toward more normalization of the world under control? Or toward the new normal I've described? The road has forked. It is time to choose.

1

Examples of non-pharmacological treatments for depression include psychedelic therapy, tai chi, Kundalini yoga, cold water immersion, red light therapy, pulsed electromagnetic field therapy, and many more. Wait, did I just give medical advice? Bad! I'm not suggesting any of these actually work. Nope. I'm just exercising my fingers. None of the above should be construed as medical advice. Please see your qualified medical practitioner before trying any of these. You are not qualified to do your own research. In fact, since life is increasingly medicalized, please don't do anything at all, even go outdoors, without permission of medical authority.

2

To be clear, I think that even in the narrow terms of risks and benefits, both glyphosate and SSRIs are better left unused. That is due to their side effects, which industry tends to cover up. In the case of SSRIs, these include all kinds of physical problems plus, quite possibly, murder and suicide. My point here is that there is an argument to be made for them that is at least worth having if we hold the system as unchangeable.

3

Certainly, ruthless, malicious, and psychopathic individuals are over-represented among the global power elite. They thrive in our current system, rise to the top, and

find ways to stay there. But their power depends on the deep stories I am describing here. They did not create those stories, but they feed them and feed off them.

4

People keep telling me I made a typo here. “Pwned” is actually a term from video game culture. I know that because I’m an avid gamer. Just kidding. I had and have teenage sons, which is why I’m so stylish and hip. That was a joke too. Also, I was joking that this will balk the censors. Some people thought I was serious.

5

The case for mandatory vaccines is far weaker as the narrative of an “epidemic of the unvaccinated” crumbles and evidence mounts that the vaccines do not prevent infection or transmission but only lessen symptoms.

6

When I mention obesity I often get accused of “fat shaming.” So let me say, obesity is not to be blamed on people’s weak willpower or dumb choices. It is a function of childhood trauma, social programming, toxic environments, a social infrastructure in which physical activity is separated off into the category of “exercise,” unmet needs that get displaced onto food, a food environment devoid of genuine nutrition, and many other factors. Sometimes overeating isn’t involved. When it is, fat shaming is actually counterproductive as a way to get someone, especially oneself, to lose weight. That’s because overeating (especially of sugar) can be a way to compensate for lack of unconditional love and acceptance. It is when we love ourselves and each other exactly as we are, that that stage can be completed and change can happen. I made a small online course called Dietary Transformation to explore and practically integrate these and related ideas.

For links to reference, please visit <https://charleseisenstein.substack.com/p/beyond-industrial-medicine>

September 2021, Laurent Mucchielli (sociologist, research director at the CNRS (French National Center for Scientific Research) in the Mediterranean Center for Sociology, Political Science and History department)

Coronavirus crisis: interview with toxicologist Jean-Paul Bourdineaud

In this interview, the toxicologist Jean-Paul Bourdineaud disputes the supposed toxicity of hydroxychloroquine and ivermectin, explains the reason for their ban, and develops the notion of scientific controversy; he highlights the role of conflicts of interest and the problem of risk assessment by regulatory agencies, which have resulted in the unique vaccine solution.

1) Hello Jean-Paul Bourdineaud, can you introduce yourself for my readers? What are your training, your profession and your area of scientific competence? Do you also have any conflicts of interest?

JP.B. - By training, I am a chemical engineer, I have a master's degree in organic chemistry, then I branched out into biology and I have a doctorate in molecular and cellular biology.

Before starting my academic career, I worked for three years as a research engineer in the perfume industry at Givaudan, a subsidiary of Roche. Now, I am a professor at the University of Bordeaux, where I teach microbiology, biochemistry and environmental toxicology. My area of expertise is that of microbiology, biochemistry and ecotoxicology. I am associate editor of the Journal of Toxicological Sciences and the International Journal of Molecular Sciences , section Molecular Role of Xenobiotics . My scientific work and that of my collaborators are referenced in the National Center for Biotechnology Information database and 85 articles appear, and for those who know the meaning of the quantitative criteria, my index “h” collected by the Web of Science is equal to 29 (index linked to the frequency with which our work is cited by other researchers, and therefore their influence). It is not a question of vanity on my part, but I am forced to have to stress it because my expertise in biochemical and microbiological sciences was called into question after the

publication of [my letter to Charlie Hebdo](#), and among others, by [Antonio Fischetti](#), the scientific referent of Charlie Hebdo. [...]

I would add that it is also the conscious citizen who speaks (since I have the necessary scientific knowledge), and that my remarks in no way commit the University of Bordeaux, nor even CRIIGEN (Comity of Research and Independent Information on GENetics), of which I am a member of the scientific council, because these entities want to be apolitical and neutral. However, intervening in the field of the imposition of the health pass and mass vaccination is an eminently political act since these measures are themselves above all political and not medical.

