

Medical Ethics | Review

COVID-19 & Disaster Capitalism - Part III

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INTRODUCTION

In the first two parts of the series we examined a sinuous trail of evidence substantiating coordinated exploitation of the COVID-19 pandemic by disaster capitalists and the medical-industrial complex: imposition of punitive (though ineffective) containment measures like lockdowns and business closures that affected the economic and psychological well-being of tens of millions of Americans; active collusion with governmental oversight agencies; brazen manipulation of research data; misleading the public on the efficacy and safety of the mRNA vaccines; and a devious smear campaign levelled against legitimate voices of dissent. In the process the corporate sector raked in unprecedented revenues which were largely underwritten by public monies.

Beyond questions of fraud and corruption it has stimulated debate as to whether the government

overstepped its bounds and infringed on the rights of its citizens. Certainly, the active suppression of alternative perspectives regarding handling of the pandemic raises First Amendment questions. The pandemic response was a watershed moment in American democracy and should raise concerns as to whether it heralds the rise of a new form of totalitarianism.

In his 2022 work *The Psychology of Totalitarianism* Belgian psychologist Mattias Desmet examines the psychological impact of the pandemic on societies across the globe: the sudden emergence of an escalating fear-inducing crisis, entire cities shut down and quarantined, large swaths of the population placed on what amounted to house arrest, daily recitation by the media of surging caseloads and deaths, terrifying images of crowded hospitals and stacks of corpses, an army of fear mongering experts – public health, immunologists, physicians, economists, politicians – endlessly

chronicling the morbid developments to captive audiences, many of whom were in psychological distress [1].

Within a matter of weeks, a previously unimaginable Orwellian scenario had become reality: ‘Coercive control leads to fear and fear leads to more coercive control’, writes Desmet, ‘Just like that, society falls victim to a vicious circle that inevitably leads to totalitarianism. . .’.

While the transition to totalitarianism may seem abrupt and unexpected, the inciting event is invariably preceded by profound deterioration in the fabric of a society which may have been in play for years or decades, what American writer Rod Dreher, in his 2020 book *Live Not By Lies*, calls the ‘pre-totalitarian culture’ [2]. What is this? It is a culture in which traditional stabilizing influences like family, religion, class structure and communal ties, all sources of psychological meaning for individuals, have eroded and no longer provide a coherent and stable shared milieu. Pre-totalitarian cultures are already in the process of unraveling before any real or manufactured crisis appears.

Pre-totalitarian cultures are fragmented and atomized. Many in the population are alienated, lonely, and disconnected with others. They experience their lives as inconsequential and meaningless. Anxiety and depression are endemic. This is often accompanied by loss of faith (if not profound mistrust) in overarching social structures which are regarded as irremediably corrupt and self-serving.

Accompanying the dissolution of natural social hierarchies is a peculiar vulnerability in susceptible populations to manipulation by external influences, a willingness to believe what might be regarded as lies or propaganda, and to fall sway to ideologies that purport to explain or offer solutions not just to the perceived crisis but to their existential

void. Desmet likens this state of vulnerability to mass hypnosis. Did the orchestrated handling of the pandemic, both in the US and globally, tip the scales toward a totalitarian society?

The social dynamics of totalitarianism were first described in the early 1950s by cultural philosopher and historian Hannah Arendt in her hugely influential work *The Origins of Totalitarianism* [3] (Figure 1). If indeed totalitarianism made an appearance during the pandemic as some claim, it is quite distinct from that which took hold in Germany and the Soviet Union nearly a century ago. Dreher refers to this new version as ‘soft’ totalitarianism; others call it ‘velvet glove’ totalitarianism. We must decide for ourselves as to whether such claims have substance.



Figure 1: Political philosopher Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) circa early 1960s [4].

Whatever we choose to name it, the phenomenon falls closely in line with our earlier descriptions of so-called dominator hierarchies in which malefic actors, in this case, disaster capitalists and the medical industrial complex, use real or manufactured crises as an opportunity to seize control of the social and political machinery to manipulate events toward their own end.

In this variant form of totalitarianism, the dominant ideologies aren’t Nazism or Communism, which were bent on exterminating certain ‘undesirable’

segments of society but, instead, the ubiquitous and iconic cultural institutions of science and capitalism which have morphed into all-encompassing ideologies that seek total domination. Rather than appearing suddenly and unexpectedly out of the blue, the 'pre-totalitarian' ground was slowly tilled over a period of centuries until the social milieu was ripe for conquest. In this final part we examine the cultural and historical roots of our present dilemma.

MASS MOVEMENTS & IDEOLOGIES

Before examining the significance of the pandemic response in terms of its totalitarian features, we should briefly describe the nature of mass movements and ideologies which, as collective phenomena, are the means by which complex social systems undergo change and transform.

Mass movements are dynamic developments within organized human systems intended to enact change in existing states of affairs. Movements, currents of change within historically bounded social systems, may arise in any sphere of human activity – politics, religion, art, science – and center around any number of issues – human rights, gender equality, wage parity, environmental concerns, and many more. As Arendt points out, totalitarianism itself is a movement.

Movements usually emerge spontaneously and, according to Arendt, are based on collective mood or sentiment. This is to say they are psychological in origin. Movements, driven by shared desire, are manifestations of a collective will. Wherever mass movements take root there is consensus for change. Regardless of their purpose or merit, movements are intended to alter the status quo and, as such, tend to be disruptive and destabilizing forces within an organized sphere of human activity. As primal psychological forces, they inevitably persist until the collective urge is either satisfied or spontaneously dissipates.

Ideologies are central features of mass movements and represent the rationale behind shared psychological dispositions. Ideologies are formalized systems of belief, principles, motives, values, and ethics that inhere within movements and provide impetus and justification for meaningful collective action. Ideologies shape and guide broad patterns of human activity while giving identity and purpose to individuals within a movement. Without an overarching ideology collective action is disorganized, incoherent and little more than mob rule.

Ideologies are more likely to surface during periods of social stress and times of crisis when collective patterns of behavior have been disrupted and individuals forced to adapt to newly emergent conditions. Arendt claims that totalitarian leaders exploit this state of instability (i.e., crisis) to control the masses. During the pandemic the ever-shifting claims and predictions by those holding the reins of power served to maintain control and justify the pandemic agenda.

Unlike mass movements which attempt to correct or improve an existing state of affairs, totalitarianism seeks to demolish existing social structures, eliminate all competing perspectives, and dominate other ideologies. Totalitarianism, as the name implies, represents a totalizing force that acknowledges no middle ground. Imperialistic by nature, given liege it would conquer and reshape the entire world to its own ends. Over the centuries' dominator ideologies like science and capitalism acquired historical durability and became intimately entwined into the social fabric of various societies. The age of mass movements and ideologies began in Europe nearly 350 years ago.

