

TOO CLEVER FOR OUR OWN GOOD: A REFLECTIVE REVIEW OF TWELVE KEY ISSUES IN OUR WESTERN SOCIETIES

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ABSTRACT: *Many people in our Developed Western World believe that we are entering or are already in, an era of great societal change, redolent of the Renaissance and the Reformation periods from a cultural perspective and of the Industrial Revolution in terms of commerce, manufacturing industry and service provision. This study reviews and critiques a broad literature of developments from twelve areas namely 1. Loss of spiritual Faith by many; 2. Increasing Economic Inequality across the social strata; 3. The Increasing Incidence of Mental Illness in Western Societies; 4. Increasing Narcotic Drug Addiction; 5. Increasing Blue Screen Addiction; 6. Failure to Act on Global Warming and Erratic Weather Events; 7. Corruption of Democratically Elected Politicians and the resulting Public Protests Against Their Actions; 8. Trying to Fix the Symptoms of these maladies rather than the Cause; 9. Increasing Civil Unrest Worldwide and Increasing Militarization of Police Forces Worldwide; 10. Endocrine Disruptors; 11. Profit Before People; 12. Corona Virus (Covid 19). A selection of texts by well-established and specialist academic authors testify to the historic concern on these issues. These are supplemented by recent/current on-line sources. Academic journals are limited to past issues because immediate issues such as Covid -19 and racial issues such as the murder of George Floyd by police officers have yet to be published. This research identifies the unintended social and medical consequences which have arisen, in twelve of the most troubling social and medical issues of today. This research invites reflection and thoughtful critical comment from readers.*

Keywords: *Developed Western World; The Reformation; The Renaissance; The Industrial Revolution; Social Breakdown or Upheaval; Increased occurrence of mental illness, Endocrine Disruptors, Political Ineptitude, Covid 19 virus, Black lives Matter*

Disclaimer The author confirms that the opinions expressed in this paper are his own and are not necessarily those held by the institution and its publication.

Introduction

Our, family, friends' or colleagues will have concern and likely express an opinion on one or more of the twelve issues discussed in this paper. However, it is unlikely that they will have the level of

details on all twelve issues discussed herein. From the outset it is imperative that the reader know that the scope of this research concerns the developed western world. Informed readers know that most of the world's people fall outside of this framework. United Nations (UN) Data identifies that 33% of humanity live on less than US\$1:90/day whose plight is much greater than is the focus of this paper and

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will be covered in a future study. (UN-OHRLLS, 2020).

This research begins with a brief overview of the literature of earlier history, then proceeds to our current era, identifying twelve key issues affecting us all to encourage deeper review and understanding.

Earlier History

The Reformation (1517-1648) saw a major societal change in the Western World when the Christian church was split by Martin Luther (1483-1546) and John Calvin (1509-1564) who offered a Protestant alternative to Roman Catholicism (MacCulloch, 2003, MacCulloch, 2009, Montefiore, 2011). Here is where today's loss in spiritual by the majority in religious belief first took hold.

The Renaissance: (1300-1700) saw a blossoming in all forms of culture and art from the 14th to 17th centuries in Europe. As a cultural movement, the Renaissance encompassed innovative flowering of Latin and vernacular literatures, beginning with the 14th-century resurgence of learning based on classical sources, which contemporaries credited to Petrarch; (1304-1374). the development of linear perspective and other techniques of rendering a more natural reality in painting; and gradual but widespread educational reform began especially in the theoretical and applied sciences. It is crucial to appreciate that science divorced from spirituality has caused many of the twelve significant ailments plaguing our society and detailed in the following discussions some researched from the immediate and respected popular press whilst others are sourced from the academic press.

(MacCulloch, 2003, MacCulloch, 2009, Montefiore, 2011)

Current Era

Today, we are often told by many of our politicians, commercial and industrial leaders, that we are entering the 4th Industrial Revolution which will be characterized by the displacement of many people from manual work, where they will be replaced by robots. This is already underway in numerous automotive assembly plants in China such as BMW and Tesla; where the whole production line has been robotized (China Tesla,2020). Meanwhile in some kindergardens in China and Japan, teachers monitor the classes, but the actual teaching is done by robots. (Phys.org 2018) We are also informed that professionals such as lawyers, will be replaced by data-base management systems. (Watkins, 2018) In our developed western world citizens are told that they will be paid a living wage and be able to participate in the "gig economy" to earn additional income. (Wilson, 2017).

Sudden change is a traumatic prospect for many people who are used to living very structured lives. Books by social critic and theorist Jeremy Rifkin such as *The End of Work as We know it*, (1994-2004) and more recently in 2013, *The Zero Marginal Cost Society: The Internet of Things, the Collaborative Commons, and the Eclipse of Capitalism* and most recently, *The Third Industrial Revolution: How Lateral Power Is Transforming Energy, the Economy, and the World*, each graphically explain the forecast future.