The goal of my research is to understand how organisms react to environmental contaminants, in terms of the molecular strategies used to adapt and remove the pollutants. My approach breaks with that of traditional toxicology, which focuses on acute exposure to high doses, close to the LD₅₀ (dose which causes 50% lethality), and therefore irrelevant from an environmental point of view. On the contrary, I focus on the doses which are those encountered in the environment and with which animal and human organisms are confronted. For example, I was able to demonstrate the harmful impact of metallic nanoparticles on several aquatic and terrestrial animal species at environmental doses. A main theme that has occupied me for several years has concerned mercury contamination by consumption of fish and the influence of the different chemical species of mercury on health.

Finally, to answer your last question, unlike many doctors who have been on television since the start of the coronavirus crisis, I have no conflict of interest, that is to say I am neither remunerated nor gratified in kind or in honor for any activity whatsoever (advice, expertise, research work) by private interests, and I am thinking in particular of pharmaceutical companies. I am, like you, a servant of the State and of the Republic, and I neither eat nor drink from several bowls.

2) Thank you. How did you come to be interested in treatments against Covid, in the anti-SARS-CoV-2 vaccination, in the health pass, and to make public your opinion on the subject?

JP.B. - You understood that I was working as a researcher in the field of environmental sciences. Many viral epidemics are linked to the destruction of the habitats of animals carrying emerging viruses, by deforestation, urbanization and industrialization that accompany human population growth and the compulsory quest in the capitalist system for economic growth, which in Western countries is linked to almost half the population increase, as demonstrated Picketty Thomas in his book [capital in the 20th century](#). Sonia Shah [pointed](#) the responsibility for the

environmental disaster and the dangers of factory farming in the occurrence of epidemics, some terrifying such as those of the West Nile virus and the Ebola virus.

But as an environmental toxicologist, beyond the destruction of natural habitats, it's environmental pollution that concerns me. And as my colleague Christian Vélot recalled [in your interview](#), the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus only deals the final coup de grace (Christian uses the word thrust) to people already largely reduced by their chronic pathologies. The problem of chronic diseases in our Western societies is crucial; the World Health Organization has echoed this on several occasions, and the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE) recalled in [its report](#) delivered on June 11, 2019 that 10.7 million people in France benefit from the "long-term ailments" system, and that the Health Insurance has 20 million people receiving care related to a chronic pathology. The CESE writes that "*changes in living and working habits and conditions, environmental pollution, play a major role in the appearance, development and aggravation of these diseases*".

Air pollution is the leading cause of death from environmental pollution and results in the premature death of millions of people every year. The European Environmental Agency (EEA), in its [report on air quality](#) published in October 2017, estimated the number of premature deaths (before age 65) caused by air pollution in Europe at 520,400 people for the year 2014. Air pollution results in the main chronic pathologies following: myocardial infarction (36%), stroke (36%), lung cancer (14%), chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (8%), and pediatric respiratory infections (6%). It will be noted that similarly to atmospheric pollutants, covid-19 in its severe form particularly affects respiratory and cardiac functions. People already sensitized by air pollutants with their attendant chronic diseases would therefore constitute vulnerable prey for the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus. WHO (World Health Organization), in its 2016 Air Pollution Report, estimates the number of deaths attributable to air pollution worldwide at 2.97 million in 2012 alone. It would be unreasonable to refuse to admit that these chronic pathologies of environmental origin do not weaken those who are afflicted by them after infection with SARS-CoV-2. *Air pollution therefore kills more European citizens prematurely each year than covid*, without this seeming to affect our health authorities.

I was therefore already attentive and mobilized when the controversy of hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) erupted in February 2020. To my amazement, HCQ was classified as a poisonous substance by the Director General of Health, Jérôme Salomon, on the 13th. January 2020, just at the start of the pandemic, when he was well aware that this drug had just been used successfully in China (see [here](#), [there](#) and here). Then, the courtier doctors and their media outlets declared it to be a violent, formidable cardiotoxic poison. At the same time, doctors paid for by Gilead company

were promoting Remdesivir, manufactured by this industrialist. However, as a toxicologist, I immediately understood that we were told stories ("*fake news*" in the jargon of Parisian journalists). Because it is precisely the opposite: Remdesivir is very toxic, from the outset in the doses necessary to obtain an antiviral effect, while HCQ has been used for decades on people themselves weakened by self-induced diseases immune systems such as lupus erythematosus and rheumatoid diseases. Moreover, the WHO has finally recognized the possibility of significant side effects of Remdesivir and has advised against its use in the treatment of covid (see [here](#)).

