

Dignity Is Yours to Lose

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by [Richard Kelly](#), [Brownstone Institute](#)

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On my morning walk with the dog I passed through a family gathering. The path I was on goes right along the foreshore between a carpark and the sand. From about 10 metres away I could see a father and mother, two teenage or early twenties kids, and an old, infirm dog being gently cradled by the dad, carried a few metres from the car, across the path, and being laid down on the little bit of grass growing on the sand dunes.

Was this spot a favourite of the dog? The sun was shining and the family was in the lee of the cliff, sheltered from the wind. The sea was calm.

By the time I realised what was going on it was too late to reverse course or avoid walking between them. I hurried on with my own pup, his energy and cheekiness on the end of the lead a stark contrast with the slow, pained movements of the old dog that was blinking into the sun and raising his muzzle to the ocean smells. Perhaps not today, but soon, that old dog will have one last journey in the car.

Those moments of peace, togetherness and dignity were precious. I was very moved and sat down on a bench about a hundred metres away to offer a prayer for the family and the dog.

Dignity is a concept that doesn't seem to cut any ice with our overlords. Even if they worked, and especially if they didn't, masks were an affront to dignity. Denial of the comforting embrace or kiss of a loved one made dying with dignity that much harder. The invasion of snarling, smug, hunching,

hectoring tyrants into our living rooms each night made dignified conduct a test of will power and patience.

The extraordinary turmoil of the last three years, on the surface, is ebbing away. But the undercurrents are as strong as ever, dragging us further away from the dignity that used to be inherent in our daily lives, our encounters with others, our institutions, our nations.

The algorithmic censorship and self-censorship we commit in our guarded conversations with friends and colleagues attack the dignity of relationships in general, and friendships in particular. There are some things we cannot say, will not say, are frightened to say, especially if someone beloved might hear or read them. Ironically, some self-censorship would have been nice from those who thought it was appropriate to hector, bully and guilt-trip those who were not to be coerced into injecting an experimental concoction on pain of exclusion from society.

The evasiveness and weasel-wording of our institutional representatives continues apace, vowing before an election not to make changes to tax on superannuation, then months later reversing course. It was ever thus; it's unreasonable to expect that this feature of our democracy would be at the vanguard of a revival in trust. The politicians have sacrificed their own dignity on the altar of power.

Likewise the so-called health experts, proclaiming their infallibility and imposing strictures at odds with human dignity, and human life. State-wise, Victoria seems likely to pass legislation that will share personal health 'data' compulsorily, with no opt-out. The long-held tenet that medical information was the most sacrosanct private data of all is being swept away before our eyes.

At the national level, in Australia and across the world, the proposed changes to the WHO treaty will see whole nations

prostrate themselves to a global scheme, abdicating responsibility, and making the idea of national sovereignty, and thus national dignity, completely obsolete.

Even more insidious, inroads are being driven into our cultural understanding of what it means to be an individual with agency, and responsibility, and autonomy. Here is an extract of the Product Disclosure Statement that came with my latest House and Contents insurance renewal bill:

On page 28 under the heading 'Things we don't cover' delete the exclusion 'Communicable Disease' and replace with:

Communicable Disease

any loss, damage, claim, cost, expense, legal liability or other sum, directly or indirectly arising out of, or attributable to, a Communicable Disease or the fear or threat (whether actual or perceived) of a Communicable Disease.

So my insurer will not cover “any loss...arising out of...the fear...of a Communicable Disease.”

What on earth is this clause saying? What possible circumstance would see the insurer invoke this clause to deny a claim? In any case, fear, as such, is baked into this contract as an entirely predictable predisposition or attitude for someone to hold – and that if a claim arises because someone was afraid, then the claim is avoidable. Bottom line – our insurers have conceded that Fear is an attribute of our culture, and they don't want to have to pay for it. Fear and dignity can't coexist.

The good news is that no one, not a [Supermarket insisting on 'vaccination'](#) to hold down a job, not a [Premier salivating about qualifying for a statue](#) on account of being in power for 3,000 days, not a [bully masquerading as a cop walking away scott free](#) from court, can take a person's dignity, no matter

how much they might want to. Ultimately it is a personal possession, only to be freely exchanged, and only retrieved at great cost.

What then to make of the rest of it, our 'democracy,' our nation, our culture? Is it time, lovingly, to pick it up and lay it on a blanket in the sun, and like the family at the beach stroke its head while we say goodbye through our tears? I'm reminded of Wilfred Owen's poem "Futility."

*Move him into the sun—
Gently its touch awoke him once,
At home, whispering of fields half-sown.
Always it woke him, even in France,
Until this morning and this snow.*

*If anything might rouse him now
The kind old sun will know.
Think how it wakes the seeds—
Woke once the clays of a cold star.*

*Are limbs, so dear-achieved, are sides
Full-nerved, still warm, too hard to stir?
Was it for this the clay grew tall?
—O what made fatuous sunbeams toil
To break earth's sleep at all?*

Can the kind old sun wake our democracy? Or will we, grieving, one day find a new puppy, and train him in the ways of dignity?

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