

# The Twisted Optimism of the Miserabilists

With deaths mounting, economies tanking and unemployment growing, it's hard to see anything positive in the coronavirus pandemic – other than rehearsing for something worse down the pike.

However, optimism flourishes in odd places. In fact, some people batten on the misery of a world in turmoil. Here are a few miserabilists who see a silver lining in the gushing fire hydrant of bad news.

## Climate Change

We're having a dry run for the radical emission reduction policies espoused by climate change activists – fly less or not at all, produce less stuff, don't burn fossil fuels etc, “The outbreak has, at least in part, contributed to a noticeable drop in pollution and greenhouse gas emissions in some countries,” says Denise Chow, of NBC News. “Although grim, it's something scientists said could offer tough lessons for how to prepare – and ideally avoid – the most destructive impacts of climate change.”

One notable environmental blogger, [Martín López Corredoira](#), who writes from Spain, regards the catastrophe as a welcome “miracle”, although he does regret the suffering it necessarily entails for many people.

“As in H. G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds*, a microscopic Earth lifeform has finally proved to reverse the victory in what has so far been a losing war to reduce the excesses of a crazy, self-destructive world. Neither [Greenpeace](#), nor [Greta Thunberg](#), nor any other individual or collective organization have achieved so much in favor of the health

of the planet in such a short time. A miracle happened, and, suddenly, all the excuses to avoid a reduction of contamination have been shown to be spurious. In less than two months, worldwide organizations have shown us how it is indeed possible to close museums, shut down whole towns, including such top touristic destinations as Venice, reduce the number of flights, and cancel many of the most important conferences and summits, etc. And this is only the beginning.”

Perhaps there is a silver lining to the pandemic if it generates posts like this which show what some climate activists really think about the welfare of ordinary people.

## **Scouring the World Clean of Grumpy Old People**

[Ed Conway, the economics editor of Sky News](#) in the U.K., believes that this silver lining moment will move the world to a new level of technology.

“Don’t take this the wrong way but if you were a young, hardline environmentalist looking for the ultimate weapon against climate change, you could hardly design anything better than coronavirus.

“Unlike most other such diseases, it kills mostly the old who, let’s face it, are more likely to be climate sceptics. It spares the young. Most of all, it stymies the forces that have been generating greenhouse gases for decades. Deadly enough to terrify; containable enough that aggressive quarantine measures can prevent it from spreading.”

Can you think of a better reason for stopping quarantines, social distancing and isolation than eliminating climate septics? Why not a virus which would target everyone who voted

for Boris Johnson? This is a return to eugenics.

## Assisted Suicide

“As an eternal optimist, I was able to find a silver lining in this difficult situation,” said Kim Callinan, the head of America’s leading assisted suicide lobby, Compassion & Choices, in an email to its supporters. Amongst other things, she points to a growing interest in telehealth during the pandemic. Doctors can diagnose and prescribe remotely through social media.

“As the workforce grapples with the pandemic, telehealth is gaining prominence as a critical mode of delivering medical care. This provides a unique opportunity to make sure health systems and doctors are using telehealth, where appropriate, for patients trying to access end-of-life care options. These efforts should improve access to medical aid in dying in the short and long-term.”

As [Alex Schadenberg](#), of the Euthanasia Protection Coalition, comments, this is not a novel proposal. But it has drawbacks. People grappling with depression could be approved for assisted suicide and prescribed a lethal medication without meeting face-to-face.

After a heavy rain, toadstools pop up everywhere. Perhaps the coronavirus will unmask some of the enemies of human dignity.

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