Then, the imposition of the sanitary pass arrived and what distressed and annoyed me was the media treatment reserved for opponents of the sanitary pass and in particular for refractory nursing staff. In the mainstream media, we have been vilified, pushed to the fringes of the far right, labeled anti-Semites, and irrational fools. Then, *Charlie Hebdo* sang the same refrain, with the satirical talent we know. I am a friend of *Charlie's* and a subscriber. You can't always be in agreement with your friends, but several virulent headlines and articles, and in reality lacking in discernment (it is a rule of caricature and satire that I readily recognize in *Charlie*), nudged me enough that I decided to write a letter to *Charlie*, presented with well-supported rational and even scientific arguments. This letter was sent to *Charlie* on July 29, who replied to me on August 2 through the pen of Marika Bret: "*Hello, thank you for your message, well-argued letter participating in the debate. Wishing you a beautiful summer...*" Then the CRIIGEN association - which aims to inform the public about biotechnologies and genetic engineering - and in which I am a member of the scientific council, decided to publish and host my letter to *Charlie* early August. CRIIGEN is naturally founded to inform the public about vaccines, because those validated and distributed in France are all derived from genetic engineering.

It was a surprise to me: my letter was noticed, read and appreciated by many (but not all). Collectives fighting against the health pass contacted me in mid-August, and in particular those of the "White Coats" and the "Free Citizens of the Pyrenees". The "White Coats" directed me to the director Magà Etori who was making a documentary film on struggling caregivers and on the theme of freedoms. I accepted his proposal to appear and testify, both in his film "Freedom", and in the live debate that followed the film's broadcast on September 5 [on YouTube](#) . And since the world is almost perfect, you contacted me and offered this interview.

3) You dispute the toxicity of HCQ and its supposed lack of efficacy against the treatment of covid. Very few of you publicly assume such a position among scientists. Don't you feel isolated and at fault as a scientist?

JP.B. - First of all, in scientific matters, the number does not make the weight. A single scientist can get the better of the multitude. Consensus in the scientific world is

only possible on what has been learned, and on what is incorporated into the large body of scientific knowledge. For example, we no longer argue that humans are mammals like primates: too much evidence is abundant, including in the minds of non-scientists. The water molecule is made up of two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom. Here too, the evidence, immediately inaccessible to the general public, is spectroscopic, biochemical, and in molecular biology laboratories, we carry out daily electrophoresis of proteins and nucleic acids where these molecules are separated by the imposition of an electric field: we observe the release of hydrogen at the cathode and oxygen at the anode with twice the production of gas bubbles at the cathode; it is indeed an electrolysis of water. It is always a delight to check it out and show it to the students. It is therefore the repeatability and banality of the observations made by a large number of people over a long period of time that allows scientific consensus.

On the other hand, dissensus prevails in the science in the making, that is to say that which is at work and in progress in research laboratories. Controversy is appropriate and even desirable when it is not polluted by the "conflicts of interest" of researchers, because the dispute makes it possible to generate new theories, which lead to the implementation of experiments, including the results that will in turn make it possible to modulate, influence and correct the theoretical model, a new model which in turn lends itself to a new cycle of hypotheses and experimentation. This is the positivist Comtienne approach developed in 1865 by Claude Bernard (*Introduction to the study of experimental medicine*) and implemented in his work on diabetes and the regulation of blood sugar through pancreatic secretion. Bruno Latour (*La science en action*, 1989) has explained this dialectic well, and he calls science in development science in action. I will give a few examples where a scientist, alone, can stand up against the entire community of his disciplinary field, and be served justice years later.

In his time (the mid-19th century), Ignatius Semmelweis was alone against all doctors from Vienna hospital in Austria, when he established the first principles and actions of asepsis. He was mocked, expelled from the hospital and interned in an insane asylum. The obstetrician that he was had reduced the puerperal mortality of parturients by 75 to 20%. The women were begging to be able to give birth in his ward. The troublemaker was declared nuts by his jealous colleagues. This story, true, is superbly told by Céline, in [a work](#) which constituted her thesis of general practitioner.

Likewise, Louis Pasteur was right against the Academies of Sciences and Medicine, not only concerning vaccination (the Pasteurian one), but also on the controversy of the spontaneous generation which had opposed him to Pouchet.

Another example: [Stanley Prusiner](#), finally recipient of the Nobel Prize for medicine, had to fight for fifteen years to make admit that the disease of scrapie in sheep, kuru striking the natives of Papua New Guinea, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, and what the journalists called the disease of the "mad cow", were all due to a non-living pathogen, devoid of genome - and therefore without virulence gene since without any gene -, which boiled down to being only a beast protein called prion, expressed in the brain, and which could adopt a pathological three-dimensional configuration (various etiology: genetic, spontaneous, or by consumption of meat from sick animals, or human brains in the case of kuru).

Finally, Oswald Avery, Colin MacLeod and Maclyn McCarty were right against the whole profession of biochemists and geneticists when they asserted in 1944 that the carrier of genetic information was DNA and not proteins. They had to [wait eight years](#) for their discovery to be accepted by the scientific community after the experience of Martha Chase and Alfred Hershey which showed that the bacteriophage T2 virus attaches to the surface of the E. coli, and injects its DNA into it, and that only the Viral DNA - not viral proteins - allows further viral multiplication in bacterial cells.

