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In this issue:

Carbon Mike:	The Soft War.
Andrew Mahon:	Hocus-POCUs.
Aethelstan:	Fantasy and Reality.
Nick Buckley:	The Truth About Life.
Ben Pile:	Panic.
Mr. Wednesday:	Composure.
A Ainsworth:	The Hollow Economy.
Carbon Mike:	Love and Religion.

See Deeply • Listen Closely • Reason Honestly • Speak Clearly • Act Bravely

Deny the Self • Defend the Individual • Respect Tradition • Face the Present • Cultivate the Future

*The slogans and the shouts of Partisans
Are random Words but written on the Sand,
While Banners flash, and Bells ring out for War
And golden Armies march along the Shore.*

-- SonOfSonnet, "Call to Arms"

The Soft War

Carbon Mike, Brooklyn, NY, USA

The Christian tradition holds that roughly two thousand years ago, the Ulterior Mind used a part of itself to create a living weapon, which it then launched into the world. A primary purpose of this weapon was the viral transformation of the human soul into something which could not be destroyed.

In its initial or seed phase, this weapon transmitted copies of its original program to human vectors, who then disseminated it via the Internet of the time: the cultural, financial, and logistical networks of the Roman Empire.

The second phase was initiated by the destruction of the weapon's physical carrier, which later reintegrated. This triggered a viral cascade which ultimately rewrote the rules — the software — by which human civilizations have functioned ever since.

This Event, as a cornerstone of Christian doctrine, reframes and advances a fundamental idea: that the human being — the human soul — is sacred. This is not a *natural* idea; it does not come from Nature, which is indifferent to human suffering or well-being. Nor is it an *evolved* idea; even a casual reading of history shows that highly advanced civilizations can be (and have been) not just indifferent to suffering, but actively and even monstrously cruel.

Rather, the sacred human ideal is inherently a *supernatural* concept. It comes from outside the world. It re-embodies the ancient human understanding of the Universe as a tree: but an inverted tree, with the root at the top. According to this tradition,

the human *being* — which is to say, the essence rather than the form — is no mere accident, but a vital outgrowth of this structure, and can only be destroyed by *eradicating* it: that is, by destroying its connection with its *radix*, or root.

Over the last few years, a number of societies around the world have embarked on an experimental regime to test this concept: that is, to find out whether the eradication of the human essence — the human soul -- is possible. The nature of the experiment is not new, although the methods and instruments are. But it is worth noting that the experiment itself is not an evolution (in the Darwinian sense); it is not a natural or inevitable outcome of technological advancement or societal progress. Like all experiments, it is a conscious human undertaking; which is to say, it is a *choice*.

The people who have chosen to conduct this experiment have done great harm. Their contempt for human souls, and their cruelty toward human beings, so far appear to be unlimited — but thankfully this has not gone unopposed. Individuals and societies around the world have chosen to resist this experiment, and the resulting conflict can be classified as a new kind of war: a *soft* war. The enemy's weapons are, of themselves, barely recognizable as such: they are verbal, psychological, social, pharmaceutical, biological, legislative, economic, memetic. The enemy's raids are conducted in the open, by daylight armies insisting that they come in peace. Their assassins bear the poisoner's weapons, but wear concerned expressions. They approach, like the most dangerous assassins, in plain sight — and therefore undetected — in the guise of caretakers.

Like all wars, the Soft War has caused enormous human suffering. It continues to do so. But like all wars, it has also held a mirror up to the combatants and the societies in which they live.

The outcome is of course uncertain. The mirror does not show us the future; that is not what mirrors do. There are, however, meaningful questions one can ask when looking into a mirror: Who are you? What is your purpose? And, perhaps most importantly: Which side are you on?



Hocus-POCUs

Andrew Mahon, UK

How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.

-- Mark 3:23-26

In 1865, the great Prussian statesman Otto von Bismarck (who would later become Chancellor of a unified Germany) met with his Austrian counterpart Gustav von Blome to negotiate the Gastein Convention. The Treaty of Vienna had been signed the previous year, following the defeat of Denmark in the Second Schleswig War, and the resulting dispute over the seized territories -- Schleswig, Holstein and Lauenburg -- by the victorious Prussia and Austria led to the agreement at Bad-Gastein. The talks did little to help the cause of German unification or to reduce tensions between Prussia and Austria, prompting Bismarck to comment: "we are working hard to paper over the cracks in the building."

This is supposedly the origin of the idiom, "to paper over". Bismarck knew that the Gastein Convention wasn't going to address any of his real concerns; that it was what today we might call "a band-aid solution". It merely concealed the deeper issues between the German states, leaving them to fester and grow into a bigger obstacle down the road.

Papering over something is the easy, immediate, and short-sighted response to a problem. A heroin addict continues to use, rather than face the symptoms of withdrawal. An alcoholic prefers the hair of the dog to sobering up in the morning. Papering over doesn't address the root of a problem, and therefore doesn't really address the problem at all. It creates a mirage, a deceptive solution, at best a short-term fix, while the underlying defect remains unaddressed.

Worse than papering something over is covering it up with a lie; a response which has far-reaching consequences for oneself and for others. It is the fruit of an unwillingness to admit to error. An unfaithful husband lies to his wife about his affair. A business executive tries to hide a scandal by destroying incriminating documents.

The paper-over and the coverup can be combined into a single, radically dishonest reaction to a problem. This combination -- the paper-over-coverup, or POCU -- is the modus operandi of the modern-day politician, and never has this been more evident than in the policy response to the SARS-CoV2 outbreak over the past year.