The Enlightenment Era, also called the Age of Reason, was a 17th and 18th century intellectual movement intending to enact widespread social,

political and intellectual change across the European continent. Based on ideals such as liberty, freedom, and equality for all, encompassing a range of ideas centered around humanism, social progress, and pursuit of knowledge, the Enlightenment triggered profound social change in the centuries that followed. Political philosopher Thomas Hobbes argued for social contracts between the state and its citizens to guarantee rights and equality for all. English philosopher John Locke argued that advancement of human knowledge was the key to unlocking the future. The science movement had begun to penetrate Nature's hidden order and luminaries like Newton claimed that it would open that new world of knowledge and power.

Central to Enlightenment ideals is the notion of progress. Progressivism, as the word implies, is a dynamic open-ended movement based on a collective sense of faith and hope that the human condition, through social and politically enacted initiatives, can advance over time. It was laden with universal aspirations and a broad agenda. It would open the path from social barbarism and bondage to civility and freedom. Monarchies would tumble in the face of rule by law and equality among all. Advances in knowledge and innovation in science and technology would improve the lot of life and bring economic prosperity. In due course Progressivism became the dominant ideology and aspiration of western societies. Today, 350 years later, hope and unbounded faith in the future remain cornerstones of Progressive western culture.

Progressivism as both movement and ideology, however, implies a state of continuous change and endless expansion. As Arendt points out, expansionism plays a key role in the dynamics of totalitarianism. The term imperialism, coined to denote forceful expansion of a nation's boundaries, was borrowed from economists in the late 19th century and entails the notion of sustained and

unimpeded growth; in the political sphere it implies unlimited accumulation of power. Imperialism is central to capitalism.

Imperialism was born when corporate elites in capitalist societies came up against natural limits to economic growth. Unlimited growth necessitates unrestricted accumulation of power which, in turn, requires a conducive political climate in which legal and moral constraints have been eliminated. In capitalist economies this occurs by intrusion of corporate interests into the political realm and infringement upon the public good. Permanent expansion and unlimited power are the primary motivation behind disaster capitalism.

The purpose of an organized political structure is to advance and propagate stabilizing forces, i.e., laws, that stand opposed to incessant expansionary change. Besides established legal constraints, stability in societies, as Dreher points out, derives from shared social habits, customs, religion and primary organizing structures such as family and local community, i.e., 'tribe'. In order to achieve its ultimate aims, imperialism must eradicate such stabilizing forces which entails destruction of established communal bonds.

The Enlightenment movement flourished and, by the late 1700s, became actualized in real historical events: the American Revolution in 1776, representing the birth of the nation-state, combining two entities, the nation (or tribe), as a distinct lineage of peoples, and the state, as guarantor of individual rights, freedom and equality; the publication by Adam Smith in 1776 of *The Wealth of Nations*, the capitalist manifesto that served to justify its expansionary ambitions; James Watt's introduction in 1776 of the steam engine inaugurating the Machine Age and providing momentum for the Industrial Revolution; the discovery of oxygen by Lavoisier in 1782 establishing the Chemical Age and the triumph of

the experimental method as the means of securing knowledge in the natural world.

It is no coincidence that the term 'revolution' has been widely applied to all of these social developments. The political, industrial and scientific movements of the late 18th and early 19th centuries literally revolutionized and transformed every aspect of European and American life. No segment of society – rich, poor, intellectuals, artists, nobility, urban workers or rural peasantry – was left untouched. Upheaval upon upheaval forced reorganization of entire societies and, in the process, created whole new social classes.

By the spring of 1848 Europe was ablaze as liberal democratic revolutions sprang up across the continent. This widescale movement, known as the Springtime of the Peoples, sought to tear down monarchies and replace them with nation-states. The public demanded more participation in political decision-making along with abolition of serfdom and involuntary servitude. Most of the revolts, as mass psychological phenomena, were spontaneous and without central coordination. Primary inciting factors were disruption of traditional social patterns and growing disparities of wealth and power between the rich and poor.

The Industrial Revolution led to mass migration of peasants into crowded urban centers in search of work. Many of the migrants had been day laborers on lands owned by aristocrats or on communally shared lands that had been transferred into private hands. The Industrial Revolution, moreover, eroded traditional skilled occupations performed by artisans and tradesmen. The growing pool of unskilled laborers created a permanent underclass of working poor, i.e., the proletariat, that lived in squalid, disease-infested slums and became involuntary foot-soldiers for the capitalist revolution.

Living a hand-to-mouth existence in which much of their income was spent on food, often working 12-15 hours a day, the proletariat experienced permanent instability and were usually the first to feel the effects of economic downturns. As a result of harvest failures such as the potato famine in the late 1840s, food prices soared in combination with waning demand for manufactured goods leading to widespread unemployment and starvation. By the mid-19th century mass economic disruptions like recessions, depressions and inflation had become commonplace among industrialized European societies.

At the other end of the spectrum were what Arendt calls the elites, traditionally known as the aristocracy, who controlled large swaths of land and huge financial resources. As the Industrial Revolution progressed this traditional center of power and wealth gradually faded and became concentrated in the corporate sector giving rise to an entire social system defined by generation and accumulation of wealth. Capitalism, fundamentally acquisitive in nature, is based on the leveraging of existing capital to generate ever-increasing capital. Capitalist societies in turn rely on a continuous revenue stream.

Completing the modern industrial caste system is the middle class, i.e., the bourgeoisie, who, as Aristotle observed, as the richest of the poor and the poorest of the rich, combined the psychological attributes of the two opposing classes. With roots in the lower-class struggle, many bourgeoisies were politically active and shared a strong desire for liberal political reform. Other bourgeoisie, having savored the upper crust life, became committed to the ideal of upward mobility. Based on such divergent sympathies, capitalist societies have always flirted with the possibility of a permanent two-tier social system of haves and have-nots not to mention ongoing civil discord. Arendt claims the middle class plays a key role in the transition to totalitarianism.

Increasingly, the working poor, in league with sympathetic bourgeoisie, turned against the wealthy as social systems in Europe became starkly polarized. This gave rise to the mass movement and ideology known as socialism. In 1867 German writer Karl Marx published *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy (Das Kapital)*, a widely influential analysis of capitalism which argued that exploitation of the underclass and perpetual transfer of wealth to the rich were the sole basis of its existence. Fifty years later Marx's work formed the thematic underpinnings of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and rise of Communism, the first totalitarian system of the 20th century, in which dictators used the excesses of capitalism to justify mass extermination of the upper classes.

