

# The World Upside Down | The Vineyard of the Saker

The Saker

by Jimmie Moglia for The Saker Blog

The Coronavirus phenomenon has left so many attired in wonder that they know not what to say – including the undersigned who runs the positive risk of losing some or all of his 25 readers.

Writing objectively about the reported death of thousands and the predicted demise of millions is impossible. For the very questioning of the figures triggers a perception of callousness, cynicism or indifference, however alien these sentiments may be in the mind and soul of the questioner.

And yet a reporter censured for his partiality differs only by degree from a historian. Can there be an impartial chronicle or history? History is the representation of past events. But what is an event? Is it any event? No, it is a noteworthy fact. But how can the reporter or a historian judge if the event is noteworthy or not? He judges arbitrarily, according to his character, his ideas, sometimes even his artistic sense. For events do not divide themselves spontaneously into historic and non-historic. An event is something infinitely complex. Can the reporter or the historian present the facts in their complexity? It is impossible. Even a historic event is probably and possibly the culmination of various other events non-historic and therefore unknown – as many suspect the Coronavirus phenomenon to be.

All this is dramatically obvious nor I intend to wage here a battle about interpreting numbers, but to touch on the main contributors to a sociological phenomenon surpassing, I think, what could be imagined just a short time ago.

Sociological because it involves, in an unusual convolution, some fundamental issues of our time – namely religion, science, capitalism, biology, medicine, media and the online world. A world that constitutes, of itself, a new type of crowd, with features only in part shared with the historical crowds, who love they know not why, and hate upon not better a ground.

I cannot resist the temptation, however, to describe a personal anecdote showing, in its own small way, the mechanism whereby opinions are formed and sometimes change.

Among people whom I know personally, I have maintained that one major issue of the pandemic is not whether it exists or not, but whether it is misleading, in the announced statistics, NOT to publish the average age of the deceased. I could see that my argument was not convincing and I attributed its persuasivelessness to a generalized idea that if qualified authorities do not divulge those numbers, then those numbers are irrelevant.

Then, a few days ago, one of the ‘unconvinced’ brought to my attention a newspaper article from the “Los Angeles Times”, titled, “Annie Glenn dies of COVID-19.” [*the wife of astronaut John Glenn*]. Later the article added that, “Ms. Glenn died in a nursing home in Minnesota at the age of 100.”

For good or for bad being born is optional, but not to die isn’t. All that lives must die, passing through nature to eternity. Does it mean that I or whoever else disputes Ms. Glenn’s diagnosis? No, but her age when correlated with the cause of death gives to her death a quite different complexion. I assume that a similar different reaction would occur if the average age of all victims were published, along with other pathologies

that affected them.

I did not ask the person who showed me the article if he had changed his mind, nor I could say that he did, but at least, I sensed that his position had softened significantly.

If I were an academic I would use the example to propose a kind of sociological law – an intelligent person may change his opinion on a universally distributed narrative if he independently perceives, through one or more indisputable examples, that the narrative is plainly an insult to his own intelligence.

But I digress. Few would argue that science has become the religion of our time, something to unquestionably believe in. However, in the Western world some systems of belief still coexist, namely Christianity, capitalism and science. ‘Christianity’ here refers both to Protestantism and to a Catholicism that has become Protestant. Not only Protestant but also Judaicized. All Catholic texts have erased any reference to the bi-millennial Catholic rejection of Judaism. To the point that Jews no longer need to convert to Christianity to gain access to a Paradise that does not even exist in their Welt or Himmelschauung.

When Max Weber, in 1905, wrote “The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism” he couldn’t imagine that 100-year later Catholicism would follow suit.

In the past the Papacy, capitalism and science have sometimes been in conflict. By and large, however, and notably by some imaginative theology, disputes were either settled or ignored.

But the conflict between science and the other religions has resumed, and science is winning – not directly but thanks to its offspring, technology. Broadly speaking we could say that technology is the theology of science, with its vast network of beliefs, unquestionable assumptions and even dogmas.

Where the conflict is more open and evident is in the effort by science to apply its theology, through technology, to a field of knowledge and practice – medicine – that until very recently was considered both art and science. In fact as recently as 2006, in the academic text “Introduction to the Study of Medicine” we read, “Medicine is sometimes considered a science, and sometimes an art; the object of medical science is to study disease.”

Except that with the advance of the inaudible and noiseless foot of time, technology has gradually shifted the perception of medicine, with the aim of changing its definition. That is, instilling the idea, with an elaborate system of procedures and rituals, that we no longer deal with “sometimes an art”, but with “always a science.” A science with its theological set of values and constructs.

