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# Pandemics and Ideologies | The Vineyard of the Saker

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**By Jimmie Moglia for The Saker Blog**

A man's life's no more than to say 'one' – Hamlet tells his friend Horatio. And Voltaire has a character from one of his novels declare, "... We in a manner begin to die the very moment we are born: our existence is no more than a point, our duration an instant, and our globe an atom... I consider myself as a single drop in an immense ocean."

On the other hand, whatever we see, new or old, flourishing or declining, either directly or by a very short deduction, leads man to the consideration of his own end. Accordingly, we find that the fear of death has always been considered as the great enemy of human quiet, the polluter of the feast of happiness, and the embitterer of the cup of joy.

All this the world well knows. Fear of death is inevitably linked to desiring the continuation of life. Apart from the disputes among statisticians, the current pandemic has a relatively low mortality rate, heavily slanted towards the elderly. But the engine of fear, fortified and fed by the oxygen of publicity, has more or less driven

the world (or large parts of it) to an economic halt – simultaneously producing the weaponization of health care and an unprecedented upheaval of social life, comparable to the effects of a war.

Consequently, what a punctiliously censored minority still considers but a strain of influenza has become a catastrophe, a tragedy, a cataclysmic, apocalyptic, monumental calamity.

In the whole thing there are events so paradoxical as to appear lugubriously comical. Such as, for example, New York State governor's Mario Cuomo decision of ferrying Covid infected patients to retirement homes. Whose residents, weakened by age, health conditions and a reduced immune system would be inevitably more prone to infection.

Or the mass pilgrimage of vaccine enthusiasts in the Emilia region in Italy, to the nearby independent Republic of San Marino to get a shot of the Russian Sputnik V – given that the news and noise about the killing properties of European and/or American vaccines could no longer be easily squashed.

In fact, as of Mar 12, 21 the combined deaths linked to the administration of Pfizer and Astra Zeneca vaccines (data actually published by the manufacturers) exceeded 500 with 70,000 plus reported cases of severe and/or debilitating reactions.

Furthermore, who would have thought that, through a driven, clever, peculiar and extraordinary sequence of events, an inevitable combination of instinct of self-preservation, desire, weakness and assuefaction to unchallenged ideas propounded by authorities, would become the instrument and the engine for establishing a new world order – what everyone now glibly calls 'The Great Reset.'

One year ago that notion would brand its holder as a conspiracy theorist. One of many who pry into the world of conjectures, and amuse themselves with phantoms in the clouds.

Yet, that the rulers of the world should find in medicine the ideal tool for the great reset should not surprise. What is surprising is the spectacular, seamless and almost worldwide coordination of the operation.

With the meager power of hindsight it seems logical that corporate medicine is the optimal engine because – notably in the West – medicine has substituted religion as a root ideology, exchanging the transcendent for a temporary immortality while ignoring the paradox and contradiction in terms – for temporary immortality is no immortality at all.

It is then also congruent that medicine is the perfect vehicle for establishing a new mode of government, a new therapeutic order. For promised salvation, as a remedy to the fear of death, can tame, restrain and constrain in the mind of man the wild democracy of his passions.

Furthermore, the therapeutic order blends equally well with the palpable drifting of Western politics towards a kind of communistic capitalism, which, setting aside particular ethnic and cultural traits, differs from the capitalistic communism of China in degrees though not in substance.

For while China clamps down on freedom of expression, the corporate media is the Western equivalent of the Chinese voice of the party. And even the New York Times, which traditionally exhibited a shrewd eye for the limits within which dishonesty is the best policy, has long given up any pretense. While social media

shuts up and censors dissenting voices, when not directly punishing their utterers.

In this respect and as an aside, not long ago a now deceased European tycoon predicted that the day would come when, to carry out capitalistic right-wing reforms, it would be necessary to rely on the Left. The United Kingdom, Italy and other European countries are examples. In the US capitalism is more strongly associated with war. It was then natural that the Left would win the recent elections, however fraudulently was the operation performed.

Furthermore a sanitary emergency becomes an effective method of government of people and institutions the more the government can hide its real nature behind a therapeutic ideology.

