

How to Lose the Public's Trust: A Phenomenological Analysis of Quarantine Policy during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Amidst the rise of the novel coronavirus pandemic, governments around the world set in place different public health measures, including stay-at-home orders, lockdowns, and quarantines. While these measures were implemented based on the best scientific understanding available, protests sprang up in response to these restrictions in different parts of the world. Many attempts have been made to persuade protestors and dissidents via education or incentives. Yet, they have met minimal success, where this has endangered the lives of millions.

My paper demonstrates that such efforts to redress dissidents are ineffective, because they do not address the underlying disease, but rather treat only one symptom in abstraction. I reveal that these skeptics can only be swayed, when their objections are first recognized as a rational response to a much larger societal problem. By drawing from the resources of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, *I argue that the factual historical development of the sciences has led everyday individuals to feel alienated from the results of the sciences, where this has set the conditions for dissent against quarantines and a general anti-scientism.* To accomplish this goal, the paper is divided into three sections.

First, the paper historically traces the crisis of the sciences, which inspired the protests against quarantines and lockdowns, all the way back to Galileo's formulation of the sciences. Galileo inaugurated a certain "style" of scientific thinking that posits a cleavage between the world, as it presents itself in the perceptual experience of everyday life (the life-world), and the world, as it is in scientific truth. According to Husserl, this cleavage was the (indirect) result of the specific methods and techniques, which Galileo employed. In this section, I follow Husserl's attempts to clarify these methods and techniques.

Second, I outline how this gap between the life-world and the world of science, which widened over the historical development of the sciences, led to the formulation of public health policy proposals, which ignored and destroyed the lives of the individuals they were meant to help. Because public health scientists (incorrectly) understand their experiments and statistical analyses to take place in abstraction from the life-world, they also believe that they do not have to consider the particularities of the life-world they are dictating to. When these life-world particulars are overlooked and control measures are imposed, policy makers are perceived to be insensitive to the lived reality of the pandemic. This destroys the trust required to motivate compliance and, in contrast, motivates rebellion. To concretely demonstrate how this has occurred, I outline two different ways how quarantine recommendations, which ignore the lived reality of the pandemic, have devastated individuals and communities.

In the conclusion, I make a critical clarification. I highlight that while I am identifying the conditions of dissent against health recommendations, I am *not* endorsing such dissent. Following Husserl's treatment of Galilean science, I merely hope to have shown that uncritically applying public health policy, without extensive consideration of the lived experiences of the public, can result in dissent.