In fact, both medicine and capitalism borrow from biology their fundamental concepts. Capitalism rests on the Darwinian principle of the survival of the fittest, helped by the supposedly benign and invisible hand of the market. Unlike medicine, however, capitalism does not need self-justification, because it tends to destroy, physically or economically, those who disagree, be they men or states.

Medicine, on the other hand, cannot obviously kill those who disagree with the drift towards medico-scientific dogmatism. But it structures the arguments borrowed from biology into a digital yes-no system or, borrowing from philosophy, into a Manichean framework. There is a god-like malignant principle, disease, whose specific agents are bacteria and viruses, and a god-like beneficial principle, which is not necessarily health, but healing, whose priests and agents are doctors and therapy.

As in all gnostic faiths, the two principles are clearly separated, but in practice they may mix unpredictably. The principle of doing-good, and the doctors who represent it, can make mistakes and collaborate unknowingly with their enemy. This does not nullify the Manichean dualism and the necessity of a cult through which the principle of doing-good fights the battle.

Applied to the Coronavirus situation, the theologians who establish the strategy are the representatives of a science, virology, which actually is neither biology nor medicine but something in-between.

Earlier on, this strategy, or practice, or liturgy, like other liturgies, was limited in time and subject to change, or even reversal. We all may remember catastrophic cases where medicines deemed good one day proved deadly not long later. Still, the example of nefarious medicines illustrates the point, though it does not fit completely the current pandemic, because here we are dealing with a virus, and not with a condition (such as those where the remedy proved disastrous).

But in the virus world the liturgy has seemingly become permanent. The whole life is insidiously threatened by a malignant enemy (in medicine the virus, in capitalism, socialism) that must be fought incessantly through vaccines and universally restrictive measures (in capitalism through preventive wars).

There is an interesting parallel with the practices of the early Ascetic Christians and their associated monastic orders at the onset of Christianity, during the times of Constantine. The Ascetics were unhappy with the loose and imperfect practice of religion that satisfied the conscience of the multitude.

They were inspired by the savage enthusiasm that represents man as a criminal, and God as a tyrant. They seriously renounced the business and the pleasures of the age; abjured the use of wine, of flesh, and of marriage; chastised their body, mortified their affections and embraced a life of misery, as the price for eternal happiness.

Social distancing was the actual norm and Egypt, the fruitful parent of superstition, brought forth this marvelous revolution. A chronicler of the time reports that in Egypt the number of monks was equal to the remainder of the people.

Still the Ascetic practice was free and voluntary; today the cult practice must be enforced and must be the norm. Religion and lay power colluded in the past, for example, in the prosecution of heresies. But the medical religion, which now embraces life, dictates to the lay power the liturgy to be observed.

That such enforcement is the expression of a cult, or of a practice similar to one, needs no ample demonstration. In the Western world the most frequent causes of mortality are degenerative and cardiovascular diseases, and the complications connected with diabetes. All intuitively and effectively could be counteracted by a healthier lifestyle and nutrition. But no legal regulation imposes better nutrition or a healthier lifestyle, which would mean the transformation of existence into a health obligation.

Samuel Butler realistically described this type of world upside down in his classic novels, "Erehwon" and "Erehwon Revisited."

However, at least for now, people at large have accepted a virus-imposed health obligation, as if it were implied and inevitable to give up freedom of movement, work, friendships, social relations and even religious practices.

Dissenters are punished. A parish priest in the little town of Castelletto di Leco (Lombardy, Italy, 1500 inhabitants) decided to show his disagreement with social distancing by having dinner in the open, in front of the church, along with 4 workers who were there for some repair work on the structure.

He was fined, but to stress his opposition to the constricting measures, he again ate a pizza, outside the church, but now alone. This time the police showed up at the parish, removed him and brought him to a hospital for OST (Obligatory Sanitary Treatment).

The bishopric office issued the following statement that could have been written by George Orwell:

“Some patterns of behavior by Don Gianluca Prada (the parish priest in question) in recent days are the result of obvious personal discomfort. At this juncture, the bishop and his collaborators, after a moment of meditation, and with the advice of the treating physician, agreed with don Gianluca to put in place a series of measures so that he can recover, as soon as possible, a more serene personal condition. In the coming weeks, therefore, the current parish priest of Castelletto Di Leno will be absent from the parish and will be accompanied on a path of verification and support that allows him a full recovery”.

The episode shows how the religion of Christ on one hand, and the religion of money on the other, have bowed to the religion of science through the medium of medicine. The Church has seemingly set aside that a principle of mercy was to visit the sick, and that sacraments required the presence of an officiant to be administered. In turn capitalism, apart some grumblings, has accepted the losses in productivity, hoping or counting on a later agreement or compromise with the new religion.

But there are other implications. The medical religion has adopted a specialized version of the eschatological principle, meaning the final destiny of the soul and humankind – a principle that the Church quietly dropped, or at least has substantially de-emphasized.

