

Book Reviews

The Real Anthony Fauci: Bill Gates, Big Pharma, and the Global War on Democracy and Public Health (Children's Health Defense), by Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., 480 pp, hardcover, \$22.69, ISBN13: 9781510766808, Skyhorse Publications, distributed by Simon and Schuster, 2021.

In Trump Time: A Journal of America's Plague Year, by Peter Navarro, Ph.D., 326 pp, hardcover, \$22.99, ISBN-13: 978-1737478508, All Seasons Press, 2021.

A Plague Upon Our House: My Fight at the Trump White House to Stop COVID from Destroying America, by Scott W. Atlas, M.D., 352 pp, hardcover \$23.49, ISBN-13: 9781637582206 Bombardier Books, distributed by Simon and Schuster, 2021.

These three books concern various aspects of the recent COVID-19 crisis. Kennedy's book is about the big long-term political picture; Navarro's book concerns his four years in the Trump Administration as a close advisor in economic policy matters with a focus on COVID issues; Atlas's book describes his time in 2020 as an outsider trying to help the Trump administration sort out the proper medical policymaking needed to respond to the COVID problems of 2020.

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., in an ambitious and thorough 480-page book with more than 2,000 references, covers Anthony Fauci's career of repeated malfeasance. This began in the 1980s with his manipulations during the HIV/AIDS era. As director of a major National Institutes of Health division, Fauci built an empire that enabled a global pharmaceutical edifice to hijack the public health response to COVID-19. His pernicious "noble lies" aggravated the damage of the disastrous, apparently laboratory-developed virus that he evidently helped finance and nurture. Kennedy provides a good historical and political grounding for understanding the roles of Fauci, Bill Gates, and others who were at the epicenter of the crisis.

Kennedy portrays Fauci as *il capo di tutti capi* of medical research funding and public health medical journal influence that continues to this day. He depicts Bill Gates as a narcissist monopolist megalomaniac, who partnered with Fauci, a man

with a similar personality disorder. The evil nature of the Fauci-Gates coordination takes a lot of telling. As an accomplished investigator, Kennedy delves into the international pharmaceutical and biosecurity operations that surround Gates and Fauci and include the "deep state."

Kennedy explains the widespread adoption of masks and social distancing and the acceptance of lockdowns and school closings as the fruit of 30 years of planning to create fertile ground for a coherent and consistent authoritarian general response to a threatened bioweapon (or microbe) attack—a panicked approach that left officialdom in control.

Kennedy's approach to conspiracy theories is, I believe, the correct one: to consider them like any other theory. Be open-minded but skeptical, consider the evidence, and judge their plausibility and their likelihood of truth based on that evidence. Kennedy has provided a well-informed and open and fair-minded argument with regard to the motivations of those heavily involved in the COVID matter.

Peter Navarro is uniquely qualified to provide an insider's account of the 2020 events that surrounded the COVID crisis. He was a senior adviser to President Trump during the 2016 campaign and throughout Trump's term in office. Navarro holds an M.B.A. in public administration and a Ph.D. in economics from Harvard.

Navarro has published more than a dozen books on economic and foreign policy. Trump no doubt was attracted to his theories on Chinese economic aggression. His China trilogy—*The Coming China Wars* (2006), *Death by China* (2011), and *Crouching Tiger* (2015)—established him as one of the leading scholars and experts on the threat of Communist China.

Trump Time alludes to Trump's energy and intolerance of delays. After the COVID outbreak, Navarro became Defense Production Act policy coordinator in the administration, sitting in on all the key committees. His insights and commentary are lucid, compelling, and insightful. He is also candid about who was and wasn't a problem during the COVID crisis year of 2020. His book states

that Dr. Anthony Fauci is an audacious, mendacious, sociopathic dissembler—a malefactor who did "more damage to this nation, President Trump and the world than anyone else this side of the Bat Lady of Wuhan."

Navarro not only asserts that Fauci was responsible for the Wuhan lab production of COVID-19, but that he withheld information early in the pandemic to the detriment of the country.

