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# The Vaccine Moment, part one

On the days of revelation



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Der Renner unterm Weihnachtsbaum

*This is the first installment of a two-part essay on the virus and the Machine. Part two follows next week, after which normal service will be resumed.*

Perhaps it's because I'm English, or perhaps it's my age, or perhaps it's just blind prejudice, but when I wake to the news that the Austrian government has interned an entire third of its national population as a 'danger to public health', a chill runs down my spine.

*Austria*, I think to myself. *Ah*.

I look at the news photos of armed, masked, black-clad police stopping people in the streets to ask for their digital papers, and I read stories of others arrested for leaving their own house more than the permitted once a day, and I hear Austrian politicians intoning that those who refuse to accede to the injection are to be shunned and scapegoated until they acquiesce. Then I watch **interviews** with 'ordinary people', and they say that the 'unvaxxed' had it coming. Some of them say that they should all be jailed, these enemies of the people. At best, the 'anti-vaxxers' are paranoid and misinformed. At worst they are malicious, and should be punished.

A few days later I wake up to some more news about Austria: from next year, everyone in the country will have a covid vaccine **forced into them by the state**, overriding their right to what certain people, who have gone very quiet recently, used to call 'bodily autonomy.'

Then I look across the border at Germany. I see that in Germany, politicians are also considering interning the 'vaccine hesitant', and are currently discussing forcing vaccination upon every citizen. By the end of the winter, **says** Germany's refreshingly honest health minister, Germans will be 'vaccinated, cured or dead.' There is apparently no fourth option.

They have been busy in Germany. Recently they **put up fences** in Hamburg to separate the Bad Unvaxxed from the Good Vaxxed at the Christmas markets. Outdoors. Perhaps they will also provide the Good people with rocks to throw across those fences. When I see cartoons like the one at the top of this page, which recently appeared in a mainstream German newspaper, I think that this may not be far off. Here, the man on the sofa has bought himself a first-person shooter game in which he can having fun killing unvaccinated people. It will be, says the cartoonist, 'a big hit under the Christmas tree.'<sup>1</sup>

*Ha ha ha, I think. Germany. Fences. Internment. Forced injections. Armed police. Scan your code. Kill the unvaxxed.*

*Ha ha ha.*

I am watching all this from Ireland, the country which has the highest adult vaccination rate in Western Europe, at over 94% of the population. At the same time, curiously, we have some of the highest covid infection rates in Western Europe too. The government has not been able to explain this fact, but it is a trend that has recently manifested in some other highly-vaccinated places too: Gibraltar, Israel, West Flanders. High levels of vaccination do not seem to correspond with low-levels of disease; often quite the opposite.

In other parts of the world, strange things are happening too. Africa, for example. Africa's population is the largest, fastest-growing and materially poorest of any continent. Few governments there can afford to supply their people with the pricey corporate vaccines which we in the West have staked our nations on. Only 6% of Africa's population is vaccinated, and national healthcare systems barely exist in many places, yet the WHO **describes** the continent as 'one of the least affected regions in the world' by the virus. In fact, the richer, more 'developed' parts of the world seem to be suffering worst from the pandemic.

Nobody seems to be able to explain any of this, but that hasn't changed the official direction of travel. Certainly in Ireland, the script remains the same. For six months we have been living with vaccine apartheid, with the 'unvaxxed' excluded from much of society, but it hasn't worked. Rates of infection are shooting up as winter arrives - as you might expect with a respiratory virus. We were all told recently to work from home, and another lockdown is on the cards. A midnight curfew has recently been imposed on pubs and nightclubs. This is odd, as only vaccinated people have been allowed into them for months, and we have repeatedly been assured that vaccinated people are safe to be around.