[...]

These different examples show that a single researcher or a team can hold the truth against the rest of the scientists or the academic institution. To be fair, the reverse is true: the multitude can be right over the minority in scientific matters. So what to conclude? **Simply that a scientific debate cannot be decided by the argument of numbers alone. Scientific truth cannot be voted on, it is true regardless of the number and quality of its opponents or supporters:** only experimental results, their repeatability, and the exercise of reason can cut the Gordian knot.

I don't pretend to compare myself to the titans of science that I just mentioned, but I wanted to become a scientist because I admired them. When I say that HCQ does not present toxicological dangers prohibiting it from being prescribed as a treatment against SARS-CoV-2, against a majority of courtly physicians, I am not wrong *a priori* for the sole reason of the many people claiming the opposite.

Colleagues tell me that my arguments presented in the letter to *Charlie* are admittedly admissible, but that I take the risk of discrediting the institution and the scientific community by contributing to a controversy that has been made public, and in particular by the fact that the anti-vaccine networks have seized upon my letter. First of all, I am not responsible for the use that the various activist networks can make of my letter, and I cannot prohibit anyone from the possibility of repeating the arguments I put forward (if they are not modified or truncated, or presented in a

fragmented way out of context, which would be dishonest). **Controversy, dispute and dissent are necessary to unravel the results of science in action, and I fail to see why this process should be hid and concealed from the public**, on the specious and rather contemptuous motive that our non-scientific contemporaries could not understand and would ask themselves questions about the relevance and the scope of scientific advice. At CRIIGEN, we believe rather that citizens should take hold of the major scientific and technological debates since technoscience and its achievements modify our existence and our societies, for good or for worse. The philosopher [Barbara Stiegler](#) agrees and writes “*that rather than being silent for fear of adding controversy to the confusion, the duty of academia is to make scientific discussion possible again and to publish it in the public space*”.

In addition, we have been hit with the wall. The need for great unpacking was imposed on us without the debate between scientists (not bribed by the industrialists) having taken place beforehand. Conversely, professors Christian Perronne and Didier Raoult were the victims of slander, death threats, and attempts to ban the practice of medicine by the National Order of Physicians. While this Order accuses Professor Raoult of charlatanism (more precisely, his departmental branch of Bouches-du-Rhône), the same Order did not oppose and did not issue any objection or protest against anti-Semitic laws excluding Jew doctors under Vichy government [*French government collaborating with the nazis during WWII*]. Thereby, who discredits Science, me or the Order with its accommodating media outlets, as well as the doctors in the pay of the pharmaceutical industry, the expert agencies (National Agency for Food Safety, the Environment and labor, ANSES; National Agency for the Safety of Medicines and Health Products, ANSM, formerly AFSSAPS; European Medicines Agency, EMA), benevolent towards industrialists and plagued by “conflicts of interest” (see [here](#) , [there](#) and [here](#)), or the scientists who publish fraudulent data as the [Lancet](#) and *New England Journal of Medicine* cases have revealed?

I note, moreover, that manufacturers are not left out when it comes to highlighting disagreements between scientists, and above all taking advantage of them by exploiting them. For example with regard to the risks associated with pesticides, endocrine disruptors, nanoparticles, GMO plants, mobile telephony, asbestos, and certain drugs. Faced with studies showing the toxicity for the environment and human health of these molecules and new technologies, manufacturers and their pressure groups harass parliamentarians, have lunch with influential journalists and press bosses, and highlight the work soothing from their scientists, so much so that they call for arbitration of the public. Expert agencies advising governments are smirking like this: “*but finally, if even the scientists do not agree among themselves, it is*

because the toxicological data are not sufficiently convincing; So let us have another 20 years of running our business". This strategy was fanned by an American scholar, Sheldon Krimsky, professor of urban and environmental policy at Tufts University, [who found](#) that 35% of the 789 articles he had scrutinized had at least one author with a financial interest in the field research area studied.

Finally, it should be remembered that **the essence of the scientific mind is to doubt.** Doubting one's own results, which we verify by ensuring their repeatability, and doubting the new technological marvels supposed to revolutionize our lives. Asking questions about these biotechnological vaccines in the trial phase does not consist in refusing the advance of science, but in exercising your critical mind and demanding a sufficient amount of certainty before being injected with a motley set of molecules with biological effects. On the other hand, the zealots of these vaccine biotechnologies have absolutely no doubts, they claim to be in the appropriate scientific approach, and overturn the accusation of scientific denial against those who precisely doubt, despite all the achievements of epistemology in heuristic matters. Let us leave the last word to the greatest of us, microbiologists and biochemists, Louis Pasteur (cited by [Latour](#)): *"In experimental sciences, it is always wrong not to doubt when the facts do not oblige the affirmation"*.

4) Let us return to the question relating to the toxicity of HCQ and more currently of ivermectin. What are your arguments for asserting that these substances do not present major dangers in therapeutic use?

