

Chapter 1

The Assault on Reason: The Major Arguments in Defense of Not Getting Vaccinated for Covid 19



...the savage and changeable winds of public opinion demanded ever more paranoid and grandiose statements. U.S. plans for state building and counterinsurgency became issues of evasion and euphemism, justified with contorted logic, dressed in partial statistics, and decorated with false analogies. They were inflexible, simplistic, and shrilly confident...¹

The results of a new poll shared exclusively with Yahoo News finds that 28 percent of U.S. adults believe without evidence that the 'truth about the harmful effects of vaccines' is being deliberately hidden from the public.²

"From which top-ranked Medical School did you graduate at the top of your class such that you're a world-renowned expert in contagious diseases?" is the proper response to such outrageous claims.

Most of all, the chapter offers an incisive critique of the arguments. While counterarguments are generally ineffective in convincing their staunchest proponents to abandon their positions in the light of disconfirming evidence and information, they play an indispensable role in providing needed support for those who are in doubt and open to reason. Whether they persuade their proponents or not, they are absolutely necessary in preserving our basic sense of sanity.

One of the most significant outcomes of the chapter is the finding that the individual arguments readily group into distinct clusters thus bolstering one another in even more insidious ways. For instance, the Hoax and Invulnerability Clusters are two of the more prominent. In the first, the Virus is a complete Hoax that does not deserve to be taken seriously. In the second, even if it is, I'm Invulnerable to it. But surely the most important of all is the Freedom Cluster, namely that it's my fundamental right to determine what's done to me and my body.

¹Rory Stewart, "The Last Days of Insurrection," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2021, p.66.

²Caitlin Dickson, Yahoo News, Tuesday, November 23, 2021.

Just as important is the realization that the same clusters apply to virtually all of the Hot Button Issues with which we're faced. In this way, they play a larger role by helping to illuminate the true sources of the general difficulties facing us.

The Principal Arguments/Claims

Given that our lives literally rest on the soundness of the "arguments"—if they're even worthy of the term—that have been constantly bandied about in favor of *NOT* getting vaccinated for Covid19, they deserve the most intense scrutiny and critique we can muster. Each is bad enough in and of itself, but taken together, they reinforce one another by all-too-easily bunching together in distinct clusters thereby reinforcing one another in the most insidious of ways.

But by far, one of their worst features is the sheer anger, fury, and outright hate that underscores them. Threats of harm and violence towards those who don't share the same views as their proponents are too close for comfort. Indeed, those Public Health Officials who've taken their responsibilities seriously and thus have mandated the wearing of masks to protect against the spread of the Virus have been subject to explicit death threats.³

It's made worse by the constant threats of violence that are a part of U.S. Society. Thus, a frontpage article in The New York Times reported that at a Conservative rally in Western Idaho, a young man stepped up to a microphone and asked, "when he could start killing Democrats."⁴ Harboring such thoughts in private is bad enough, but expressing them openly is crossing a dangerous line. The all-too-real fear is that it will lead to actual violence. Sadly, the same kinds of intense emotions underlie each of the arguments/claims.

Although we will encounter more as we proceed, the following are representative of the kinds of arguments/claims that have been advanced in favor of *NOT* getting vaccinated. They are nothing less than the most reprehensible justifications for utterly appalling and irresponsible behavior of the worst kind:

1. "By virtue of my age, health, lifestyle, and special circumstances, I'm totally immune to the Virus."
2. "My body, my choice! The Government has no right to tell me what I can and cannot do with my body. It's an infringement on my Basic Freedoms and Liberties! It's nothing less than Tyranny. Besides, I and I alone know best when it comes to my own body."

³Baker and Ivory, Op cit.

⁴Lisa Lerer and Amstead W. Herndon, "Menace Grows Commonplace G.O.P.: Threats Are Embraced as Divide Widens," The New York Times, Saturday, November 13, 2021, p. A1.

Billy Perrigo/Paris, "Change Agent," Time, December 6/13, 2021, p. 43.

3. "The Bible tells us that we are made in the Direct Image of God. Wearing masks is nothing less than a Grievous Defilement of His Image. It's a Sin of the Gravest Order!"
4. "The vaccines are responsible for causing the Virus."
5. "The authorities have reversed themselves so many times such that they're not to be trusted."
6. "The Virus is not a big deal."
7. "The wearing of masks is foolish."
8. "We cannot allow science and scientists to rule our lives. Who gave Anthony Fauci the power to make decisions over us?"
9. "It's time to stop worrying about others."
10. "The Virus is part of Nature. Thus, in harmony with all things, it's morally and universally appropriate to let Nature run its course."
11. "The vaccines are an insidious plot by the Government to put microchips in us not just to track our every whereabouts, but even worse, to read and thereby control our minds."

