

# Five Lessons From Three Years Of Authoritarianism



Seth Smith writes in the [Brownstone Institute](#):

Three years ago, few of us knew the impending storm that was brewing; one that would upend the very fabric of global democracy, destroy whole communities, businesses and families and cause a vast number of children and adolescents to become unmoored and disengage from society, among many other deleterious outcomes.

Perhaps most chilling of all has been the sinister turn in those three years of what was once seemingly a force for good, “public health;” which changed into a punitive and authoritarian entity that willfully engages in iatrogenesis and the disenfranchisement of those skeptical of the medical-industrial complex through widespread and draconian vaccine mandates.

In retrospect, America in February of 2020 seems like a libertarian, innocent age compared to our current one. We did not live under the shadow of possible nuclear holocaust. Everyday life was devoid of the nanny-state elements of our current age. Many of us had gone through life never quite knowing what the destructive power of a government run amok looked like.

Now we know.

Not only do we once again live under the imminent threat of atomic annihilation, as our global “leaders” continue to play out a 21st-century version of Dr. Strangelove, [but Covid offered an opportunity to further militarize and subordinate society.](#) For let’s call lockdowns what they were: martial law.

Moreover, the government and the security state during the last few years has proved itself to be in the service of only a tiny sliver of shadowy and in some cases invisible elites and “experts” whose actions have, in America most especially, been held to little accountability. In the face of lockdowns, which happened to be the most universally undemocratic and destructive event of my lifetime, regular citizens were held in contempt and with little more agency than the serfs of the Middle Ages. Some of us were made [completely irrelevant and “non-essential.”](#)

Yet, amongst this wreckage and horror, many skeptical people, who once believed in benevolent leaders, have been freed from the flawed faith in “good” government. In this freedom lie several important lessons for how to move forward into a (hopefully) less totalitarian future.

## **Lesson #1: We need to hold the medical-industrial complex accountable.**

My skepticism about the medical-industrial complex felt inchoate and somehow unfounded pre-Covid. Sure, I knew I’d be

given a lecture at every doctor's appointment about how I needed to schedule colonoscopies (in my early 40s!), buy new medicines, get blood work done, no questions about my holistic well-being, diet, etc. It didn't matter which doctor I saw, they were all like that. There was always a feeling that these big buildings and office parks that housed the machinery of the medical industrial complex were, like consolidated public schools or prisons, quite anti-human. But I still . . . *believed*, more or less.

What the Covid mania revealed is that much of the medical-industrial complex, like the military-industrial complex, is part of a system of hierarchical relationships that only truly benefits those in power. The beneficiaries being Big Pharma, massive corporate health systems, wealthy physicians and even a security state/biodefense apparatus that sees vast swaths of the global population as dots on a chart to be manipulated, vaccinated and medicalized.

Even worse, iatrogenesis – the massive health harms caused by Covid medical interventions – generates unseemly and massive profits, again for a tiny segment of individuals with unfathomable power and wealth (Bill Gates is the prime example). This sinister complex [relies on sickness, not health to make their profits](#). I believe this is one reason why Covid was so intensely medicalized and why we all became pawns of the vaccine industry, instead of public health pursuing more holistic attempts for better outcomes for people with Covid.

None of us has to take this lying down, though. Health consumers can take back their rights through the great work of organizations such as the [Children's Defense Fund](#) and [No College Mandates](#), two groups with writers affiliated with Brownstone Institute.

**Lesson #2: The “real” American left is**

## not MSNBC and has perhaps vanished entirely

The American liberal-left is a coalition that has deteriorated so far as to be unrecognizable, filled with purity tests, blind obedience to secret service agencies like the FBI, the CIA and [shadow organizations in the military like DARPA](#), with authoritarian leaders who constantly virtue signal and who will censor and cancel those they do not agree with.

For many years, since the late Obama years particularly, I've felt more and more out of place within the cultural ideology of the American left, which has placed identity politics above economic fairness, and in many instances is entirely unrecognizable from the "left" of old.

Covid remains the demarcation point—when I and millions of others abandoned the movement entirely.

Nothing about being a cheerleader for lockdowns represented traditional leftist values. In fact, I would argue that the natural place for the American left was to viciously oppose lockdowns, because they so deleteriously affected the working class, working poor, and minorities. And yet the silence on the left in the mid-part of 2020, much to my horror, soon became derision and then full-scale hatred toward those of us who proclaimed our opposition to lockdowns, even with reasoned analysis or proposals such as the [Great Barrington Declaration](#).

That we were brutally censored and that all protestations ended up falling on deaf ears was such an alienating experience, many of us who at one time proclaimed to be "of the left" have abandoned the project entirely, and most especially the political party that was supposed to represent us in America, the Democrats. We have emerged politically homeless; some having even established alliances within the welcoming arms of the libertarian and conservative movements.

This begs the question that many of us have pondered: what *is* the political left now? And what has it always been?