At the beginning of 2020, the policy of "locking down" a healthy population was nothing but a theory; one that had already been rejected in virtually all pandemic plans, from those of the World Health Organization (WHO) to those of most national and local governments. Totalitarian measures of that kind are, however, to

be expected in a Communist one-party state. To use Professor Neil Ferguson's own words, "we couldn't get away with it in Europe, we thought", but then, after the initial Chinese lockdown was copied by Italy, "we realised we could".

Ferguson's apocalyptic computer models led to the hysterical U-turn from the British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, who suddenly abandoned the UK Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Strategy of 2011, and opted instead for a lockdown; but only ever a *partial* one — as supermarkets, among other public places, remained open, thereby rendering the entire exercise pointless.

The first lockdown was imposed by Johnson on the 23rd of March, just before the peak of Covid-related deaths on the 8th of April in England and Wales. The stated purpose of that initial lockdown was to slow the spread and "flatten the curve" to prevent the National Health Service from being overwhelmed.

We have reason to distrust the superficial appearance of success, which led many to believe the lockdown worked.

In fatal cases of SARS-CoV2, there is an average of 23 days from infection to death from Covid-19 -- which, *according to the Government's own figures*, places the peak of infections approximately five days before lockdown.

The curve had therefore already peaked — and infections were falling — *before* the lockdown was introduced. The same scenario unfolded for the two subsequent lockdowns, later in 2020 and early 2021, suggesting that the lockdowns had little or no effect. Since then, at least seven peer-reviewed studies have concluded that there's no correlation at all between lockdowns and Covid infections and cases.

But once the Government had committed to lockdowns as the solution, the very last thing they were going to do was admit they'd made a mistake. Every subsequent decision has been made with the aim of justifying this earlier bad decision -- emphasizing the continuing danger of the virus, manipulating the figures to make it look as deadly as possible, instilling maximum fear, repeating the pledge to do everything necessary to defeat the silent enemy.

Lockdown was the initial error -- a massive, unprecedented suppression of ancient (and essential) liberties without evidence-based justification. Two major Paper-Over/Cover-Ups ensued.

The first was the introduction of masks. Entering summer 2020, the Government's lockdown policies had not only failed, but had also caused catastrophic damage to the economy. The dilemma now was how to resuscitate the economy, while maintaining the awareness of invisible danger, widespread fear, and compliance, all to justify the initial error -- as much to themselves as to everyone else.

But how could a terrified, compliant people be induced to return to shops, and restaurants, places of work, if the Government wasn't prepared to admit that the virus had receded naturally, and that its draconian policies had been mostly useless?

The beauty of a mask requirement is that masks give the wearer and those around him a (false) sense of safety, while simultaneously being an ever-present reminder of the danger. Masks also give a false feeling of virtue and sacrifice -- the wearer feels he or she is Doing Something For Others, while doing nothing of the kind -- and every mask-wearer becomes a walking instrument of government propaganda, at no cost to the Government.

But the assertion that mask-wearing would protect a populace from a virus was always, at best, a belief unsubstantiated by evidence. At worst, it was an outright lie. By the Government's own repeated admission, until summer 2020, it had actually endorsed the *opposite* belief.

For instance, Dr Jenny Harries, the UK's Deputy Chief Medical Officer of Health, advised against wearing masks, pointing out that they could actually **increase the risk of infection**.

And then, without any real evidence -- beyond observational studies that are too narrow in scope to apply to an entire population -- the guidance was reversed. According to the BBC's

Deborah Cohen, following her Newsnight report on masks, the WHO guidance changed, not because of any evidence, but “due to political lobbying”. (This point was put to the World Health Organization, which did not deny it.)

The Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) is one of the best tools we have for proving scientific claims. Virtually all RCTs ever performed on the wearing of face coverings by a populace have shown that there is no statistically significant difference in viral spread between those who wear masks and those who don't. The only RCT performed on mask-wearing and SARS-CoV-2, specifically, was published in November 2020. This study, which was conducted by Danish researchers and which struggled to find a publisher, involved over 6000 participants, and found – once again -- **no statistically significant difference**.

This *should* have been the nail in the coffin for mandatory mask-wearing everywhere; and would have been, if these decisions had been guided by evidence. The supposed benefits of mask-wearing could not be proved conclusively, and so masks should never have been anything but an individual choice.

But now, eight months after the Danish RCT was published, the indoor mask requirement is still in effect in the UK. Of course, despite the widespread wearing of masks, infection numbers started to rise as the weather turned colder in the autumn – almost as if it were a seasonal endemic virus that would follow an annual pattern regardless of what people put on their faces – and the Government continued to turn to lockdowns as the solution.

Vaccines were the second major POCU. For most of 2020, the Government was desperate for a vaccine that would allow it to (a) get out of the mess it had created, and (b) do so without admitting error. Lockdowns and masks were necessary and had been effective, the Government insisted — but also, they didn't work.

The vaccines were developed and came to market relatively quickly, and the reopening of society was conveniently pinned to vaccination levels. The Government couldn't take credit for a natural decline in the spread of the virus, but they could take credit for a vaccine rollout. And so, however effective these vaccines prove to have been, the narrative is that without them, lockdowns and masks would have to continue indefinitely. An advertisement from the Canadian province of Alberta encapsulates the POCU thinking about vaccines. It reads: "get vaccinated so we can all get back to normal".

The accompanying image shows a syringe containing a scene of a birthday celebration with maskless adults socialising and children playing, surrounded by presents and balloons. The subtext: if you don't get vaccinated, we will have to continue lockdowns and masks and there will be no birthday parties.

Unlike lockdowns and masks, there is *at least some evidence* that the vaccines are effective, at least in terms of minimising duration of illness and severity of symptoms.

What is **not true** is that: (a) they are the only way out of lockdown, (b) they're beneficial for everyone, and (c) they're completely safe.