Capitalism already did so, removing the idea of an end of time and replacing it with a state of permanent crisis. ‘Crisis’ was originally a medical Hippocratic term. It referred to the moment when the doctor decided if the patient would survive the disease. Past theologians used the term ‘crisis’ referring to the final judgment occurring on the last day.

The new medical religion combines the crisis implicit in perpetual capitalism with the Christian idea of a last time. Except that the final event, the Greek eschaton, is always evolving, advanced or delayed, but always under medical management. In the words of a modern philosopher it is the religion of a world that feels at an end and yet is unable, like the Hippocratic doctor, to decide whether it will survive or die.

Unlike Christianity the medical religion does not offer prospects of salvation and redemption. For the aimed-at healing can only be temporary, since the evil God, the virus, cannot be eliminated once and for all. On the contrary, it changes constantly and takes on new forms, presumably even more risky.

The paradox of a life that is simultaneously indefinitely-extended and indefinitely-limited is the fluid yet fundamental canon of technology-based medicine. All paradoxes imply a fiction – here it is a fiction propagated by every tongue and confirmed by measures that are at least controversial. Associated with the techno-medical canon is the unspoken goal of earthly immortality as the “supreme good.” Which is a radical reversal of historic and antique wisdom, when ancient ages exercised their abilities in the inquiry about the “supreme good”. They concluded that the highest degree of earthly happiness is a quiet and calm repose of mind and body, undisturbed by the sight of folly or the noise of business, the tumults of public commotion, or the agitation of private interest.

Homer associates the term ‘epidemic’ with ‘polemos’ – ‘polemos epidemios’ means civil war. Following the etymological trail, maybe the current epidemic represents a worldwide civil war that some sociologists claim it has substituted the traditional world wars. All nations and all people are at permanent war with themselves, for the unconquerable enemy lay within us.

As philosopher G. Agamben has described, the new ideological conflicts and wars will not be between philosophers and the Church but between them and a science that has acquired the characters of a religion. Those who will seek the truth and refuse the un-truth of the dominant will be accused to spread fake news (not ideas, because in a state of permanent crisis, news are more important than ideas). Philosophers will be slandered while scoundrels will profit from the misfortunes they themselves have caused.

On balance we are spectators of a perverse engineering of the narrative, sold as science-based, which, for

being ‘scientific,’ people should obey.

Lord Kelvin said about science and measurement: ”If you can’t measure it then it’s not science and your theory tends to be based more on imagination than knowledge.”

Given all of the above there is sufficient evidence to claim that the accuracy of the basic data (on coronavirus), has been compromised by the interests underlying the epidemic, political, pharmaceutical and monetary.

This is no conspiracy theory. Here, for example, is a statement from the director of the Illinois Department of Public Health (a Democrat), “If someone was in the hospital with a prognosis of a few weeks of life and then they also found a contact with the coronavirus his death was counted as a victim of the Covid”

Here is another. The epidemiologist Deborah Birx, specializing in the research of a vaccine against Aids – and who is part of the task force led by the ubiquitous Fauci – in an interview with the Washington Post said: “The accounting system of the Centers for Disease Control (Cdc) is “doubling” the coronavirus cases, and in the best of situations is increasing the measurements of contagion and mortality by up to 25%”.

I included two quotes, but in the US and in Europe we currently assist to a veritable battle among virologists of often completely opposite opinions. Not to mention the epidemic accounts by the corporate media. For their journalists paint facts according to their fancy and with a view to their wallet.

It may interest some to consider the major steps that helped medicine evolve and become what it is now. Since ancient times and until at least the first quarter of the XIX century, most medicine was based on what today we call ‘metabolism’. The word itself – metabolism – was coined in the 1830s to indicate “the sum of the chemical changes within the body by which the protoplasm and the cells are renewed.” In fact, however unappealing may be the method, to make a diagnosis, it was a common practice of doctors to taste the patient’s urine, and determine which potion, or herb, or ‘simple’ (as they called them) to administer. The practice continued until the first part of the XIX century.

The ensuing industrial revolution also meant the triumph of the machine, and it equally and radically altered the perception or the inner elaboration of basic ideas. And when one of the machines became the automobile, it was but a simple step, in the collective consciousness, to see an analogy between parts of the machine and parts of the body, and therefore between a garage and a clinic.

Later, to foster the transformation of medicine into techno-science, was the essential universality of the computer, when it became personal. Man had finally created the perfect means, the image and the metaphor to describe himself. Now the central operating system (the brain) and its software (the mind) controls the peripherals (organs) by dispensing current (blood) and special signals (hormones etc.).

The metaphor is so appealing as to obscure or almost nullify the influence of metabolism as a concept of important, immediate and constant value for the maintenance of life.