In an honest society, all of this would have been subject to robust public debate. We would have seen scientists of all opinions openly debating on TV and radio and in the press; views of all kinds aired on social media; journalists properly investigating reports

of both vaccine successes and vaccine dangers; serious explorations of alternative treatments; public debates about the balance between civil liberties and public health, and what 'public health' even means. But we have not seen this and we will not see it, for debate, like dissent, is out of fashion. The media here in Ireland has not asked a critical question of anyone in authority for at least eighteen months. Google's algorithms are busy **burying** inconvenient data, while the social media channels from which most people receive their worldview are removing or suppressing critical opinions, even if they come from virologists or **editors of the British Medical Journal**.

Day after day, I have been waking and wondering: *what is going on?*

Internment. Mandatory medication. Segregation of whole sections of society. Mass sackings. A drumbeat media consensus. The systematic censoring of dissent. The deliberate creation by the state and the press of a climate of fear and suspicion. What could possibly justify this? Perhaps the combination of a terrible pandemic which killed or maimed large percentages of those it infected, and the existence of a safe and reliable medicine which was proven to prevent its spread. This, of course, is what we are said to be living through. This is the Narrative.

But it is clear enough by now that the Narrative is not true. Covid-19 is a nasty illness which should be taken seriously, especially by those who are especially vulnerable to it. But it is nowhere near dangerous enough - if anything could be - to justify the creation of a global police state. As for the vaccines - well, let's just acknowledge that vaccination has become a subject which it is virtually impossible to discuss with any calmness or clarity, at least in public. As with almost every other big issue in the West today, opinion is divided along tribal lines and filtered through the foetid swamp of anti-social media, to emerge monstrous and dripping into the light.

Often, in an argument, what people think they are arguing about is not the real subject of disagreement, which is deeper and often unspoken, if it is even understood. So it is here. The divisions that have opened up in society about the covid vaccines are not really about the covid vaccines at all: they are about what vaccination symbolises in this

moment. What it means to be 'vaxxed' or 'unvaxxed', safe or dangerous, clean or dirty, sensible or irresponsible, compliant or independent: these are questions about what it means to be a good member of society, and what society even is, and they are detonating like depth charges beneath the surface of the culture.

This is not to say that the surface disagreements don't matter. They do. There are plenty of good reasons to be concerned about these medications and their enforced use. Here we have a **novel technology**, never before used at scale or for this purpose, used to create a series of vaccines which have been rolled out to millions before their clinical trials are even complete. This is an unprecedented situation - as is vaccination for a respiratory virus in the middle of a pandemic, which some people with serious expertise **warn** may worsen the situation rather than end it. The companies manufacturing these things are making equally unprecedented hourly profits, and their long histories of **dishonesty and cover-ups**, plus the fact that they are legally immune from any liability for problems arising from these vaccines, makes it impossible to take seriously their assurances of safety. And when we witness an active state/media **campaign against early treatment** of a disease - the precise opposite of what every doctor is taught at medical school - along with a refusal to report any of the **mounting** evidence of **short-term side-effects**, it ought to be clear that something is happening which cannot be explained by the story we are being told.

For all these reasons and more, I have not been vaccinated against covid, and I don't plan to be. This does not make me 'anti-vax' - a category that is designed to feed into the ongoing culture war narrative which separates the good from the bad people, and leads both sides in that war to demonise the other. I am not against vaccination, and I certainly wouldn't imagine I had a right to tell others what to do with their bodies. I don't believe that the available covid vaccines are ineffective - though they do not do what they were sold to us as doing - and I can see plenty of reasons for people, especially vulnerable people, to take them if they choose.

I expect that readers of this essay could argue with me about my decision if they felt like it, and I expect I could argue back. This is what much of the world has been doing since these vaccines arrived on the scene. We could all throw peer-reviewed studies that we don't really understand at each other, and they would all miss the mark because the

vaccine is not the point. The point is what it symbolises - and what it is being used to build.

I am a writer. I know how to construct stories. I know what makes them succeed or fail, and I have a nose for when a story does not hang together. The covid Narrative is just such a story. It doesn't fit together, even on its own terms. Something is wrong. The surface tale does not reflect what lies beneath. And what lies beneath is what interests me now.