Vaccines, like any other medical treatment, always carry some degree of risk, and ought to be a personal choice based on an individual risk assessment. The potential side effects must be carefully balanced against the individual's risk profile for the disease in question. For someone over 70 with multiple preexisting conditions, it might be a wise decision; for a young, healthy person who isn't at risk from Covid, it wouldn't make much sense. For someone who's already had Covid, it makes even less sense (even if antibodies disappear after a while, the immune system can bring to bear an arsenal of weapons — including killer T-cells — that even the best vaccines can't match).

But when vaccination is used as a POCU, a collectivist mentality takes hold; mass inoculation becomes an all-or-nothing solution — a mass struggle — in which everyone needs to do their part. It's no longer about individuals deciding to protect themselves; it's about all of society protecting itself as a collective entity. If some people refuse, so the reasoning goes, they ought to relinquish their right to remain part of society.

As for safety, it's too early to know, as safety trials won't be complete for another couple of years -- yet it's being claimed as a fact that these vaccines are safe, and evidence to the contrary is being minimised or ignored. In contrast to the way we count

Covid deaths — which, in the UK, includes **any death of any cause within 28 days of a positive PCR test** -- deaths or other side effects that occur **only a few days after vaccination** are treated as coincidental.

But it does appear that vaccine uptake is high, so the POCU may be successful – in terms of papering over and covering up, that is, rather than addressing any real problems – and we might get out of this cycle of destructive lockdowns. The deep truths will be ignored, and the criticisms will remain about how and when the lockdowns were introduced rather than that they were. But if the errors and lies go unacknowledged, what hope is there that our response to the next pandemic will be any better?

According to the theories of the great French anthropologist and philosopher René Girard, human desire is mimetic; that is, our desires are born of our imitation of other people whom we admire. This leads to rivalry when the object of desire is shared by more than one person. Mimetic rivalry leads to violence, and that chaotic violence eventually morphs into mob violence. Mob violence reaches its climax when the mob grows so large that it consists of the entirety of society *except for one person or group* – the **scapegoat**. The murder of the scapegoat marks the end of the crisis — a kind of peace -- and is accordingly regarded as a sacred act. This murder is then periodically re-enacted as ritual sacrifice to maintain that peace, and the original victim is deified. Girard argued that this was how all primitive religions developed.

This is the Girardian interpretation of the opening epigraph from the Gospel of Mark. At the birth of every religion and culture, an act of collective violence is used to bring about an end to individual, chaotic violence. Satan casts out Satan. POCU politics follows this same pattern. Perhaps we aren't at the same level of violence yet, but we are seeing the same scapegoat mechanism playing itself out. So-called anti-vaxxers, anti-maskers, and Covid deniers are the scapegoats onto which the modern mob is channeling its hostility. Perhaps these scapegoats will be fortunate enough to escape murder, but will they escape marginalisation, relegation to a lower caste, or exclusion from society?

When the masks finally come off, the new society might seem normal to those who choose to live by its lies; but it will be inherently unstable. It will be the product of a deviation from truth, goodness, integrity, stability, and wisdom, followed by a second deviation to cover up and paper over, followed by a third, and so on. Satan casts out Satan and a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. Eventually, the heroin addict overdoses; the alcoholic ruins his own life and the lives of those around him; the marriage built upon a lie falls apart; the dishonest business executive is exposed and disgraced.

According to Girard, Christ came to break the pattern of escalating violence: to disrupt the scapegoat mechanism, to stop the human practice of using violence to end violence, lies to cover lies, mistakes to paper over mistakes.

The Christian call is to remain rooted in truth and virtue, weathering any challenge and any temptation to retaliate to a wrong with another wrong, to paper over, to cover up. Christianity demands that its adherents side with and even become the scapegoat -- rather than join the mob. It is the definitive example set by Christ himself.

POCUs, therefore, are not merely foolish, short-sighted, and deceitful; they are literally diabolic. Just as an act of violence followed by a retaliatory act of violence can lead to a more violent society, a deceitful act followed by another deceitful act will lead to a more deceitful society. Those described here are just two examples that are currently affecting all of us. But POCUs are everywhere: in government, in society, and -- if we're honest -- in our personal lives.

As we move further away from truth, integrity, and stability, the Western world -- this house divided against itself -- will not be able to stand for long, unless we peel back the layers of error and deceit and attempt to rebuild our societies and our lives from the proper foundations.

No other solution can ever be anything but a paper-over, a coverup, or both.

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Fantasy and Reality

[When LARPing* Gets Real]

Aethelstan, London, UK

Yesterday I decided to write something on Twitter about the recent shooting of Black Lives Matter activist Sasha Johnson (I had never heard of her), and I found myself writing and deleting, writing and deleting.

I started to think about generational changes in the black community, and I picked up a biography of C.L.R. James. The book fell open to a section where James stressed that his politics were situated within *Western Civilisation* and its historical traditions — and that he was buttressed by its presuppositions, despite being an anti-colonial Marxist.

Of course, today this would lead to him being “cancelled”; indeed, today’s “decolonisers” might even burn “Beyond a Boundary” -- the book in which James asserted that his politics would be the best possible synergy of the European worldview and the mind of a black West Indian colonial intellectual.

I suddenly found myself thinking of the subcultures, political affinities, and diverse voices within the town of my racial and cultural awakening in England.

I thought of the West Indian RAF fighter pilot, married to a white English woman, who set up the first local black community centre (and probably voted for Thatcher). I thought of the town archivist – another black immigrant – who set up a history project and community venue and had a first-class degree from Oxford (he spoke posher than C. S. Lewis with no self-consciousness, and despaired at the younger generation's under-education and vulgarities).

I thought of the Caribbean Labour party councillors who, in the course of representing their constituents, frequently had to dissociate themselves from Labour migration policies.