Twelve Key Issues Affecting Us All

Key Issue #1: Loss of Spiritual Faith by Many

We now see (within the developed western world), a major loss of faith with the Christian Church in both Catholic and Protestant denominations. (MacCulloch, 2009, Pew Research Centre, 2015).

In the middle east, Islamic religion consists largely of two main groups namely **Sunni and Shi'ite**. Sunni is the most widespread form of Islam. Shi'ite Islam is the predominant religion in Iran and has major communities in Lebanon and Iraq. The division between the groups began after the death of Muhammad (570 AD - 632 AD) who did not make any provision for a successor and continues to the present.

A third group called ISIS have split from those two traditional forms of Islamic worship to one espousing and practicing death and destruction to all who do not follow their creed. One group operating in North Eastern Nigeria is called Boko Haram (Boko meaning western education Haram meaning forbidden), believes that western education espouses wrong societal values for the Muslim faithful and they further believe that women are meant to remain uneducated, marry, stay at home and procreate. If one is dispassionate on this subject, then one realizes that within the last century, this was the custom in much of the developed western world. (Rubio Marin, 2014).

This wide-spread loss of Christian religious faith by the many, has been largely replaced by worship of money and material possessions often referred to as consumerism or materialism. Both defects of *The Consumer Society*, eloquently described in a book authored by philosopher and social critique, Jean Baudrillard, (1970) and more recently in a book by Alain De Botton (2004) in his book titled *Status Anxiety*. It is this “materialism” or worship of money, along

with failure of the church leadership to drag its feet on rooting out corruption and pedophilia that has caused parishioners to leave the church and in the process lose their spiritual faith. (Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, 2017).

Key Issue #2 Increasing Economic Inequality Across the Social Strata

Our increasingly materialistic developed western society sees an increasing economic divide between the so called 1% mega rich and the 99% living an increasingly subsistence lifestyle. This was eloquently detailed by Joseph Stiglitz (2012) in his book, *The Price of Inequality*. Recent documentary movies record many people living in tents on the streets of San Francisco without access to clean water and toilet facilities. This is a recipe for the spread of disease in a major urban metropolis, in what is supposed to be the richest country in the world.

If, as is commonly believed, Covid-19 arose in Wuhan city in China we need to be asking ourselves, what other disease could arise in our own poisoned cities such as San Francisco? Little imagination is required to see a return of cholera, typhus, typhoid, measles, mumps, or polio. Many of our poorest members of our community have not been vaccinated against these diseases and added to that we have the “anti-vaxer movement” who shun the practice of vaccination. (University of South Australia, 2020).

Many of these comments relating to social inequality are supported by a recent book and documentary movie narrated by Noam Chomsky (2017) entitled “Requiem for the American Dream” which details **the** 10 principles which lead to the concentration of wealth and power:

1. Reduce Democracy

2. Shape Ideology
3. Redesign the Economy
4. Shift the Burden
5. Attack Solidarity
6. Run the Regulators
7. Engineer Elections
8. Keep the Rabble in Line
9. Manufacture Consent
10. Marginalize the Population.

Key Issue #3 The Increasing Incidence of Mental Illness in Western Societies

In what we believe to be a largely western social miasma, an increasing number of people are suffering from mental illness. This is attributable to the increased number of aged people in the community, many of whose mental faculties decline with age. (CDC Statistics: Mental Illness in the US - psychcentral.com). However, this singular cause is an over-simplification for the increasing presence of mental illness in our western societies. (US National Institute of Health 2019).

Many people wish to live longer, even when their mental faculties have declined, rather than living perhaps a good quality of life, seems perverse to this researcher. Those of us with aged parents or grandparents know in our conversations with many of them that with age comes deteriorating physical and mental faculties and that these inevitably detract from the joy and quality of life. Surely quality of life is more important than length of life. This is not to say that these two factors are mutually exclusive. (Shrestha, Martin, Wyld. 2019).

I must stress here the Christian tenet that we must take care of our life not just give it up, because of difficulties with mental or physical health. (Galatians 6:5 ESV / 471 helpful votes. For each will have to bear his own load).

We are now seeing increasing incidence of mental illnesses such as Schizophrenia in the young.(Charleston, 2018) Governments in developed western societies have traditionally under-funded physical and mental health programs (Royal College of Physicians, 2016) which leads to the growing magnitude and incidence of this problem. (Charleston 2018). Returning to the crux of this research, it is crucial to determine the many true causes of mental illnesses in our societies and address them at their root, rather than just keeping on medicating people. Erving Goffman (1922-1983) a world leading sociologist, in his research publications *Asylums* (1961) and *Stigma* (1963) clearly identified the need to determine the societal sources of these mental illnesses rather than merely medicating and institutionalizing the outcomes/symptoms.