Navarro first saw Fauci in the Situation Room on Jan 27, 2020. He writes that they soon were in a heated argument over whether to ban travel to and from China. Days earlier, Fauci had said the Wuhan virus was "a very, very low risk." In the Situation Room, he "echoed that sentiment."

"I've studied travel restrictions many, many times and [they] don't work," Fauci said.

In the end, Navarro prevailed. Trump imposed the travel ban on Jan 31, and Australia and New Zealand followed suit.

Navarro's book is filled with tidbits for political junkies. He is not shy about exposing incompetence, weakness, and betrayal on both sides of the aisle and in and out of the White House. He portrayed people I previously thought well of as deceitful dissemblers.

Scott W. Atlas, M.D., is a 15-year fellow in health care policy studies at the Hoover Institution of Stanford after an illustrious career as a neuroradiologist, with his last posting as chief of neuroradiology at Stanford Medical School. He is the editor of *Magnetic Resonance Imaging of the Brain and Spine*—the leading textbook in the field, which has been translated into several languages, now in its fifth edition. He has been a prolific essayist and author on health care policy during his last 15-plus years at Hoover.

A Plague Upon Our House is a narrative on Dr. Atlas's work as a special adviser to President Trump on the Coronavirus Task Force from July to December 2020. It recounts his early 2020 independent efforts to analyze the COVID crisis that eventually resulted in his public statements and writings and then his engagement to assist the Trump Administration by moving to D.C. and into

the cauldron that was the summer 2020 White House.

The book tells a vivid story with plenty of basic science discussions of Dr. Atlas's early 2020 interest in and energetic research on the COVID matter through the summer and fall White House activities running up to the 2020 election. Nothing about this book is boring, even the relatively technical medical information, which Dr. Atlas provides without confusing jargon.

In the White House, Dr. Atlas did constant battle with the Coronavirus Task Force troika of Anthony Fauci, Deborah Birx, and Robert Redfield, representing the entrenched public health bureaucracy. Dr. Atlas repeatedly went to task force meetings as the only person prepared to talk about the scientific studies to determine appropriate COVID mitigation and intervention. He exposes Fauci, Birx, and Redfield as marching in lockstep, covering for each other. Not serious scientists, they were unaware of the studies that show the lack of benefit of their pet mitigation actions; the negative impacts of lockdowns, school closings, and mask mandates; and the inappropriate censorship and suppression of early ambulatory treatments.

"Fauci did not present scientific research," Dr. Atlas writes. "I never heard him speak about his own critical analysis of any published research studies." When Dr. Atlas argued against proposals and statements from Fauci and Birx, he never received any support from other task force members except after the meetings. By the time Dr. Atlas was in D.C., it was too late to replace the junk science, and President Trump didn't have the nerve to stop the Fauci-Birx-Media juggernaut.

The value of this book is inestimable. In my opinion, Dr. Scott Atlas is a giant, and D.C. was and is populated by agency Lilliputians.

John Dale Dunn, M.D., J.D.
Brownwood, Texas

The Cult of Smart: How Our Broken Education System Perpetuates Social Injustice, by Fredrik deBoer, 276 pp, hard cover, \$16.79, ISBN-13: 978-1250200372, All Points Books, 2020.

In *The Cult of Smart*, Fredrik deBoer unwittingly explains the sharp left turn of the Democrat Party and a growing number of young Americans. It also shows why the widening chasm between the far left and liberals and conservatives will never be bridged.

For those reasons alone, it's a very important book and should be read by traditional Democrats and Republicans, although a root canal would be less painful. If the book had been published when I was younger, I could have learned about Marxist thinking without having to labor through *Das Kapital*.

At the leading edge of the millennial generation, deBoer is an avowed Marxist, a professor with a Ph.D. from Purdue, a former high-school substitute teacher, a contributor to *The New York Times* and other mainstream liberal publications, a descendant of "red diaper babies" (his words), and an admirer of Sen. Bernie Sanders, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.), Karl Marx, and Frederick Engels. Also, like so many ideologues in history, he is the product of an apparently unhappy childhood, stemming from his mother dying when he was a child and his father dying when he was 15, after a life of alcoholism and depression.

