

COVID Is Not A “Categorically Different Danger”

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*Since March, the coronavirus has been treated as if **it is a danger categorically different from other dangers**, including other viruses. But this treatment is deeply mistaken. The coronavirus is not a categorically different danger. It occupies a location on the same spectrum that features other viruses. Reasonable people can and do debate just where this location is – that is, how much more dangerous is the coronavirus than are ordinary flu viruses and other ‘novel’ viruses that plagued us in the past. But the coronavirus is well within the same category as other viruses.*

Yet humanity has reacted – and continues to react – to the coronavirus as if it is a beast that differs from other health risks categorically. The hysterical overreaction by the press, public-health officials, and politicians – an overreaction undoubtedly supercharged by social media – has convinced many people that humanity is today being stalked by a venomous monster wholly unlike anything to which we are accustomed.

Only by assuming that this virus differs fundamentally from other risks can governments continue to get away with unprecedented and arbitrary restrictions on peaceful human activities – restrictions on activities such as working at the factory or office, on dining out, on attending religious services, on going to school, and even on seeking medical treatments for non-Covid-related ailments. Only by being convinced that the coronavirus poses a threat categorically unique are ordinary men and women led to change their ways of living and interacting as fundamentally as many have done, and to tolerate the categorical change in governments’ responses to epidemics.

Quaking with fear that the angel of death lurks as never before in every stranger’s breath, on every person’s fingertips, and around every corner, people today treat each other categorically differently from how they treated each other until this past March. They leap frantically away from approaching strangers on sidewalks. They “meet” their co-workers only online. Neighbors no longer visit each other’s homes, while those who still dare to chat outside stand far apart, as if each is about to morph any moment from a Dr. Jekyll into a Mr. Hyde. When they stage athletic events, the stands are filled not with human beings but with eerie cardboard cutouts.

Other human beings are no longer treated as potential partners in productive social cooperation, whether for work or pleasure. Now regarded as meaty and mobile vials of unprecedented poison, other human beings are treated by so many of us in a way that differs categorically from how we treated them for centuries up until just a few months ago. “Social distancing” is undermining social cooperation – which means that it’s undermining civilization itself.

Is there any evidence to justify this categorical change in behavior?

Covid's Risks

My always wise friend and [sometime co-author](#) Lyle Albaugh has from the start understood that Covid, while certainly no nothingburger, is not remotely close to being the extraordinary monster that it has become in the popular mind. And so he's having the following information printed on business-card-sized notices:

COVID-19 INFECTION SURVIVAL RATES (per CDC)

- Ages 0-19: 99.997%
- Ages 20-49: 99.98%
- Ages 50-69: 99.5%
- Ages 70+: 94.6%
- Seasonal Flu Infection Survival Rate (for population as a whole): 99.90%

This single slice of information should be sufficient to put Covid-19 in proper perspective. It makes plain that the risk that this disease poses to humanity as a whole does not differ categorically from the risk of seasonal flu – or, for that matter, from any of the many other perils that we humans routinely encounter. And because these figures show the estimated chances of survival of those who are *infected* with Covid, even for persons 70 years of age or older Covid obviously is not a categorically unique threat.

And yet, again, humanity has reacted to Covid in a manner categorically unique. It's as if a hornet rather than a honeybee found its way into our home, and so to protect ourselves from the somewhat-more-threatening invader we commenced to frantically scour every room of our home with a flamethrower.

But I despair that the information shared by Lyle – or even [the more extensive information shared by my courageous colleagues at AIER](#) – will have any noticeable impact. Very many people today seem almost *eager* to be misled about the danger posed by Covid. Much of humanity today appears to perversely enjoy being duped into the irrational fear that any one of us, regardless of age or health, is at the mercy of a brutal beast categorically more lethal than is any other danger that we've ever confronted. I hope that my despair proves misguided.

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