It certainly does not resemble the George Orwell version, which had so much influence on me as a college student. The spirit of the left contained in [“The Road to Wigan Pier,”](#) for instance, feels like a world gone by, infused as it was with a healthy skepticism, admiration and reverence for the working classes, and the mutually supportive ideas of liberty and egalitarianism. Such humility and nuance have almost wholly disappeared from our current rendition of “leftism.”

Some of us have even wondered (and indeed Orwell pondered the same thing): does leftism, if unchecked, always loop into something horrendous, the inevitable conclusion not being utopia but the graveyards of Cheong Ek or tendentious, censorious authoritarianism?

Does dialectical materialism only go down one road in the end, and that toward Stalinism or fascism?

Yet, despite the loneliness of becoming a dissenter within one’s old political home, the complete destruction of what used to be “left” and in some instances “right” political spheres is in itself freeing. Many of us are carving out new political identities and in some cases new political parties and alliances are forming. This outcome will ultimately be very healthy for the future of democracy.

### **Lesson #3: We have proof that “experts” are often wrong.**

A healthy skepticism of the “experts” and elites has always been a hallmark of American life, especially out here in the provinces where I reside. Yet, as Christopher Lasch pointed out in [Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy](#) – the last book he published and maybe most prescient – many American elites and professional “experts” have now completely

abandoned their advisory roles to become de facto rulers in themselves, worshiped in almost a religious sense by a segment of completely secularized, well-to-do liberals. These elites, however, mostly hold contempt toward the working and middle class. This has been happening for quite some time (Lasch's book was published in 1996).

The most egregious recent example of this worship and the power of the 21st century technocrat is embodied by the former Director of NIAID, Anthony Fauci, who was the public face of the disastrous Covid response for nearly three full years. The myopic reverence for this man is dangerous on many levels, but it also showcases a grave weakness of modern humanity; many of us will give up even the most basic freedoms because we blindly trust a technocratic "savior" who just may have all the wrong data or simply be a mendacious, cunning bureaucrat.

Yet, before Covid many of us, including myself, trusted unelected bureaucrats like Fauci far too often with little questioning of their motives. Lockdowns showed their hand and tipped the balance toward egregious authoritarianism. Unelected administrative-state actors should not have any ability to create policy by fiat, and groups such as the [NCLA](#) are fighting many of the unconstitutional edicts pushed forward by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the NIH as part of the Covid response.

## **Lesson #4: The technology that was supposed to lessen inequality actually increases societal rifts.**

The modern worship of technology has created an undemocratic information ecosystem rife with inequity, which helped smooth the way for authoritarian and coercive lockdown policies. In fact, with the aforementioned DARPA heavily involved in the Covid response and Big Tech gaining nearly unfettered power during the pandemic, technology's tentacles are lodged in

every classroom, courthouse and boardroom across the country. It seems likely that the architecture for future lockdowns is now firmly in place.

We should never, at any moment moving forward, accept this as our future. The Western world imitated China's brutal, authoritarian lockdowns *because digital technology facilitated it*. These policies would have been impossible as little as 25 years ago.

And in the end it was all a sham.

Millions still had to keep the sewers clear, emergency services running, the lights on and our grocery stores stocked. Working class people, many of whom were rightly skeptical of the Covid vaccine, and who subsequently lost their jobs because of the illegal vaccine mandates, were completely ignored by the laptop class who were able to work from home. In the midst of receiving endless curbside deliveries, virtue signaling on social media about "anti-vaxxers," and sidelining those who actually had to leave their homes and work for a living, Big Tech only fueled the culture wars and ultimately hurt the working class.

## **Lesson #5: The most meaningful things are still the most meaningful things.**

If we cannot trust the experts, the government, the global order, or technology, who can we trust? This is perhaps the most important question of all, and one that has been asked from time immemorial. In intense readings of Leo Tolstoy's non-fiction work during this strange and awful time, especially [\*Patriotism and Government\*](#) and [\*The Kingdom of God is Within You\*](#), I've come to realize that in the very act of trusting monolithic institutions or the state in general, we are looking for all the wrong answers and even perhaps asking the wrong questions.

For, like all of the material world, institutions are fallible and crumble. The right questions are much larger and far more personal, and the answers are immutable and have been there forever.

Outside the bounds of our fallible institutions, the most important answers to nearly every question are to be found in authentic feelings of love and belonging. Love for your family, or the little plot of land and house that you own, or the tiny farming community that you live in, the church you belong to, or the group of kind-hearted and supportive friends and writers, like those who have found one another in Brownstone Institute and other grassroots communities.

Faceless federal institutions and their representatives do not deserve our love, nor in most cases do they deserve even admiration or respect. They are the products of very flawed, uncaring systems and are ultimately artificial creations of a flawed humankind.

Despite the anguish and pain we have all felt—and the divisions the last three years of authoritarianism have created—don't let the elites and their petty politics divide your friendships and family. Love is still the ultimate answer.