Ecocide and the Psychotic 0.5 Per Cent

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From Pathocracy to the (Mis)Anthropocene

Psychosis – an impaired relationship with reality.

Psychopathy – a personality disorder characterized by persistent antisocial behavior, impaired empathy and remorse, and bold, disinhibited, egotistical traits.

Misanthropy – the general hatred, dislike, distrust or contempt of the human species.

Misanthrope – someone who holds such views or feelings.

Precariat – a social class formed by people suffering from *precarity*, a condition of existence without predictability or security.

Ecocide – extensive damage to or destruction of ecosystems to such an extent that peaceful enjoyment by the inhabitants becomes impossible.

The society that selects for and rewards psychopaths and pursues ecocidal policies ensures its own inevitable demise. Unfortunately, in a globalized society, it could take the whole planet with it.

When Karma Runs Over Dogma

Purveyors of the myth of infinite, perpetual growth on a finite planet are now experiencing a terminal overdose of cognitive dissonance…and fighting it tooth and nail. Two recent events illustrate the phenomenon.

One is the July's G20 (minus 1) spectacle in Hamburg, where representative of the world's richest – and therefore most polluting – countries banqueted, listened to a performance of Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy' (while militarized police brutalized protesters in the streets outside) and affirmed their undying commitment to fighting fossil-fueled climate change. Nevertheless, they collectively continue to massively invest in and subsidize carbon energy sources. This according to a report titled "Talk is Cheap: How G20 Governments Are Financing Climate Disaster" published by a consortium of environmental groups.

The report's lead author, Alex Doukas, senior campaigner at Oil Change International, told Democracy Now, "$72 billion, on average, per year is flowing from G20 governments through their public finance institutions to support the production of oil, gas and coal. … that's more—nearly four times as much as they're providing for clean energy.

A recent study by the University of North Carolina estimates climate change will cause 60,000 deaths globally in 2030 and 260,000 deaths by 2100.

Another illustrative event is the approval, by 122 United Nations member countries of a treaty banning the possession, use, or threatened use of nuclear weapons. This, despite the opposition of the nine nuclear-armed nations and their allies – led by the United States.

The President of the U.N. conference, Costa Rican ambassador, Elayne Whyte Gómez, opined, "This is a very clear statement that the international community wants to move to a completely different security paradigm that does not include nuclear weapons." The Ambassador might also have included nuclear reactors and waste, since, as the still on-going Fukushima nuclear disaster continues to demonstrate, every nuclear plant and radioactive waste dump are ticking time bombs, vulnerable to misfeasance, malfunction, extreme weather events, grid blackouts, fires, floods and constitute WMDs-in-place for potential terrorists.

As one pro-abolition critic of the ban also points out, "…there are no provisions in it that actually seek to outlaw the production and stockpiling of nuclear weapons…[or] that actually seek to eliminate the existing stockpile of nuclear weapons in a time-bound manner."

Nevertheless, France, United Kingdom, and the United States, three of the five veto powers in the Security Council, denounced the ban in a Joint Statement which read in part: "We do not intend to sign, ratify or ever become party to it. Therefore, there will be no change in the legal obligations on our countries with respect to nuclear weapons."

These events underline divergent human responses to the twin convergent existential threats to our civilization – nuclear- and/or carbon-induced eco-catastrophe: civilizational suicide and destruction of the planetary biosphere – ecocide.

Welcome to the Thermonuclear Anthropocene. This could be serious, folks.

How Did We Get Here? What Do We Do Now?

Three books throw complementary light on these questions: *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, by French authors Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz; *Political Ponerology: a Science on the nature of evil adjusted for political purposes* by Polish psychiatrist Andrew Lobaczewski: and *Democracy in Chains – The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America*, by US historian Nancy MacLean.

