

More on a Recent Article About COVID-19

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In late March, I wrote an article, posted here [The Occidental Observer], on the public response to the COVID-19 virus called “Thoughts from a Leather Couch on Covid-19.”¹ My focus was on the U.S., as it will be in this writing. I saw COVID, as I will call the article, as being about a breaking news story and felt pressed to get it out quickly, and I wrote it in a day. I’m prone to be in-a-stew regretful about everything I write—“Why’d I say that?” “Why’d I leave that out?” “What a piss-poor sentence that was”—and this rush job resulted in more than the usual number of laments. But re-reading it now to put this article together, I’m OK with it, or sort of.

My surface impulse for writing COVID was to report what was going on with me sitting on my leather couch in my living room where I spend most all of my time in retirement with my laptop when I’m not trying to get some sleep and failing at it. Enjoy your youth, because I’m here to tell you that if I’m typical, insomnia is a bitch in old age. I was getting from politicians and big media that there is this giant menace threatening to wipe out millions of people if we didn’t stop everything we were doing and hide out in our basements. Businesses were shut down, and the schools, and don’t you dare go to the beach, and the stock market had gone south. I read *The New York Times* every morning over breakfast even though I know it’s a sophomoric propaganda rag. I can’t shake the idea I grew up with that it’s the newspaper of record, and I like some of its non-front-page features like the movie reviews and, especially, the obituaries, which at my advanced age are the first things I read. It’s sobering to get to where not only are you older than the president, you’re older than just about everybody that’s dying. The *Times* was coming on about the virus like we had been invaded by Martians.

In my geriatric-and-counting long life, I’ve never experienced hysteria like the reaction to COVID-19. I referred in COVID to the

swine flu outbreak in 2009 and to the seasonal flu that kills tens of thousands every year, and made a brief allusion to a polio epidemic in my childhood—no lockdown with any of those. I could have also referred to other virus outbreaks, including the Asian flu in the 1950s, and SARS and MERS and Ebola in recent years—no lockdowns there either. Even the Spanish Flu in 1918, which killed millions, no lockdown. I had assumed you quarantine sick people, but this time everybody was getting quarantined. Really something else.

I Googled around on my laptop and it appeared to me that the numbers of deaths from COVID-19 didn't support the gigantically-over-the-top response to it. It looked as if the people dying were primarily old with serious pre-existing health conditions—in nursing homes, a lot of them—and even with them, I was wondering if most of them hadn't died *with* COVID-19 rather than *from* it. As far as I could tell, virtually nobody under forty—or was fifty, or sixty?—was dying from this virus. Yet I went to the supermarket and everybody was wearing a mask and the toilet paper was sold out. It looked like a movie set; I half-expected Tom Cruise to come around the corner.

Nine weeks later, I'm still mightily intrigued by the COVID-19 phenomenon—which is starting to wind down some—but I'm clear now that what most propelled me to write COVID was to get into *authoritarianism* and *statism*. Both of them rub me the wrong way, and they've been concerns of mine for a long time. This writing expands on my basic impulse for writing COVID.

By authoritarianism, I refer to the unquestioned obedience to authority; somebody “higher up” calling the shots at the cost of someone's personal freedom and self-determination, and that person going along with it. Statism gets at government overreach in its control of social and economic affairs. It especially grates on me when the government is just a few people, or even one, making decisions and dictating to people, and when it is distant from everyday life in the home, the neighborhood, and the community.

With both authoritarianism and statism, there's invariably someone one-up on you in worth. He (or she) is more informed than you, or smarter, or wiser, or on a higher moral plane, or something, and knows how you should think and conduct your life better than you do. With COVID-19, Dr. Anthony Fauci, who is on the news way more than you or I are, steadily made pronouncements on COVID-19. I remember Dr. Fauci from way back—he had dark hair then—saying that AIDS was a heterosexual disease. I'm serious, I went straight to my doctor and blurted, "I have AIDS!" He replied, "Ah, go home."