The first claim is that by virtue of a person's special circumstances, and/or basic characteristics, he, she, or they are totally exempt from the disease, thus requiring no intervention or treatment whatsoever. The rebuttal is that there are no such known characteristics or circumstances that make anyone immune. To believe otherwise is wishful thinking of the most fanciful kind. It's made even worse by the fact that it's a direct threat to the health and well-being of others. In this sense, it's not merely "wishful," but absolutely "dangerous."

The second is a complete misunderstanding of the concept of Freedom. Freedom does not mean that one has the absolute or sole right to do whatever he, she, or they pleases. By definition, all civilized societies put strict limits and clear restraints on what their citizens can and cannot do. They are absolutely necessary to protect the general health, safety, and well-being of society as a whole. The acceptance of limits is in fact one of the key things that binds a diverse set of people together into a collective body of One.

In curbing the spread of deadly diseases, Public Health Mandates are clearly within the proper scope of Government. To believe otherwise only reinforces the serious need for greater Civics Education.

Even more basic, one is not always the best judge when it comes to one's body. It's impossible for anyone to possess all of the relevant knowledge that experts have acquired though years of arduous and specialized training.

The outstanding case where "my body my choice" does apply is a woman's basic right to choose whether to have an abortion or not. Indeed, having an abortion is not a communicable disease like the Virus. You don't "catch it from others." In this sense, a woman's right to choose constitutes a Closed System whereas the decision to get a vaccine or not constitutes an Open System in that it affects the health and well-being of countless others.

Of course, Right-to-Lifers feel the exact opposite. For them, the attitude that having an abortion is morally acceptable is directly akin to a communicable disease.

Unfortunately, the right to have an abortion is facing its most serious challenges in decades.

The third is a gross misreading and interpretation of the Bible, or any particular text for that matter. The inherent nature, let alone the image, of God is not defiled by the wearing of protective equipment, especially that which safeguards the health and well-being of our fellow citizens. To the contrary, it's testimony to our God-given intelligence and the ability to exercise it wisely.

The claim that the vaccines are responsible for the Virus is not only completely bogus, but a total misunderstanding and complete reversal of the correct order of things. The "correct sequence" is that the Virus is responsible for the rapid, but safe development of the vaccines and the protection they clearly offer from the disease, not the reverse. It's part of the false belief that the Government deliberately planted the Virus in the vaccines in order to make us sick and thereby control us. It's reflective of the low trust in institutions of all kinds, a condition that has been worsening for decades.

It's true that authorities such as CDC and Dr. Fauci have reversed themselves. But they have not done so arbitrarily. Rather, they have changed their recommendations as the underlying conditions themselves have changed. Indeed, one of the prime features of Science is that it's self-correcting. As a matter of fact, it generally goes out of its way to reward those who disprove earlier notions. Ideally, the institutions that are based on it are self-correcting as well.

This is not to say that the CDC has always been in tight alignment with other agencies such as the FDA. In something as complex as Covid 19, it would be an absolute miracle if all of them were in perfect agreement all of the time.

The Virus is a big deal, Period! It's one of the worst calamities to strike in modern times. It's responsible for over 5 million deaths and its continually getting worse. Further, new more dangerous variants are constantly emerging.

Furthermore, in response to another variation on the same theme, it's not a hoax created by Nefarious Liberals to impose their will on others, certainly not to eliminate and thereby replace Conservatives.

To the contrary, not wearing masks is foolish. Along with being vaccinated, masks are one of the best protections we have. Recent studies only confirm it.

Dr. Fauci earned his position by virtue of his specialized education, years of experience, and outstanding qualifications. No one "gave it to him."

When indeed is it ever time to stop being concerned about others? Aren't we all in this together? Do we really want no one to be concerned about anyone other than him, herself, or they? If so, it would be the absolute end to society as we know it. Indeed, it would lead us backwards before the advent of modern civilized societies where everyone was completely out for themselves and no one else.

The Virus is not the result of "Nature acting alone" for there is no such thing anymore. It's the result of humans not taking appropriate precautions to prevent animals from all-too-easily transmitting a deadly disease from one species to another. In today's world, there's little humans do that does not affect all of Nature. The most potent example is the 2020 Nobel prize in Chemistry that was awarded for gene-editing technology. While it was created for the express purpose of correcting genetic effects in young babies, the fear is that in the wrong hands it can and will be

used to create “designer humans.” Once again, there’s not a single aspect of Nature that is not affected by our actions, intended or not.