The nation-state was the first major casualty among Enlightenment ideals and Progressivism. In the post-World War I years massive dislocation of individuals across Europe gave rise to hordes of displaced peoples and refugees who had been excluded from the rights and freedom movement guaranteed by existing nation-states. The dilemma of stateless and rightless peoples continues to haunt societies across the globe. And in Germany, with the rise of Nazism with its 'enlarged tribal consciousness', minority groups like the Jews became excluded altogether from state guaranteed rights, interned in forced labor camps, and subjected to mass execution. For Arendt these developments signaled an end to the concept of universal human rights.

Totalitarianism, says Arendt, represents mass movements of rootless, alienated humans that emerge from the fragments of highly atomized societies. Loneliness and isolation among individuals are held in check only by family, local community, class membership, or in shared religious experiences. 'The danger', writes Arendt, 'is that a global, universally interrelated civilization may produce barbarians from its own midst by

forcing millions of people into conditions which, despite all appearances, are the conditions of savages'.

RISE OF US CORPORATISM

The Second Industrial Revolution, extending from about 1870 to the beginning of World War I, was a period of mass industrialization and implementation of technological advancements across Europe and the US. The US underwent rapid, unparalleled economic growth with dramatic increases in the standard of living driven by technological innovation. By the 1870s work performed by mechanical steam engines vastly outpaced that done by humans and animals; industrial productivity was at an all-time high resulting in availability of a wide range of commercial products at affordable prices.

The transportation infrastructure expanded at an unimaginable pace: by 1869 railroads connected the east and west coasts and soon crisscrossed the entire continent. This enabled the transport of agricultural and industrial products throughout the US. Urban areas were transformed by gas, water and electric lines as well as sewage systems. Transatlantic telegraph lines connected the US and Europe enabling rapid communication over great distances and contributing to the integration and coordination of mass commerce. But there were bumps along the road.

Technological progress produced seismic upheavals affecting production methods and patterns of human labor. Older factories and manufacturing processes became obsolete overnight and had to be phased out. Increased mechanization, while improving efficiency and productivity, led to elimination of many jobs which generally meant loss of skilled workers in favor of cheap, unskilled labor.

The continued flux of large populations into urban areas resulted in profusion of crowded slums teeming with urban poor. A generation earlier the Emancipation Proclamation had abolished slavery and yet by the closing decades of the century vast numbers of the underclass were held in economic slavery on blighted urban plantations. The divided legacy and insidious Faustian bargain of Progressivism had become too obvious to ignore.

On the heels of the Second Industrial Revolution came the capitalist revolution, what Mark Twain called the Gilded Age, that reshaped the American economy, transforming it from its agrarian roots into a modern industrial system. Along with the rise of a professional managerial class came

establishment of a financing system, a means to continually prime the pump, in which Wall Street became the hub for investment to ensure steady industrial expansion.

The capitalist revolution spawned immense wealth for a group of industrialists known as the Robber Barons who were able to seize opportunity and manipulate circumstances to their advantage. Among their notables included J. P. Morgan, financier and banker; Cornelius Vanderbilt, transportation mogul; Andrew Carnegie, steel magnate; John D. Rockefeller, founder of Standard Oil Company. The Robber Barons, individually and collectively, came to embody the unrivaled excesses of the era (Figure 2).

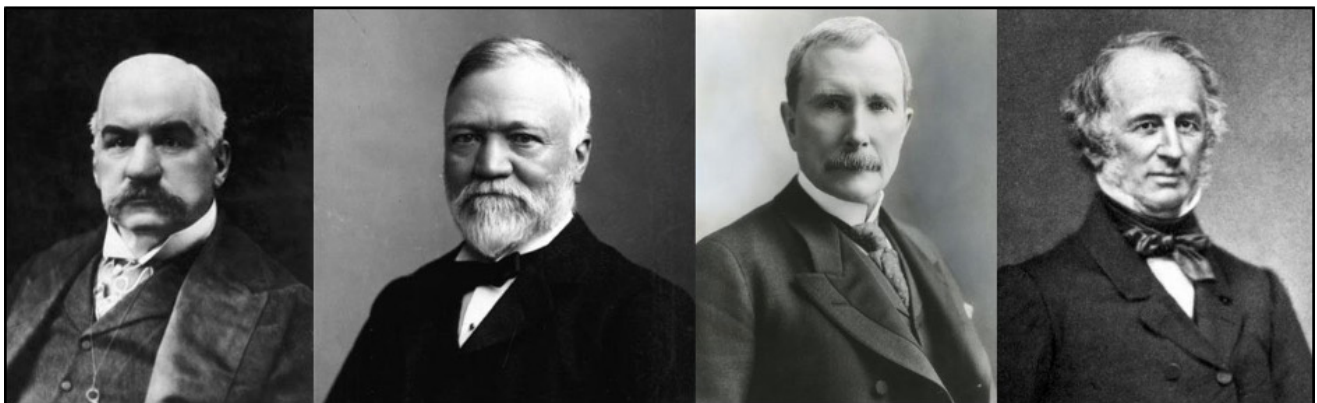


Figure 2: Gilded Age Robber Barons: J.P. Morgan, Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller & Cornelius Vanderbilt [5].

In addition to generating historically unprecedented wealth, the Robber Barons used predatory tactics to eliminate competition and gain monopolistic control of their industries; supported widescale corruption, bribery, and influence peddling within government; aggressively resisted governmental interference through political lobbying and support of pro-business politicians; maximized profits at the expense of workers whose wages were often barely above subsistence level. Their sprawling corporate empires and aggressive practices became a template for the modern corporation.

Corporate imperialism became more aggressive in the 1890s when an economic depression led industrialists to expand into foreign markets. By then the US had a modern naval fleet, courtesy of the capitalist shipyards, thereby advancing its power and might in the western hemisphere. Such strategies, in turn, began to change the relationship between corporations and government and, ultimately, crossed the line between influencing policy decisions and making policy decisions.

In his acclaimed 2006 work *Overthrow*, investigative journalist Stephen Kinzer chronicles the rise of

US imperialist aggression in the service of the corporate agenda [6]. In the 110 years between the 1893 overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy and the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the American government orchestrated 14 regime changes to depose leaders of foreign nations for ideological, economic and political reasons. No nation in modern history has made more hostile incursions into sovereign territories than the US.

Throughout the 20th century and into the beginning of the 21st century, the US repeatedly used military power and clandestine agencies to overthrow foreign governments that refused to safeguard American interests. It invariably cloaked its imperialist aggression in terms of national security or liberation of oppressed peoples, but the underlying intent was to establish, promote and defend the right of American corporations to operate anywhere in the world with impunity.