Key Issue #4 Increasing Narcotic Drug Addiction

In members of our communities, we see increasing addiction to substance abuse, such as alcohol, tobacco (laced with potent chemical mind-changing compounds) and other narcotic drugs such as crystal methamphetamines. The current fad in the USA of “Vaping” among the youth in our societies has already resulted in deaths and is indicative of likely future health issues. (Radcliffe, 2019) The contention that people resort to narcotics initially to escape reality of debt slavery, the ceaseless seemingly uselessness of life without meaningful employment, (aggravated by enforced continuous lockdown at home for 2-3 months due to Covid 19 virus) and loss of spiritual faith. We know from discussion with family and friends that initial recreational use of narcotic drugs

ultimately leads in many cases to dependence and addiction.

Consumer drug use (demand) leads to an encouragement to supply. Even as I write this research paper in May 2020, the head of UN Drug enforcement admits that whilst effective policing of drugs use has focused on identifying and capturing end users and their immediate “pushers” efforts remain ineffective in identifying and capturing suppliers of the raw materials and manufacturers of the end product. (Feldab - Brown, 2008) but no reasons for this loss of focus have been offered by the United Nations.

Our society’s currently most popular solution to drug abuse is to confiscate the end products and lock up the users and their immediate pushers, rather than identifying and fixing the underlying need to consume narcotic drugs. The evidence shows that the current capture and imprisonment action does not solve the narcotics problem. (The Pew, 2012). We now have huge numbers of people in prison at tax-payer expense, where it is alleged that many are being radicalized by terrorist elements rather than being rehabilitated. (Hamm, 2008).

The construction of additional prisons is sub-contracted to private firms to house and manage prisoners but is still unable to cope with an increasing number of felons. (Binswanger, Nowels, Corsi, Glanz, Long, Booth, & Steiner, (2012); Mumola, & Karberg, (2010); The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, 2020). The justice system fails to provide enough deterrent to those seeking financial gain through participation in the illicit manufacture and trading of narcotics and requires drastic overhaul.

A recent and rapidly growing form of addiction in America and the UK is opioids taken for relief of pain. The problem is that opioids are addictive and are legally available through pharmacies. One of America’s largest and privately-owned opioid pharmaceutical manufacturers (Perdue Pharmaceutical) was faced with severe financial penalties for supplying opioid medications to doctors who prescribed it to patients who then became addicted. Four other pharmaceutical manufacturers have been heavily fined. To escape imprisonment and financial loss, the owners of Perdue Pharmaceutical (The Sackler family) sought bankruptcy protection and relocated from New York to Florida. It is likely they will succeed in escaping financial loss and imprisonment whilst leaving the addicted community without legal recourse (Hakim, Rabin, Rashbaum, 2019).

The doctors who so freely prescribed those opioid medicines will also likely escape prosecution and the addicted users will likely move onto the next addictive “remedy”. A similar addiction problem exists in the UK where addicts take increasing amounts of Ibuprofen (an aspirin substitute). UK law was recently changed to require a doctor’s prescription. We know that has not worked effectively in the USA and will likely also fail in the UK so why is this action being taken? What it does is to lengthen and enrich an additional player (a General Practitioner or GP) to the supply chain. (Smith, C 2018).

Key Issue #5 Increasing Blue Screen Addiction

Another social problem shown to increase mental illness is “blue screen addiction” of the young (and not so young) to mobile devices. Some years ago, the

sales pitch for mobile phones was “power” Your mobile phone had to be 2 watts capable (bigger is better). This is ridiculous, because spacecraft travelling beyond Venus did not require that much power to transmit data back to earth.

Heavy users of these powerful mobile phones were experiencing debilitating headaches and developing brain cancers. Then came Blue Tooth earphone receivers, same problem. Only later did mobile phone companies make earphone buds available. Today the mantra is 5G, which will require the need to purchase new mobile phones, tablets, laptop or desktop to access 5 G services. (Dolcourt, 2020).

Today we see many people walking around “zombie-like,” not looking where they are going, whilst expecting others to make way for them as they wander along public pavements or on the platforms of public transportation station and in shopping malls not looking where they are going, oblivious to everyone or everything around them. To overcome this addiction many Chinese parents have begun sending their mobile phone addicted children to Government-run, rehabilitation centres, to break them of their blue screen addiction. (Phillips. 2017).

Meanwhile, telecom companies are gleefully promoting 5G networks as the next “must have”. It saddens this author to see that several of these telecom companies target young children just 4-6 years of age in advertising their 5G services, which is patently unethical and illegal in Thailand and many other countries and yet they do so with impunity. (DLA Annual Report, 2014, Advertising to Children).