But conveying to a 'believer' an alternative to his beliefs is more readily bound to failure than success. For one, the current medical narrative overwhelms any alternative. Therefore many, actually most, when meeting with different ideas, antithetical to those they hold and the world upholds, react with repressed irritation. For suddenly an important foundation of their inner world, on which their perceptions are based, is questioned.

Yet, even a cursory knowledge of the history of medicine could possibly crack the irrefragable resistance to entertaining any reservations about the dynamics of the current pandemics and their political-sociological-cultural implications.

Before continuing I should make it clear that I have the greatest respect for medicine – especially for those latter-day Michelangelos who essentially recover the life and reconstruct the body of humans involved in traumas and accidents.

Therefore, relating the following history of how the word ‘charlatan’ was born through an oblique association between medicine with charlatanry smacks of ignorance and arrogance, two semantic relatives often found together. Perish the thought! The intent here is to recall the chronicles of distant events, too secondary to attract the attention of most. And, as we will see, just as the devil is in the detail, the limits are in the lexicon.

‘Charlatan’ is a compound word of medieval Florentine language origin. One is ‘ciarla’ or ‘ciarlare’. Benedetto Varchi, a linguistic historian whose work was published in 1570, says that, “The word ‘ciarla’ and the verb ‘ciarlare’ are applied to those who speak only because they have a tongue, while having nothing else to do but talking. And because they cannot do anything else, what they say is nonsense, as they don’t know what they are talking about.”

The other contributing word is ‘Cerreto’, the name of a medieval fortified town close to Spoleto, in the Italian region of Umbria.

‘Ciarlatano’ then derives from the lexical admixture of ‘ciarla’=nonsense and ‘Cerretano’=an inhabitant of Cerreto.

For it came to pass that in the 14<sup>th</sup> century the citizens of Cerreto were granted the right of fund-raising for the benefit of certain hospitals of the “Order of St. Antony.” This is documented in the Statutes of Cerreto for the year 1380.

What became very urgent was the need to re-build and re-organize the hospitals and the “system of charity” (read ‘free health-care for the poor’), which had been disrupted and almost destroyed by the plague epidemic of 1348-49, and by subsequent recurrences. A plague that, allegedly, killed about one third of all Europeans.

The system of fund-raising was managed and administered by sundry official concessions, and related concessionaries. It was a meritorious and lucrative activity, for contributing to the funds were not only the offerings by the poor but the elargitions of the rich.

The plague of 1348, induced perhaps the first Great Reset, which also affected the ethics of mercy. The wealthy could reduce the time and intensity of their after-life sufferings, caused by sins committed in the nether-world while building their fortunes. The discount was proportional to the size of the elargition.

The collectors from Cerreto were essentially social workers and mediators between the rich who survived the plague and the infirm poor who crowded the 'hospitalia' of the lower Middle Ages.

Numerous Cerretans, however, took a cut out of the offerings, or set themselves up independently in business. Masuccio Guardati, called the "Salernitan," in chapter 18 of his 'Novellino' reports as follows: "... the Cerretans, as pseudo-friars of St. Antony, roam around Italy, asking for money in exchange for promises (made to or by St. Antony). Under this disguise, they pretend to be the mediators of miracles."

And in the "Confessional of St. Antony and Mirror of Conscience" (Florence, 1477) reference is made to the "Cerretani, of whom it is better said that they go around more stealing than collecting offerings."

The degeneration, due to widespread trickery and treachery, accompanied by petulance and imposture, prompted the bishop of Spoleto, on the recommendation of Pope Innocent III, to invite the Franciscan preacher Bernardino da Feltre to visit and deliver sermons of reproach and redemption to the locals. Bernardino was

famous for his tirades against any form of license and greed – a kind of Billy Graham ‘ante litteram.’

Bernardino da Feltre (1439-1484) was made a saint shortly after his death, an impossibility today because he was also a virulent anti-Semite. (See my article <http://thesaker.is/quo-vadis-vatican/> )

Not everyone was pleased. There were ideological efforts to justify the wickedness of the Cerretans by dating back their origins to Paganism. In other words, they were disguised pre-Christians priests of the ancient goddess ‘Cerere’ (hence ‘cerretani’), further corrupted as time went on.