There were the pan-Africanist radicals, who had a community centre, ran Saturday schools and African history classes, and took on casework – and fought tooth-and-nail with the town hall bureaucrats till they both learned to respect each other.

There was the first generation of underemployed Caribbean bus drivers, nurses, and railway workers -- some of whom later became teachers and lecturers.

There was the Grenadian man who set up the first black housing association, took over swathes of housing from the local council, and managed it perfectly, with minimal infrastructure.

There were black churchpeople who attended the Anglican churches; the millennialists that replicated their own denominations from “back home” in the Caribbean with names like “The Church of God of Prophecy” and “The Seventh Day Adventists”, who converted terrace houses and shop fronts into new chapels and tabernacles before they had the chance to build or acquire the real thing.

The people who got together to set up “pardner” schemes to pool their income (when banks would not give mortgages to “coloureds”) and went on to buy cars and houses and see their children do the same.

The female trade unionist, who got the full-time position in the shop workers union, and devoted her life to defending the low paid workers long before it was fashionable to do so.

I thought of one of my first mentors: a Barbadian woman who considered herself *at least* the equal of any of her white colleagues, and who finally got me to shut up, listen, and learn when I desperately needed to.

And who could forget the black kids who just wanted to play guitar with their white friends -- and furnished a generation with classic records like “Mirror in the Bathroom” and “Ghost Town”?

There are almost too many to remember: black people from big islands and small, who persevered despite everything -- and who passed on to my generation a boundless (if sometimes misplaced) optimism. We were all of us living in an age where -- compared to the present day -- there were **far more** racist slights, glass ceilings, instances of overt discrimination, and even racist murders; but somehow, we didn't just survive -- we *thrived*.

Now it seems to me that there should have been someone to take Sasha Johnson in hand; to help her to understand that her middle-class upbringing and her opportunity to get a college degree were priceless legacies: hard-won treasures passed down to her from previous generations. Who was there to talk her down from the cliff-edge of BLM's violent live-action roleplaying?

Who was there to provide a political apprenticeship for her? Who was there to point out that these tactics -- posing with black-gloved fists and Black Panther garb, calling for the destruction of the family and the "collectivization" of wealth -- have failed every single community in which they have been tried?

Who was there to tell Sasha Johnson the truth: that venerating the sociopathic footsoldiers of endless, nihilistic drug wars as "urban freedom fighters" would never -- could never -- end well?

No one, it appears.

Has that vibrant black community of my youth, full of credible mentors from every walk of life, died off – or is it sleeping? Is it hiding – or merely waiting? Is it gone for good – or merely invisible to the news media?

Either way, for Black Lives Matter activist Sasha Johnson – shot in the head by a young black man who cared nothing for black lives -- the fantasy of revolutionary violence has suddenly (and tragically) become real.

*LARPing: Live Action Role Playing

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The Truth About Life

Nick Buckley, Manchester, UK

Life is hard. Life is unfair.

I have repeated this thousands of times to young people over the last two decades. My job was to prepare them for life; that is, life as it is today. Not life in a utopia that has never existed and will never exist. Our job as adults is to equip our young people with the tools they need for today, not fill their heads with fluffy nonsense.

As modern life becomes more complicated and technical, we are abandoning large segments of the population as waste matter; we've decided they have no value, no purpose, no future. We rely on immigration to fill the jobs British people do not wish to do for the wage on offer. We refrain from training enough of our own doctors and nurses, preferring to take them from poorer countries. We do not invest in our own workforce, preferring to recruit from Europe at a lower cost for a much higher level candidate.

This is the world young people find themselves living in: it is hard. It is unfair. But it is never *hopeless*. The answer to many of our problems is personal responsibility, because there are always things that need doing which--if you don't do them yourself--no one will do for you.

Personal responsibility is a path. It is not a destination you can arrive at overnight. It starts with the realisation that you are of intrinsic value as an individual. The next step is learning that your choices have consequences: good and bad. This is when you begin to realise you can affect the world around you. Finally, you understand that you are able to shape your own destiny and a large scary world is out there waiting for you.

Many young people I work with have not completed all three stages of this personal development. This leaves them lost, frustrated and angry.

Some think they are unworthy – that they don't have what it takes to be successful. Others are too afraid to try.

Learned helplessness within families and communities also has an impact. Being brought up on state handouts, with no father figure and no one going out to work in their home – in short, being raised a beggar -- erodes all sense of aspiration. Accepting responsibility for yourself and your actions can be frightening if you have not been prepared or educated. It may be a safer option to lower your head and follow the crowd you know.

How do we help young people in this situation to get out of it?

We start by telling them the truth about life: that we cannot and should not protect them fully from the realities of the world. Rather, we introduce them to the difficulties of life in small doses, a little at a time, so they can learn how to overcome them.

We instill rules and morality — because a life without rules is chaos, devoid of meaning. We treat people as we wish to be treated. We do not steal. We do not lie. We all know these rules, even if we pretend we have forgotten. If life is a game, it is also true that *all games have rules* – and we do not cheer for the cheaters. We cheer for the individuals who have perfected their skills and amaze us with their ability to play.

The war on fatherhood is also damaging to young people. We have been telling a lie: that fathers are not essential in the lives of children; they are just an optional add-on; that they are nothing special. Many of our societal issues stem from just this falsehood.

The fact is that boys do not know *how to be men* without fathers, and girls do not know *what a man should be* without fathers.

We have boys looking up to gangsters and degenerate entertainers as role models, seeking to fill the gap where a father belongs. We have girls prostituting themselves for attention and affection, not knowing their own worth. This has led to many unhappy young people trying – and failing -- to make sense of the world and their lives. Unhappy men with failed relationships. Unhappy women bring up kids on their own. Unhappy societies

paying a high price to clean up all the issues created by fatherlessness.