JP.B. - Any drug is toxic, and the combination between the dose (or the blood concentration) and the duration of treatment will determine the occurrence of toxic events (the higher the dose and the duration of treatment, the greater the toxic risks) . It is therefore necessary to ensure that at effective doses and during the duration of treatment, the toxicity is as low as possible. Scientists against Didier Raoult [doctor who proposed a early treatment protocol based on hydroxychloroquine] put forward formidable toxicological data, those obtained with very high doses, irrelevant in terms of therapeutic dosages, and obviously fatal, but which must be acquired on animals (the so-called acute toxicity tests; the goal is to specify the lethal doses killing half of the workforce, LD₅₀, in 24 hours or 48 hours), which allows health agencies to specify the dose limits by dividing the LD₅₀ by 100 or 1000.

HCQ is used as an indication against malaria and against certain autoimmune diseases such as systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) and rheumatoid diseases. Before 2020, therefore before the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, most of the toxicological literature concerning HCQ mainly related to the risk of retinopathies in patients with autoimmune diseases, and only secondarily to its possible cardiotoxicity. This focus

on the heart and retina was motivated by the fact that patients with SLE are prone to retinopathy and cardiovascular disease, regardless of taking HCQ (see [here](#) and [there](#)). It was therefore necessary to verify whether taking HCQ in these patients would not be an aggravating factor. For the retina, and in patients suffering from SLE, and who therefore take HCQ daily, [a Spanish study](#) showed in 2019 that below a dose of 5 mg / kg / day, no toxic effect was observable, same for the retina and the macula. As for the heart, the HCQ plus azithromycin (AZI) combination tested on tens of thousands of people with autoimmune diseases did not trigger any known increase in cardiac arrhythmia. Then [a meta-analysis](#) (incorporating and synthesizing the results obtained from 46 randomized studies) concluded that the use of HCQ was safe, and that no significant increase in cardiovascular and ophthalmologic risk had been recorded. Also, in several hundred hospitalized patients with covid, the administration of HCQ [did not reveal any link](#) with the need for intubation or the fatal outcome, in relation to untreated patients, even though the authors of the study recognized that patients treated with HCQ were more severely affected.

In fact, it is SARS-CoV-2 itself that causes severe heart damage and arrhythmias, and this had been known since the onset of the coronary attack (see [here](#), [there](#), and here). Chinese doctors [very quickly alerted](#) to the fact that "*unlike other coronavirus infections, which mainly cause lung infections, this case of coronavirus infection was characterized by heart damage*". And therefore attempts at treatment with HCQ on patients in intensive care (not recommended by Prof. Raoult) have concluded that HCQ is cardiotoxic when it comes to the effects of the virus. And there, the media trumpeted the news of the cardiotoxicity of the HCQ without asking for trials by drawing lots ("randomized", say the journalists).

As for ivermectin, [it is used](#) as an antiparasitic (against scabies and intestinal worms). Regarding its safety of administration, [a meta-analysis of 452 studies](#) showed that up to a dose equal to 0.4 mg / kg, no adverse or toxic effects were observed. As a treatment in children against scabies and the intestinal worm causing trichocephalosis, it has been shown to be effective and safe (see [here](#) and [there](#)).

5) But if HCQ and Ivermectin are both effective and non-toxic at the indicated doses, why do you think they are ostracized so much?

JP.B. - The devaluation and the opprobrium cast on the HCQ started very early and at the highest level of the administration since the general direction of health classified it poisonous substance in January 2020, even before the first infectious outbreaks declared in France. Then the case of the bogus article of the *Lancet* will allow the Ministry of Health to ban this drug. The ban will be maintained even after the scientific fraud has been discovered, and while the WHO will have reversed its decision. But before the *Lancet* affair definitively killed the chances of the HCQ

(May 22, 2020), an almost burlesque episode that had already damaged the image of the HCQ: it is [the case of the clumsy aquarist](#) death after having preventively ingested a lethal quantity of chloroquine phosphate (March 23, 2020) which has absolutely nothing to do with the Raoultian therapeutic protocol. Minister Véran participated in the muddle and exploited the news item in [front of the national representation](#) he said: “*Cardiologists also alert me to the fact that hydroxychloroquine can cause heart problems. In the United States, today, a person who had used it for self-medication suffered a cardiac arrest which was fatal to him*”. The journalist who quotes Mr. Véran does not ask himself which cardiologists, and from which observational and clinical bases these mysterious cardiologists would speak. The Minister mixes brushes or meds since it is the chloroquine phosphate and not the HCQ which is involved in this case of poisoning. However, HCQ is used instead of other congeners of the family (chloroquine phosphate and chloroquine) precisely because it is clearly less toxic than the latter and is harmless at therapeutic doses.

