

Coronavirus' Thoughts on *Us*

By: Cameron Fink

Beyond fatalists and nihilists alike, the average person would have never wished for a pandemic. The very nature of a pandemic (a country-wide or continental virus), is bone-chilling. Before COVID-19's outbreak, the Swine Flu Pandemic of 1918 was the only *recent* threat of such an extreme scale. The Swine Flu infected almost a third of the world population, something Coronavirus easily has the potential to do despite stay-at-home orders and other cautionary methods. The Swine Flu Pandemic is easy to be used as a cautionary tale for our current predicament. Once contracted, the virus was spread much the same as Coronavirus is, by inhaling the virus or touching a surface that has been contaminated and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. However, Coronavirus tests are incredibly hard to come by, and because of the incubation period the virus has in which the person may still infect others, the rate of infection is just as, if not more, challenging. The extreme, and difficult circumstances of a never before seen situation such as this has brought many to share their honest, unfiltered views on how different governments are handling the pandemic, how the general public should conduct themselves, and more. Needless to say, the world has had *plenty* to say about COVID-19. But what has the virus had to say about us, not just as our individuals selves, but a whole species.

The most glaring declaration of this pandemic? We are not prepared. A common expression, "You never know what you have till you've lost it," comes to mind. It is easy to take for granted the luxury of everyday life. Medieval royalty would look at the average, modern civilian and revel in all of their glories with riches taken for granted by the privileged existence innovation has provided us. As time has passed, modern medicine, including vaccines and incredible healthcare across the world has made common sickness being much more than an annoyance, nearly a moot point. But the swine flu infected and killed many people about a century ago. For most able-bodied individuals, we never have to think of the flu more than once a year to get our shots. But just as people do, viruses progress and advance, quite rapidly if mutating. The unpredictable, nearly undetectable, and unforgiving nature of COVID-19 has been extremely telling of our complacency with being unprepared for possible pandemics and disasters because of our inability to prepare in advance. The speak of "flattening the curve" is in reference to trying to lessen the load on hospitals and other facilities to combat the virus because we are not prepared for the sheer number of possible infections. As well, if we are able to lessen the rate at which individuals are infected, the exponential nature of a virus is severely hindered. But these gungho strategies, which have not worked seeing as hospitals across the world (in China, in Italy, even in the US) are still completely overwhelmed and some healthcare agents are being told to work around those with the virus without proper face masks and gloves.

Coronavirus has been clear with its claim that as a collective, we are mentally weak. Oftentimes, different immunocompromising issues cannot be helped, but mental health and strength is not easily plagued with “diseases”. In part due to selfish tendencies, and also a lack of discipline, we are weak. Humans are instinctively pack animals, with a tribalistic mentality to follow the lead of their social circles. In a time of crisis, there is little room for inability to focus and react calmly for resources are limited and others are less fortunate. I am of course referring to the Toilet Paper Famine of 2020. While toilet paper is not necessarily a necessary good, the point is clear. If the virus had warranted a need for large amounts of clean water or canned foods, the repercussions of our gluttonous inclinations would be haunting. Apparently, we can not be trusted to ration between ourselves. It is incredibly laughable really, the virus does not really call for an excess of toilet paper in any way, but once one person felt panicked enough to buy it in bulk, others followed suit. Thankfully, this same pack mentality was used to combat this famine, effectively so, with social medias and news networks raising radical awareness of the unnecessary nature of buying carts full of toilet paper and brawling over the soft tissue, and most grocery stores began to ration so that nobody would come to buy the whole stock. So while this tribalism was used against itself, this mindset is incredibly susceptible to negative manipulation. We ought to think for ourselves, and maybe the panic wouldn't be more than wondering if your reservation for dinner on Friday is still on rather than being creative with whatever material would be soft enough to be used as a substitute (spoiler, nothing properly substitutes).

Finally, to cap off the slew of unfortunate realizations, the virus decided to slip in a reminder of another global crisis that many may have missed: We are parasitic to the Earth. The irony is clear; the virus exponentially infects our bodies and has potentially lethal effects, just as humans spread in vastly the same way. We have been killing the planet for quite a long time. The benefits of our inability to travel often or pollute our planet has made the air and water much cleaner, observably so. Who knew that scaring people into their homes and letting nature have its time to return to normal without our constant leeching would be positive? I think the coo of birds in the morning, not scared by constant lawn mowers or other human activity is my favorite albeit a minor benefit.

It's truly depressing it took a pandemic to realize some of these truths and to *already* see some positive climate benefits. However, in the wake of this virus, we may be able to silence the clear criticisms with a newfangled approach to ourselves and our world. At some point, some world event will have to be enough to wake us up to the reality of our fragility and our downfalls, hopefully before it's too late. I am of the train of thought that if it doesn't happen here soon, we may not have another chance. Here's to a blind faith we can save the human race, from itself. I wish you all great health, safety, and introspection.