They came originally from the Orient, *in partibus infidelium* (land of the faithless). And the term ‘cerretano’ was reconducted to the Byzantine-Greek word ‘keratas’, meaning ‘scoundrel’. But the humanists of the time did not buy this notion. Lexicographer Ambrogio da Calepio (1440-1510), in his dictionary of 1502, for the entry ‘Cerretani’ writes, “Those who take all the world for a ride, with a bit of wine and ugly superstition....they hail from the castle of Cerreto.”

The notoriety of the Cerretans-charlatans even reached Machiavelli, who in his 1512 satirical poem ‘L’asino d’oro’ (The Golden Ass) says,

“Lately a certain Cerretan.

Of whom many are seen around,

Promised that he would heal his father” ...

And geographer Leandro Alberti (1479-1522), in the pages dedicated to the Duke of Spoleto, from his book, “Description of the Whole of Italy” writes,

“There is found, among high and rocky mountains, Cerreto, a castle of recent naming and full of people. From there the Cerretans derive their name. They roam throughout the whole of Italy, pretending to sanctity through various means and with diverse colors, to obtain cash. And therefore from them it is derived the term, which – when someone importunately and shamelessly asks for something for free and colors his words with new ways and fictions in order to obtain it – it is said of him that he is a Cerretano.”

But it took about a century for the word ‘cerretano’ to migrate into multiple European languages as the word ‘charlatan.’ The meaning remained though its history is forgotten.

Perhaps expectedly, the Cerretans, having experienced success from promising discounts in the sufferings of the Afterlife, turned themselves into a kind of faith healers of the infirmities of the nether world.

Which is why, when, where and how the reproachful and irreverent association came about.

For the gulf between medicine and charlatanry has widened through the centuries, but a sense of a presence, a lingering, a difficultly-measured in-between grey area has never completely disappeared.

As recently as 1998 the medical doctor and poet Alessandro Bajini wrote that “... man is often disappointed by medicine, which is much ‘earth-earth’, and by faith, which is much ‘sky-sky’.” Meaning that patients were dissatisfied by both allopathic (if-you-don’t-feel-well-here-is-a-medicine-from-Big Pharma) and esoteric medicine (in the style of Indian gurus, faith healers and similar).



In the XIX century, the respected doctor Peter Lahan wrote that, “The practice of medicine is besieged on one side by charlatany and on the other by science.” And in the report covering an international medical congress held in 1985 we read that “...in the Western industrialized world, medicine is claimed to be a homogeneous, well defined, contradiction-free resource field, and a solid common good for society, but actually it is a profoundly contradictory and problematic resource.... for the deepening of the diagnostic gaze and the strengthening of therapeutic means have changed the cultural background on which concepts, values and symbols concerned with human health and its opposites: disease, precarious aging and premature death, are based.

The doctor, from a direct contact with the patient and his environment, has gradually developed an increasingly mediated relationship: a technological mediation often exasperating and destabilizing. This changed relationship tends to close the spaces that belong to the patient as a person... The technological boom in contemporary medicine and the uncontrollable increase in healthcare expenditure risk being paid for by a decrease in profit, economically, and by a growing dissatisfaction of the health-care providers and especially of the health-care provided in terms of well-being.

The dissatisfaction of patients, regarding their own well-being, due to a techno-medicine often more efficient than effective, is the fertile ground that has yielded a renewed breed of healers, exorcists, sorcerers and wizards.”

This was said in a Medical Congress in 1985. 35 years later, the needle has further shifted towards technology and mechanization.

How do you know? – you may ask. Or rather, on what authority can you say so other than having read it? In answer, authority I have none, but during the last five years I have held a part time job as a certified medical interpreter for Spanish speaking patients. I participated in about 2,000 sessions, during which I saw and/or learned about different pathologies, illnesses, conditions and treatments.