The incestuous marriage of politics and corporate interest was most apparent in the 1950s in John Foster Dulles, a lawyer who had spent decades working in the corporate sector before being appointed Secretary of State. Dulles organized the 1953 coup in Iran intended to pave the way for American oil interests in the Middle East. In 1954 he directed another coup in Guatemala to protect

the interests of United Fruit, which had been represented by his old law firm.

By mid-century American corporations had marshaled massive public and political support including the military and agencies like the CIA. A line of US presidents collaborated with them, presenting their views to the American people, and willingly applying leverage on foreign nations. The public generally supported these US led incursions that flagrantly advanced corporate interests and power.

The rise of Milton Friedman's Chicago School movement in the 1970s brought expansionist corporatism to new levels with its hawkish trifecta of unfettered free markets, downsizing of government, and deep cuts in social welfare programs. Friedman, the grand guru of exploitative economics, described by corporate-friendly politicians as 'an intellectual freedom fighter', honed his skills in the early 1970s with dictator Augusto Pinochet's violent overthrow of Chilean democracy. Extreme disaster capitalist makeovers were effected in Argentina in the late 1970s, China in the 1980s, Russia in the 1990s and the ultraviolent 'shock and awe' liberation of the Iraqi economy in 2003 (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Milton Friedman: architect of disaster capitalism [7].

Over three decades Friedman and his corporate stormtroopers carried out their ideological crusade, shredding apart the public domain of sovereign nations and delivering them into corporate hands. Wherever they went their revolutions created bubbles of extreme wealth catalyzed by massive transfers of public monies that inevitably widened the gap between the rich and poor. Presidents like Reagan and the Bushes completed the final transformation of the US political and economic system, creating a de facto corporatist state with a broad globalist agenda.

The rise of the US to an international superpower coincides with the emergence of multinational corporations, businesses based in one country whose revenues derive in large measure from overseas. The US global hegemony is based on thinly-veiled economic imperialism. In turn multinationals, as an emergent and decisive force in world affairs, have come to expect that the US will act on their behalf even if this means intervening in the affairs of other sovereign states.

A 2018 study found that large corporations now generate revenues far in excess of most governments: on a global basis 157 of top 200 economic entities by revenue are not countries but corporations. In 2017 top ten corporate revenues exceeded \$3 trillion. Corporations like Walmart, Apple, Toyota and Shell accrued more wealth than affluent countries like Sweden, Belgium or Russia. And the gap continues to widen [8].

‘The vast wealth and power of corporations is at the heart of so many of the world’s problems – like inequality and climate change’, claimed Nick Dearden, director of Global Justice Now, a social justice organization based in the UK. ‘The drive for short term profits today seems to trump basic human rights for millions of people on the planet. Yet there are very few ways that citizens can hold these corporations to account for their behavior.

Rather, through trade and investment deals, it is corporations which are able to demand that governments do their bidding’. As we saw during the pandemic, there was not even a pretense of seeking public consensus for policies enacted under the behest of the medical-industrial complex.

In *Shock Doctrine, The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, Naomi Klein puts it more bluntly: ‘certain ideologies are a danger to the public and need to be identified as such. These are closed, fundamentalist doctrines that cannot coexist with other belief systems; their followers deplore diversity and demand an absolute free hand to implement their perfect system. The world as it is must be erased to make way for their purist intervention’ [9].

THE SCIENCE DELUSION

After nearly four centuries of experimental medicine one would think there would be more dialogue concerning its shortcomings. In what is considered to be one of the great scientific achievements, William Harvey's 1628 discovery of the circulation of the blood, he introduced a grave error is his descriptions of the contraction and dilation of the heart which precluded scientists from understanding how blood moved through the arteries and veins. Only 350 years later did his error finally come to light.

There are innumerable instances in the annals of science in which interpretive errors were introduced or scientists failed to make proper adjudications of experimental results. This is an unavoidable consequence of experimental science. Research is never cut and dry. Once one moves past interpretation of experimental results into explaining their actual significance the problem gets even thornier.

In the mid-18th century Scottish philosopher David Hume advanced what some call the 'white

swan' allegory to highlight the limitations of the experimental method: suppose one sits at the edge of a river for an indefinite period of time and observes an indefinite number of white swans passing by. Based on this exercise can one conclude that all swans are white? The answer concerns the problem of making inferences and generalizations based on limited observation. It is impossible to know what lies outside one's temporal or spatial frame of reference.

Earlier, Aristotle brought up the related problem of foreknowledge: how can one speak of a circle or square unless one already knows what a circle or square is? Even when identification of new phenomena is observationally correct how can even the most astute observer know their true context and significance? These issues aren't just philosophical sleight of hand.

In his seminal work *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (1959), science philosopher Karl Popper explains the intractable epistemic problems that plague experimental science [10]. What we call a discovery is simply recognition of a fact or state of affairs in the natural world of which scientists had not previously been aware. Discoveries, based on correct observation and description of phenomena, are qualitatively little different than empiric statements such as 'the sky is blue' or 'it is raining', which are discoveries in their own rite. The crucial step involves moving from description to explanation.

The central part of generating scientific knowledge involves articulation of a theory, which begins with generation of a mental idea, a synthetic representation supposedly reached through 'induction', that illuminates a relationship between an empirical observation and some universal attribute. For much of the 20th century scientists sought to explain the emergence of such insight on the basis of a special 'logic of induction' but,

as Popper shows, no such logic exists. Scientific insight is no different than garden variety intuition that everyone possesses. From the onset scientists believed they had access to some arcane realm of knowledge inaccessible to the hoi polloi.

Theories, which generally concern cause and effect, are dependent on the nest of relationships in which observed phenomena reside, i.e., the context, which in turn presupposes knowledge of the whole. The corollary to Hume's white swan problem is that no scientific theory can ever be proven to be correct; all theories are tenuous. As Popper writes, there are many, 'presumably an infinite number', of logically possible theories that could explain a given fact: 'And the system we call empirical science is intended to represent only one world, the real world of our experience'.

Based on this inescapable fact, the inability of scientists to prove their theories, valid scientific knowledge is established on the basis of a circuitous and entirely counterintuitive path: falsification. Scientific knowledge advances not on the basis of verification but, instead, by falsification of existing theories, i.e., revealing them to be either erroneous or incomplete.

Thus, by its nature science, at any point in time, is incomplete and always in search of missing pieces to the puzzle that would tie its observations into a coherent conceptual framework. Like other totalizing ideologies, science is fundamentally unstable and always in evolution. Scientists exploit this instability to continue their domination of the intellectual realm: 'more research is needed to resolve this question'. The moment knowledge is unified and people come to a shared understanding of natural phenomena, science as a movement will cease to exist.