The toxicity at very high doses of HCQ congeners was already known, so this isolated case did not add anything to their toxicology. And yet, the propaganda deployed was going to instrumentalize this news item and suggest that this information was new, shattering, and made it possible to return to a supposed safety of the therapeutic use of HCQ advanced by Professor Raoult since he was therefore established that a member of the HCQ family was fatal. Conclusion imposed by this propaganda: HCQ cannot constitute a reliable and safe drug. However, it was an accident caused by stupidity above all else.

Today we are being replayed this stupid scenario with ivermectin, and propaganda is unleashed in the United States claiming that it is a drug for veterinary use only and used in horses and cows (this veterinary overdose does exist but intended for these animals only), after [another simpleton](#), in Australia this time, poisoned himself with an equine formulation. The Food and Drugs Agency (FDA) is lying copiously by omission by obscuring the fact that ivermectin is used against scabies and certain intestinal worms in humans.

Professor Raoult rightly pointed out that paracetamol absorbed in excess was also fatal, and that nobody nevertheless came to the idea of banning it. Paracetamol (or acetaminophen) is a formidable hepatotoxic (see [here](#) and [there](#)). The death rate from [paracetamol poisoning](#) (number of deaths divided by the total number of suicides) is of the order of 0.2 to 2% depending on the country. For example, [in the United States, from 2000 to 2018](#) , there were 327,781 hospitalizations for suicides by analgesics and 1,745 deaths: paracetamol alone contributed 48% of these hospitalizations and 64.5% of these deaths. .

So what is the real problem? Well, quite simply, **it is a question of casting shame on any drug or therapeutic treatment not protected by a patent.** Plaquenil does not bring in much more since HCQ has fallen into the public domain; ditto for AZI and ivermectin. The pharmaceutical industry is eager to respond to each new disease or epidemic with a miracle drug or vaccine, patented and therefore remunerative for shareholders. In the anthrax case mailed to US senators and journalists in 2001, the US government responded to these bioterrorist threats - and after intense and hysterical media propaganda, causing public panic - by deciding to resort to storing tons of an antibiotic. While penicillin and doxycycline were effective in killing the bacillus, they had the weakness of being inexpensive, and it was Bayer's very expensive, patent-protected ciprofloxacin that was chosen; the Center for Disease Control (CDC) advised the federal government in this way. The French government followed suit and also ordered this antibiotic [at a considerable cost](#) . The foreclosure of drugs that are no longer protected by a patent, therefore involves shouting haro on generic drugs.

So what is the industrial strategy: instill doubt. So highlight all the studies which do not distinguish the beneficial effects of the generic drug, minimize those which show the opposite, by mobilizing all the stipendied professionals who will explain on the television sets and in the radios that the studies do not show statistically significant effect, and that many more studies are essential before making a decision. The same will denigrate observational studies to require those by lot; they speak of "randomized" trials and the Parisian journalists use this euphemistic formulation without explaining to the public that this involves drawing lots of patients and dividing them into two groups: those who receive the drug tested and those who receive a placebo, so salt or sugar water. It is of course immoral to proceed in this way with sick people who risk dying, and this is the reason why Didier Raoult and the doctors of the IHU of Marseille refused to practice this drawing of lots. They refused to carry out a scientific experiment on infected patients and chose to treat. They preferred an attitude full of humanism towards their fellows, even if it meant damaging their immense scientific prestige. Society and the nation should be grateful and admiring them.

Then, the same lieges and other paid henchmen in the industry will propagate a campaign to smear those who observe beneficial effects: they will be called charlatans, agitators, to be proud and contemptuous, of data falsifiers, breachers of ethics. This whole slanderous campaign is being carried out with the drum of the dominant media relays, all owned by millionaires whose one wonders if business lawyers have not judiciously stocked their clients' stock portfolios with Pfizer stock (if they didn't, they would lack competence).

This strategy has been known and denounced for a long time. So Dr Mayer Brezis [wrote](#): “ *The chemical, tobacco and food industries share similar tactics [to those of the pharmaceutical industries]: proclaim doubts about safety issues, buy researchers, infiltrate universities, administration, media and legislative agencies*”.

What applies to drugs also applies to toxic compounds produced and released into the environment by industrialists. In the first case, it will be a question of discrediting the effectiveness of generic drugs (by means of scientists in the pay of industrialists and pressure groups), and in the second of denying or minimizing the dangerousness of their chemical wonders. This strategy has been used extensively in the case of asbestos: toxicological knowledge of its carcinogenicity and of the etiology of mesothelioma in exposed workers has been acquired [since 1960](#). And yet, [thanks to the actions of pressure groups and lied scientists](#), it was not until 1997 that it was banned in France. Likewise, it took decades before tetraethyl lead (TL), used as an anti-knock agent in motor gasoline, was banned despite the demonstration of its toxicity to humans in 1965 by [Clair Patterson](#). There too, scientists in the pay of the industrialists produced false studies and some of them even filed a complaint against [Herbert Needleman](#), another researcher who contributed to knowledge about the toxicity of TL. He was also attacked by industrialists' lawyers for intellectual dishonesty, then disowned by the National Institutes of Health, and by his own University, that of Pittsburgh. Again, it was about [imposing a patented product](#) (the TL), which was in reality not very effective in terms of its anti-knock quality, against the use of a much more effective but inexpensive product that was ethanol.