Our young people also need dreams; they need a vision, without which they will perish. If we do not supply this need, then others will do so -- and others *are* doing so.

We have an explosion of social justice groups which claim to have the answers to all society's ills. Extinction Rebellion wants to save the planet from destruction by mankind. Black Lives Matter want to save marginalised people from destruction by white men. (Antifa wants to cure society's ills by destroying society altogether.)

All Marxists. All anti-Western. All alluring to directionless young people – because they all have a vision.

What do we offer instead? Unemployment benefits. Poorly paid jobs. A lack of affordable housing. If I were twenty years old again, I know which dream I would chase: I would choose adventure, excitement and the opportunity to raise my social status so that I could attract more women. In short: I would be a social justice warrior.

We need to show our young people the correct path, difficult though it sometimes is to follow. We show them that hard work and hard-won skillsets are their way to escape the traps and snares of the welfare state and achieve fuller, better lives.

We do our best to remove what barriers we can, and we attempt to level the playing field; but we do so in the full knowledge that it will never be completely fair – and we accept that fact. So must they.

This is how we cultivate the future.



Panic

[Bad faith and the “climate crisis”]

Ben Pile, Kent, UK

Before the Covid-19 outbreak, and hard on the heels of the Brexit referendum and Trump’s election, local, regional and national governments throughout the West began declaring a “climate emergency”. Official declaration of a climate emergency had been a key demand of the newly-formed Extinction Rebellion movement, whose rise, along with Greta Thunberg and the “schools strike” movement came, as if out of nowhere, to dominate news media and global politics. “Climate crisis” became the leitmotif of a new phase of the climate wars, replacing “climate change”, which activists felt no longer conveyed the urgency of their cause.

For its adherents, any challenge to the claim that a “climate crisis” is happening and must be acted on with urgency is in itself a monstrous act of bad faith. Voicing criticism will consign the challenger to the lowest possible moral category, whose frivolous gamble with unimpeachable Scientific Truth invites nothing less than the collapse of civilisation and the end of all life on Earth.

But what if we happen to disagree? What if we believe that, though climate change may be a real problem, it does not require any new forms of politics or new political institutions —

especially when those institutions do not take our interests, much less our views, into account?

What can we say in reply to the claims that there is a “climate crisis”?

I shall not dwell on the technical aspects of the nonexistence of the crisis – “The Science”. The point here is not to claim that CO₂ is not a greenhouse gas, or that global warming is not happening, or that there is no such thing as climate change, or that it is not a problem. I am often called a “climate change denier” for pointing out that there are problems with climate advocates’ claims, but I argue none of these things. The point here is to show that climate change does not meet any reasonable, actionable definition of either “emergency” or “crisis”.

What is a crisis? In this context, it is a situation whose outcome is either survival or death. An “emergency” is, likewise, a life-or-death event which requires swift and decisive intervention. News media, politicians and “green” campaign organisations present a constant and unending narrative about an “escalating” or “growing” climate crisis, afflicting ever more people. Floods. Fires. Storms. Diseases. And even poverty and war. Scientific authority often throws its weight behind such storylines, to grimly depict a world collapsing into chaos.

But whereas the layperson can be somewhat confident that observational science has detected a slight warming of the atmosphere, he or she will find very little evidence of the outcomes that such warming is expected to cause. I urge you to look for yourself.

There is a stark contrast between what has been claimed would be the inevitable outcome of global warming, and what has actually happened. The decades since the end of the Cold War – the era of global warming – have seen unprecedented growth in all measurements of human welfare, both regionally and globally. Rates of infant mortality and communicable diseases and diseases of poverty have fallen. Longevity has increased. Per capita income has increased. Agricultural productivity has increased. Deaths from hunger, and from natural disasters are at historic lows. Even extreme weather claims far fewer lives today than at any point in the past, despite a growing global population. On every measure, the facts show the opposite of what environmentalists have claimed would be the outcome of global warming, and what is routinely claimed in the public sphere each and every day.

That is not merely to say that there is no evidence of a “crisis”. It is to say: there is overwhelming evidence of its opposite.

Humanity is in a better material condition now than at any point in history. This disparity between political narratives and this reality is not a trivial matter. This remarkable disjuncture, which

seems set to dominate our politics for the foreseeable future, needs explaining.

The starting point for such an explanation should be the environmental movement's origins in the middle of the last century. The early green movement exploded into popular consciousness and onto the global political stage with claims that society had encountered "limits to growth", that resource depletion and the population explosion would set society on course towards total breakdown by the end of the millennium. War. Famine. Pestilence. Plague. All were predicted. But all that history recorded was a half century of environmentalism's failed prognostications. Then, as now, dire predictions that society would be – was being – ripped from its foundations turned out to be opposite to the outcome. The same stark contrast between narratives and reality.

Why are today's equally dire green prognostications not seen in the light of the movement's history of failures? The "science" seemingly underpinning political environmentalism's moral imperatives is *failed* science, of a piece with phrenology, phlogiston, and astrology.

No doubt the (real) deterioration of natural environments can be observed and measured as something equivalent to society's "footprint" as human settlements grow to occupy what was once wilderness. But the catastrophic predictions made by environmentalism posit society's close dependence on natural

processes. This presupposition of dependence is also at the core of environmentalism's moral and political claims, which require society must be reorganised and its growth limited. Since we have good data that environmental degradation has not led to the putatively inevitable consequences, green thinking is manifestly unsound.

The notion of human society being closely dependent on Natural Providence – and therefore vulnerable to Gaia's revenge for our sins – is a powerful idea; but it is a political idea, based on presuppositions which are ideological, not empirical.