The author verbally lambastes both liberals and conservatives for believing in meritocracy and in the power of education to significantly reduce inequality. Liberals will no doubt applaud his rebuke of conservative values, and conservatives will applaud his rebuke of liberal values; but they should be aware that he wants to put a ticking time bomb of social revolution under the backsides of both.

DeBoer goes so far as to write:

That education is the great economic leveler stands as one of the ubiquitous nostrums in contemporary politics. Barack Obama, the pope of modern American progressivism, repeated the trope endlessly, insisting that the American dream could only be secured through an invigorated education sector....

We should reject the idea of education as an anti-poverty tool for being wrong on its face. Because education is not a weapon against inequality; it is an engine of inequality. Far from making society more equal, our education system deepens inequality, sorting winners from losers and ensuring even greater financial rewards for the former. Nowhere is this dynamic more prevalent than in college.

A major premise of *The Cult of Smart* is that intelligence is hereditary and inherited to the same degree across all races. Genes help to explain why some people excel in school and in abstract thinking, and some people don't. Of

course, such factors as parental influence and socioeconomic class come into play in how someone does in life, but, according to deBoer, inherited intelligence accounts for about half of success, especially in this era of knowledge work, where those with lower IQ are being left behind in increasing numbers.

The author understands the danger of the premise being misunderstood and how it can lead to racism and that it led to the eugenics movement of the first half of the 20th century, a movement that he admits was led by progressives. He makes clear that inherited intelligence, or a lack thereof, does not vary by race.

According to deBoer, it follows from the premise that additional spending on education is mostly a waste of money, because more money cannot overcome a lack of inherited intelligence, and because more money is not needed for gifted students with inherited high intelligence who are going to succeed regardless of spending levels. This goes against the liberal belief in more education spending and the conservative belief that everyone can succeed through hard work, no matter their personal circumstances.

Taken to an extreme, the idea of inherited intelligence can also go against the foundations of Western moral philosophy, namely Judeo-Christian beliefs about right and wrong, sinning and redemption, and crime and punishment. The idea calls into question how much free will and agency humans really have when all the factors of nature and nurture are considered. This is not a new philosophical question, but it is complicated by new science, especially cherry-picked science.

It's undeniable that humans don't reach adulthood with a blank slate. On the nurture side, behavioral choices and learning are strongly influenced by the circumstances of childhood—by parenting, neighborhood mores, environmental factors, and socioeconomic class. On the nature side, as science is revealing but has a long way to go, behavior and learning are influenced by hormones, other bodily chemicals, and the condition of the parts of the brain that control impulses.

Take a child who has two Nobel Prize-winning parents, who has an innate ability to concentrate and control impulses, and who lives in a house full of books in a neighborhood of college graduates. Certainly that child has a wider range of good choices than one who has a single parent on drugs, who has an innate difficulty in concentrating and controlling impulses, and who lives in a household

with no books but a lot of television, in a neighborhood of drug dealers and crime.

To counter Marxists like deBoer, we need to delve into deep questions of moral philosophy, and into ways that young people obtain and process information, but that is outside the scope of the book.

DeBoer is merciless in his criticism of liberals who feign concern for the poor and social justice but engage in selective breeding and do whatever they can to get their kids into the best K-12 schools and into elite universities, so that their ticket is punched for the rest of their life—and, as deBoer's Marxist thinking goes, at the expense of the less fortunate. He questions whether the education is any better at elite schools, and posits that the schools are key members of the "Cult of the Smart," where credentialing takes precedence over other considerations and leads to self-reinforcing and self-replicating elitism.

Naturally, being an academic, he buys into the progressive Zeitgeist about white privilege, the goodness of wokeness, and America's being racist, sexist, and classist. At the same time, he lambastes his "fellow leftists" (as he calls them) for their phony virtue-signaling. He writes that if they were "simply a new kind of nouveau riche with culturally liberal politics, they would probably be harmless, if somewhat obnoxious. But there's a far larger problem: simply by living upper-middle-class lives, these woke go-getters perpetuate inequality."

To those who have attended elite colleges, he says:

Privilege theory, intersectionality, cultural studies—each has value and important insights to impart, but more important for your lived experience is their signaling value. Peppering your speech with abstruse academic vocabulary these fields have developed demonstrates to your social peers that you believe in the right things, that you are politically enlightened, that you are woke. And to be woke has come, in the past decade, to confer considerable professional benefits.

