

Sourced Transcript

CULTURE IN DECLINE EP #1: "What Democracy?"

There we go. We got it, Bob! Hi! Sorry, we're running a little bit late. Excuse me a second. Hey Bob, think fast! [Glass breaking] [Shouting] Sorry, man! Welcome to 'Culture in Decline'. My name is Peter Joseph. This show is designed for those that want to be a little bit more skeptical about society, because perhaps, you're like me. As you stumble around this experiment we call global society, you can't help but feel an increasing sense of unease, perhaps even frustration, with respect to how we, the human family, have chosen to organize ourselves on this little planet.

The late astronomer and well-known advocate of scientific thought, Carl Sagan, in his famed PBS series 'Cosmos', once invited the question: "If we were visited by a superior species from another part of the galaxy, and we were forced to explain to them our stewardship of our planet, not to mention the state of human affairs today, would we be proud of what we described?"

How would we frame our explanation of how almost half of the world, over 3 billion people, are either barely surviving in abject poverty and sickness,¹ - or are simply dying off unnecessarily at a rate of about one person every couple of seconds² - all occurring in the wake of an advanced technological reality, where we could easily feed, clothe and house every family on Earth in a respectable standard of living?³.

How would we frame the global warfare: 230 million killed by their fellow man in the past 100 years alone⁴ - based on what, meaningless territoriality, resources, dogmatic, obsolete ideologies? Again, this all occurring in the shadows of a looming scientific recognition, that we are indeed simply one family sharing one household, bound by the exact same laws of nature, and hence the same unifying operational ideology.

How about our economic system, the bedrock of what defines our society, not to mention our dominant motivations? How would we explain the reality that, rather than organizing ourselves efficiently as a single system to properly manage this household we share, we childishly divide and compete and exploit each other through an archaic, completely environmentally decoupled game. A game, by the way, which not only appears to perpetuate a vast spectrum of social atrocities, but now seems to be further destabilizing society, decreasing our public health.

Sorry to say, as an individual, I really don't care what you believe, nor do I particularly respect it. Why? Because I don't really respect what I believe either.

There is no evidence to show that any of the traditional values, establishments, social structures or common practices we have today, will be relevant tomorrow. The only thing that appears to stand the test of time is this very notion of change, the ever-evolving understanding of ourselves and the world we inhabit. Perhaps, some might think that that's actually the definition of human intelligence. What do you think about that? Less about what we know, more about how vulnerable we are.

So, when you look out your window, ask yourself. Do you see intelligence or do you see dogma? Do you see a culture listening and working to realign itself with the ever-emerging natural orders as they unfold, or do you see desperately stubborn efforts by many, particularly those in positions of power, trying to keep everything the same to the detriment of the entire human experiment?

You know, like you, I might be only one member of this family that is now 7 billion strong; and

1 <http://www.globalissues.org/article/26/poverty-facts-and-stats>

2 <http://www.globalissues.org/article/715/today-21000-children-died-around-the-world>

3 <http://true-progress.com/the-earth-can-feed-clothe-and-house-12-billion-people-306.htm>

4 <http://www.cissm.umd.edu/papers/files/deathswarsconflictsjune52006.pdf>

like most families, sometimes it's hard for us to agree, but sometimes, things get so bad we need serious intervention. The following series is that intervention in the hope to salvage what is clearly, a culture in decline.

It's an election year in the United States and some may say it's an election year for the whole world. Still the dominant empire, the United States' political system has spent roughly 25 billion dollars in the past decade alone.⁵ - An amount of money, if averaged and distributed annually, could house and feed every homeless person in America, effectively ending the epidemic.⁶ Perhaps, like me, by the end of this program, you'll find that money will be better well-spent.

Be that as it may, the 2012 presidential election is gearing up to be one of the most expensive, and ostensibly important elections of all time, given the ongoing debt crisis, the unemployment crisis, and the vast destabilization we see across society.

However, I'm not particularly interested in the left or the right, or am I interested in any candidate's political merit. What I'm interested in, is the entire idea of global democracy in the tradition as it exists, and how it is blindly accepted by the vast majority of people on this planet, as being the only option to satisfy their interests and create good well-being, and hence societal management in its optimum state. That's what interests me.

So, rather than debate about who should be the next president, why don't we step back and consider some broader issues? Such as, I don't know, maybe, why we even have a President to begin with? What is this, medieval feudalism? I thought the days of kings, dictators, and giving one person enormous power was coming to an end. Or, more generally, doesn't it seem a little absurd to claim a participatory democracy, when the public itself actually has zero say, when it comes to the actual decisions made by those elected? It's bad enough that those voted in have literally no legal responsibility to do anything they might have claimed on the campaign trail, but if you examine history, you will find the historical fact that the public good has always been secondary to other interests, mainly, financial and business interests.