Green ideology posits that a natural order exists, deviation from which results in the breakdown of society. Thus the natural order yields a design for political or social order: the reorganisation of global society, the economy, lives and lifestyles. Put simply, environmentalism is just like any other ideological movement of the early-mid twentieth century. And it is just as determined to reorganise the world. One of the many lessons from that era is that institutional science is unable to resist ideology.

And that is why we must criticise it. Ideology is not an object of science, such that it can be easily excluded from scientific investigation. Institutional science has proven itself extremely reluctant to scrutinise its historical failures – the dire prognostications of the 1970s onwards – much less admit to them. It carries on, regardless of error, contrary to the ethic of self-correction established by the scientific method, likely because of

the obvious quid-pro-quo – political power in exchange for scientific authority – and likely to save so many institutions and their leading figures from embarrassment.

Scientists are humans, and research organisations are human institutions, after all. But on the (false) premise that scientists have transcended the petty, human world and attained pure objectivity, science has been brought (or bought) ever closer into policymaking (aka. “politics”). “Follow the science” may not be such a straightforward political injunction as is hoped, if it turns out that (institutional) science is simply following the politics.

How dare I make such a claim? I am often asked for my credentials – scientific qualifications – that may license me to say that so many scientists and so many scientific institutions are wrong. I will cite no such credentials, and I require none. I can point to the claims of a “climate crisis” and I can point to the evidence, and say, consistent with the Royal Society’s motto, “nullius in verba” (“on the word of no one”), that the equation simply does not balance. There is no “crisis”. Moreover, I assert that by issuing *moral* imperatives, *science* has exceeded its authority and transgressed its proper role in society.

“Science” is no longer speaking truth to power, but speaking official Truth, on behalf of power, contrary to its foundational promise and purpose.

In the past fifteen months, we have seen the history of climate politics played out in the form of our government's response to the SARS-CoV2 viral outbreak. Scientific models and projections - - computer-aided simulations, often impossible to perform repeatably and with no tests in reality -- were used in place of fact to urge radical and immediate action.

The right of governments to grant themselves extraordinary powers on the basis of scientific authority was presupposed. Scientists who voiced their misgivings about the response and the scientific claims were swiftly smeared in the media and ejected from scientific institutions. There was no opportunity for debate about how to balance the need to protect the vulnerable against the consequence of closing down society, destroying countless businesses and livelihoods, and denying a generation of children the vital education and experiences of their most formative years.

And no alternative to locking down society was considered. Any expression of criticism, no matter how qualified the critic, was prohibited from news and social media, by corporations assuming responsibility for "healthy public debate". They were blocked, banned, deleted.

In short, "Science" was used to close down debate about the most important moral, political, economic and even *scientific* questions that emerged from this public health crisis.

In debates about freedom of speech, defenders of the principle routinely encounter the censor's favourite rejoinder: the case of someone falsely shouting "fire" in a crowded theatre. This thought experiment is intended to demonstrate the necessity of speech regulations. Without such regulations, the censor claims, some malevolent individual may go unpunished for the inevitable harm caused by sending a panicked audience fleeing toward the exits. The censor's thought experiment is of interest here, not simply because of the overlapping of the issues of free speech, climate, and public-health politics, but because of the remarkable inversion of the morality play.

"Our house is on fire", Greta Thunberg told the World Economic Forum in early 2019. "The planet's on fucking fire", "science guy" Bill Nye told the audience of Last Week Tonight with John Oliver later that year. "Earth is on fire" proclaims a 2020 article in Scientific American. "FIRE!" is being shouted from centre stage. But it is those who wish to calmly point out that the Earth is not on fire who face censure and censorship.

It is wrong to falsely shout "fire" in a crowded theatre because it creates a threat to human life and safety — the threat of a panicked rush for the exits — *in bad faith*. But in the case of climate alarmists, we can't presuppose *good* faith, because many of them do intend to mobilise people towards their own ends by creating a sense of crisis that robs people of their autonomy. They've said as much, openly. Isn't the censor shouting "fire", too?

I argue that the political project centered around the “climate crisis” is specifically an attempt to mobilise people by manipulating their basest emotions – fear – rather than by appealing to their reason. It demands that people suspend all consideration of their own legitimate interests. It threatens to hold them *morally responsible* for *imaginary outcomes*, should they object. And it seeks, through the instruments of government and law, to take control of people’s lives away from them. It is a politics of fear that is hostile to democracy. And it is a design for a social order that does not require the consent of the governed -- only their obedience.

The climate crisis, then, is an article of bad faith. It is holy writ to its adherents. But whereas articles of faith typically compel only the faithful, the “crisis” is used to coerce believers and nonbelievers alike. Behind the story of the crisis is a long history of bad science , bad politics, and failed predictions. Public fora, in which the facts of society’s relationship with the natural world, and the critical history of green thinking might be shared and discussed in sober, rational terms are instead disrupted and closed down by the shrill cry of “FIRE”. What climate alarmists fear most is debate and discussion.

They want you to panic.



Composure

Mr. Wednesday, Colorado, U.S.A.

Roughly 19 years stand between the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the COVID-19 viral outbreak of 2020.

These events were paradigm shifts for the entire world, but they were especially disruptive to the culture and soul of the United States. A paradigm shift, defined by the Oxford dictionary as “a fundamental change in approach or underlying assumptions”, is not necessarily a swift and uniform transition. When long-held assumptions collapse in the face of traumatic disruptions, there is a period of radical vulnerability in which people struggle to make sense of the world.

This vulnerability is essential to growth. It is when we are faced with the imperative to redefine our worldview that we truly find the opportunity to explore what is meaningful and worth pursuing. Moments such as these allow us to get rid of dead weight: fallacious or foolishly held assumptions that no longer hold water; the fearful anticipation of things which have already come to pass; hopes and dreams which are no longer viable in the new reality.