He goes on to cite the inconvenient truth that locales with a high number of such people have the most income inequality.

Continuing the skewering, he says that "it's essential to bear this thought in mind: many of those who are ostensibly part of a political movement to change our society are the ones who most benefit from the

status quo and who hold back others simply through living the lives they do." Then he administers the coup de grace: "I am persistently pessimistic when it comes to progressive social change."

He also dislikes the wealthy, as evidenced by this bloodcurdling statement: "Certainly, if I had the power, I'd ensure that the very wealthy didn't exist."

As with Marxists of yesteryear, deBoer has antipathy for the upper middle class, or what the Bolsheviks characterized as the *petit bourgeoisie*. I would add that many of today's leftists in academe, politics and the media extend that antipathy downward to the middle class, especially the members of the middle class who have "white" values about work and marriage. However, as with deBoer, they're largely silent about Asians having the same white values and being at the top in income in America, with a median household income of \$94,903, versus \$74,912 for non-Hispanic whites.

Likewise, deBoer says nothing about the realities of Marxism and one-party authoritarian government in general. Left unmentioned are the purges, gulags, mass starvation, privileges for top party cadres and their families, and, as can be seen in China today, discrimination against minorities, women, and what the Chinese Communist Party has called "sissy boys."

DeBoer even buys into the old Marxist trope that a worker's paradise could be built upon the existing industrial foundation of capitalism, leading to a second phase of communism in which workers would be self-actualized and not have to toil in jobs they didn't like. The second phase has never been realized, however. Drudgery, bad management, immovable bureaucracy, and an out-of-touch hierarchy are just as alienating, if not more so, under communism as under capitalism.

To his credit, deBoer is honest about pre-kindergarten and after-school programs being ineffectual in the long run in improving academic results. Yet he supports these programs for reasons of social welfare and because they can be a stepping stone to the kind of society he envisions.

Surprisingly, he has an objection to a universal basic income: "It has the same problem that liberal social programs almost always do: it does nothing to strengthen the hand of the poor and working class relative to the rich, to the bosses, and to political leaders."

Not surprisingly, he supports nationalized medical care and free college. But the latter seems to contradict his belief

that college doesn't benefit those without the intelligence to succeed in college.

He also disdains charter schools, repeats the popular canard that public school teachers are underpaid for their abilities and hard work, and claims that teachers are unfairly blamed for not being able to improve the test results of students who don't have the intelligence to do well. He says nothing about how Norway dramatically improved its test results by making a degree in education one of the toughest degrees to obtain and raising the pay of those teachers who met the higher standards.

Speaking of standards, deBoer wants to eliminate one-size-fits-all state testing standards and curricula for public schools, a point that I agree with in concept as long as it results in furthering the education of the less gifted students who need a curriculum tailored to their intellectual capacity, and as long as it doesn't crimp the education of the more gifted students. This is easier said than done, however, given the difficulties in determining a student's IQ and potential, as well as the political challenge of telling parents that their child doesn't have what it takes to succeed in college.

All the foregoing is but a prelude to what deBoer really believes and wants. He really believes that equal opportunity will never be achieved, even if all differences in individual circumstances were to be eliminated. As such, what he really wants is for the existing political and economic order to be replaced with the Marxist idea of "from each according to his ability and to each according to his need," so that equal outcomes result. He doesn't say how that would be achieved and who would decide, but he no doubt sees ideologues like himself in charge.

Make no mistake: I, too, want to eliminate poverty and think that it's unacceptable for a rich country like the U.S. to have widespread urban slums and rural poverty; to have high crime, broken families and drug addiction in those places; and to have large numbers of homeless people living and dying on city streets like animals. This is particularly unacceptable in light of the trillions of dollars we have spent on foreign wars.

On the other hand, the last thing I want is for people of deBoer's ideology to be in charge. Unfortunately, that's what a growing number of Americans seem to want, especially younger Americans taught by teachers like deBoer.

Craig J. Cantoni
Tucson, Ariz