This researcher sees young people, by their dress barely able to afford regular meals, convinced by slick advertising to

own two or three so called “smart phone” devices. I ask you the reader, “If smart phones are so smart, why do we need more than one device and why are we still fiddling with these devices using two thumbs or other digits, instead of just talking to our phones.” (I know that voice recognition has long been available) The reason is that telecom companies make more money, using this old and slow hand-operated technology). A friend recently explained to me that “smart phones are smart, but the users are not so smart”. (personal anecdote of this author 2020).

Key Issue #6 Failure to Act Sufficiently on Global Warming and Erratic Weather Events

If we believe that global warming is at least in part due to human interventions, why are gasoline powered cars still being produced? Statistics clearly show their contribution to the problem. (Union of Concerned Scientists, 2018). The answer is that people will continue to buy gasoline powered cars, irrespective of the environmental damage which they cause, because they believe that if those vehicles were causing this serious problem our Governments would act on our behalf to ban them.

This is clearly nonsense when governments fail to act on other crucial problems facing our societies such deteriorating infrastructure, failure to protect and care for the elderly, clearly permit corruption in banks, financial institutions, and the insurance industry to persist. (Amnesty International 2018).

Instead in the west, it is business as usual, where-as in China, electric and hydrogen-powered vehicles are being produced and the manufacturers are providing recharging stations throughout

the country to stimulate purchase of their vehicles.

Failure to act, in the west, lies equally with the general public motor-vehicle owners who continue to buy gasoline powered cars; their governments who have not legislated against production, and the car manufactures who are happy to keep producing what people want. This is known as “a process of denial” which is another form of mental illness. (Melosi, 2019).

Unlike in China, in the developed west, no one political or environmental party is taking the lead. In September 2019, Elon Musk worked with the Chinese government and financial institutions to build a Tesla electric car factory on a green-field site within twelve months which is producing and selling all-electric vehicles called Tesla. (China Tesla, 2019) Because of small production numbers and the practice of offering high end models Tesla cars are priced beyond what most people can afford. In contrast, Nissan Motor of Japan has just begun selling its all electric “Leaf” compact model which is a small coupe and which I hope will sell well and be rewarded with increasing sales. (Nissan 2020).

As a way of getting public attention and action on Global Warming this researcher suggests that we reinstate the equivalent of the post, World War II, *Doomsday Clock* displayed publicly to all and on tv and social media, as part of the daily news services, much as we display daily temperatures and weather conditions of capital cities around the world to direct people’s attention on what citizens need to do and by when.

The same principle is clearly visible today with daily publication of Covid 19, Corona Virus infection, recovery and death

statistics by city region and country. The *Doomsday Clock* will record our approach to achieving environmental objectives rather than its earlier purpose of identifying the likelihood of World War III occurring and by when. Words alone are insufficient. The original Doomsday clock was in Times Square New York city to get people’s attention on how close we were to unleashing nuclear war between the east and the west. (Casey, January 22, 2020).

Key Issue #7 Corruption of Democratically Elected Politicians and Widespread Public Protests Against Their Actions

As can be seen by the growing number of protests in many parts of the world, prior to lockdown mandated in many countries because of Corona Virus in February to May 2020, the public has become disenchanted with many decisions made on their behalf by their elected politicians. Many protesters felt that their politicians live in a privileged “bubble,” isolated from their constituents, ignoring their legitimate requests for rebalancing income inequality; winding back reduced civil liberties such as freedom to conduct non-violent protests and freedom of association, reduction of predatory and polluting practices by many manufacturers and service providers. Lobbying of politicians by manufacturers and service providers (Ospena-Ortiz and Roser, 2020). The bubble surrounding our politicians is formed by an envelope of bribery in the form of money and access privilege (Berlin, 2014, Sandel, 2013, Chomsky, 2006, 2017, Klein, 2013).

A recent example of Australian Federal Government ineptitude, during the last two years, Australia rolled out the NBN national broadband internet system.

Shortly complaints surfaced about slow connection speeds. This was due to the use of copper connection systems to customers premises. Even developing countries like Thailand use fiber optic connections, directly into the home, office, or factory, rather than copper, because fiber permits higher speeds and uses much smaller conductors and cableways.

Questions need to be asked Why this could happen? Who approved it? and What action will be taken against the perpetrators who squandered tax-payer funds on outdated technology . (Turner, 2019) In May 2020 it was announced in the Australian press that a new private provider will enter the market with an all fibre network, to compete with NBN. (New Daily May 2020) This researcher believes that it will not only succeed where NBN has failed but that it will become the dominant player.