We live in an apocalyptic time, in the original sense of the Greek word *apokalypsis*: revelation. What is happening on the surface is revealing what has always lain beneath, but which in normal times is hidden from view. All of the action now is in the underworld. Beneath the arguments about whether or not to take a vaccine that may or may not work safely, glides something older, deeper, slower: something with all the time in the world. Some great spirit whose work is to use these fractured times to reveal to us all what we need to see: things hidden since the foundation of the modern world.

Covid is a revelation. It has lain bare splits in the social fabric that were always there but could be ignored in better times. It has revealed the compliance of the legacy media and the power of Silicon Valley to curate and control the public conversation. It has confirmed the sly dishonesty of political leaders, and their ultimate obeisance to corporate power. It has shown up 'The Science' for the compromised ideology it is.

Most of all, it has revealed the authoritarian streak that lies beneath so many people, and which always emerges in fearful times. In the last month alone I have watched media commentators calling for censorship of their political opponents, philosophy professors justifying mass internment, and human rights lobby groups remaining silent about 'vaccine passports.' I have watched much of the political left transition openly into the authoritarian movement it probably always was, and countless 'liberals' campaigning against liberty. As freedom after freedom has been taken away, I have watched intellectual after intellectual justify it all. I have been reminded of what I always knew: cleverness has no relationship to wisdom.

I have learnt more about human nature in the last two years than in my preceding forty-seven. I have learnt some things about myself too, and I don't especially like them either.



I have noticed my ongoing temptation to become a partisan: to judge and condemn those on the other side of the question - those sheeple, those malicious enemies of Truth. I have noticed my tendency to seek out only sources of information which confirm my beliefs. Revelation is never comfortable.

Most of all, though, what the covid apocalypse has revealed to me is that when people are frightened, they can be easily controlled.

*Control:* this is the story of the times. Across the world we are seeing an unprecedented claim to control staked by the forces of the state, in alliance with the forces of corporate capital, over your life and mine. All of it converges on the revealed symbol of our age: the smartphone-enabled QR code that has, with frightening speed and in near-silence, become the new passport to a full human life. As ever, our tools have turned on us. Another revelation: they were never our tools to begin with. We were theirs.

Amongst the vast flock of contested facts that wheel around this virus like a murmuration of starlings, darkening the skies and addling the mind, one stands out. It is the single fact that blows a cathedral-shaped hole in the strategy being pursued by governments at present, and which offers a glimpse into the crypt. It is the fact that these vaccines, whatever their efficacy in other areas, **do not prevent transmission of the virus.**

This single fact - which has long been known but is barely ever mentioned - blows apart the case for vaccine passports, segregation, lockdowns of the 'unvaxxed' and all such similar measures. Even if you believe (or pretend to) that this virus is dangerous enough to justify the radical new forms of authoritarianism which have emerged around it - and I certainly don't - those forms will fail anyway if both vaccinated and unvaccinated people can spread it; which we know they can.

What, then, can be the justification for the system of technological control and monitoring which has arisen around us with curious speed and smoothness over the last year? And what could explain the strangely similar language in which the world's governments explain and justify this system, which so many have adopted in similar ways with similar technologies in similar timeframes? That the 'unvaxxed' are a danger to society, and that the 'vaxxed' must be protected from them is the pretext. But as we are seeing on the ground in Ireland, the pretext is baseless.

If we were operating, as we pretend to be, from the ground of reason - if we really were 'following [The Science](#)' - then we would be dismantling these systems at this point. Instead we are moving deeper into them. We are being herded into a future in which scanning a code to prove you are a safe and obedient member of society will be a permanent feature of life, as unquestioned as credit cards and driver's licences. We are moving towards enforced mandatory vaccination of entire populations - including [children](#) - and prison sentences for those who refuse. By winter's end, we could be living in a world in which the state has taken full charge of our bodies, and our only chance of remaining active members of society is to submit to their every instruction, and agree to permanent digital monitoring to prove our compliance.