Science historian Thomas Kuhn, in his groundbreaking work *The Structure of Scientific*

Revolutions (1962), also recognized this inherent instability [11]. Science is generally regarded as a linear and progressive accumulation of knowledge but quite the opposite is true. Kuhn shows science to be a series of conceptual boom-and-bust cycles with a successive rise and fall of 'paradigms' or theories that, as more evidence surfaces, inevitably lose their ability to coherently explain phenomena or predict experimental outcomes.

Eventually as a critical number of flaws and errors accumulate science enters a period of crisis in which new explanations must be sought leading, eventually, to the collapse of the reigning paradigm and formulation of new principles and practices. Given the lack of major conceptual breakthroughs in recent decades many observers believe science is currently in the midst of a paradigm crisis. The handling of the pandemic by the science community did little to assuage this concern.

For Popper such paradigmatic crises as well as new discoveries are opportunities to falsify existing theories and open up new vistas into a more complete scientific understanding of natural phenomena. 'And we shall hail it', writes Popper, 'even if these new experiences should furnish us with new arguments against our own most recent theories'. The pandemic provided scientists with numerous opportunities to falsify and refresh their stale molecular and cellular theories. One example: Dating back to the 1890s immunologists were sharply divided over the primary mechanisms by which the immune system functions. Scientists in Paris, touting the research of Elie Metchnikoff, argued in favor of cellular mechanisms such as phagocytosis while a German faction under Paul Ehrlich argued in favor of the antibody response. By 1910 scientific consensus had shifted toward antibody theory which remained the accepted explanation for the rest of the 20th century. The pandemic effectively resolved the question.

Throughout the pandemic the immune response was measured quantitatively by antibody levels as if they were the defining feature. Research found that people with more severe disease tended to have higher antibody levels and younger, healthier people tended to have lower levels. It was discovered that significant numbers of people with documented COVID-19 infection went on to recover and yet never developed an antibody response. Known as 'non-seroconversion', it tells us that the immune response is organized around cellular functions like phagocytosis and autophagy; the antibody response constitutes only a secondary form of protection. This explains why the mRNA vaccines, which simply trigger an antibody response, confer short-term protection but do not induce immunity.

As Kuhn points out, the majority of practitioners do not recognize the inherent fragility of scientific knowledge. Instead, they regard it as ironclad and a final word on all matters. This constitutes a collectively shared delusion. Ultimately such delusions assert a role in the emergence of mass movements. As Arendt notes, masses of isolated, alienated individuals seek to escape their emptiness and form a connection with something meaningful beyond themselves. They long to be part of a movement that affirms to them that life has purpose and that they are on the right side of history.

The ideal subject for totalitarian domination, Arendt notes, is not the dyed-in-the-wool Nazi or Communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction, truth and falsehood, no longer exists. They long for a comprehensible and predictable world that is in alignment with their beliefs and sentiments. Science, with its fanatical belief in progress and unlimited power over nature, is the perfect ideological antidote for such individuals.

How else does one explain the unbridgeable chasm in public opinion over the vaccines? No matter how much evidence surfaces regarding their ineffectiveness and potential danger, the masses, as if in a trance-like state, refuse to acknowledge it. Ideological movements, as Arendt claims, are driven by collective belief and conviction.

ROCKEFELLER'S ARMY

In the US, scientific medicine came of age in the same period as the rise of the corporation and the emergence of the modern capitalist economy. By the early 20th century wealthy industrialists like Rockefeller and Carnegie had turned their sights to forging American society into a capitalist utopia. Large philanthropic foundations were endowed with limitless resources to implement the makeover. As corporatism flourished it affected every social institution but none more than medicine.

Modern medicine isn't simply the result of merging experimental science with medical practice: powerful social and economic interests were in play. The corporate class designed a blueprint for a healthcare system that fell in line with their capitalist project. 'They believed their goals for medicine would benefit society as a whole', writes E. Richard Brown in *Rockefeller Medicine Men: Medicine and Capitalism in America* (1979), 'just as they believed that the private accumulation of wealth and private decisions about how to use that wealth were in the best interests of society' [12]. This movement was the forerunner of Friedman's radical fundamentalist ideology that, decades later, would culminate in the egregious disaster capitalism of the pandemic.

The turn-of-the-century molecular and cellular theories regarding the causes and treatments of disease fit hand-in-glove with the interests of industrial capitalists. Scientific medicine was

enthusiastically embraced by the corporate sector and soon became an ideological weapon to showcase the capitalist vision of modern American society. Moreover, as Brown notes, they sought to exonerate the vast inequities spawned by 19th century corporatism and the reckless practices that had adversely affected the lives of so many working-class Americans.

The transformation was largely influenced by the American Medical Association, the foundations of Carnegie and Rockefeller, and by a widely influential critique of American medicine known as the Flexner Report. Abraham Flexner had been commissioned by the Carnegie Foundation to assess the state of medical education in the US. Not surprisingly his criticisms and suggestions for reform coincided with the new capitalist vision.

Flexner emphasized the changing role of medicine in society, from 'individual and curative' to 'social and preventive', and the need to cultivate physicians who reflect the interests of the new social order. Flexner zeroed in on his alma mater Johns Hopkins, 'a small but ideal medical school embodying in a novel way, adapted to American conditions, the best features of medical education of England, France, and Germany'.

During the 19th century in both Europe and the US the practice of medicine had been pluralistic, populated by competing medical sects that espoused entirely different views on the nature of health and healing. Around the turn of the 20th century, for example, there were about 30 homeopathic medical schools in the US. In rural areas a form of herbal medicine that would later evolve into naturopathy was also popular. In the late decades of the 19th century osteopathic and chiropractic forms of medicine had emerged. Physicians, moreover, were poorly compensated and had no special social status. All of this would change dramatically after the Flexner Report.

The report led to a flood of funding for universities in support of the new medical paradigm and, predictably, exclusion of all other healing traditions. By the late 1930s, for example, all US homeopathic medical schools had shut down. 'Medicine' came to mean the field of clinical practice guided by experimental research. And the practice of medicine was firmly in the hands of an organized professional elite whose wealth and social status climbed on a decade by decade basis. Parallel to this was the rise of a sprawling research complex focused mainly around cellular and molecular biology. Physicians, in turn, functioned as points of service in the rapidly expanding medical-industrial complex.

