**“Get tough with anti-vaccine people; true freedom, conservatism demand it”**

Imagine that stalking your neighborhood are foreign terrorists armed with biological weapons who threaten the health and lives of all those they encounter. Right now, there are terrorists with biological weapons in our midst, not foreign but domestic — our fellow citizens.

They are the people who refuse to be vaccinated against COVID-19. In so doing they have weaponized their bodies as biological weapons loaded with the COVID-19 virus, threatening to infect anyone who encounters them.

I am fed up with those who refuse vaccination for COVID-19. I propose that the following urgent measures should be taken against them:

First, unvaccinated individuals who have COVID should be denied admission to hospitals. If admitted, they would take up space that should be taken by only those whose illnesses are not directly caused by stupidity. Currently, there are hospitals throughout the country filled to overflowing and medical providers under undue stress because of their admitting an influx of COVID patients.

Second, Congress should immediately pass a law criminalizing the refusal to be vaccinated. I would advocate police check points where drivers and their passengers are required to show proof of vaccination; if they cannot, they should be prosecuted.

Third, nobody should be allowed in any public place whatsoever without proof of vaccination, and that includes churches, stores and schools.

Fourth, the president should issue an executive order requiring the wearing of masks in all public places, thus overriding the contrary decisions of states.

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Fifth, all students in public and private schools must be vaccinated for COVID-19; they must be vaccinated for other diseases; why not this one?

Now obviously people with medical exemptions should not be vaccinated. But religious exemptions should not be granted since the public’s health overrides a person’s religious scruples, which are largely based on superstition.

Now, of course, yelps will come from so-called conservatives who will complain that these measures I am proposing infringe on people’s “freedom.” This is nonsense. To choose to become a public health hazard is not an exercise of responsible freedom but is license — doing something simply because you want to do so, the public be damned.

In a previous editorial I explained the difference between genuine freedom and license. Genuine freedom is not doing what you like but doing what is in your and the public’s best interest, with health being the preeminent interest.

We need to be reminded of what the 19th century English poet and literary critic, Matthew Arnold, said about freedom in his book, “Culture and Anarchy;” currently in our country the two are in conflict, with anarchy winning. Arnold defines culture as “the study and pursuit of perfection;” culture is “simply trying to see things as they are in order to seize on the best and to make it prevail.”

One’s becoming cultured, in Arnold’s sense, “simply means trying to perfect oneself.” And the light that culture sheds on the mind “shows us that there is nothing so very blessed in merely doing as one likes” and “that the really blessed thing is to like what right reason ordains, and to follow her authority.”

Our genuine freedom, then, consists in our rational pursuit of perfection and liking what our right reason prescribes. By contrast, license or ersatz freedom is, for Arnold, “random and ill-regulated action — action with insufficient light, action pursued because we like to be doing something and doing it as we please, and do not like the trouble of thinking and the severe constraint of any kind of rule,” and such is “a practical mischief and dangerous to us.”

He remarks that freedom is “one of those things which we thus worshipped in itself, without enough regarding the ends for which freedom is to be desired,” which is perfection, both of the individual and society. This is true of Americans today who bandy about the word “freedom” in whose name they want lifted restrictions imposed on them by government. Arnold complains that in his own day this attitude “tends to anarchy.”

And today, throughout the United States we see people beginning to put in practice their American right to do what they like, such as refusing vaccinations and masks, regardless of the proper end of culture which includes health along with other perfections. Arnold’s diagnosis of this anarchical impulse is people’s lack of an idea of belonging to a larger political community. They have, in his words, “no idea of a State, of the nation in its collective ...”

Arnold’s position is truly conservative insofar as culture is the realization and conservation of what is best. Now Republicans who oppose mask mandates and vaccines are not “conservative” in any sense of the word. Because they advocate license, not freedom, they are anarchists.

A true conservative, moreover, takes a dim view of human nature. For example, the 17th century English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, believed that human beings are inherently rapacious — “man to man is an arrant wolf,” he famously said and advocated the establishment of an absolute political power to constrain their rapacity. And the 16th century Swiss theologian and Reformer, John Calvin, thought that all human beings are congenitally depraved and redeemable only by the free grace of God.