

Are We on the Side of Good or Evil? Deconstructing the Global Anti-democratic Trajectory

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Soon accessible in the ARCHIVE section of website: www.colinsoskolne.com

GLOBAL ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY GROUP (GEIG): International Conference.

Celebrating 25 Years of the Global Ecological Integrity Group (GEIG)


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June 30, 2017. Special Topic Day: “Ecological Integrity and Democracy at a Tipping Point”




ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- ▶ I thank my cousin, Mervyn Soskolne, the family **gadfly** who keeps me honest with the most current material from original (non-sociopathic) thinkers whose perspectives transcend dominant paradigms, like the recent report from Chris Hedges that stimulated this presentation.
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GADFLY

“A **gadfly** is a person who interferes with the status quo of a society or community by posing novel, potentially upsetting questions, usually directed at authorities. The term is originally associated with the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates, in his defense when on trial for his life.”

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_gadfly



From Fidel Castro at the Earth Summit, Rio de Janeiro, 1992

Tomorrow Will be Too Late

“An important biological species — humankind — is at risk of disappearing due to the rapid and progressive elimination of its natural habitat. We are becoming aware of this problem when it is almost too late to prevent it. It must be said that consumer societies are chiefly responsible for this appalling environmental destruction. ...”



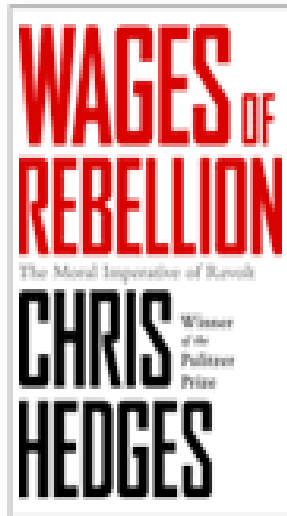
Global Ecological Integrity and 'Sustainable Development': Cornerstones of Public Health

- ▶ **A DISCUSSION DOCUMENT**
by Soskolne and Bertollini of the
World Health Organization (EURO), 1999.
- ▶ Thanks to the participation of members of the *Global Ecological Integrity Group (GEIG)*

http://www.colinsoskolne.com/documents/WHO-1999_Discussion_Document.pdf

For three successive years, this was the most accessed document on the WHO (EURO) website, deemed to have played a major advocacy role in the world toward the 2005 MEA

Chris Hedges (2015):

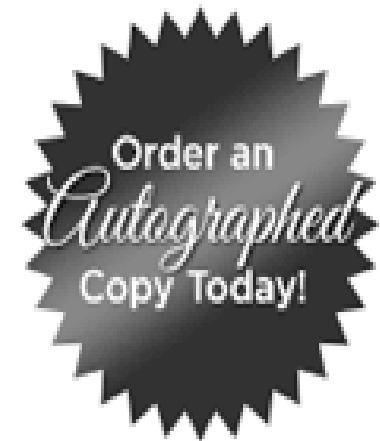


WAGES OF REBELLION

The Moral Imperative of Revolt

By **Chris Hedges**

Truthdig Columnist and
Winner of the Pulitzer Prize

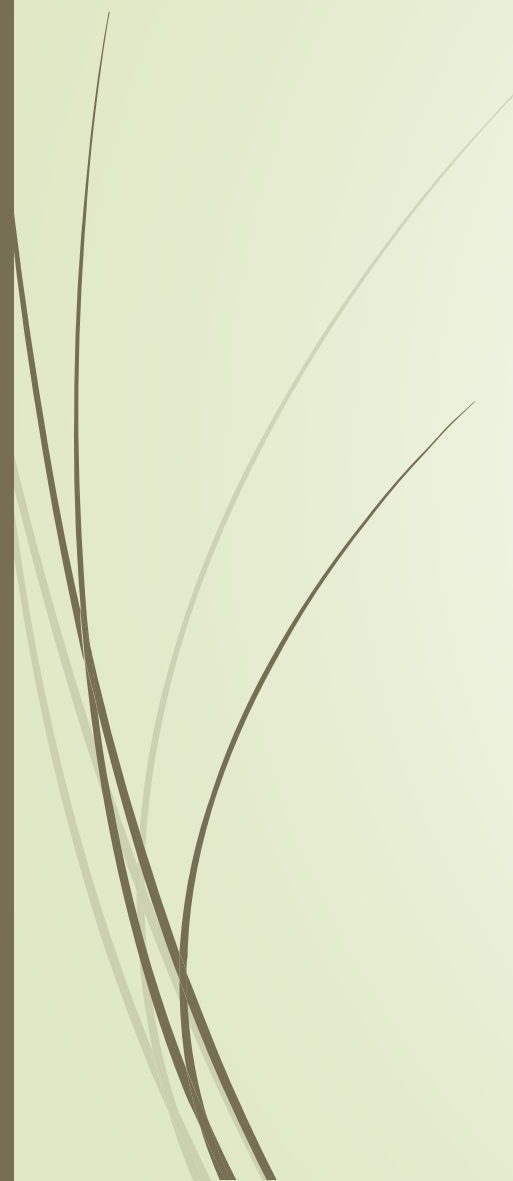




From Chris Hedges ...

