

Life In The Brave New World

In my day, the fear and terror were of nuclear holocaust. I remember as a child going to the home of some of my parents' friends. The older boy in one of those families showed me a puzzle map of the United States. He showed me the destruction that would occur at the time of a nuclear exchange. At school, we crouched down in the hallways during air raid drills. This scenario was blatantly described for us; the white flash of light, the immediate destruction of millions of people and the radiation sickness leading to horrible death. My generation lived under that fear and threat. Many people built air raid shelters in their basement and stocked up on food.

In more recent years, we have been exposed to fears of terrorism. We know that a so-called "dirty bomb" consisting of nuclear debris and exploded by dynamite could empty a city the size of New York or London. We still live with that fear, so long as our international leadership cannot get their act together and stamp out terrorism and nuclear proliferation once and for all.

Hollywood has made movies not only about the disruption of life on earth from aliens, but also from diseases which morph out of control. To some extent, we are now living a Hollywood scenario. Every political leader in the world sees his or her head on the chopping block. If the politicians do not act dramatically enough, their future is foreclosed.

In England, there appears to be a different approach. Let most people get the Coronavirus, say the health care officials, and that will build "herd immunity".

The truth is that most people do not understand what the scientists are thinking about or working on. Many of the scientists do not agree. There are those who believe that the disease should be permitted to spread, albeit at a more relaxed pace, while immunities are built up within the population and health treatments are developed. No doubt, by this time next year there will be vaccines and viral treatments for the most ill in our population. In the meantime, life as we know it has been altered.

No one is writing or talking much about the post-Coronavirus world and how we will be changed. Looking beyond the current inconveniences, there are several important considerations to think about concerning our lives after the disease:

- (1) Economics. Just as after World War II, when there was a dam bursting in terms of economic development, the same will happen here. All kinds of incentives will be in place to get people up, out and buying. The policymakers will spend trillions of dollars on rebuilding our infrastructure and, who knows, perhaps some of the most vexing political problems, such as immigration, will be tackled;

- (2) Health Care. The Coronavirus will alter our approach to health care. Most Republicans, as well as Democrats, want to make sure that the sick and those at risk receive health care that is either free or that they can afford. When the Coronavirus scare is over, the population have an expectation that the government will ensure their health care. There will be greater pressure to come up with a way of making absolutely clear that everyone is entitled to health care either free or at an affordable price. Who will pay for this, how the care will actually be delivered and the other crucial details have yet to be approached.
- (3) Philosophy of Life. Most people will come to realize just how risky their lives are. We are in danger from global warming, nuclear catastrophe, terrorism, and a host of other scary possibilities. Perhaps our citizens will become more proactive in terms of taking charge of their own lives. More may be demanded of politicians to get along and to depoliticize policymaking;
- (4) Social Relationships. Will social relationships change? Will we give up handshakes, hugs, and do more handwashing? I saw a post on social media pointing out that handwashing and care concerning social contact is something people should be practicing regardless of any health care crisis. During the AIDS epidemic, the sexual behavior of many young people was affected and the use of condoms was widely encouraged to stop the spread of the immunocompromising disease.

Much of my speculation about how the world will change is probably overly optimistic. The chief beneficiaries of the Coronavirus will be pharmaceutical companies, food production enterprises and, naturally, toilet paper manufacturers. Although that observation is clearly based upon a healthy dose of cynicism, there is no question that we all will have an enhanced appreciation for the difficulty of life in a society where we have not been able to cooperate to solve serious problems.

The current dilemma over how to contain coronavirus is also a good lesson for our children. Parents may very well scoff at government restrictions, but at the same time they are subconsciously teaching their children the habits of cleanliness, delicacy in the approach to other people, and a consciousness of the fact that we are all in this little rowboat which we call earth.

The Coronavirus will never go away completely. It will be a kind of flu that we all have to deal with. It will morph and evolve just like everything else in life. The question is whether the world learns to work together in a more productive manner to solve problems with which humanity will be confronted. This does not mean that we have to give up nationalism in favor of one world government. The response to dangers which most human beings face has very little to do with political philosophy and everything to do with individual commitment and responsibility.

All the best to everyone on this fragile planet for health, happiness and peace in the coming days, weeks and months as we strive together to eliminate the pandemic of the Coronavirus,

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