

# The End of the End of Ideology

In 1960, Harvard sociologist Daniel Bell published a [book](#) called [The End of Ideology](#). It argued that it was time to put aside all our ridiculous arguments of the past – socialism, fascism, liberalism, anarchism, technocracy, etc. – and just recognize that elites like him have it all under control. They had already established the building blocks of the administrative state so that real experts could be in charge and rule society with a steady hand.

The rest of us need just to work hard, pay our taxes, and comply. We should be free to study, read, and dream. But, he wrote, the political system is off-limits to revolutionaries, simply because the postwar social managers have proven themselves so competent and ultimately moderate in their judgments. The wise and well-trained get the great lesson of modern history: prudence is more valued than vision. The best utopia for which we can hope is a continuation of what we have now with careful tweaks along the way.

In the six decades that passed, we largely went along with the idea. Sure, we argued about this philosophical point or that in what seemed like intellectual parlor games. The Cold War itself devolved into a neat debate in which the US represented the idea of freedom and the Soviet Union instantiated tyranny. Of course none of this debate really hit home; it was an abstraction about which we read and heard on the nightly news.

When that ended – oh how sad for the elites! – matters became confusing but we trudged onward in any case, increasingly satisfied in our sectarian camps of conservative, liberal, and libertarian. There were institutions, events, and publications that indulged our appetite for belonging and donating. No big emergency called forth permanently deep passions, much less

panic about the future.

This parlor game came into grave question on 9/11 when the great struggle hit home but even that receded in our memory over time, as the machinery of centralized bureaucratic control grew and grew, just waiting for its day in the sun. That came four years ago.

Apparently out of nowhere, and only with the seemingly reluctant support of the US president, governments at all levels locked us in our homes, shut the parks and gyms, restricted travel, blocked access to public worship, and urged us all to order our food in and otherwise binge streaming services. And why? They said it was to control a virus that had already been described as a serious flu that only mortally threatened the aged and infirm.

They were trying out an experiment on us as we waited for pharmaceutical companies to create and distribute a magic potion that would protect and heal the population. Audacious doesn't quite sum up the scheme. Needless to say, it didn't work except to engorge the rules of the system. Along the way, the scheme created vast carnage in lost liberty, health, and trust in institutions. It turns out that Daniel Bell's beloved intellectual class and wise bureaucracies didn't have it all together after all. They made an unprecedented mess of things.

That posed a number of problems from an ideological point of view. The first issue to solve concerns who precisely had put these people in charge of the rest of us. How did they gain the power so flagrantly to shred the Bill of Rights and trample on every freedom we had taken for granted? They claimed it was their right to do so, and continue to claim that in every court filing. They have not and will not apologize for what they did. Worse, they have spelled out plans to do more of the same.

That poses a serious problem. All ideology aside, if the

people themselves cannot have some influence over the system of government that rules them – if our job is merely to listen for and follow instructions over which we have no input – we are truly back to a pre-Enlightenment age. In that case, no one's ideology really matters. We don't have that fundamental thing that birthed modern civilization in the first place, namely the basic dignity that comes from a regime that recognizes human rights and responds to democratic control.

Worse, the more we closely examine what happened to us, the more it defies conventional ideological categorization. The government on which the "liberals" relied to empower people actually took away their rights and injected them with pharma products on which the largest corporations made vast money. The churches, nonprofits, politicians, and the president once celebrated by "conservatives" went along while "conservative" publications said nothing. The big corporations which had long been defended by "libertarians" closely cooperated with government in the enslavement of the population and the disabling of small business.

This is the fundamental reason why ideology seems so scrambled in our times. In the end, everyone was betrayed by the institutions Professor Bell promised would guide us into the light. Even the schools closed, the very jewel of the progressive crown. As it turns out, the professional managerial class in both public and private sectors – ultimately a minority of the population – cooperated in a vast scheme to transfer wealth and power to themselves at everyone else's expense.

They were not the "best and brightest" after all but rather the most brutal and sadistic, not to mention pompous and condescending.

As everyone attempts to regroup and reconsider, we have new clarity on why left and right are so incredibly scrambled these days. It's because all of our expectations were defied

and we have been presented with new realities that cry out for explanation and solution.

1. Food and medical freedom both involve what goes into our bodies and both came under massive assault. These causes have traditionally been associated with the left. And yet the leaders of what is now called the left completely ignored these concerns while celebrating the forced masking and inoculation of the population.

2. The right has traditionally been defensive of corporate enterprise but these days most large media, tech, medicine, and food distribution is captured by the state, which rather messes up the clean binary between public and private. Enterprise is no longer free and yet conservatives didn't speak out in any great degree in defense of the crushed small businesses and even turned a blind eye to canceled religious holidays.

3. Both sides of the good guys here – the people who took seriously the best values of the old left and right – agree on the rights of individuals and businesses to go their own way against the corporatist hegemon. These groups are finally finding each other in defiance of the censorship regime and discovering more in common than they knew.

4. Meanwhile, the leadership of old left, right, and libertarian orgs are solidly on the side of the hegemon and pretending as if there is nothing really going on of any import, which is why the establishment in all camps cares nothing about vaccine mandates, the attacks on the Amish, censorship, medical capture, or the Great Reset generally.

5. This further feeds into what is called "populism" but is better described as an authentic freedom movement against the ruling class agenda on all sides. Covid controls peeled back the curtain and now many see what had previously been mostly invisible. This is not only in the US but all over the world.

It is showing up in farmers' protests, new political parties in parliamentary systems, and new media that is threatening the old for influence over a new generation.

What is striking today is how the freedom movement has been enlivened by oppression of various sectors that the central managers had long promised to guard and protect. In particular, this movement concerns education, food, and medicine, again that which is most impactful on our thinking, our sustenance, and our health.

The rise of public schooling beginning in the late 19th century was codified as the norm in the early 20th century, the same time the medical schools came under centralized control and food regulation became a cause célèbre of the progressive elite. Money and finance became centrally controlled at the same time, again with a public-private partnership that promised better results thanks to scientific management.

Think of that: government and corporate control of education, medicine, food, and money/finance are all discredited in light of the last four years, revealed as little more than schemes to crush alternative pathways that might otherwise be chosen by people themselves. The stakes here are very high. We are talking about a century of precedent now called into question among a huge swath of people from a variety of different ideological perspectives.

Looking back, Daniel Bell's "end of ideology" seems more like an attempt to draw closed a green velvet curtain that was hiding something terrible, namely that we were gradually giving up citizen control of our societies to an elite that pretended to possess wisdom, judgment, and prudence to the point that the rest of us could do no better than to outsource our penchant for exercising freedom and democracy to them. Pull back that curtain and we find ignorance, institutional interest, fraud, graft, and a shocking lack of empathy.

That gang is now discredited. And yet they remain in control. That is the essential problem we face today. It is a problem that vexes all the lower orders of society all across the world as they work to find ways peacefully to unseat the elites from their ill-used power. In this struggle, it is not Daniel Bell who is our prophet but C. Wright Mills and Murray Rothbard, who despite their divergent ideological perspectives agreed on one thing: it is unjust and unworkable that a small elite should rule the world without the consent of the governed.

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