As many or most will probably agree, social phenomena do not occur in isolation. In the instance, the technicalization of medicine has evolved with the simultaneous mechanization of patients – meaning here that all patients had/have a car. And the analogy between the car and the body is too tempting to be overlooked. The body is made of parts and so is the car. The remedy for a defective car is the garage, for a defective body is the clinic.

A doctor actually suggested the analogy. During an intervention to remove a small cyst in the throat of a patient, his heart stopped for one minute. The patient recovered but in the aftermath of the surgery the doctor came to speak with the waiting relatives and told them about the occurrence. At which they were reasonably upset and complained for not having been told immediately- a practically unwise if not impossible request. Nevertheless, in order to sooth the worried relatives the doctor said, “.... This is why we do not make these interventions in a garage.”

Nor it ends here. The car may just be fine, but every so many miles, it is driven to a garage for routine maintenance. In the sociological analogy, the body is brought to the clinic for a routine medical check-up. Far from me to question the practice – I only report it. Even hearing from a doctor that you are in perfect health may have positive psychological benefits.

That the body-mind system is infinitely more complex than a car-parts assembly none will question. And even discounting the impropriety of the analogy, only the body-mind system can tell us how we feel. Its never-resting, dynamic operation is called metabolism. And metabolism, conceptually and practically, is very different from medicine. Or rather, individual care of metabolism comes before medicine, and medicine is the second or last resort. Perhaps for this reason, either Hippocrates or a contemporary said that after the age of 30 a man ought to be the physician of himself.

More than 1000 years later, in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the Salerno Medical School had this Latin inscription at the head of one of its books, "*Si tibi deficient medici, medici tibi fiant haec tria: mens laeta, requies, moderata diaeta*" (If you lack doctors, let these three things be your doctors: a serene mind, rest and a moderate diet.)

Nor is the clinic-garage analogy the first instance of puzzling associations. New discoveries have inspired different ages to create new models to define physiological analysis, medical practice and, in the end, medical truths.

Take the alembic for example. Its use was known since the High Middle Ages, but it had remained for long a mysterious and cabalistic device, used by alchemists and sorcerers. However, it acquired widespread use and notoriety in the XVI century, as the engine of distillation.

From the alembic medicine drew the model for the direction of fluids in the body and their purification. Subtle gaseous humors ascend from the lower to the upper body, cleansing its components of pollutants in a process of filtering and decanting.

Gerard Dorn, a French alchemist (1530-1584), and a follower of Paracelsus' medical theories, represents man actually inside an alembic while alongside, at different ascending levels, are represented a burner, a boiler, a condenser and a spout.

To obtain a positive medical outcome, a satisfactory distillation occurs only if the direction of the gaseous humors is facilitated by the position of the body. Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), in his famous 'Essays,' subscribes to this model describing the type of heat that is generated in the feet, to be transformed into vapors "that grow and exhale."

Francois de Bassompierre, in his memoirs, gives proof of the theory by the way he used to recognize the cadavers of Turkish soldiers, killed during the siege of Vienna in 1529. Their key characteristic – he wrote – was their rotten teeth, caused by wearing a turban, a headwear that impaires the distillation and therefore the ascension of the cleansed vapors and the complete purification of the body.

The theory of the distillation of humors gradually shifted towards a theory of 'invisible emanations.' Writes Pierre Bailly, in his "Questions nouvelles et curieuses" – (New and curious questions, 1628), "If fresh laundry has the power of cleansing and attract impurities, then as much, as long and as often we wear fresh laundry, the more quickly we will be purified."

Mademoiselle de Montpensier, found herself in Paris at the time of the famous "Frondes" (a rebellion by the nobility against the King) in 1649. She had to escape quickly and take refuge in the Castle of Saint Germain. Another carriage, adventurously carrying her accoutrements and general wardrobe, only reached her 10 days

later. In her Memoirs she writes that, during those 10 days and being short of clothes, “I was compelled to wash my nightgown by day and my daygown by night.”

And in a subsequent further evolution, the ‘invisible emanations’ turned into ‘impalpable humidities.’ Which increased the intermediate stages between health and illness, as most of the symptoms remained hidden (today we would call this patient an asymptomatic carrier). This state of affairs created medical management problems. In her memoirs, Madame de Maintenon (1683-1715, mistress of King Louis XIV, the “roi-soleil”), writes, “According to the doctor I am very well, but according to me I feel horrible.”