Sometimes they don't even pretend to be worthy. They have simply gotten themselves into a slot in the social machinery that makes them think they are a big deal and can play God. "I'm Governor Cuomo. Look at me when I'm talking to you. Quit checking to see if I have nipple piercings. Shut up and do what I tell you!" As Aristotle once said, what is, is. Bernie Sanders may be my senator here in Vermont, but I knew him back when he was on welfare and trying to get a job as a carpenter. Even though Bernie has filing-card-shouted his way to a successful political career, it's still him, he's not fooling me, and I not deferring to him.

A feature of authoritarianism and statism is *intimidation*. Don't get the idea that what's coming at you is merely a suggestion. You'd better do whatever it is or else, with the "or else" ranging from disapproval and condemnation and exclusion (which includes "Clean out your office and hand over your keys, you're gone") to jail time.

COVID dealt a lot with authoritarianism and statism. I used the metaphor of people becoming race horses with blinders, only looking straight ahead of them as they are driven in the direction their jockeys (politicians, the media) want them to go. There was the example of the horrific and barbaric firebombing of civilians in Tokyo by killer supreme, General Curtis LeMay, during WWII because Franklin Roosevelt "knew" that kind atrocity was our only recourse. In 1950, Harry Truman decided (where was Congress? where were the American people?) to give American young men no

choice but to travel 6,000 miles in order to kill and die in 25 below zero weather in North Korea. 54,000 Americans just starting out in their lives were slaughtered in Viet Nam because super-intelligent Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara thought it was good idea.

In COVID, I said I was getting a distinct déjà vu feeling with this COVID-19 response. Judging from historical precedent, standing aside and letting the “smart guys” and “top guys order people around might just get you unemployed and standing in a bread line and me trying to figure out how to pay for my daughter’s college education with my retirement account reduced to a dollar-and-a-half.

During the COVID-19 mania, state governors have had a good time—I think they get off on it—playing dictator. Besides New York, I’m thinking particularly of the governors of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Washington. As I write this, the governor of Pennsylvania is in a total snit because a professional football player for the Pittsburgh team in the National Football League, Ben Roethlisberger, got a haircut without his permission. A couple days ago, it was, “Close that beauty salon down this minute or I’ll castigate you and put you behind bars!” What is it about hair care that especially energizes them? Something all these governors have in common is that they are Democrats (as were FDR, Truman, and Lyndon Johnson during Viet Nam). Lately, I’ve noted some voices of protest to what is going on and it’s been heartening.

Speaking of Democrats, in recent days as I have been putting this article together, the death in Minneapolis of a black man after a white police officer knelt on his neck to hold him down when he allegedly resisted arrest has resulted in massive rioting and looting in multiple cities across America. I was sickened and angered by the first impulse of the Democratic mayor of Minneapolis and the Democratic governor of Minnesota to stand aside and let rioters burn and steal what others had created, and for the national Democratic Party leadership to cheer them on. When will whites get that modern-day Democrats disparage and diminish and, when things get tough, abandon them? I’d like think that this latest tragic racially-

charged episode in American life will prompt whites to wake up to reality.

If nothing else, the COVID-19 crisis has surfaced the dream come true of the left: East Germany before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Check out the 2006 German film “The Lives of Others,” which is set in East Germany. There it is: the same smug, self-congratulatory, authoritarianism and statism. And I’m not just referring to electoral politics. What’s gone on over the past few months in in my daughter’s public high school is an illustration of what happens when you unleash NPR listeners and Obama fans (that’s who school people are). As I reported in COVID:

With this health crisis, it has been a series of edicts from the school administrators and teachers in my daughter’s school; no explanations, no rationales. No more classes until, first, March 23rd, and then April 27th, and, now, June 19th. No teaching the regular curriculum until April 20th, which will then be taught on a remote basis. Why, you ask? None of your business. Don’t contact us. We’re working on it; we’ll get back to you.

I ended COVID with a quote from a journalist from the ‘1920s and ‘30s, H.L. Mencken. “The urge to save humanity,” Mencken pointed out, “is almost always a false-face for the urge to rule it.” I would modify Mencken’s quote to bring it up to date: “The left’s professed aim of saving humanity is a thinly disguised effort to rule it, and in the process, bring white people to their knees.”

Endnote

1. Thoughts from a Leather Couch, *The Occidental Observer*, Author Archives, posted April 8, 2020.