But vulnerability is also dangerous; and when confronted with a paradigm shift, individuals and populations are liable to react

defensively. Some may cling irrationally to the failed tactics and ideologies of the past. Others may retreat into nostalgia by way of denial and self delusion. More dangerous are those who take advantage of uncertainty to advance agendas of control: centralizing power, pushing for widespread adoption of ideas and approaches that should be debated thoroughly and implemented cautiously (if at all). For ideologies, movements, or even just power-hungry individuals, vulnerable populations — vulnerable systems — are ripe for takeover.

In such times, the natural human desire for order and security can exact a heavy price. Hard-earned principles of objectivity, fairness, and procedure -- difficult to maintain even in times of peace and stability -- may be sacrificed in favor of *any* ordering principle, even if the order it brings is neither just nor durable.

The vulnerability of such moments in history creates opportunities as well as dangers. Vulnerability can reduce humans to their baser instincts. But sense-making and truth-seeking are also human instincts; and remaining composed in times of change is a powerful art. In times of disruption, those equipped with the discipline and resolve to govern their passions have an opportunity — perhaps even a responsibility — to serve their fellow humans. These individuals become the pursuers of truth, the questioners of authority. They take it upon themselves to do the meticulous investigation required to see deeply and reason honestly about the new realities; not in order to decide on

behalf of their fellows, but in order to shed light so that their fellows might see and decide for themselves.

These individuals may sometimes seek to convert others to their cause. However, the wisest among them understand that even short of persuading our adversaries, we can broaden (or narrow) the scope of debate; we can establish common ground and shared terminology; and we can see more deeply into the underlying values and concerns of those who oppose us.

These are not small victories. Those who observe the intensity of partisan behavior in the United States in 2020 can easily walk away with the conclusion that each side is slowly losing its ability to view the other(s) as human. Even if disagreements over solutions are legitimate, the current landscape is hostile to discourse, to say nothing of true understanding and reconciliation.

The takeaway here is that as societies respond to chaotic events (and chaotic actors), there will always be those who submit to their passions and resort to petty tribalism. There will be a tendency toward displacement: of truth by ideology, of due process by mob vengeance, of that which is deep and difficult by that which is shallow and easy.

It is easy to lose one's way in face of chaos; but it is not inevitable. Some of the concepts discussed here -- truth-seeking, sense-making, reasoned dialogue -- these are the methods of the wise. To adopt them is not only to protect an individual soul from the sins of the mob. It is to redeem and honor our history — our foundation -- by embodying the best of what has gone before. It is to have faith that some of the realities we have discovered over time are, indeed, timeless.

This is not a call to arms, but its necessary prelude: a call to composure.

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The Hollow Economy

A Ainsworth, Manchester, UK

“The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold...”

--W.B. Yeats, “The Second Coming”

Lockdown

During the first lockdown, I cut my friend’s hair in my house. (According to our government, this form of exchange is illegal.) We were discussing the nature of the economy -- how it’s part of social life; barter and personal interaction, rather than only “pounds, shillings and pence”. How markets are part of the way we operate as a species. The chap who stands at the bar at the Bull’s Head pub for hours on end might not talk to anyone much, but he’s engaging in social life just by being around people, and the same goes for the widow who enjoys a cup of tea and bacon roll at the local greasy spoon cafe.

The economy, in other words, has a spirit.

Over the last twelve months, in the wake of the 2020 COVID-19 viral outbreak, this spirit has changed -- and the change did not happen organically. It was forced. It will be interesting to see how

things develop over the next twelve months. I'm sure many people are reassessing their priorities and have developed a taste for doing things themselves instead of, say, going to the hair salon or calling a plumber out. On the other hand, it feels deeply unfair that the livelihoods of people like plumbers and hairdressers were decreed "non-essential" by government bureaucrats.

Even normally thoughtful and conscientious people who are *not* bureaucrats can be quite callous and dismissive of the "economic spirit" --which is to say, of other people -- when it suits them. I was shocked when a friend of mine spoke about lockdown solely in terms of the ways it benefited *him*: less time commuting, money saved by not eating at the local cafe with his wife every day, and so on.

I remember thinking: I wonder how the cafe owner is surviving?

Something has been hollowed out – something has fled from the center of things – when small businesses, and the courage of small business owners, and the care they take in providing for the city centre workforce, can all be callously brushed aside as nonessential; as if the only meaningful exchange were of "pounds, shillings and pence".

Rituals And Restrictions

In cases where businesses have been able (or permitted) to stay open, there seems something curiously decadent about the moneyed classes willingly going through arbitrary rituals in order to buy coffees and sandwiches. It makes for a strange vignette to see them standing lifelessly in ugly masks and standing the requisite 6 feet away from the person in front. It would somehow seem less decadent if they were queuing up for caviar and the finest champagne.

Obviously it helps the business owners maintain some semblance of cash flow, but the whole enterprise seems soulless. Not much humour or banter either; only a kind of sterile tension. How long will people tolerate behaving in this manner, on the tiny off chance that person A is pre-symptomatic and carrying enough viral load to infect person B -- who happens to not have enough immunity to fight it off?

For many decades now, most of the threats from “outside” or from nature have seemingly been defeated; “natural evils” such as floods, disease, and wild animal attacks are a much rarer occurrence than for our ancestors. Yet Covid seems to have taken a large section of the populace by complete surprise. I remember thinking, when I turned 30, that I should think about writing a will; yet during the last 12 months, many people of all ages seem

to have only now considered mortality for the first time in their lives.