Of course, this is common knowledge now, right? Why did the US government, completely against all known public interest, allow the private banking system, a system which actually creates nothing, to be bailed out to the tune of 13 trillion dollars?⁷

[Video Cut]

["You have a 14-million-dollar ocean front home in Florida. You have a summer vacation home in Sun Valley, Idaho. You and your wife have an art collection filled with million-dollar paintings."]

While the public was left out to dry with overflowing private debt, job losses and a stagnating economy. If we're going to persist with this silly little game we've concocted called the growth economy, where the movement of money defines everything, it might be a good idea to do the math regarding what might actually help this economic system operate at some passable level.

[Video Cut- G.W. Bush Speaking]

["Therefore, if you raise taxes on the so-called rich, you're really raising taxes on the job creators,

5 <http://www.opensecrets.org/bigpicture/>

6 \$25 B. / 10 yrs = \$2.5 B. a year | HRI 2009 Stat: 672,000 Homeless [<http://cflhomeless.wordpress.com/2009/10/07/how-many-are-homeless-in-america/>] | \$2.5 B. / 672,000 = ~\$3700 per person. \$3700 / 365 days = ~\$10.00 per day. WorldShelter.org puts trans shelter cost per person, per day at \$2 a day. [<http://worldshelters.org/for-us-unsheltered/municipalstate-agency/>] | Extrapolating "Star of Hope's" budget to feed the poor at \$1.80 per meals: 3 Meals per day = \$5.40. The total budget allocation extrapolation then total to a daily cost for food/shelter at \$7.40 [\$5.40 + (\$1.80 x 3)] [<http://blog.sohmission.org/blog/soup-kitchen-houston/>]

Note: This circumstantial extrapolation is not meant to be a direct resolution but to simply show the evidence that it can be done, even with the highly restrictive financial mechanisms which inhibit the use of resources efficiently.

7 <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/need-to-know/economy/the-true-cost-of-the-bank-bailout/3309/>

and if the goal is private sector growth, you have to recognize that the best way to create that growth is to leave capital in the treasuries of the job creators.”]

If that money spent on the bank bailout was spent on relieving private household debt instead, while letting Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan and all of the other technically meaningless, non-producing financial institutions experience the failure and bankruptcy they deserved, simultaneously nationalizing the entire US banking system as a whole, the US economy might have had a chance. Why? Because banks don't actually contribute anything. People with jobs do. [If] you want growth in this type of system, you need jobs. If you want jobs you need demand, and demand requires people having free money to spend. By helping the public debt burden, you would plant the true seeds of economic growth.

As obvious as that may seem, many forget one thing: The bailout had nothing to do with helping the US economy, nor does it or will it work to help any hurting sovereign economy in the world. Why? Because we live in a plutocracy,⁸ not a democracy, and the only true power is actually behind the curtain, not in front.

The financial and business powers not only own and control this country, they own and control the whole planet; and no, it's not a conspiracy. It's a value-system disorder. As long as a dollar sign is associated with every blade of grass, every plot of land, every fleeting thought or invention, not to mention judging the merit of individuals for their right to life through labor, we should expect nothing less. Since the inception of the state itself, coupled with the underlying power of money as the ultimate driver of human decisions, and hence persuasion, the true power has always been financial, and those little people you elect into office every couple of years, they have owners too, and don't you forget it.

[Street Interviews]

[Q: Democracy: Is that something you believe in as it exists today in America?

A: When you say as in 'believe in', does it exist? Like forest fires, God, or the devil?

Q: What is your opinion of the American democratic system as it exists?

A: It's broken. It's deeply, deeply broken

[Cut]

A: Democracy, goes, of course, to Greece and it's the theory that the people own the government. Is it in practice happening, in 2012, in this country? Not close! It's a corporatocracy.]

All of this considered, let's now think a little more accurately about this whole democracy deal. Since the tradition of our democracy has to do with representatives elected to apparently do our thinking for us, a critical question becomes: Where did these people come from? Why are they the ones on your TV and not others? Did you decide that these people are the best choices to compete for such critical leadership, or have you noticed that the most pronounced candidates especially the Presidential, sort of come out of nowhere; and through the media, are given credence merely by repetition of exposure?