The subject is too wide to be compressed into a few statements. Suffice to say that, in the instance of the coronavirus, the ‘medical’ bridge to the remedy is ‘vaccine’ – whereas the ‘metabolic’ bridge to the remedy is ‘immunity’, or the natural in-built ‘immune-system.’

There is a large volume of serious research and methods to strengthen the individual immune system – research categorized under the overall concept of metabolism. Which is a discipline available to all, and its costs, compared to techno-medicine, are miniscule.

In techno-medicine metabolism is confined to the general advice given to patients to control their diet. For metabolism suffers from the deficiency of being cheap. Which is also one reason why techno-medicine is an

inseparable and natural companion of capitalism.

I will conclude with a historical anecdote. The Persian Avicenna (Ibn-Sina) wrote “The Canon of Medicine”, a medical encyclopedia in 5 volumes. It was the sum total of all medical and psychological knowledge available at the time of its publication (1025 AD). It was used as a standard medical textbook through the 18th century in Europe.

Psychology played an important role in diagnosing and curing – we could say it was consubstantial with the practice of medicine. Avicenna treated the subject also in another work, “The Book of Healing.”

And here is an example, a reported ‘case-study’. A prince of Persia had melancholia and suffered from the delusion of being a cow. He would moo like a cow, crying “Kill me so that a good stew may be made of my flesh,” and would never eat anything. Avicenna was persuaded to treat the case and sent a message to the patient, asking him to be happy as the butcher was coming to slaughter him. The sick man rejoiced. When Avicenna approached the prince with a knife in his hand, he asked, “Where is the cow so I may kill it.”

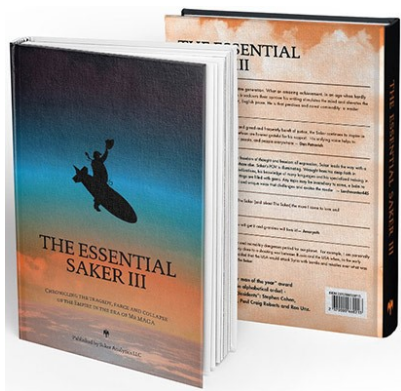
The patient then mooed like a cow to indicate where he was. He was then laid on the ground for slaughter. When Avicenna approached the patient pretending to slaughter him, he said, “The cow is too lean and not ready to be killed. He must be fed properly and I will kill it when it becomes healthy and fat. The patient was then offered food, which he ate eagerly and gradually gained strength, got rid of his delusion, and was completely cured.

How relevant may be the Avicennian case study to the current dynamics of the pandemic I will leave it to my possible and patient readers to decide.

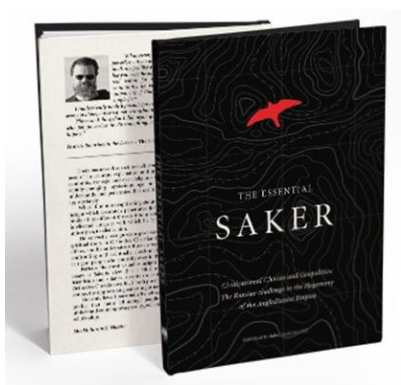
Finally, and from a quite different point of view, the coronavirus phenomenon fits the general, very old, but ever recurring problem of the “mundus inversus”, of the world upside down. The “contamination of the opposite” affects mathematics, anthropology, social history, religions, logic and more.

The semantic instrument used to overturn the normal, the natural and the logic by making them abnormal, unnatural and illogic was/is described by the Greek word “adynaton” – meaning a hyperbole magnified to such an extent as to be completely unfeasible. At a deeper level the adynata were/are reflections of a collective anxiety and of a desire for radical change. In the middle ages the idea of this inner and occult rebellion was conveyed by ample literature, involving impossible events, for example, a man who collects the winds, an ox that hunts a hare, a cosmic event that makes gold less valuable than iron, etc. In Renaissance art, scenes of impossible animals and men decorated the frames around the main frescos in the ceiling of castles. The technical name for this type of decorative frame was ‘grottesca’ (grotesque because impossible). In our times the most visible and official representation of the opposite of norms has remained the Carnival.

But a universal, often unconscious desire to turn the world upside down, to escape from the inevitability of the normal, the stricture of written and unwritten rules, the recurrence of the routine and/or the inescapability of the class system is still with us. And the true, authentic or questionable virologists suddenly turned into legislators may perhaps be the externation of an ancient collective desire for some kind of escape, in the imaginative fashion of a new, brave, upside-down world.



The Essential Saker III: Chronicling The Tragedy, Farce And Collapse of the Empire in the Era of Mr MAGA



The Essential Saker II: Civilizational Choices and Geopolitics / The Russian challenge to the hegemony of the AngloZionist Empire