Suddenly, we're in a new era of universal and infinite danger, vaccines confer no protection (even the vaccinated must wear masks), no-one's immune system can fight off the disease (we must vaccinate even if we contracted the virus and recovered), and we're all assumed to be exhaling death all the time. We've experienced a kind of "year zero" for the body—we are all exactly the same, regardless of age and health status --which is why we've been exhorted to "act like we have it" and engage in all the same rituals and restrictions.

Scapegoating, purity tests, and before-the-fact accusations have been some of the more disturbing elements of last year's changes. If someone gets ill, it's because of someone "not wearing a mask" or going to see their Aunty Pat in her garden. You must bear documents to prove that you have been treated – purified – and are now fit to join society. If you don't do this, you are "holding us back".

Activities we had assumed were natural and normal are now threats to the general well-being. For example, an overweight bon viveur acquaintance of mine admonished an experienced hill walker about going for a walk in the countryside -- lest he fall, break his ankle, and take resources away from Covid patients.

Fitting, then, that people are queuing up for bread, just like in the old communist countries? But it is precisely our extraordinary prosperity (unlike the old communist countries) which feeds into the sense of decadence. Are people engaging in these empty displays of penitence and guilt precisely *because* we have such abundance?

And of course, members of the chattering classes – who overwhelmingly favour lockdown -- consider themselves sensible enough to break the rules safely; lockdown rules are only for those *other people* who “can’t think for themselves”. Many of the people they don’t credit with cognitive ability will have nonetheless been serving this exalted class of thinkers -- in supermarkets or garages or other businesses deemed “essential” - -throughout the last twelve months. (Who says the class war is dead?)

They claim to be following “the science”, but in truth, I am not sure they understand what science is – what it can and cannot do; what it is *for*. And as great many militant atheists make up their number, they don’t know what religion is either; and so, unbeknownst to them, “the science” has taken the place of a religion.

But it’s a rather primitive and brutal religion – the kind where the small folk are sacrificed by the priesthood in order to appease the gods and ensure the sun rises the next day. Of course, the sun rises every day in any case, but their need for others’ sacrifice has

to be satisfied. *Something must be done* -- there must be something (or someone) to control.

The Church of England, rather than seeing this as a chance to help people seek deeper meaning in life and confront (rather than try to avoid) the inevitability of suffering and death, instead begged the government to close them down on the say-so of one very cautious health and safety officer. People were allowed to go to the supermarket to feed their bodies, but not to church to feed their souls.

So: if medical people have become angels, computer-generated “models” have replaced empirical science, scientists have replaced priests, and priests have become health and safety bureaucrats ticking boxes – where is medicine to be found? Where is science to be found? And where is the soul of the country; and where can its core values -- its center -- be found?



Love and Religion

Carbon Mike, Brooklyn, NY, U.S.A.

In the matter of religion, I am not an adherent; that is, convinced of one thing. Nor am I a so-called free thinker; that is, open to anything. Much is made of so-called open-mindedness; but the mind is like a door: it is only useful as such if it can be closed to some things and open to others. Otherwise, it is merely a void.

In the matter of religion, I am a pilgrim; which is to say, I am looking for something.

If we accept that God -- or the Ulterior Mind -- is infinite, then we must accept that all religions are wrong; because Man is finite. The question is not *whether* any religion is right; the question is *how* it is right -- and if it is wrong in the right way. In looking for the right religion we are looking for a system that is wrong where it might well be; but that is right where it must be.

What is the human condition? The human condition is that we awake to find ourselves alone, after dark, in a haunted house. Perhaps it is haunted by more than one spirit. But which one is the spirit of the architect; the spirit of the builder?

Surely the more correct answer is: the spirit by whose signs we can map its rooms; the spirit by whose signs we can fashion keys and unlock doors; the spirit by whose signs we can turn on its lights.

The atheist or freethinker will say that for all those purposes, the spirit of “science and technology” will answer perfectly well. He will say that the spirit of inquiry might reveal all these things to us -- and he is not wrong to say so. The problem is that he is not right enough. That is because in this house, haunted by mighty spirits, we are looking for signs which tell us not only what we are, but who we are.

Science can tell us that we are mammals, and carnivores, and a good many things besides. But to stop there is to reduce our search to a question of mere nomenclature; of mere category. Science and scientific categories are good and useful things; but for our purpose they will not suffice. We are looking for something deeper and more mysterious.

Homo Sapiens is a scientific category. Humanity is a way of being. I assert that it is a sacred way of being. Sacred because it is near the root of all things meaningful to us; and meaning transcends names and categories -- which are, after all, simply labels we attach to things which are meaningful in the first place.

If we wish to limit ourselves to mere scientific categories, we could decide that meaning is unnecessary, and we can live without it; but even a casual look at human history tells us that people do not wish to live that way; that in fact, they would often rather die than live that way.

We could decide to exist as mere creatures; but on those terms, co-existence might not even be possible. Mere creatures, after all, do not think it wrong to slaughter each other. We could decide to live as if there is no such thing as moral error, because mere creatures are incapable of moral error; but to do even that is to make a moral decision, which is more than mere creatures can do. And worse, having decided to live without morals -- that is to say, without promises -- we would likely find that we could not live at all.

What is the human condition? Having awakened alone in a haunted house, we find that by some sign we can inventory its contents; that we can open its secret doors and look into its secret rooms; that we can descend into the basement and comprehend, at least in part, the furious energies at the heart of the world.

But by what sign do we recognize each other as fellow inhabitants; as brothers and sisters? That is the ultimate question we have to confront -- and it is not a scientific question. It is a religious question; it is a question of sacred and eternal things which connect, which *bind together*.

Scientific categories are systems bound by affinity, or by mere similarity of form or function. But the human being — which is to say, the human *essence* — is more than the human form or function. To be human is to be part of a family. And families, if they are good families, are systems which must be bound together, at last, by love.

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