Capitalism as a Geologic Force

Geologists think in huge time scales, dwarfing individual lifespans, or even those of nations and civilizations. Geological eras and epochs with names like Paleocene, Eocene, Oligocene,

Miocene, Pliocene and Pleistocene span thousands or even millions of years. The Holocene, the most recent, began a mere 11,500 years ago.

In 2002, Paul Crutzen, a Nobel Prize-winning atmospheric chemist, published an article in *Science* announcing that the short-lived Holocene was already over. Wrote Crutzen, "It seems appropriate to assign the term "Anthropocene" to the present, in many ways human-dominated, geological epoch."

Controversial at the time, Crutzen's term has since come into common usage, with scientists and commentators from many disciplines seeming to agree that "the human imprint on the global environment has now become so large and active that it rivals some of the great forces of nature in its impact on the functioning of the Earth system."

The neologism 'Anthropocene' comes from the ancient Greek words *anthropos* (human being) and *kaino* (new).   When did it start? Some agree with Crutzen, dating its beginning to James Watt's 1784 invention of the coal-fired steam engine, which began the industrial revolution and the 'carbonification' of the global atmosphere with fossil fuels.

Others date it from the 1945 detonation of the first atomic bomb, which began the still-on-going world-wide contamination of the biosphere with manmade radionuclides heretofore non-existent in nature.

Still others suggest it dates from the late 1800s with the invention of the electric dynamo and the subsequent worldwide spread of electric lighting and electrification, the telegraph, the telephone, radio, radar, TV and WiFi, to the point where today manmade electro-magnetic frequencies envelop the earth and all its life forms with increasingly-documented negative biological effects. Maybe it should be called the Electro-Magnetic Thermonuclear Anthropocene.

Whatever the start date, all but hardcore denialists agree, the Anthropocene is caused by the growth of planet scale human industrial activities – which, some also have the temerity to point out, coincides with the rise of globalized corporate capitalism.

So, *anthropos* is who done it, but who is *anthropos*?

Is it the masses of humanity now beginning to experience the Anthropocene's world-wide impact? Or is it, suggest authors Bonneuil and Fressoz, the stock holders and executives of the "ninety corporations… responsible for 63 per cent of the cumulative emissions of carbon dioxide and methane between 1850 and today?"

Or, we might add, the politicians, scientists and producers of the nuclear weapons and energy industries?

Or the telecom entrepreneurs and technocrats spearheading the current worldwide deployment of ever more dense and polluting electro-magnetic technologies and consumer gadgets?

How has it come to pass that human activities clearly inimical to human health, well-being and even existence – especially warmaking – have become the dominant activities of humankind?

Deconstructing the Anthropocene Meme

The two French authors of _The Shock of the Anthropocene_ examine this question with a trenchant and far-ranging historical, scientific, economic and socio-political analysis, placing the meme of the Anthropocene in the context of what they call 'imperial cosmologies.'

They propose, "To make fruitful use of the advances in the Earth system sciences, we have to learn to distrust the grand narratives that come with the Anthropocene concept, to pass them through the sieve of criticism. This is the way in science, history and democracy."

The goal of their inquiry is to "open new spaces for strong democracy, new participatory forecasting and policy-making, and new social inclusiveness."

They suggest that "There is some reason to suspect…that the knowledge and discourse of the Anthropocene may itself form part, perhaps unknowingly, of a hegemonic system for representing the world as a totality to be governed…. Otherwise the seductive Antropocene concept may well become the official philosophy of a new technocratic and market-oriented geopower." As in the hubristic meme, 'We had the power to f**k it up, and we have the power to fix it.'

Pointing out that the degradation of the planet over the past two centuries has proceeded despite consistent knowledgeable intellectual criticism and persistent popular opposition,

the authors ask, "What if the entry into the Anthropocene, rather than an unconscious slippage…, was the result of a political defeat in the face of the forces of free-market economics?" They show that the struggle of individual versus collective interest is a consistent feature of technological totalitarianism common to "communist and fascist regimes and liberal democracies alike," and especially inherent in the current capitalist world-system.