The problem is economic, financial and therefore capitalist. The pharmaceutical industries are not intended to treat the sick but to enrich their shareholders; besides [the vaccines will only go to the richest](#) by virtue of patent protection and the associated unbearable costs for less fortunate countries (and the immoral side of the process does not shock any of our leaders and does not provoke any reaction allowing the regulation of patent law on medicines by amendments). Often times, their financial interests coincide with the health of the patients, otherwise too bad. **When the drug is too toxic, we first reap the benefits, and then for years we deny the toxicity of the product**, using the strategy that I have just described, that is to say inundating the medical literature with 'articles claiming that it was not possible to observe toxicity of the drug, using the network of stipendied scientists. And other scientists, installed in health agencies, will close their eyes as long as possible. [The tragedy of the Mediator](#) of Servier is exemplary: this deadly drug was only banned in 2009 by AFSSAPS - now renamed ANSM - while its toxicity, as well as that of the molecular family to which it belongs, has been well known since the late 1980s.

This poses two fundamental problems.

First, that of “conflicts of interest” in which many scientists and doctors are entangled, but also experts from food safety or drug agencies (who are recruited among the first). "Conflict of interest" is an expression imported from Anglo-Saxon countries and imposed by what is called there a "politically correct" attitude. In French, this is called corruption. Most astounding is that it is legal.

Then that of the financing of public research, which partly explains the problem of “conflicts of interest”. Indeed, the law of autonomy of the Universities, established in 2007 an increased impoverishment of universities and public research laboratories. The recurring credits that were allocated each year by the institutions to the teams have disappeared. We must now go through the National Research Agency (ANR), which meets at most 10% of requests. Concretely, researchers must respond to a call for tenders - it is indeed a competition and therefore a competition between French teams. They must write a copious scientific dossier, and plan the total budget for research not yet carried out and forecast (it takes two months because it is necessary to mobilize other teams around the project). The institution urges us to have an industrial or private partner. If the ANR does not accept their project, the only remaining solution for researchers is Europe (but it is even more selective), the regions (but for very specific, applied, and poorly funded projects), and finally “private actors”. As André Picot, toxicologist, said [in this book](#): "*For us, at the CNRS (National Center for Scientific Research), but also at the University, the situation has never been so catastrophic ... We have no more money and it is 'generalized prostitution'.*"

6) You mention the problem of risk assessment by agencies and that of “conflicts of interest” that would undermine these institutions. Could you give us some examples and specify in your opinion how to remedy them ?

JP.B. - The Merck Vioxx scandal is now forgotten. Vioxx was an anti-inflammatory drug believed to be a real miracle for patients with osteoarthritis. Authorized in 1999, it quickly became apparent that it caused cardiovascular accidents and an article was published relating its dangers in 2001 in the *Journal of The American Medical Association (JAMA)* by [the team of Dr. Eric Topol](#). The FDA is [did not move](#), and in France AFSSAPS even takes up Merck's soothing argument (the whole story is told [here](#)). Merck tried to buy the silence of Dr Topol who refused. In the years that followed, other publications implicated Vioxx and associated it with a dramatic increase in heart attacks in patients, but neither the EMA nor the AFSSAPS asked for the withdrawal of the drug. It was ultimately Merck who decided to withdraw it from the market despite the FDA's decision in favor of maintaining it, and to the chagrin of the French Minister of Health. AFSSAPS will declare, after the withdrawal of Vioxx

by Merck, to fully assume the decision not to have withdrawn this drug from the market.

In 2002, the Directorate General for Health referred the French Environmental Health Security Agency (AFSSE) to [the health risks of mobile telephony](#). A working group was created under the leadership of Bernard Veyret (University of Bordeaux), Denis Zmirou (AFSSE) and René de Sèze (INERIS, National Institute for the Industrial Environment and Risks). Curiously, undisputed specialists in this field are excluded, and who had published work on bioelectromagnetic disturbances (Pierre Aubineau, CNRS; Pierre Le Ruz, French radioprotection society; Roger Santini, National Institute of Applied Sciences). But the day before the submission of the report in April 2003 - which will clear mobile telephony of any harmful health effects - it is revealed that the three accomplices were in advertising contract with the Orange company, and that they had published an advertising brochure in which they were reassuring, even though they had started their mission. The report is even set back from the recommendations written by Denis Zmirou in 2001 to the Ministry of Health and imposing a distance greater than 100 meters from nurseries, schools and hospitals, for the installation of antennas. The same will dare to proclaim, with regard to the private funding of experts: *"This does not affect the integrity of the researchers: the contracts guarantee total independence of the studies during their conduct and interpretation"*.