In following decades, a vast and sovereign industry, almost too complex to imagine, sprang up around the new medicine. Universities became centers of research, receiving generous public funding, and, over time, cultivating ever closer ties with the private pharmaceutical and technological sectors. Health insurance programs were developed allowing public access to the new medicine. Hospitals, originally descended from 19th-century almshouses, gradually consolidated a dizzying array of service offerings and morphed into increasingly large health care systems with staggering revenues.

In the early decades of the 20th century healthcare comprised a small fraction of the US gross domestic product, around 2.0-2.5%. In his acclaimed work *The Social Transformation of American Medicine* (1982), Paul Starr described it as a 'cottage industry' [13]. Based on its expansionary roots, however, over the 20th century US healthcare costs continued to spiral at a dizzying pace; by 2020 it comprised 19.7% of the GDP. Everyone came to the table with their palms facing the sun. US healthcare became an endless feeding frenzy.

Early 20th century medical scientists brimmed with confidence. Some, like English physiologist

Ernest Starling, predicted that science would gain complete control over the human body and bring about complete eradication of disease. A series of fortuitous early discoveries led to dramatic changes in the treatment of a handful of common ailments: the isolation of adrenal compounds provided temporary relief of asthma symptoms; the discovery of insulin in the early 1920s radically changed treatment of diabetes; the discovery of sulfa drugs and penicillin in the 1930s revolutionized infectious disease therapy. All of this, widely reported in the media, was eagerly taken in by a fawning public that came to regard the new science as a beacon of hope for the alleviation of human suffering and disease.

But alongside these breakthroughs was an uninterrupted chain of drug disasters that continue into the present: around the turn of the 20th century veratrum alkaloid compounds, introduced as 'cardiac sedatives', produced a rash of cardiac deaths. Similarly, anti-inflammatory substances like antipyrine and antifebrin destabilized cardiac function. In the 1930s the antibiotic sulfanilamide produced a mass-poisoning event causing hundreds of deaths. In the 1940s through 1970s diethyl stilbesterol produced thousands of vaginal cancers in young women. The sedative compound thalidomide in the 1950s caused up to 10,000 birth defects.

In the 1960s isoproterenol caused thousands of sudden asthma-related deaths around the world. From the 1970s through the 1990s the anti-obesity drug fenfluramine induced thousands of cases of aortic valve disease and pulmonary hypertension. In the 1990s the anti-inflammatory agent Vioxx produced up to 90,000 heart attacks and strokes with an estimated 33,000 deaths. From the 1890s, when opium was widely prescribed, through the current oxycodone crisis, multiple addiction-producing substances have been unleashed on the public by pharmaceutical firms and unwitting

physicians. The recent pandemic disaster is only the tip of the iceberg.

By 1970, ten years after receiving the Nobel Prize, Macfarlane Burnet, eminent 20th century immunologist, had soured on experimental medicine. In *Genes, Dreams and Realities* he argued that the contribution of laboratory science in unlocking the problem of disease had come to an end and that further research would amount to little more than a filling in of details. Most of the important breakthroughs in 20th century medicine, he noted, were not based on experiment but, rather, on observation [14].

Burnet claimed that ‘too much sensational material was being written about the future significance of discoveries in molecular biology’. He pointed to the increasing burden of chronic disease and lack of meaningful change in their outcomes in the previous 3-4 decades. Modern science, he wrote, ‘is by no means the triumphal march toward perpetual health and well-being’ as popular accounts would suggest. And far from stunning breakthroughs he warned that molecular science ‘might release some new and nasty problems on a world that already has more than it can cope with’. Burnet's comments were prophetic.

By the 1980s researchers began observing striking increases in chronic diseases like asthma, allergies, autoimmune conditions, obesity, and diabetes throughout Western societies. In the late 1980s endocrinologist Gerald Reaven described the ‘metabolic syndrome’ which has continued to evolve and spread rapidly across the globe. There are no known cures. And it is associated with a rash of organ failure syndromes that have equally multiplied.

In the late 1990s the World Health Organization declared a global epidemic of chronic heart failure, now a major reason for hospitalization.

The leading causes are hypertension, diabetes, and coronary artery disease, three conditions that medical science had supposedly been treating successfully in previous decades. And in the early 2000s a global epidemic of chronic kidney disease was belatedly recognized. It is estimated that 11-14% of American adults are somewhere in the spectrum of early-to-late kidney disease. Numbers are expected to rise in coming decades. Presently there are no effective treatments. And a recently recognized form of combined organ failure, the cardiorenal syndrome, is escalating rapidly. Since the turn of the millennium there has been an explosion of chronic nonalcoholic fatty liver disease which has now become a leading reason for liver transplantation.

Equally disturbing is a 2016 meta-analysis reported by Makary & Daniel in *BMJ* finding that medical error in hospitals accounts for about 252,000 deaths per year in the US, making it the third leading cause of death behind heart disease and cancer [15]. A 1998 study by Lazarou et al. reported in *JAMA* pegged the burden of drug-related adverse events in hospitals alone to be in the 100,000-140,000 per year range [16]. Other causes include in-hospital infections and procedure related complications. One is hard-pressed to pronounce 20th century experimental medicine a resounding success. Quite the opposite. It has always been a nerve-tingling dance on the high-wire.

CONTROLLING THE MASSES

In early 1775, crowds swarmed to the small German town of Ellwangen to witness Father Johann Gassner, the most acclaimed healer of the time, exorcise and cure sick patients. A wide swath of the populace – rich, poor, aristocrat, peasant – traveled from near and far to witness what they regarded as miraculous. With the subject kneeling before him, Gassner, donned in ceremonial vestments, ordered the demon believed to inhabit the sick person to

make an appearance. If the subject's symptoms manifested, he took it as a sign of possession and ordered the demon to depart the person's body. Astonishing cures took place.

These events, described by psychiatrist Henri Ellenberger in his masterful tome *The Discovery of the Unconscious* (1970), coincide temporally with the rise of the nation state, capitalism, industrialism, and experimental science [17]. In the phenomenon of hypnosis, we observe the intersection between subjective belief states and susceptibility of individuals to suggestion and external manipulation. And as this dynamic play out in large crowds' amplification of effects results in mass phenomena. No description of totalitarianism is complete without examining this crucial psychological underpinning.

Hypnotism, induction of a trance-like state of unusual lucidity and focused concentration, has been a part of religious practices for millennia. In this altered state subjects are able to converse, interact and, often, relate information of which they had no previous conscious knowledge. Called 'animal magnetism' by early hypnotist Franz Mesmer and 'hypnotism' or 'nervous sleep' by James Braid, it was believed to represent a hybrid state of awareness somewhere in the spectrum between sleep and wakefulness. Some likened it to somnambulism. More recently it has been compared to REM sleep.