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Pondering Political Ponerology

Another approach to the question of how societies become sociopathic – inimical to their own existence – is provided by the investigations carried out 'behind the Iron Curtain' by eastern European psychiatrists and political scientists at great professional and personal danger to themselves.

Their joint project was "a secret investigation of the real nature and psychopathology of the macro-social phenomenon called 'Communism.'"

Adapting a term from theology, they called their new discipline _Ponerology_ (from Greek _poneros_, "evil") and the process of the genesis of pathology in a society _ponerogenesis_. However their inquiry was not moralistic or theological, but scrupulously scientific by the standards of their time.

Their collective findings are summarized in the book *Political Ponerology* by Andrew Lobaczewski, a Polish psychiatrist who survived imprisonment, torture, the deaths of his colleagues, and the destruction of their research records, to reconstruct their conclusions from memory after the rise of Poland's Solidarity Movement and the collapse of the Soviet regime. For Lobaczewski and his intrepid colleagues the term 'evil' was not a moral judgment, but a scientific diagnosis.

His summary of their work shows how societies, the majority of whose populations are normally functioning people, can be collectively pathologized through the activities of a very small percentage of psychopathic individuals, who – for genetic or traumatic reasons – lack a conscience and the capacity for empathy, combined with a compulsive need for power and control over others.

Their work, since combined with that of others in the UK and this country, suggest that genetically or traumatically produced psychopaths constitute between 0.5 and 1.56 percent of any given national population. If you add to that an estimated 4% of undiagnosed or undetected psychopaths, the total nears 6% of the population.

Psychopaths are puzzled and amused by the conscience-constrained, mutually empathic behavior of those in the surrounding population. Still, despite distaining it, they learn to emulate it for their own advantage. Meanwhile those in the unsuspecting multitude cannot even imagine acting with the unconstrained ruthlessness and cruelty of the psychopaths among them, making them lambs to the slaughter – vulnerable to psychopathic manipulation and exploitation. Society's failure to take the existence of evil seriously is what makes it susceptible to what Lobaczewski and his colleagues call 'macro-sociological pathologization.'

The psychopaths' ruthless drive for power of the psychopaths, combined with their chameleon-like ability to mimic normal emotions and spout ideological rhetoric persuasively, allows them to rise to leadership positions in institutions of business, law, media and government. They become what Lobaczewski terms "pathocrats" and the institutions they control become "pathocracies."

Birds of a Feather

According to Lobaczewski, another 12% make alliances with pathocrats – some even adopting their behavior traits as a way of 'making it in the system' – bringing the potential total to about 20% of the population – more than enough to infiltrate and control the government, corporations, courts and the media.

Robert Hare, a 71-year-old professor emeritus of Criminal Psychology from the University of British Columbia, would agree. Hare is the creator of the Psychopathy Checklist, the 20-item personality evaluation protocol that sparked the 2003 documentary *The Corporation*, which argued that corporations are fundamentally psychopathic organizations that attract similarly disposed people. Compelling recent evidence from recent events abounds to support the film's thesis.

King of Chaos

Diana Johnstone's _Queen of Chaos_ portrayed the pathocratic accomplishments of the Clinton Machine. The current tragic clown show unfolding daily in Washington matches all the pathocracy criteria, with the Patho-POTUS being the very embodiment of the pathocrat archetype.

Does the ascendency to power of a Koch-dominated Republican Party and the Trump Administration of appointees dedicated to what presidential advisor Steve Bannon calls "the deconstruction of the administrative state" make America a 'pathocracy?'

A new book by US historian Nancy MacLean lends credibility to that conclusion.

Saving Capitalism from Democracy – Pathocracy on Koch

In 1988, an obscure Virginia academic named James McGill Buchanan was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economic Science for his "contributions to the theory of political decision-making and public economics." The prestigious Swedish Academy called him "the leading researcher in the field of what has come to be known as 'public choice theory.'" He was lauded for his 'visionary approach' to constitutional 'systems of rules.'