Key Issue #8 Plastic Waste: Yet Another Example of Trying to Fix the Symptoms Not the Cause

In October 2019, two states in Australia (New South Wales and Victoria) instituted a requirement for householders to sort their trash into six (not two or three categories) to make it easier for recyclers to process their waste. For example, milk is purchased in plastic containers the body, cap or closure and label are each made of a different type of plastic which for recycling, must be separated into three different plastic category bins by users. This is stupidity on an unforgivable scale. Make all components from the same material. Impossible, you might say, but not so: Many years ago, my father delivered milk to houses by ladling milk from a 20 gallon can on his bicycle into a “billy can” hung on the front gate of each house The billy can

and lid were plain metal, one material no label. Later this changed to refillable heavy-duty glass bottles with a single use cardboard wad cap and later non re-useable aluminum foil cap and so we have “progressed” to where we are today.

The question must be asked, “Why Australia was exporting plastic waster overseas instead of processing it locally?” The answer is that someone was making money out of it and in the process, abrogating their responsibility “to clean up the mess of their own making”. That action was patently unethical and environmentally destructive.

When China and Indonesia stopped taking Australia’s exported contaminated plastic waste in August 2019, (Walden and Renoldi, 2019). State governments in Australia buried the plastic waste in their own domestic waste landfills, contrary to agreement with their electorate, rather than reducing the production of these wasteful and harmful materials at the source. Again, those activities were patently unethical and broke the agreement of trust between leadership and the electorate. The proverb “Out of sight out of mind”(Heywood, 1562). seems to have driven the actions of those involved here. A more effective approach would have been not to cart away plastic waste from households for 2-3 collection periods or charge households a higher fee depending upon the quantity of garbage to be carted away as is done in Germany. The “user pays” methodology appears to be appropriate in this case.

This researcher witnessed on public television in October 2019, Australian Federal Parliamentarians recommending that Australian waste disposal authorities, incinerate waste. Those parliamentarians are so out of touch with the latest science, which confirms that incineration releases

highly toxic dioxins into the atmosphere. Furthermore, the waste incinerators used for burning plastics are notoriously ineffective and hugely costly to install and maintain. Incinerators have bankrupted several American cities. We need to reduce, recycle and re-use usage, but not bury or incinerate. Interested readers should watch the documentary movie *Trashed* starring Jeremy Irons (1996) for full disclosure of these issues. (Brady, Ogilvy, Brady, 2012).

Key Issue #9 Increasing Civil Unrest Worldwide and Increasing Militarization of Police Forces Worldwide

Over the last decade, signs of civil unrest in Athens in Greece, Paris in France, Chile, Venezuela, El Salvador and in August-September 2019 Hongkong and in June 2020 UK and USA. What began as peaceful protests have turned violent, because the politicians and law enforcement agencies resorted to confrontation and violence rather than conciliation and negotiation. (Walden, and Renaldi 2019).

Related to this (but proceeding those protests by a period of perhaps ten years), police services world-wide, became heavily militarized and equipped with military weapons of war. No one protested those actions. Communities are now being monitored 24/7 by CCTV equipped with facial recognition software and very few people have protested the move. Now many governments want people to synchronize their mobile phones to government operated systems to track and trace them allegedly ease tracking and tracing of people infected with the Covid 19 virus who have been in close physical presence with them. The problem is that

this mechanism may not be removed when the virus no longer presents a danger in the community or if it cannot be removed from the community. This is reminiscent of George Orwell's Big Brother or Marvell's V for Vendetta scenarios.

The USA military complex has long attacked its enemies with ballistic missiles launched thousands of miles from the target without warning to the innocent target civilian population of the impending attack to enable them to seek shelter. This is pure evil. The USA has now developed "Killer Robots", in the form of tiny drones equipped with facial recognition equipment and a detonating charge. The robot once launched will seek and find the target individual and kill that person by detonating its explosive charge. This technology was used to assassinate Major General Qassem Soleimani and others in his retinue in Iran on 3rd January 2020 (Turak, 2020).

These killings in our name are signals to us all, that science, management, and application technology has lost its ethical bearings and gone awry. This has long been ignored by the general public (to their peril) who have been lulled into accepting this as necessary in the fight against The "War Against Terror" or The war on Covid 19 (both are misnomers) and which has largely come about because of the belligerence of the west in seeking to impose western political and economic systems in faraway lands; to secure petroleum for the use of largely western countries. However, those middle eastern people prefer to live by political, economic, cultures and religions different to the west. (Robson, David, 2017, Chomsky, 2006, 2017).

Civil unrest has returned despite of the Covid 19 restrictions due to the murder

by police of George Floyd in Minneapolis in June 2020. That in turn has reignited the “Black Lives Matter” issue and because most people will no longer tolerate the status quo.