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The term 'democracy' comes from the Greek 'demos' which means people, and 'krates' which means rule.⁹The people of a given society express their opinions through votes, and policy is created by the majority's interest. It appears the process was formalized in ancient Greece and has been adapting ever since.

However, it didn't take long for a bit of cynicism to emerge with respect to the process itself, given the fact that the entire basis of the idea assumes that the voting public actually is educated

8 <http://politicalgates.blogspot.com/2011/12/citigroup-plutonomy-memos-two-bombshell.html>

9 <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=democracy>

enough to know what they're doing.

Franklin D. Roosevelt once acutely stated: "Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education."¹⁰

Winston Churchill, on the other hand, was a little less forgiving, stating "The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter."¹¹

The infamous Mark Twain jumped to the inevitable punch line, stating "If voting made any difference, they wouldn't let us do it."¹²

I would like you to ask yourself: If we were in the ruling class, the 'investment ownership class', to paraphrase Thorstein Veblen¹³, and we wanted to preserve our interests against any interference, what would we do?

First, we need to take the broadest possible view we can. We need to make sure the voting public is as uninformed as possible, regarding relevant issues that might contradict our establishment's practices. Coupled with that, we also need to eliminate as much independent, logical, causal, scientific thought as possible.

So, let us support an extremely underfunded, outdated, and deprived public educational system, a system focused on merely getting a person a job one day, not teach them how to critically and logically think.¹⁴

However, to further reinforce this we, also want to push and reward belief systems that support passive obedience – belief systems and values that are stubborn, irrational, and promote closed thinking. Religion becomes very helpful in this circumstance. If people are groomed to be obedient to their god and follow blindly... they are ripe to extend that obedience to others who claim authority. So lets make sure all our candidates keep the religious theme going, thanking "god" whenever possible.

[Street Interviews]

[Q:The heart of democracy really is the basic assumption that the public is well-educated about critical thought. They know how to think about things and evaluate, and therefore they can make proper decisions, right? What is your opinion on American education and its effect on the democratic process? A: I think that we have multiple problems in the education in America. One: I think we are dealing with the dumbing down of America. -

Q: Do you feel that this sort of poor educational system actually benefits the establishment?

A: Oh, absolutely! Absolutely! Keep them stupid, keep them easily entertained. If they're uninformed, they can't fight back!]

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[Video Cut]

[Is it possible that religion is being politicized and that candidates are using it as a tool? [cut] I

10 <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15545#axzz1znpTLxtH>

11 <http://jpetrie.myweb.uga.edu/bulldog.html>

12 http://refspace.com/quotes/Mark_Twain/

13 http://economistsview.typepad.com/economistsview/2005/09/why_labor_alway.html

14 http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CFkQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.deliberatedumbingdown.com%2FOtherPDFs%2FRFP_interview_p1.pdf&ei=r0T2T-TWKeHi2QXJqKnXBg&usg=AFQjCNEUjizYX29vmY6vKPyH5FTCnoKAxQ

believe that God created the Universe. [cut] And we're enjoined by Scripture and the Lord Jesus to oppose it with all our might. [cut] Let us not pray that God is on our side in war or any other time, but let us pray that we are on God's side. [cut] May God bless the 7th Day Adventist Church. [cut] I think the God who loves us, the God who gave us life, who gave us our being... [cut] And so to every sailor, soldier, airman and marine who was involved in this mission, let me say, you are doing God's work.]

If people are groomed to be obedient and follow blindly, they are ripe to extend that obedience to others who claim authority. Check.

Next, it's critical we recognize a unique, sociological characteristic of the human condition. Something we will call 'herd psychology'. This is the tendency for us humans, when faced with mass appeal, to often behave in extremely thoughtless and malleable ways. In the words of Charles McKay, famed author of 'Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds': "Men, it has been said, think in herds; it will be seen that they go mad in herds, while they only recover their senses slowly and one by one."¹⁵

However, this doesn't just apply to a soccer riot. Such mob persuasion can be generated through simply shared cultural events. Remember September 11th? Talk about mass insanity! This event created an immediate crowd madness with fear and revenge,¹⁶ and it didn't take long for the US government, and other governments, in fact, to harness that madness and funnel support for draconian legislation and illegal invasions.

However, this herd psychological tendency is not only very useful for implanting and guiding perceived issues of importance, it is also critical in setting rigid limits of debate, creating the tendency for those who begin to question beyond those limits to be ostracized and rejected by the herd itself. You know, if someone talks about a more equitable distribution of income in society: [Video]

All the growth that has occurred in our country, over the last decade or more, has gone to the upper 1, 2%.

[PJ Joke]

['Fucking communists!']

