

The New Feudalism

On February 28, the idea of locking down and smashing economies and human rights the world over was unthinkable to most of us but lustily imagined by intellectuals hoping to conduct a new social/political experiment. On that day, *New York Times* reporter Donald McNeil released a shocking article: ["To Take On the Coronavirus, Go Medieval on It."](#)

He was serious. Most all governments – with few exceptions like Sweden and the Dakotas in the U.S. – did exactly that. The result has been shocking. I've previously called it the [new totalitarianism](#).

Another way to look at this, however, is that the lockdowns have created a new feudalism. The workers/peasants toil in the field, struggling for their own survival, unable to escape their plight, while privileged lords and ladies live off the labors of others and issue proclamations from the estate on the hill above it all.

Consider a restaurant at which I dined one week ago in New York City. The mask mandate is in full force except that diners can take them off once seated. The staff cannot. The wait staff of restaurants wear plastic gloves too. Here you have diners enjoying themselves with food and drink and laughter, many of whom work at home and have faced relatively less economic deprivation, which I assume given how much this class of diners is throwing around on evening revelry.

Meanwhile, you have this wait staff and the kitchen staff too with their faces covered, their voices muffled, and forced into what seems to be a subservient role. They appear like a different caste. Society has decided to treat them as the ranks of the unclean. The lockdowns have turned a dignified equality that once existed between the staff and customers, all cooperating together to live better lives, and turned it

into a theater for feudalistic absurdism.

The symbolism of this troubles me so much that my own dining experiences have been changed from a time of socializing into a vision of tragedy that breaks my heart. Think for a moment about the main victims of lockdowns: working classes, the poor, people who travel for a living, those working in arts and hospitality, children locked out of schools, people who can't just convert their office jobs into living-room jobs. They were never asked their opinions on policies that destroyed their lives and degraded their choice of profession.

The main victims do not typically have Twitter accounts. They do not write academic articles. They do not write articles for newspapers. They aren't talking heads on TV. And they sure as heck aren't economically protected with a tax-funded job in a public health department in a state bureaucracy. They are out there getting food to the groceries, delivering things to your front door, hopping around in restaurants to make sure you get your food. They are in the factories, the warehouses, the fields, the meat-packing plants, and also in the hospitals and hotels. They are voiceless and not only because their masks impede their ability to communicate; they have been robbed of any voice in public affairs even though their lives are on the line.

Lockdowns have done nothing to drive the virus away. This virus will become like all others of its kind in history: it will become endemic (predictably manageable) as our immune systems adapt to it, via naturally acquired immunity in absence of a vaccine that may never arrive or will only be partially effective just like the flu vaccine. Which is to say: we will reach herd immunity one way or another.

Ask yourself who is bearing the burden of achieving this. It's not the blue checkmarks on Twitter, the co-authors of articles in the *Lancet*, and certainly not the journalists at *The New York Times*.

The burden of herd immunity is being born by those who are out and about in the world, even as the keyboarded professional class sits home and waits. Under the influence of Professor Sunetra Gupta, I would call that absolutely immoral. Feudal. A new caste system concocted by intellectuals who have chosen their own short-term interests over the interests of everyone else.

The [FAQ at the Great Barrington Declaration](#) explains that “the strategies to date have managed to ‘successfully’ shift infection risk from the professional class to the working class.”

Think about the implications of that. The politicians and intellectuals who put this new feudalism in place tossed out all normal concerns over freedom, justice, equality, democracy, and universal dignity in favor of the creation of a strict caste system. So much for Locke, Jefferson, Acton, and Rawls. The medical technocracy cared only about conducting an unprecedented experiment in managing the social order as if it consisted entirely of lab rats.

It was already happening when the lockdowns began. This group does essential work while that group does nonessential work. This medical procedure is elective and thus delayed while that one can go ahead. This industry can continue on as normal while this one must shut down until we can say otherwise. There is nothing about this system that is consistent with any modern sense of how we want to live.

We went full medieval indeed, ending arts, sports, museums, travel, access to normal medical services, and even putting an end to dentistry for a few months. [The poor have suffered so much](#). Medieval indeed.

In light of all this, I’ve come to have the highest respect for [Sunetra’s Gupta’s cry to completely rethink](#) the way we handle social theory in the presence of pathogens. She posits

what she called the Social Contract for Infectious Diseases. She explains that it is not a document but rather endogenous and evolutionary in light of what we've learned about pathogens over the centuries. We agree to live with them and among them even as we work to build civilization, recognizing freedom and the rights of everyone.

Why did we previously insist on terms like human rights and freedoms? Because we believed they are inalienable; that is, that they cannot be taken away regardless of the excuse. We baked these ideas into our laws, constitutions, institutions, and into our civic codes found in pledges, songs, and traditions. The social contract we practice with regard to the threat of infectious diseases is that we manage them intelligently while never trampling on the dignity of the human person. The payoff is that our immune systems get stronger, enabling all of us to enjoy longer and healthier lives – not just some of us, not just the legally privileged, not just those with access to platforms to speak but rather every single member of the human community.

We made that deal many centuries ago. We've practiced it well for hundreds of years, which is why we've never before experienced draconian and near-universal lockdowns of essential social functioning.

This year we broke the deal. We shattered and smashed the social contract.

It's not surprising at all that a "medieval approach" to disease would also result in the deletion of so many modern advances in social/political understanding and consensus. It was reckless to the point of being evil. It has created a new feudalism of haves and have nots, essentials and unessentials, us and them, the served and the servers, the rulers and the ruled – all defined in the edicts passed by panicked dictators at all levels acting on the advice of bloodless intellectuals who couldn't resist a chance to rule the world by force.

One final note: bless those who call this out and refuse to go along.

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