➤ **BLOG, March 12, 2017 "The Dance of Death"**

http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/the_dance_of_death_20170312





Excerpts from Hedges' BLOG (March 12, 2017)

- ▶ The ruling corporate elites no longer seek to build. They seek to destroy. They are agents of death. They crave the unimpeded power to cannibalize the country and pollute and degrade the ecosystem to feed an insatiable lust for wealth, power and hedonism. ...
- ▶ Those who rule at the end of empire are psychopaths, imbeciles, narcissists and deviants, ... The ecosystem that sustains the empire is degraded and exhausted. Economic growth, concentrated in the hands of corrupt elites ...
- ▶ The elites' myopic response to the looming collapse of the natural world and the civilization is to make subservient populations work harder for less, squander capital in grandiose projects such as pyramids, palaces, border walls and fracking, and wage war.

...

Sigmund Freud wrote that societies, along with individuals, are driven by two primary instincts. One is the instinct for life, Eros, the quest to love, nurture, protect and preserve. The second is the death instinct. The death instinct, called Thanatos by post-Freudians, is driven by fear, hatred and violence. It seeks the dissolution of all living things, including our own beings. One of these two forces, Freud wrote, is always ascendant. Societies in decline enthusiastically embrace the death instinct

A population alienated and beset by despair and hopelessness finds empowerment and pleasure in an orgy of annihilation that soon morphs into self-annihilation. It has no interest in nurturing a world that has betrayed it and thwarted its dreams. It seeks to eradicate this world and replace it with a mythical landscape. It turns against institutions, as well as ethnic and religious groups, that are scapegoated for its misery. It plunders diminishing natural resources with abandon. It is seduced by the fantastic promises of demagogues and the magical solutions characteristic of the Christian right



...

The severance of a society from reality, as ours has been severed from collective recognition of the severity of climate change and the fatal consequences of empire and deindustrialization, leaves it without the intellectual and institutional mechanisms to confront its impending mortality. It exists in a state of self-induced hypnosis and self-delusion. It seeks momentary euphoria and meaning in tawdry entertainment and acts of violence and destruction, including against people who are demonized and blamed for society's demise. It hastens its self-immolation while holding up the supposed inevitability of a glorious national resurgence. Idiots and charlatans, the handmaidens of death, lure us into the abyss.

Science is a conservative discipline

- Exceeding 450 ppm far more rapidly than previously thought - 18 years away now!!!
- “Atmospheric CO2 levels accelerate upwards, smashing records” by Barry Saxifrage in Opinion, Energy | April 10th 2017

<http://www.nationalobserver.com/2017/04/10/opinion/atmospheric-co2-levels-accelerate-upwards-smashing-records>

For those of us hoping for signs of climate progress, this most critical and basic climate data is bitter news indeed. It shows humanity racing ever more rapidly into a full-blown crisis for both our climate and our oceans.

That's the story told by the newest CO2 data released by the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Even the increases are increasing ...



Consider

- The “Military – Industrial – Academic Complex”. Where do we fit into this?
- The “incentives” and “disincentives” as drivers of both our individual and collective behaviour?

Lübeck's Dance of Death: Canon, Nobleman and Physician





To crudely make the point, are we:

*“Pissing against the wind” or
“Farting against thunder”?*



Toward deconstructing Hedges' BLOG

- Through Hedges' analysis, what we are achieving is analogous to rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic as it heads toward its ultimate impact with an iceberg ... inevitably to break apart and sink.
- We must apply Hedges' insights to address our delusional perception that overall we are doing good in the world. Focus on more relevant targets?
- By recognizing our complicity in the dominant paradigm of influence and power, such introspection may help us, intent on doing good, to retool and better aid the world in achieving a sustainable path.

“Good” vs. “Evil”

- Or, is it something in between?
- How polarized are we becoming?

The VIRTUES of “empathy/compassion” (introspection?) and “humility” are embedded in The Earth Charter. These may help guide us toward a new approach to effective action



Caution in assumptions as we move forward

Public health may be able to help with more directed research, assessment and implementation in recognizing that:

- ▶ Moral integrity and selflessness are attributes not inherent to all people
- ▶ Corruption and seduction through moneyed influence are issues with which we will always have to contend
- ▶ Sociopathy is a disease that needs to be recognized in some seeking powerful positions in our institutions of governance



Thank you!

Questions?

► www.colinsoskolne.com

► www.ijpc-se.org