Key Issue #10: Endocrine Disruptors: The Deadly Side Effects of Common Chemicals Likely Contributing to The Cancer Pandemic

Many of the chemicals in our environment, originally developed for good purpose, are now known to be extremely toxic to humankind are called endocrine disrupters.

<https://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/topics/agents/endocrine> accessed September 2nd 2019).

These substances are causing untold damage to the health of population and yet-to-be-born infants. Many have been linked to the cancer pandemic. Some examples are:

DDT developed to suppress battlefield insects and diseases resulting from those insects, such as malaria in World War II was, post war, sprayed over whole communities in peace time and on crops after use in World War II to rid areas worldwide of mosquitoes, but then bird and animal life was devastated, and water courses poisoned. Residents died of cancer and mentally retarded. *Silent Spring* (1982) by Rachel Carson, (1907-1964), whilst not the first book on the topic, gained substantial publicity when the chemical industry fought to stop publication. That was unsuccessful and in fact resulted in the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency under President Jimmy Carter, (1977-1981). Nevertheless, the powerful chemical corporations lobbied government to reduce staffing and budget for the agency beginning with President

Ronald Reagan (1981-1989) and each successive U.S. president has weakened the EPA through staff and budget cuts.

There are twelve other common endocrine disruptors in our modern environment in such innocuous products a personal health-care toothpaste, hair shampoo, soap, body lotion and cosmetics Up to 300 other compounds are known to be endocrine disruptors, whose effects are only now being studied. (Colburn, Dumanoski, Peterson, Myers, 1997) Even now those contaminated personal health-care products continue to be made and sold without any warning labels on the packages or alternative product formulations offered. The results of endocrine disruptor research may go some way to explaining the epidemic proportions of cancer, low fertility rates in men and women in our societies and the increasing number of children being borne with autism and ADHD mental impairment.

Agent Orange, a defoliant manufactured by Monsanto Corporation of USA was sprayed over jungles and plantations in Vietnam to clear vegetation used by as cover by Viet Cong guerrillas. Agent Orange residues remain in Vietnam and many children have been born with missing limbs, and mental retardation. Two hundred and fifty thousand soldiers from USA, Australia and Britain who were exposed to the chemical, have since developed cancers and the US government brought a class-action suit, agents the manufacturers to establish a fund to meet their medical needs. (Candida Brady and Titus Ogilvy, 2012) <https://www.britannica.com/science/Agent-Orange> accessed 02nd September 2019).

Tetra-Ethyl Lead was used in motor gasoline for decades to improve its combustion efficiency in internal

combustion engine driven automobiles, but it was then discovered that lead residues were poisoning the environment and killing people. (Colburn, Dumanoski, Peterson, Myers, 1997). We should have learnt the lesson from Ancient Rome, where lead water piping was believed to have contributed to the poisoning of its citizens and the downfall of that great society. Yet today, thirty-three cities in the USA (amongst them Flint Michigan), have public water supplies with dangerously high levels of lead in their drinking water which persists several years after it was detected. (Schneyer and Pell, 2017).

Teflon or Polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) was developed as a low-friction plastic in 1938 By Roy Plunkett of Dupont Corporation USA and eventually found its way into non-stick coating on cookware. We now know that the Teflon migrates under the influence of cooking temperatures to the food contained within the cookware. Elements of Teflon are now known to be Endocrine disruptors, leading to obesity, sexual dysfunction in men, low fertility rates in women, and possibly cancer. (Colburn, Dumanoski, Peterson Myers, 1997).

Bisphenol A₂ The chemical compounds used to line metal food cans to prevent corrosion of the inner surface of the containers by the food and beverage contents, migrates into the food contained within the can and when consumed, those compounds act as endocrine disruptors. (Bisphenol A (BPA) | FDA <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-additives-petitions/bisphenol-bpa> accessed 02 September 2019) The same compound is used in making baby feeding bottles and many other domestic food and drink containers.

Key Issue #11 Profit Before People

The rush to commercially exploit scientific discoveries into consumer products without due diligence and consumer testing has been driven by the perceived need to maximize profit by commercial conglomerates in the minimum time. (Chomsky, 1999, 2017, Bakan (2004, Achbar, Abbott & Bakan 2004). No successful prosecution of any of the companies associated with the development, release, and promotion of the above products into communities has occurred because those corporations are the lobbyists penetrating our government chambers. (Koopman 2017).

The labels on cigarette, packages, sold in Thailand requires a warning label of tar and nicotine but not of other “mind bending” compounds added to the tobacco used to make the cigarettes. In Kampuchea for example no warning labels are provided because the law in Kampuchea, does not require it. The cigarette companies merely comply with the law but have no regard to ethical and health implications on the population. They clearly put profit over people.