How to remedy this deplorable situation of our health expertise agencies? In a recent article published in *Toxicological Research*, Christian Vélot, colleagues and myself advocated the creation of a High Expertise Authority made up of parliamentarians, representatives of major national research organizations, researchers recognized for their work in the scientific field, qualified lawyers (in labor, environmental and public health law), representatives of associations, and representatives of major unions. These personalities could be appointed by the appropriate parliamentary committees and the EESC (Economic, Environmental and Social Council), after responding to a public call. The elected officials would be subjected to an investigation aimed at ensuring that they are not hampered by "conflicts of interest", then their appointment finally validated by the Council of State (see [here](#)).

Finally, what the public must understand is that these agencies, the ANSM and the EMA, in the case of current biotechnological vaccines, **make their decision solely on the basis of the documents sent by the companies requesting authorization to marketing**. They do not carry out any scientific study or independent experimental evaluation. The companies asking for authorization therefore have all the cards in hand, and in the context of emergency situation and pressure exerted by the political race, only two weeks were enough for the English and American companies to be

validated. On the other hand, the European Union and France have clearly ruled out Valneva and its vaccine (Valneva is a biotechnology company specializing in vaccines and producing those against Japanese encephalitis and cholera; those for chikungunya and Lyme disease are in phase III trials). Political commentators continually lament that France, the country of Pasteur, is not more enthusiastic about the anti-covid vaccination. But biotechnological vaccines are not Pasteurian; on the other hand, this is the case with the Valneva vaccine which is based on a traditional but proven methodology in which the attenuated or killed virus is injected. In this case the immune response concerns all the proteins of the virus and not just one, and therefore the protection is superior. But in the country of Pasteur, a French company designing a Pasteurian vaccine was despised without any justification being put forward.

7) You criticize the imposition of the vaccine solution as the only possible response to the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus. But why would our leaders take such a direction if it was not the most judicious and beneficial for our people?

JP.B. - How to explain the fatal choice of vaccination as the only solution? How did we get here ? Quite simply, politicians are mainly driven by their desire for re-election, a powerful motivation for them, which we can understand. But their big problem lies in the fact that at Political Sciences School and ENA (Superior School of Administration), they have not been confronted with or learned to react to a pandemic of this kind. So they rely on the doctors, the medics in court at the government. However, many of these people are no longer in activity, they are retired and continue to benefit, thanks to their interpersonal skills, from missions, expertise and other tasks. This shift in governance by elected officials to that by doctors poses a huge problem because many of these doctors are in "conflict of interest", and this is a euphemism for, in fact, moral corruption, and serious ethical stigma. They are actually bribed by the industrialists. Some of the INSERM researchers and hospital practitioners likely to carry out research are in a "conflict of interest", ie they are in the pay of the pharmaceutical industry. However, it is from them that the government is seeking advice. Of course, after the failure of Remdesivir, a nephrotoxic finally banned by the WHO, the only solution they proposed was vaccination, and consequently it was necessary to eliminate any other treatment not protected by a patent, and therefore not very remunerative for the industrialists.

Among our rulers - we want to continue to believe that some are in good faith all the same - some imagine, because they are urged and persuaded by the courtier doctors (those of the so-called scientific council), that vaccination would be the Only solution. **As long as one wants to promote vaccination and ultimately make it almost compulsory, there must be no treatment available, because in the**

opposite event that a treatment is endowed with some degree of effectiveness, compulsory or very large-scale vaccination would no longer make sense and would be irrelevant. It was appropriate from the start to shout haro on the treatments and to kill in the bud any attempt to treat by chemical means. Therefore, HCQ and AZI were promoted to the rank of violent poisons, and as for ivermectin, it is assimilated to a medicinal product for veterinary use. Thus, everything is done so that there is no treatment likely to curb this disease. There remains therefore the single vaccine solution which is given to us. However, we will not get by by the only grace of vaccination since the Indian variant delta plays with the vaccine and makes collective immunity unattainable, turning it into a mythical concept. It will be necessary to combine both treatment and vaccination for the rare young but fragile people and especially the elderly since more than 80% of mortality concerns those over 70 years old.

The combined HCQ plus AZI treatment works, no offense to the media medics; Professor Christian Perronne has provided sufficient evidence drawn from the scientific literature in his latest work. Ivermectin is also effective against covid and has become the treatment recommended by medical authorities in several countries, for example in Peru and Brazil and in some states of Federal India. Numerous studies and meta-analyzes (see 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7 , 8 , 9 , 10 , 11 and 12), ignored (or silenced) by journalists, support its therapeutic relevance against covid.

Translated from French by Google Translate, and corrected by Nicolas Giroux.

For links to reference please visit <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/laurent-mucchielli/blog/300921/crise-coronavirale-entretien-1-avec-le-toxicologue-jean-paul-bourdineaud>