Eighteen months ago, anyone suggesting that this would be the direction of travel when this virus arrived in town would have been dismissed as a paranoid David Icke fanboy. But over that eighteen months we have moved smoothly from 'two weeks to flatten the curve' to 'mandatory injections to avoid [prison](#).' We have normalised this, and accepted it. We have not asked questions. Those who have dissented have been censored, silenced, bullied and abused.

Even as I was writing this essay, the situations in Germany and Austria were eclipsed by news from Down Under. This weekend, the Australian army began [shifting](#) covid-infected people into state-run camps. Parts of the Northern Territories of Australia have entered a 'hard lockdown', in which nobody can leave their house for any reason at all except for urgent medical treatment. Those who have contracted the virus, or simply been in contact with someone who has, will now be forcibly 'transferred' by soldiers to a government-run camp where they will be held until the state decrees they are safe enough to be released.

These 'mandatory supervised quarantine facilities' have been used to quarantine incoming travellers for the last year. Now they are being used to 'contain' Australian citizens. You can watch this measure being announced by the government [here](#). You can watch an interview with someone who was taken against her will to the biggest of these camps [here](#). You can see another Australian politician fulminating about the 'unvaxxed' and what he would like to do to them [here](#).

If after this you are not filled with foreboding, then I don't know what to say to you.



My own sense of foreboding is deepening daily. Beneath the surface, down in those depths, I am far from the only one who can see what is emerging. The Narrative does not hang together, the story does not gel, but it is doing its job nonetheless. It is being used to summon forth and justify an unprecedented authoritarian technocracy which is hemming us all in with no consent, no debate, and no right to opt out.

In a short but momentous two years, this is who we have become. We in the West, who have spent decades, if not centuries, lecturing the rest of the world about 'freedom', and sometimes trying to bomb them into accepting it. We who invented this thing called 'liberalism'; we who are now burying it. It didn't take much, did it, for our words to be revealed as hollow?

Nearly a decade ago, I wrote an essay called *The Barcode Moment*. It's collected in my book [Confessions of a Recovering Environmentalist](#), but you can also read the original version, in three parts, [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#). It was about the advance of intrusive technologies, and the question it posed was: *where will you draw your line?* I was trying to work out for myself the answer to this question, which has nagged at me for years. At what moment does the direction of travel of the Machine become so obvious, so intolerable, so frightening, that you can no longer acquiesce? What is the breaking point? For some people it was smartphones. For others it might have been social media. These days I think that the really smart people stepped off the carousel at dial-up modems and went quietly into the woods.

That essay was easy to write compared to this one. Ten years ago, I shivered at the sight of Google's new [Glass](#) technology, which in retrospect was an early shot at a prototype [metaverse](#), and wrote about what it might portend. It turns out that it's a dozen times easier to write about a future of technological control that might be around the corner than it is to write about it as it manifests around you.

But this is what is happening today. Over the last six months I have been writing about the evolution of the vast grid of technological control that I call [the Machine](#): where it came from, what powers it, how we manifest it in our culture and in our individual lives.

Over the next few months, I was planning to write about how it manifests in the here and now, in our politics, society and culture. I will still be doing that, but I find myself being overtaken by events. By the time I finish writing these essays, we will be living in a very different world to the one we lived in when I started them. We already are.

The covid pandemic has proven to be the perfect controlled experiment for the rollout of the next stage of the Machine's evolution. This is the missing piece of the jigsaw puzzle without which the rest cannot be deciphered. The Narrative does not make sense until we understand that we are watching a new, radical form of techno-authoritarianism unfold before our eyes. It is not an accident, and it is not temporary. In the EU, Smartphone-enabled vaccine passes have been **on the cards since at least 2018**. The entire pandemic scenario was **wargamed** less than a year before it happened. The technology was ready, and the tightening of the ratchet long anticipated. All that was needed was a trigger event. As I wrote in my last essay here, the future in a collapsing society is a combination of both **breakdown and clampdown**. So it begins.