Similarly, production and use of insecticides, prohibited for use in the USA insecticides are manufactured for export where they kill and cause cancer in inhabitants in another country. (Panuwet, Siriwong, Prapamontol, Ryan, Fiedler, Robson, & Barr. 2012) Interestingly, the fruit and vegetables sprayed with those chemicals have been exported back to the USA where they now poison US citizens. The so-called *Circle of Poison* has been closed. This scenario was graphically portrayed in a book and documentary movie *The Circle of Poison* starring David Weir and Mark Shapiro. Two other documentary movies titled *Bananas* (2009)

and *Big Boy's Go Bananas* (2013), produced by Swedish director Frederik Gertten, inform us of a similar occurrence in Nicaragua where Dole Corporation sprayed crops whilst workers were inside the plantation. The workers became impotent. Dole sued Gertten for producing the documentary. Gertten gained support from the Swedish Government and later the European Union, who advised Dole to withdraw their lawsuit if they did not wish to face prohibition of the sale of Dole products into the EU. Dole withdrew their lawsuit.

Key Issue #12 Corona Virus (Covid 19)

In what sense can Covid 19 be regarded as a defect in our western society? Viruses are part of nature. The Covid 19 virus was resident in cave dwelling bats located in mountainous caves in Wuhan China. Local people like to eat bat meat as part of their traditional cuisine. Some people possibly ate raw or under-cooked bat meat and became infected with the Corona Virus which then rapidly spread to the local population. It is important to say clearly that the outbreak in Wuhan was the first to become widely publicly known. It may be that the virus originated elsewhere and was not identified as such. (Davidson, 2020). In June 2020, a new Covid -19 outbreak has erupted at a wet market in Beijing necessitating lockdown of that city. Historically, the occurrence of The Spanish Flu in 1918 infected 500 million people and killed between 17-50 million people. Most recently Mad Cow Disease in 2018, witnessed 231 deaths, SARS, 2003, saw 774 deaths) and MERS, in 2016 saw 1,465 deaths. These viruses were not man made, but they were spread by people going about their everyday activities such as touching infected door-handles, elevator buttons,

mass transit hand holds, stairway handrails. SARS and the current COVID 19 arrived into the human population when some people purchased the carcasses of wild animals in a wet market and ate those exotic species such as bamboo rats, and bats as part of their cultural preference to consume exotic species some of which were infected with Covid 19 which in-turn infected them. When those infected people contacted others or were close to others, the virus spread through social interaction.

Each new virus affecting humans requires the development of new vaccines and/or pharmaceutical to build immunity to the virus. That development of vaccines/ medicines typically requires a 1-2-year period of research, development, and testing before it can be “rolled out” to the community. In the interim large numbers of people die and many more become ill. The negative economic and social consequences are staggering.

The Corona virus (Covid19) has already infected 734, 063 people and killed 34,822 in China, Italy Spain, and USA as at 30 March 2020. (Corona Virus Pandemic, March 30, 2020).

After very clear guidelines were identified and explained in the media, some people are still ignoring the guidelines and not following the sanitary procedures and social distance guidelines. The attitude seems to be “it happens to other people”.

As of this writing (mid-June 2020) public parks, gymnasiums, sports facilities, theatres, museums, department stores have been closed for 2-3 months in most countries. In Thailand restaurants are now permitted to provide table however many patrons prefer home delivery (which carries other infection risks) . Churches and Mosques services have just been reopened; Gatherings for weddings are limited to 10-

20 people and at funerals to twenty people. International airlines have shut down and once open country borders are being closed. (Adams and Lupini 2020).

A shocking news clip from Italy, showed truckloads of corpses being dumped into a series of pits. The corpses were people who could not afford a Christian burial. They were to be immediately burnt to destroy the virus and covered with topsoil in a mass grave. This clip was reminiscent of how the Nazis disposed of Jews in the Holocaust. In New York city corpses are being kept in refrigerated trailers awaiting burial in communal large pits.

Meanwhile in almost all Covid 19 affected countries, doctors and nurses ministering to infected patients are deprived of necessary personnel protective equipment and are dying unnecessarily. This has largely come about due to long term underfunding by Government of National Health Care facilities. (Rhatigan, 2020).

In addition, elderly citizens who are known to be amongst the most vulnerable are dying from the virus at a much greater than average rate in aged care facilities in most affected countries of the world. Public hospital facilities are ill equipped to cope. The problem here, is two-fold underfunding of tax-payer government administered health-care systems (Wetsman 2020) and profit maximization of private healthcare provided facilities systems worldwide.

In UK, Australia, and USA many of these aged care facilities were found not to be in compliance, long before Covid 19 arrived. The penalties which were applied were insufficient to prevent recurrences. Those offending facilities should have been

closed, and/or brought up to compliance under new ownership.