The last would be laughable if it were not conspiratorial thinking of the worst kind.

Once again, the individual arguments/claims are bad enough in and of themselves, but they’re made even worse by the fact that they all-too-readily group together in distinct clusters thereby reinforcing one another even more.

First and foremost is the Hoax Cluster, namely that Virus is not real, and as a result, not deserving of any serious attention. It’s supported by the false contention that the numbers of people affected are too small for us to worry about. It’s reinforced by the Conspiracy/Paranoia Cluster. Namely, the Virus has been deliberately fomented by the Government so that not only can it track our whereabouts and thoughts at all times, but control them and thereby take away our God-given Freedoms and Rights. The I Know Best Cluster is more of the same. Another is the Invulnerability Cluster, namely that “If in the highly improbable case that the Virus is real, I’m immune to it.” The Product Defect Cluster is the unfounded claim that the Vaccines, not the Virus, are the true danger since they’re responsible for causing the Virus in the first place. In addition, the Vaccines have not been tested enough to ensure their absolute safety.

Arguably, the notion of Freedom is deserving of a distinct cluster of its own. For in many ways, the notion of Freedom is the prime animating force behind each of the arguments/claims. In short, “No one has the right to tell me what I can and cannot do with my body.”

In the same vein, the Distrust of those in Authority also ranks high.

While the preceding do not cover them all, they capture the general spirit of the major arguments/claims that have been put forth. Indeed, new ones are constantly emerging.

One of the worst was in the form of a protest outside the office of New York State Assemblyman, Jeffrey Dinowitz who is Jewish. Demonstrators wore Nazi symbols to express their opposition to the vaccines. To equate in any way the taking of vaccines with the Holocaust is nothing less than Contemptible and Evil!

In the end, all of the above and more are symptomatic of the general failure to inculcate Critical Thinking and Civic Responsibility in society at large. Their failure is especially pernicious for Critical Thinking and Civic Responsibility are the very foundations of democratic societies. They cannot exist without them. Without the ability to reason critically from premises which have themselves been subject to serious examination, Reason itself cannot be trusted. And without Reason how can anything be established, let alone trusted?

It cannot be said enough. Without an understanding and acceptance of Civic Responsibility, society is not possible.

Nonetheless, as we show in the next chapter, the situation is even worse. It’s symptomatic of widespread Mental Disorders.

Finally, there is another aspect which deserves special mention. Efforts are of course underway to learn the lessons of Covid19 so that we’re better prepared for the next Pandemics. Indeed, Epidemiologists have been warning for years that it

was only a matter of “when” not “if” that a major Pandemic would strike. To better our understanding and thereby encourage our preparations, they’ve even conducted simulations for future Pandemics. But no one to my knowledge has proposed, let alone performed, actual simulations of all the systems that would be affected by a major Pandemic: the Economy, Hospitals, Nursing Homes, Schools, etc. It’s the result of our failure to think and act Systemically. In fact, who anticipated the awful arguments/claims that would result in response to the Pandemic?

The situation is made worse by the fact that the situation is not entirely without precedent. There have always been fallacious and demented arguments in response to previous horrific outbreaks such as HIV and SARS. But why didn’t we learn from them and thus be better prepared? If we had, would it have upped the rates of vaccinations? Would it have helped stemmed the spread of the Virus?

If we are to do better, it will not only require the cooperation of diverse experts to plan for the serious Medical, Economic, and Social consequences of the next Pandemics, but it will require Experts of diverse stripes to anticipate as many of the outlandish and outright bizarre arguments/claims that that will surely follow. Such planning can no longer be left to chance. Even if it only helps to persuade a few, the effort is worth it.

Thinking and Preparing for the Unthinkable has never been more critical.

Postscript

The hasty actions by over 20 states to pass laws prohibiting the teaching of Critical Race Theory—more broadly, anything that makes students feel uncomfortable—shows the power of the Invulnerability Cluster. Only in this case, it’s twisted around such that the emphasis is on Vulnerability. The fear is that by teaching the true history of race relations in the U.S., students will not only be indoctrinated, but White students in particular will be made to feel bad about themselves. In this way, Paranoia plays a central role as well⁵.

Reflections

As you read the various arguments and counterarguments, what were your personal feelings? Did they affect you in any way? Do you personally know anyone who has espoused any of them? Have they led you to feel estranged from any members of your family or close friends? Do the counterarguments help you in any way in combatting the main arguments/claims?

⁵Patricia J. Williams, “How Not to Talk About RACE,” *The Nation*, November 1/8. 2021, pp. 14–17, 23.

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