Some Comments on the July/August issue of *The Psychologist*

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Jon Sutton asks for comments on the *Issue*.

For me, as a psychologist, the most terrifying aspect of the current “crisis” has been the way it has revealed how easy it is for politicians to harness some threat to lead people to march toward their self-destruction (or war in Vietnam or Iraq). There has been hardly a murmur of protest. On the contrary, we have been greeted with widespread public demands to elaborate the privations. Civil rights organisations have been conspicuous by their absence.

We have been bamboozled by “science” and a two-word, blinkered, slogan about “saving lives”. Neither stands up to critical examination.

The “science” we have been treated to has been classic reductionist, non-systemic, “science”. In common with most such “science”, it fails to examine and document most of the inputs and outcomes that ought to have been considered. Outcomes which ought to have been studied, discussed, and weighted against the probable effects of adopting alternative policies include such things as the death and destitution inflicted on persons not infected by the virus in this country and abroad. These effects will accelerate over time and come to include as such things as poverty and isolation on the one hand and such things as the effects of humiliation at the hands of “welfare” agencies on the other. Such things will follow as night follows day from the waving of a magic wand to induce a magic money tree to cough up enough fictitious money to temporarily ameliorate the immediate effects of the Lockdown policies.

In point of fact, although this is not the place to go into it, the “science” involved in studies of the epidemiology of the biological virus does not stand up to examination even within its own (limited) framework. For example, the outcomes of the kinds of dynamic systems modelling exercises that have been conducted vary dramatically with the quality of the measures used and assumptions about such things as levels of immunity in the population.

But that is not the point.

The point is that not only has there not been much encouragement to develop alternative models, there has been a widely-supported campaign to render any questioning of the conclusions drawn from the espoused model illegal.

Indeed, the normal communication channels which would have facilitated such questioning and protest have been greatly attenuated by the Lockdown measures themselves.
Then there has been the conflation of “evidence” relating to the spread of the biological virus with “evidence” relating to the wider effects of the various measures taken in such a way that conclusions drawn about the former has come to dominate over, and obscure, the importance of the latter, in part by reference to the, widely disliked, “economy”.

In reality, the actual evidence to support the effectiveness of the “quarantine and 2-cubit social distancing” measures that have been around since medieval times is minimal. Yet these have been imposed by government after government across the world.

Yet this is far from being the most serious virus to have swept the planet in the course of my lifetime. With perhaps one exception, we have not been able to eliminate any of them. We have simply had to come to terms with them … perhaps leaving them to wreak their worst havoc in places like the Yemen, Africa, and South America.

The extent to which many people have come to believe that it is possible to create a “clean”, COVID-19-free, society billions boggles the mind.

But these are not the most important things that have troubled me as a psychologist.

More troubling has been the way in which this mental “fix it” virus (meme), resurrected by a totalitarian regime with a long history of promoting hugely destructive mental viruses (consider the “cultural revolution”) and draconian policies, has swept across the globe like wildfire.

This meme, network of thoughtways, or mental virus, is infinitely more deadly than the biological virus.

Yet virtually all scientific attention has focussed on the biological virus.

And how extraordinary it has been to witness the way in which country after country has been able to recruit local “scientists” to produce “evidence” to support this imported meme.

This is not the only simplistic mental, fix-it, virus (meme) that has swept across the globe in this way.

Consider the way in which the destructive “fix the problems of education by narrowing the curriculum and high-stakes testing” has swept across the globe. Or the way in which the current “the state must protect everyone from all adverse experiences by visiting unconscionable horrors (in many ways worse than burning heretics and stoning blasphemers a couple of centuries ago) on anyone deemed to have offended” has done likewise. And the way in which an international climate change crusade has been built upon a problem abstracted from its ecological context (the need to stem the destruction of the soils, seas, and atmosphere) and promoted at the expense of consideration of the context in which it is situated – viz the need to radically change our way of life. (By the way, the proliferation of clean, green, energy is likely to be every bit as ecologically destructive as burning fossil fuels ... but the way “science” is commissioned, funded, and promoted has prevented this insight coming to light.)
The task of studying such memes and their epidemiology is surely a task for psychologists. Yet release of the funds needed to conduct it would require major changes in the way in which research is commissioned and conducted. There is little sign of a concern with these issues in the current issue of *The Psychologist*. And, behind all these observations, lies an even more fundamental problem that has become even more conspicuous as the imposition of destructive and short-sighted policies has continued … namely the way governance itself is conducted and authority exercised. These issues merit urgent attention and research from psychologists. There seems to be little recognition of this need among those who penned the papers which comprise the current issue of *The Psychologist*. ***

I have developed my thoughts on some of these issues more fully in articles posted on my website – some might call it a “blog” – [www.eyeonsociety.co.uk](http://www.eyeonsociety.co.uk).

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