In the context of medical visits, it is worth mentioning that the popular ‘medical check-up’ was an American invention. In an amusing and somewhat irreverent book written by a European doctor, he recalls having heard of the ‘check-up’ in the 1950s, from some sailors who plied the American route.

They told him that, with the check-up, the patient was able to know his state of health and what could or would happen to him in the future. The patient’s economic conditions had an influence. And often it happened that the poorer patient was found healthier, while the wealthier had to undergo sundry additional tests and treatments to prevent future likely infirmities.

There have been voices against the excesses of medical pseudo-authority and pharmaceutical miracle-marketing. Seminal, in this respect, were the books by Ivan Illich, “Limits to Medicine”, “Medical Nemesis, The Expropriation of Health,” and “The Rise and Fall of Modern Medicine”, written by a medical and

impeccable source.

Even so, what is the link between the evolution of medicine and the new therapeutic order, that seemingly and seamlessly blends with the neo liberal, globalist ideology?

The link, I think, is straight-forward without resorting to conspiracy theories. The decline of religion and religious feelings in the West has been widely documented. But the sense of the Transcendent, of which religion is a conduit, never completely dies out in humans. When religion fails, a vacuum remains. Techno-medicine seems the nearest alternative – in time, moment and properties – to fill the vacuum and give the Transcendent a substitute habitation and a name.

To conclude, the implied purpose of medicine is to extend life indefinitely, which, lexically speaking, is a definition of immortality. The paradox cannot be denied. For, as of now, all that lives still must die, passing through nature to eternity.

Therefore, from the social and semantic point of view, medicine stands on the very narrow ledge and lexical limit that divides immortality from the indefinitely extension of life.

Historically, massive disasters and bloodbaths can be (also) traced back to doubtful lexical interpretations – for example, the interpretation of ‘Freedom,’ ‘Equality,’ even ‘Fraternity.’ The ‘Rights of Man’ led to thousands losing their head during the Terror.

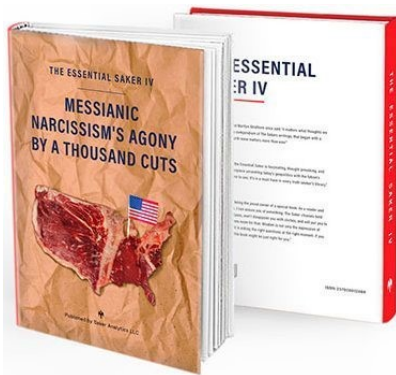
Communism caused countless victims, in the name of mythical equality. Capitalism, along with its agent, the invisible hand of the market, brought massive misery and poverty to millions.

Imperialism led to WW1, WW2, Hiroshima and maybe WW3.

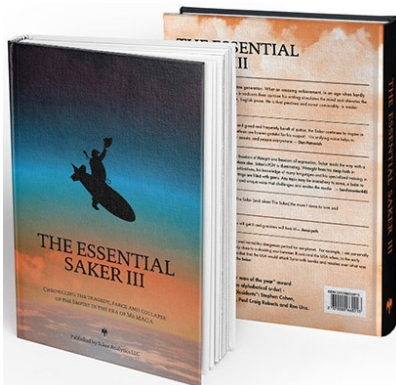
Exceptionalism has caused America to be among the most hated

countries outside her borders. And now therapeutic capitalism attempts to deprive humans of basic, common, long acknowledged individual liberties.

For what is worth, I think that a great improvement would occur if most, but especially the so-called authorities, were not spending much of their energy into upholding their own importance. To quote Spanish writer Carlos Castaneda, "If we were capable of losing some of that importance, two extraordinary things would happen. For one, we would free our energy from trying to maintain the illusory idea of our grandeur; and two, we would provide ourselves with enough energy to catch a glimpse of the actual grandeur of the universe."



The Essential Saker IV: Messianic Narcissism's Agony by a Thousand Cuts



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