Maybe the Members of that august body actually understood what Buchanan's work was really up to and approved it, or maybe they didn't. But someone who did understand and did approve was the American billionaire Charles Koch, who with his brother David, rules over a vast fossil-fueled corporate empire.

For years, the Brothers Koch had spent millions attempting to protect their personal and corporate profits from what they saw as the predations of 'the regulatory state,' but to no avail.

The problem was, their ideas of 'reform' were consistently rejected by the vast majority of the voting population. Buchanan had an analysis – and better yet a well-thought-out strategy – for overcoming that little problem: change the rules by which public policy is made, restrict and impede informed democratic choice, but do it by stealth. Don't tell people what you're doing. Use code words and slogans that seem to say one thing, but really mean another.

His 'public choice' doctrine was really 'private choice' doctrine with roots in the mid-1800s pro-slavery ideology of plantation owner political strategist John C. Calhoun, who acclaimed historian Richard Hofstedter dubbed 'the Marx of the master class.' For Calhoun and Buchanan and their fellow ideologues (including the Kochs), 'liberty' does not mean personal, civil or political freedom, but unimpeded license for individuals to accumulate wealth out of reach of any government interference whatever. In their view, explains MacLean, 'unobstructed capitalism _is_ freedom.' Their aim: to institute constitutional and legislative provisions engineered to 'constrict the operations of democratic government' for the many, while ensuring rule by and for the few.

Protecting the Predator Class from the Precariat – the Rest of Us

For them the world is divided into 'makers' and 'takers,' 'tax producers' and 'tax consumers' – the few who generate wealth through their entrepreneurial genius at exploiting others and the environment, and the lazy, feckless many who want to grab a share of that unearned wealth for

themselves through government give-away programs and 'public good' expenditures that go beyond just maintaining law and order and national military defense. In their inverted model of reality, they, the predatory class, are being preyed upon by the rest of us, the precariat. For them the 'public good' is a personal threat.

Back in the 1950s Buchanan had established what was essentially a subversive political research center on the campus of the non-profit University of Virginia. The 'Virginia School of Political Economy,' as it was called, later moved to George Mason University in the same state. Disguised as an innocuous academic research center, the Virginia School's real purpose was to train researchers, teachers and political operatives dedicated to the purpose of ensuring that, as *Democracy in Chains* author Nancy MacLean puts it, "the will of the majority could no longer influence representative government on core matters of political economy."

Buchanan termed the strategy 'constitutional revolution.' Its enemy was what he called "the collective order," by which he meant civil society in all its forms. Its purpose was, through stealth, to institute radical changes on multiple key policy fronts like education, public health, imprisonment, employment, taxation, environment and voting rights.

Its ultimate goal – also to be achieved through stealth – was nothing less than to eventually gain the power to rewrite the US Constitution in favor of what is now called 'the 1%' – and to make sure rules were in place so it could never, ever be changed back. Democracy R.I.P..

Revolt of the Revolting Rich – He Who Makes the Rules, Rules

Investigative reporter Jane Mayer's 2016 book *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires behind the Rise of the Radical Right* told the story of how, under Charles' generalship, the Brothers Koch built up a network of like-minded funders, stealth organizations, academic think tanks and institutions, and an army of operatives that allowed them to essentially take over the Republican Party.

Historian MacLean's book picks up the story where Mayer's left off, revealing what she calls "the deep history of the Radical Right's stealth plan for America," which she documents with a trove of papers she stumbled across in an old clapboard mansion on the grounds of George Mason University's main campus, 'the Buchanan House,' which 'this once revered figure' and his colleagues had formerly used as their headquarters.