If someone speculates about the obvious power manipulation and corruption,

[PJ Joke] ["God damn it! I am so sick of these conspiracy theorists and their lies! The Federal Reserve does not collude for its own self interest!"]

And heaven forbid we get those do-gooders who want to actually apply modern scientific knowledge and improve society with it.

[PJ Joke] ["Yeah right! Feed, clothe and house everybody on Earth with technology? Utopian jackasses!"]

Remember, probably the greatest way to control human thought, is to establish a deep fear of social rejection, and associate that fear to culturally taboo subjects.

So, with that ground work in motion, we now have to deal with the pesky problem that the public just might wise up enough and work to maneuver a person into political power that will cause us problems. Therefore, some more specific structural safeguards are in order. Basically, we need to make sure that those unwanted candidates, are unable to get anywhere near the major outlets for public digestion; and if they do, the practice is to treat them like freaks.

[Video Cut]

["Are you suggesting that heroin and prostitution are an exercise of liberty? What you're inferring is "You know what? If we legalize heroin tomorrow, everybody is going to use heroin." How many people here would use heroin if it was legal?"]

15 <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=common-sense>

16 http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2003-09-06-poll-iraq_x.htm

How do we do that? With money, and our corporate constituency has plenty. We just need to make sure the use of this money for political influence goes uninhibited. In a US Supreme Court 1976 decision, the freedom for a candidate to use unlimited personal money for their campaign was deemed legal, equating spending money with the right of free speech, in fact.¹⁷

What this translates to, in effect, is the removal of any regulated fairness of expression; and hence, whoever has the most money has the most resources, and hence, effect. Perfect. However, let's secure this a little bit farther. Let's also make sure that our corporations are given the legal right to promote our little puppets without limit. Luckily, in 2010, our pals again at the US Supreme Court confirmed that the government may not restrict political spending by any corporation in candidate elections, as they are, once again, protected by the 1st Amendment.¹⁸

So, now we can buy mad ad space to promote whoever we want, as much as we want, drowning the opposition in the media. ...and double check. With those broad measures in place, it is still important to control the basic unfolding of the electoral process, from start to finish. The best way to do this, is to create a false duality: the illusion of competition between parties. We need a 2-party system that, constantly argues with each other in general, but still upholds the basic elitist policies that we need to maintain our advantage.

The beauty of this dominant 2-party farce, is that it not only gives the public the needed illusion of choice, it more importantly oppresses those upstart third parties. As we know, these annoying self-righteous third parties have been trouble makers from day one. The civil rights amendments, women's suffrage, broad worker rights, child labor laws and other agitations for industry, all came from these rising third parties, historically, not from the dominant, established group, us. So, we need to be vigilant here.

We need to get the public so used to this 2-party dictatorship that they don't even mind if the two parties are given direct control over most of the electoral process itself. They need to have the power of organizing the rules of electoral redistricting, the primaries, the caucuses and debates, and of course, we, the ruling class, will moderate their actions through lobbying, campaign contributions, you know, exactly what the free market promises: the freedom to manipulate everything.

Meet our friends: the Commission on Presidential Debates, or CPD. In 1988, the Democratic and Republican Parties, or the 'Demo-publicans', as I like to call them, established the Commission on Presidential Debates.¹⁹ Posing as a non-partisan institution, the CPD successfully took control of the most influential election event, the Presidential debates. The CPD, which is a private corporation co-chaired by the former heads of the Republican and Democratic Parties, decide through secret contracts,²⁰ who is going to participate in the debates, and what is going to be talked about. Those pesky third parties, along with controversial ideas, can only come into play if the 'Demo-publicans' decide they can. Really, can you imagine what would happen if those annoying social upstarts actually were able to come up against the trite, miserable logic, and narrow subject matter typical of our rigged debates?

[Video Cut, Joke]

Obama:

"But for the nurse, the teacher, the police officer who frankly, at the end of each month, they have a little financial crisis going on: They're having to take out extra debt just to make their mortgage payments. We haven't been paying attention to them. If you look at our tax policies, it's a classic example."

17 <http://www.ilsr.org/rule/campaign/2187-2/>

18 <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/22/us/politics/22scotus.html?pagewanted=all>

19 http://www.alternet.org/news/102829/the_presidential_debates_are_a_scam/

20 <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4052162>

PJ: "I'm sorry to interrupt Mr. President, but I couldn't agree more. However, don't you feel that the tax policies and other common acknowledgments about what is hurting the average American, is actually quite benign, when compared to the very foundation of our economic system? You know, making money out of debt, charging interest on it that doesn't exist, which means that there's always more outstanding debt than there is money to pay for it. Of course, that lends itself to more debt being created to cover it, and essentially, failure and bankruptcy is inevitable. Not for the upper classes as much as the lower middle classes, (Why?) Because the lower classes are the ones taking the loans for their home and their car, while the upper class are making interest income. Rather than paying interest, they actually make interest through their deposits and investments. Obviously, this secures a massive growing class divide, structurally. Is that not something worth considering? No?"