When Covid 19 was identified medical doctors and nursing staff warned governments worldwide that Covid 19 would likely prove devastating to the elderly whose immune systems are weak. We have witnessed a very large proportion of deaths in aged care facilities where medical staff lacked proper personal protection apparel and became infected and then infected those in their care. Doctors have sworn the Hippocratic Oath not to discriminate among those in their care, but were forced to do so, with some being threatened with termination of employment if they brought this policy into the public domain. Elderly people who have paid taxes throughout their life were sacrificed under this policy and those responsible must be brought to account. (Johnson 2020).

There are 4,000 diseases known to the UN, for which we have no known cure. This is indeed an alarming figure and indicates that we are “not as clever as we think we are” There is no evidence that active research is being sought for those diseases. Only when a pandemic is likely will the necessary research and development of vaccines begin. “Déjà vu” seems an appropriate response here.

It is perhaps appropriate to close this discussion by citing two closing aphorisms which are as true today as when they were first coined long ago:

Two Closing Aphorisms

Aphorism #1. “Ignorance is Not Bliss”:
(Thomas Gray,1747)

We have been warned repeatedly of the impending disaster which awaits us and future generations (if they are indeed capable of being born).

Much earlier, we were warned by Vance Packard (1914-1996) in his books, *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957); *The Status Seekers* (1959) and *The Waste Makers* (1960) and many other timely publications of the dangerous and wasteful path we were treading and which we continue to follow.

Philosophically, we have been encouraged by the brightest minds to tread a more sustainable path than we are currently on, by such luminaries as Bertrand Russell (1872-1970); Jean Baudrillard, (1929-2007); Peter Singer (1946-) atheists all, who, never the less, knew/know that we are on a path to the end of life on earth.

Aphorism #2 “A Little Knowledge is a Dangerous Thing” : (Alexander Pope 1711)

Technologically (and that includes all sciences including medicine) we were guided to consider alternative paths to development of our societies by luminaries among the science community such as Albert Einstein (1879-1955), Richard Feynman (1918-1988); R Buckminster-Fuller (1895-1983).

Our brightest minds, whether philosophical/religious or scientific, admit that whilst science can answer many questions and help solve some immediate problems, that the science itself is tentative and will undergo change. Many people do not understand this and accept science as dogma.

A fundamental flaw with applied science, is that it promotes and facilitates development of products to solve an immediate problem e.g. food sticking to cookware without the developers taking due diligence of other unwanted, perhaps long-term health ill side-effects such as the

compound, now known to be an endocrine disrupters.

Other examples are the development of The Atomic Bomb in 1944 and later the Hydrogen Bomb in 1950. A product, in this case a weapon, was developed and has left the world a frightful legacy and fallout on Bikini Atoll in the Pacific, and Maralinga in the state of South Australia, were repeatedly used as sites for open air nuclear bomb testing.

More recently malfunctioning atomic reactors at Three Mile Island, (1979) in the US; Chernobyl (1986) in Russia and Fukushima Daichi.(2011) in Japan have spread nuclear waste globally throughout the atmosphere and caused it to enter our human food chain, through us consuming infected crops and dairy cattle meat and milk. We now all contain these radioactive components and will continue to pass them onto successive generations into the future.(King, Laura; Hall, Kenji; Magnier 2011).

Conclusion

Each of the twelve problem areas identified need to be carefully studied and solutions applied to the source not just to the symptoms as is current practice.

The Covid 19 virus, whilst it persists, has shut-down some public protests in many countries for the time being. Forcing people to work at home and not congregate which not only inhibits spreading of the Covid 19 virus but also limits people forming into protest groups. However, in mid-June 2020 mass protests erupted in the US, London, and Australia, despite such mass gatherings being deemed illegal due to Covid-19 restrictions. Protesters were demanding removal of statues of famous colonialists from public

spaces because they were now deemed racist. (Ebrahimi, 2020).

Environmentalists and concerned citizens will be pleased that greenhouse gases have been reduced even at the cost of citizen's mobility and economic prosperity. But this will likely last only if Covid 19 restrictions remain in place.

Politicians will be pleased that public protests have been reduced for the time being except those mass protests resulting from the murder of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis.

Many of the world's richest people have seen their net worth decline for the time being, but they are looking for ways to recover and grow their wealth.

When one or more vaccines for the Covid19 virus are ultimately developed, produced, and applied, citizens will resume their protests for leaders to correct the underlying social inequities. This is already occurring in Hongkong where protests resumed on 16 May 2020. The longer the virus persists without a vaccine being applied, the more serious and long lasting will be the economic costs to industry and commerce and the more serious will be the costs to mental health of citizens forced to live in social isolation from colleagues, family friends at work at church and at sport and recreation activities.

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