The similarities between hypnosis and the psychologizing effects of totalitarian dogma are striking. In both instances individuals enter a state of suspended judgment and become susceptible to outside influencers. The hypnotized person becomes unduly receptive to the suggestions of the hypnotist and, typically, responds in a programmed, semi-automatic fashion. Subjects exhibit a kind of tunnel vision in which they lose sense of context and become impervious to their

outer environment except to those aspects pointed out by the hypnotizer. And afterward they display situational amnesia with no conscious memory of the event. The hypnotic trance becomes a totalizing experience.

Induction of the hypnotic state appears to depend on some kind of rapport between the subject and the hypnotizer. Hypnotists like Mesmer relied on charisma or force of personality to induce a suggestive state in susceptible individuals. But any number of external objects can be used to produce this trance-like condition and some suggest the effect involves triggering a sense of awe or fascination.

In the mid-19th century Scottish physician James Braid, a prolific early researcher of hypnosis, claimed that while numerous forms of induction may be effective, the critical element involves intense concentration on a mental image, idea, or train of ideas which, in turn, renders the subject 'indifferently conscious' to surrounding events. Braid coined the term 'ideo-dynamic' to denote the power of a 'dominant idea' to explain the psycho-physiological effects of hypnosis.

Ideologies, as conceptual systems that organize human thought and activity, would seem to be a perfect medium through which to induce the 'nervous sleep'. During the pandemic many scientists, physicians and members of the public were lulled into a dogmatic slumber by the suggestive power of scientific authority. In addition to the effect of hypnotic suggestion on susceptible individuals, we should also consider the influence of the masses.

In an influential late-19th century work, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (1896), French social psychologist Gustave Le Bon explores the nuances of crowd psychology [18]. The modern age, he writes, has engendered profound shifts in collective

thought and radically transformed traditional modes of life. One of the defining aspects is the rise of mass movements and the power of the crowd. Modern civilization has entered the 'era of crowds' in which the divine right of kings has been superseded by that of the masses. The destiny of nations now lies in the hearts and minds of the collective. The consequences of this profound social metamorphosis have become fully manifest in our present epoch.

Le Bon uses the term 'crowd' not simply to designate a gathering of individuals but to indicate a group that has been united by a powerful idea and compelled to action. The sentiments and ideas of all persons in the crowd become aligned by the same force and they act as 'a single being composing a state of mental unity'. The transformation of individuals into a crowd induces them feel, think, and act in a manner quite distinct from that of an isolated individual. 'An individual in a crowd is a grain of sand amid other grains of sand, which the wind stirs up at will'. In a crowd each sentiment and act becomes contagious as individuals relinquish their autonomy to the collective impulse.

Observation confirms, Le Bon writes, that individuals immersed in a crowd soon find themselves, either due to its 'magnetic influence' or some other factor, in an altered state similar to that of hypnotized individuals in the hands of a hypnotizer. Their reasoning capacity paralyzed, the individual comes under the sway of the unconscious aspect of the mind which is directed by the hypnotizer according to whim.

Under the power of suggestion an individual engages in directed actions which, in the crowd, become reinforced and amplified. In a crowd, says Le Bon, individuals descend 'several rungs on the ladder of civilization'. An individual apart from the masses may be cultured and refined but, in the crowd, becomes subject to instinct and impulse.

Manifest behaviors depend on the nature of the suggestions to which the crowd is exposed. In totalitarian cultures, as Arendt points out, this state of collective suggestibility is maintained by two primary means: bureaucracy and propaganda.

Cultures under the grip of totalitarian rule revert to bureaucratic means of control. Bureaucracy represents the transformation of normal culturizing and socializing influences – family, local community, religion, cultural practices – into a monolithic institutional legacy intended to indoctrinate and subjugate the masses. Bureaucracy forms the wheelwork of mass movements and, according to Arendt, constitutes a hybrid form of governance, ruling those under its dominion by circumventing the stabilizing influence of law. In a bureaucracy the rules can be altered at a moment's notice in response to any new crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic crisis was managed entirely outside customary legal channels by bureaucratic means.

Bureaucrats are usually 'experts' who use their technical knowledge to maintain power and control over the masses. During the pandemic the most visible face of the bureaucracy was Anthony Fauci, the so-called COVID-19 czar (Figure 4). Bureaucrats, says Arendt, renounce all political aspirations and, instead, use their skills to oversee implementation of policy. They have a passion for secrecy, to exercise personal power, and govern behind the scenes. Bureaucrats are functionaries who seek only to accomplish the goals of the movement, which inevitably entails sidestepping democratic principles and the rule of law.



Figure 4: Anthony Fauci, COVID-19 czar [19].

The bureaucratic apparatus forms the complex machinery through which the dogma and falsehoods of a totalizing movement are disseminated. In the modern corporatist state its principals include political and governmental leaders, influential social and corporate actors, sympathetic academic elites, and a teeming army of media 'influencers'. The apparatus serves to insulate the mass movement from reality and safeguard its fictitious ideological world. The defining feature of totalitarian propaganda, says Arendt, is its 'extreme contempt for facts'. The intention isn't to persuade skeptics but to organize and indoctrinate the masses.

In Nazi Germany the dissemination of totalitarian dogma was under the control of the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, headed by Joseph Goebbels. By its very title, the actors were aware they were spreading fabricated information in service of a cause. In the contemporary corporatist state such overt methods are no longer necessary; information is already pure suggestion.

The new velvet glove/iron fist totalitarianism relies not on coercion but seduction: 'Just do it'. Surrender to your impulses. In the process one exchanges one form of bondage for another.

The term *vranyo* came into widespread use during the Soviet era to signify not just lies but a particular form of lie, the pervasive cultural lie in which everyone colludes: he knows he's lying; we know he's lying, and he knows that we know he's lying. *Vranyo* was the collectively shared totalitarian fiction that became endlessly iterated at all levels of Soviet society and has made a return as a staple in Putin's Russia. To be effective *vranyo* needs a bedmate.

Totalitarianism, says Arendt, requires 'a permanent instability within a fictitious world of movement'. Totalizing ideologies rely on real or manufactured crises for they thrive not on stability but ceaseless movement. This is the basis for disaster capitalism. As observed during the pandemic, evolving conditions demanded continual shifting and

reordering of facts to preserve the fictional science narrative. In the process the collectively shared delusion, what the ancients called an 'egregor', continued to morph into an ever-widening gyre that organized – and still does - the perception of all who fell under its totalizing sway.

After fleeing Nazi totalitarianism and emigrating to New York City, Arendt wrote to her mentor Karl Jaspers about the peculiar social conditions she had encountered in the US: 'The fundamental contradiction of the country is political freedom coupled with social slavery'. Her experiences in pre-war Germany endowed her with a unique vantage by which to gauge the social health of her adopted domicile.