As a final point about the CPD, our corporations can now directly donate to them, hence the parties, imposing our financial influence, and hence agenda, even more, making another end run around that pesky legal legislation, barring corporations from contributing directly to political campaigns. A beautiful end run.

However, nothing is perfect, and you can't be too careful. Sometimes, good old-fashioned, time-tested tactics are needed. Nothing is as old-fashioned, as good old direct electoral fraud. Let's get some of our corporate buddies to build some voting machines with really terrible integrity, and get them in as many critical spots as we can. Yeah, I know, it's sloppy. It has already become public that the machines can be hacked remotely, with about \$10 of materials and an 8th-grade science education;²¹ but since most Americans are completely distracted by their debt, lowering standard of living, and ongoing job losses, the liberal media falls on deaf ears.

So, let's recap. Free thinking people tend to recognize the need for ongoing adaptation and change, so we need to make sure education supports the existing tradition, through mere rote learning, not critical, logical thought. Next, we establish clear limits of debate in the culture and make sure those who go beyond the pale, are shutdown by endless ridicule and debasement. Then, we need to harness the herd psychology and guide it through our media, to either identify with the issues we need in the forefront or distract them outright. As far as large scale influence, we need to have the freedom to do whatever we want and to use our vast corporate wealth to influence both public opinion and the candidates themselves. Our legal status as a corporate person now ensures our free speech, and hence, free spending. Next, we create the public illusion of competition and choice, and gain as much control over the election process as possible. Our Demo-publican pawns, with our endless sponsorship and lobbying, now handles this well, including the restriction of public debate and the denial of all interfering third parties. If that wasn't enough, screw it! We'll just reorder the ballot counts ourselves, with the black box voting hacks in the most influential electoral states.

And so it goes! Since the beginning of civilization, those in power have successfully restricted the interests of the majority by regulating their values, by controlling resources through money, not to mention controlling the very processes that exist to challenge them. Is it a conspiracy? Do such powerful men meet in dark rooms, and work to figure out how to keep their power? Actually no, not as much as you might think. You see, the hilarious thing about all of this is that such a process of manipulation is actually self-generating, justified in a step-by-step manner with basic self-interest guiding the whole way. You see, the real corruption is not occurring in back-room meetings, or at the docks; the real power resides in how you, the public, actually perpetuate, condone and support the very underlying systems that oppress you.

Final thoughts: Many watching this program's content will likely interpret the broad farce known as American democracy, or really the farce of global democracy, in fact, as a system in need of better regulation. The ACLU, Democracy Now, Michael Moore, Occupy Wall Street, Annie Leonard, and other intelligent and outspoken activist institutions and figures seeking what they call

21 <http://www.rawstory.com/rawreplay/2011/09/diebold-voting-machines-hacked-with-10-in-parts/>

'change', all actually operate within the same presupposition: "If only if we can better regulate monetary and corporate power, we can fix the world." No. I'm sorry to say that until the social premise itself, and hence, the fundamental psychological drivers of our economy: imbalance, scarcity, narrow self-interest, exploitation and competition. Until those are altered to the extent that the system begins to reward and reinforce collaboration, human and ecological balance, efficiency and sustainability, nothing is going to really change.

In a sociological condition, where everything is based on advantage over others, what we call corruption today isn't actually corruption at all. It's just business as usual. Seriously, what did you people expect? In an economy where everything is for sale by the very ethic inherent, underscored by the false notion that we can't possibly work together intelligently to benefit all, no level of supposed corruption should surprise any of us. In short, to assume we're going to perpetuate this economic philosophy here, and then contradict it over here with the idea that certain elements of society should be off-limits for monetary manipulation and gain, is completely naive and absurd; but don't take my word for it. Just sit back and watch the ebb and flow as we move from one set of corrupt, damaging practices to the next. Sure, we'll slowly fix a few issues with our in-the-box thinking, but until the whole system is addressed at its core, unfortunately, it's all mostly a waste of time and improvement would be very little. Until we grow up to that level, sit back, relax, enjoy the show and until next time, I'm Peter Joseph, an agent and victim of a culture in decline.