No 'conspiracy theory' is required for this to be true. It doesn't mean that the virus is not real or dangerous, or that Bill Gates wants to inject you with microchips (well, he might, but that's a separate conversation ...) No hidden cabal of people needs to be in control. The people who are in control - or at least, who aspire to be - are out in plain sight, and have been for years, and most of us either don't notice or don't care. We are too busy playing with the toys they make for us. And what is the line between Them and Us, and how blurred is it?

What we are seeing is the Machine doing what it always does; what I have traced through its history for the past six months. It is taking advantage of events to cement its dominance. It is colonising our societies and our bodies and our minds. It is replacing nature with technology, and culture with commerce. It is making us parts in its operational matrix, and it is using our fear to justify its tightening grip. When we are afraid, we welcome control, we welcome authoritarianism, we welcome strong leaders who will save Us by excluding Them. We willingly give up our freedom for safety, and end up with neither. Our fear leads us by the hand towards the next stage of our long journey away from Earth and into artifice; away from human freedom and into the digital net.

Perhaps you think this sounds exaggerated. Hysterical, even. Just a few months ago I might have agreed. A year ago, I almost certainly would. But a year ago I had not seen what I have seen now. I had not seen the smartphone passports, the QR scanners, the meek public compliance, the deliberate whipping up of **fear and hatred** by political leaders. I had not seen the mandatory vaccination orders. I had not seen the camps.

Next week I will write more on what I see happening, and where it is heading. But for now, it is enough to say that my personal Vaccine Moment has arrived. Where once I was on the fence, now I am firmly off it. Even if I were to be convinced that these vaccines worked safely, I could never get myself a vaccine passport and acquiesce in the technological segregation of society. I could never scan my code without shivering. I cannot participate in this.

We all have a breaking point, and we all should, because this is the means by which our human intuition screams to us that something is wrong. This is mine. I will not go along with what is happening. I will not validate what is emerging. I will resist it. I will take my stand.

What has been interesting about just the last few days, as I have struggled with how to express myself here, is that huge numbers of people have taken to the streets to say the same thing: *enough*. As the pressure builds, the explosions begin. Following widespread walkouts and strikes in the USA in recent weeks, hundreds of thousands of people across Europe have begun to **take to the streets** to oppose the closing-in of the technium. Few of these vast demonstrations have been reported in the mainstream media - another of those facts which, if the world was what it pretends to be, would ring alarm bells, but which we have become inured to in the age of the **Spectacle**.

But something is happening out there. It's as if the Vaccine Moment is some kind of thoughtform, drifting through the air, settling on millions of us at once like soft rain. Or perhaps it is more that a fog has suddenly cleared. Perhaps more and more people are coming to see that what is happening now is the Rubicon of our age. Nothing will be the same after this, and it is not intended to be. If we don't want the future to look like a QR code flickering across a human face forever, we are going to have to do something about it.

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1 This cartoon is sourced from the Substack of satirist **C J Hopkins**, whose writing against what he calls the New Normal is well worth following, though his satire is having trouble keeping pace with reality.

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**Paul Kingsnorth** Nov 24

AUTHOR

**COMMENT POLICY: PLEASE READ BEFORE COMMENTING**

This is the most divisive topic of the age. You are free to express any opinion you like about it (this isn't Facebook) but you must do so with respect for others and their views.

If you disagree with my own views enough to unsubscribe, I wish you well, but please don't post here or email me to tell me so.

Please be open and kind, even as you disagree. Anyone who offers up abuse, insults or unkindness will be bundled into a truck by Australian soldiers - or just see their comment deleted.

♡ 185 Reply

**2 replies**



**Elsa Eikema** Writes Elsa Eikema · Nov 24

I'm one of the compliant, and it's been bugging me. Haven't had my 'Vaccine Moment' till now. I'm wondering why. Your words made me wonder even more. I feel invited to spend more time in prayer for wisdom and direction.

♡ 151 Reply

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