

COVID-19: To open or not to open, that is the problem

by Phillip W. Weiss

Should the economy be re-opened, or should the lockdown be continued? That is the question confronting every state governor. It is a vexing question because there is no right or wrong answer. It is also a loaded question, the kind of question that can make someone seem a fool. If restrictions are lifted and the economy re-opens, more people could die. If restrictions remain in place and the lockdown continues, the economy could suffer irreversible damage. So, it is a gamble, at best an educated guess based on projections. The problem is that projections can be wrong. The laws of probability do not guarantee outcome, and in this game the player cannot afford to be wrong. The stakes are too high.

Some states and countries have already started lifting restrictions, but the results have been mixed. Thus far, the anticipated rebound has not happened. People are wary, cautious and scared. That is understandable. Elected officials, backed up by expert medical authority, have warned the public that the coronavirus can KILL. No one is immune. Everyone can contract it. And what complicates matters even further is that every person, including your spouse, children, parents, friends, co-workers, and even your pet animal may be carrying the virus and not even know it. Thus, everyone is warned to maintain distance and wear a mask and avoid physical contact, even with those we dearly love. This is cruel and unusual punishment visited upon humanity from wherever and whomever and for whatever reason. No wonder that people are getting angry and

defiant. They want to reassert control over their lives, control that has been taken away from them. Losing control of their lives has made them feel resentful and insecure. So, they want answers, NOW! But no answer will be forthcoming, at least none that will satisfy everyone.

Some have argued that the lockdown is too sweeping and unduly intrusive and is shattering the economy while not eradicating the virus, thus needlessly placing the entire community at risk. Others argue that the lockdown is a necessary and prudent public health measure that has saved lives and is a proper and legal exercise of emergency executive powers. The problem is that both arguments have merit. This puts the governors in the unenviable position of having to choose. Whatever choice they make will cause a lot of people to feel unhappy, alienated, disempowered, disenfranchised and angry. It will drive people apart. Even a cure for the COVID-19 virus will not reverse the damage already done. The most that we can do is hope that we can arrive at a consensus around which all factions can unite. It is either that or keep on bickering and see where that gets us.

Sources:

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