

CULTURAL SICKNESS HAS A NAME



A dark shadow has cast itself over the Earth. Is it a projection of shadows inside our minds?

All over the world there is a feeling that something is deeply wrong. It is often felt more than seen, an unnamed darkness that keeps millions (even billions) of people disconnected from the reality of authentic life-affirming experience. Too many of our so-called leaders are asleep at the wheel—they talk about economic growth at all costs as the *only viable solution* to mass poverty, wealth inequality, the climate crisis, and other planetary-scale crises humanity must confront in the 21st Century.

What if the pain so many of us feel is caused by the same cultural sickness? How might we diagnose it? What are its root causes? And most importantly—how do we heal ourselves and the world around us?

These are deep questions. Spiritual questions. They are questions asked by seekers of truth in a time when discernment is desperately needed. And now is such a time. Our dominant consumer culture is built on the dark side of human nature—the propensity for greed that employs tactics of division to stoke fear as a system of control.

This culture tells us that *humans are selfish and greedy*. It says that we are nothing more than *individual islands of ego* floating in a sea of chaos. It is the Great Myth of Separation that takes many forms. We've seen it as humans apart from nature, reason divided against emotion, body separate from mind, one tribe distinct from another. This

mental tendency to categorize the world according to its separations is the root cause of illness in the world today.

And it has a name. It's name is **Wetiko**.

“Wetiko” is the name given to this cultural sickness in the Algonquin language. It is described by Paul Levy in his book **Dispelling Wetiko: Breaking the Curse of Evil**, in this manner:

Native American mythologies portray the mythical figure of wetiko as a cannibalistic spirit who embodies greed and excess and can possess human beings. The wetiko that was once a human being, but because of its gluttony and selfishness it was transformed into a predatory monster.

This mythic figure can be thought of as a *state of mind*, a *psychosis* or *collective delusion* that confuses the menu for the meal (for example, by confusing money for real wealth or treating nature as worthless while numbers in an accounting spreadsheet are considered to have value). A person inflicted by Wetiko is thought to have a *heart of ice* making it impossible for them to feel compassion or love for others.

It can be seen in the blind pursuit of money by those whose actions destroy the life-giving capacities of the Earth. It is whispered in the deep recesses of minds told there is something fundamentally wrong with them—an insecurity hole in their soul that can only be filled through mindless consumption of trendy products. It is the numbness of pornography replacing the erotic depths of emotional connection between human beings as one uses the other for carnal pleasure while giving nothing in return. And it is the psychopathic behavior of corporations that put profit above all else as the sacred purpose guiding CEO's and investors.

Every time someone is seen justifying the destruction of life for profit—it is Wetiko.

Every time compassion is vitally missing during a time of suffering—it is Wetiko.

Every time a privileged person uses a “throw away” toy—it is Wetiko.

Every time fear or disgust is used to manipulate for personal gain—it is Wetiko.

Our purpose in telling stories about Wetiko is to *cultivate healing experiences* for people everywhere who are suffering through the unprecedented scales and pace of change unfolding around us. Without a clear concept for the feeling that the world has gone crazy, it remains vague and muddled. The antidote is to provide a name for this feeling—and imbue it with the power of good storytelling.

We are beginning to see **Wetiko** all around us in the *mechanisms that create these conditions* in the social rules that guide the formation of trade agreements, financial policies, employment contracts, and other concrete applications.

For example, if we connect the dots well enough it becomes possible to see that:

- * **Resource extraction is only possible when nature is treated as dead and worthless on its own.** Thus it is possible to mindlessly consume forests and soils, deplete fish stocks, pour pollution into the oceans, and burn fossil fuels into the atmosphere.
- * **Human labor is consumed as a “resource” that cannibalizes time, effort and enthusiasm.** This is why so many of us are stuck in bullshit jobs while the Earth (and our local communities) are begging for meaningful service and a purposeful well-lived life.
- * **The global network of tax havens is a vampire-like web that syphons the life-flow of human labor into the coffers of the super rich.** As a result, the money supply becomes like blood that has been withdrawn from a living body.
- * **Debt-repayment programs extract wealth from “developing” societies, disingenuously exploiting the morality of social responsibility to hoard massive wealth.** Poverty is created and environments destroyed—at an accelerating pace—to keep this financial cannibal alive.
- * **This debt-poverty disease inflicts “developed” nations as well.** It can be seen in the exploding credit card and student loan debts, whereby people feel forced to serve money instead of pursuing their real passions.

Only by awakening to our true power—that it is us who individually and collectively dream this nightmare creature into being in each and every moment—will we begin the process of letting it go and “dispelling” the myth we currently speak, think, and feel into being through unconscious actions.

By seeing Wetiko, we glimpse ourselves as powerful agents of culture creation. We become what we are capable of producing—Something so destructive and horrible without even realizing it. **This becomes deeply inspiring when we imagine what becomes possible if we harness this creative power** to embrace life, and instead feed our innate sense of connection, wonder, and awe for all living things.

The human impulse to create dream worlds has been co-opted by the Wetiko mindset for far too long. It is the great threat to Wetiko and therefore must be deadened for it to work its dark magic upon us. Let's wield this creative energy together and bring light into the dark places!

Onward, fellow humans.

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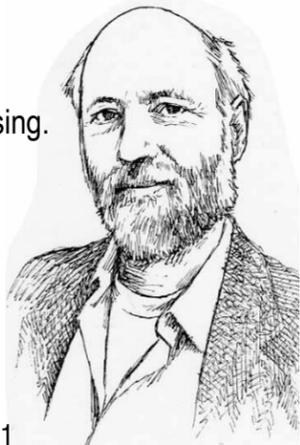
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