American social slavery, guided by Progressive ideals, is based on a fanatical belief that humanity is on a grand march toward an idealized utopia. The hypnotic allure of fraternity, equality, diversity, and eternal happiness is simply too much for many to resist. Progressivism also forms the basis of

Darwinism, the deformed 19th century evolutionary dogma which asserts that societies emerge out of a struggle between the strong and weak. In reality, this 'survival of the fittest' ideology has only encouraged the progressive rise of corporatism.

The ruthless corporate practices of the Gilded Age in the late 19th century have recapitulated a New Millennial generation of Robber Barons (Figure 5) and spawned a handful of monopolistic transnational corporate entities - Microsoft, Apple, Google, Facebook, Twitter, Amazon – possessing massive wealth and controlling vast sectors of the new information economy. Concealing their iron-fisted exploitative roots within a soft velvet glove, corporations readily embrace the Progressive ideology in the name of 'corporate social responsibility'. In the end, however, it has become a tool to manipulate public opinion and effectively eliminate all perspectives that might point out that the emperor has no clothes. The 'cancel culture' was in full swing during the pandemic.



Figure 5: History repeats itself. The New Millennial Robber Barons: Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, Jeff Bezos & Elon Musk [20].

The cataclysmic upheavals accompanying the transition from traditional modes of life into modernity - the overthrow of monarchies, world wars, relentless industrialization, and broad social transformations - have imposed an immense burden on collective humanity in recent centuries. The underlying cause of this turmoil and chaos has been the dramatic shift in collective conceptions and beliefs. As we have shown, two of the most pervasive and insidious ideologies, science and capitalism, lie at the heart of the current crisis and, indeed, have taken modern cultures to the edge of an abyss. If this civilizational turning point is to be successfully navigated it is imperative that these ideologies, indeed the very notion of Progressivism, be critically reexamined and reappraised.

DEVOLUTION NOT REVOLUTION

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly impacted populations across the globe, causing tragic social and economic disruptions that continue to reverberate. In this three-part series we documented blatant exploitation of the pandemic by corporations and the medical-industrial complex. From start to finish the pandemic was mishandled leading to needless loss of hundreds of thousands of American lives. In the process, disaster capitalism reached its ultimate, most brutal and deformed stage, unleashing its violent exploitative ideology on its own citizens and thoroughly completing the transformation of American democracy into corporate totalitarianism. What does the future now hold for the US?

The two early 20th century totalitarian movements, Nazism and Communism, met entirely different fates but, in the end, neither survived. Nazism was destroyed in the flames of World War II. Soviet Communism, on the other hand, gradually disintegrated due to the corrosive effect of vrnayo and, finally, disintegrated in the early 1990s. The long term durability of such totalizing systems remains highly dubious. As one Delphic maxim at

the Temple of Apollo declares, 'certainty leads to ruin'.

Fictitious ideologies eventually consume themselves and become artifacts of history. Current global conditions represent an unstable transitional state that, inevitably, will undergo dissolution once stabilizing forms of collective organization reemerge. The antidote for such totalizing ideologies involves reinvention of life on a human scale. This implies radical decentralization of power and authority with reversion to local autonomy and pluralism. There is no other viable solution.

In *Connectography: Mapping the Future of Global Civilization* (2016), global strategist Parag Khanna argues that the most powerful force impelling societies into the future, surprisingly, is not directed toward establishment of a monolithic world order but, paradoxically, fragmentation of existing systems into ever smaller units of political authority, economic activity, and knowledge generation, what he calls 'devolution' [21]. As with Soviet Communism, dominator systems eventually unravel and undergo dissolution from within.

Devolution is the gravitational pull of collective human activity back to the tribe, a more fundamental and integral layer of human experience than mass society. The tribe is the necessary and logical counterforce to the consolidation and concentration of corporate wealth and power. After the collapse of the Persian and Roman Empires the axes of power shifted back to the city-state, a more accessible and flexible scale of human economy. In the end local bonds and interests are far stronger and more durable than any imposed totalizing system. 'Let the tribes win', argues Khanna.

Given the organizing power of ideas and the suffocating influence of totalizing ideologies, an equally pressing problem concerns generation of a new system of medical knowledge and praxis that

overcomes the glaring deficiencies of the molecular and cellular model. The current paradigm, yet another fictional ideology laden with internal contradiction, was designed, implemented and perpetuated by the vested interests of its primary stakeholders – academics, corporations, and bureaucrats – and it is these actors that continue to reap a disproportionate share of benefit and reward.

The true measure of a conceptual framework lies in the accuracy of its explanations and ability to predict outcomes. Based on such criteria medical science failed miserably during the pandemic. Almost none of scientists' predictions regarding pandemic outcomes ever actualized. In the end attainment of so-called populational herd immunity was reached not through the aegis of the mRNA vaccines but acquisition of natural infection. Their interventions only served to prolong the pandemic and increase mortality. Even before the pandemic, this contrived system of knowledge was on the ropes and it now seems destined to take its place in the museum of spent ideas.

The continued fragmentation and dissolution of these moribund totalizing systems should not only be welcomed but actively encouraged. Individuals should avail themselves of every opportunity to vote with their feet and walk the path less traveled toward reestablishment of vibrant local community, local economy, and local knowledge generation. As economist E. F. Schumacher proselytized in the 1970s, 'small is beautiful'.

And for the brave of heart this is an unprecedented opportunity to take part in a bold reimagination of not only of the nature of communal co-existence but of health and healing (Figure 6). There is more to living bodies than cells and molecules. As the pandemic vividly revealed, medical science does not represent the sum of all knowledge. Indeed, most scientists are even unaware of discoveries lying fallow in the medical literature that point in the direction of an entirely new therapeutic paradigm.



Figure 6: The Flammarion engraving, first published by astronomer Camille Flammarion in 1888, captures the human quest for knowledge and meaning in the universe. The traveler, *Homo Intellectus*, poking his head through the shell of appearances and gazing at the eternal, has finally penetrated the boundary separating ignorance and insight. (Courtesy of Therese Schroeder-Sheker)

The future begins with individuals taking responsibility for generation and integration of their own thought. Ideas drive all human activity. Shared conceptual frameworks emerge only through open and frank dialogue among concerned parties. This kind of organic knowledge generation has been the *modus operandi* at the grassroots level for

eons and served to create stable knowledge forms and systems of praxis long before modern science happened on the scene. As philosophers and sages over the centuries and across all cultures have asserted, true knowledge liberates and empowers, false knowledge confines and enslaves.

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