Buchanan's radical ideas and the Koch's bottomless pockets, once joined in the 90s, became a winning combination. After decades of largely unsuccessful Koch efforts, by the early years of this century the combination had produced an army of trained operatives to staff what MacLean describes as

"the far-flung and purportedly separate, yet intricately connected, institutions funded by the Koch brothers and their now large network of fellow wealthy donors. These included the Cato Institute, the Heritage Foundation, Citizens for a Sound Economy, American for Prosperity, FreedomWorks, the Club for Growth, the State Policy Network, the Competitive Enterprise Institute, the Tax Foundation, the Reason Foundation, the Leadership Institute and more, to say nothing of the Charles Koch Foundation and Koch Industries itself."

Not to mention numerous Tea Party 'astro turf' front groups throughout the country, and ALEC, the American Legislative Exchange Council, which peddles boilerplate bills promoting right wing agenda items to legislatures in virtually every state now gerrymandered for GOP control.

You can visit the International Forum on Globalization (IFG) 'Kochtopus' website for an interactive graphic depicting the vast Koch-funded network based on Buchanan's ideas. http://ifg.org/kochtopus/

This is What Pathocracy Looks Like

The Kochtopus now employs more than three times as many people as the Republican committees had on their payrolls in 2015, and, under its shadow, the GOP, says MacLean, "is now in the control of a group of true believers for whom compromise is a dirty word." They control governorships, legislatures and boards of elections in states across the country – both chambers in 32 states; 68 state legislative chambers to the Democrats' 31. According to the bipartisan National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), "They also hold more total seats, well over 4,100 of the 7,383, than they have since 1920." There are also Republican governors in 24 of the 32 states with Republican-controlled legislatures. GOP-controlled states comprise 61 percent of the U.S. population.

Trump's wrecking crew of appointees, with Koch-dominated GOP approval, are now spread throughout the executive branch with more to come. Talk of an eventual Trump impeachment is hardly comforting, given that the potential replacements waiting in line – VP Pence and House Speaker Ryan – are both themselves creatures of the Koch/Bucanan cabal.

Previews of the kind of society these 'visionaries' are envisioning can be had by looking at Pinochet's Chile – where Buchanan's 'Virginia Boys' as well as Milton Friedman's 'Chicago Boys' were involved as 'policy advisors' in the US-backed dictator's debacle; or at our own sad state of Michigan, where Detroit, Flint and Benton Harbor under Republican-appointed 'emergency managers' presage the intended outcome of Kochtopus pathocratic rule – poisoned water, urban blight, bankruptcy, police repression and all

The targets of the planned 'public choice revolution' include just about all the rest of us – the poor, workers, unions, teachers, healthcare providers, minorities, immigrants, the middle class, retirees, NGOs, and dissidents of every stripe. Writes MacLean, "James Bucanan revealed just how bitter the medicine would be. People who failed to foresee and save money for their future needs, Bucanan wrote in 2005, 'are to be treated as subordinate members of the species, akin to…animals who are dependent."

Tyler Cowen, who has replaced Buchanan as head of the Koch-funded Mercatus Center at Virginia's George Mason U, predicts that with the "rewriting of the social contract" now under way, "the United States as a whole will end up looking more like Texas." Or maybe Mexico.

But for these guys, the over-riding threat to their democracy demolition agenda is public awareness of climate change. Carbon is the cash cow that – via Kochs and friends – has basically funded their movement.

"Just as property rights supremacists would rather let people die than receive health care assistance or antismoking counsel from government," observes MacLean, "so they would rather invite global ecological and social catastrophe than allow regulatory restrictions on economic liberty."

The result has been the massively funded dis- and misinformation campaign of climate change denial; autocrat Trump's bromance with the Saudi petro-monarchy; and ExonMobil's takeover of the State Department in the person of its former CEO Rex Tillerson.

So now we have what Vatican commentators are calling "apocalyptic geo-politics," with two nuclear-armed pathocracies – the US and Russia – both governed by ruthless cabals of carbon-capitalists and crackpot nuclearists, competing in a race to collective extinction.

Which brings us back to our starting point – looming ecocide, globalized pathocracy and the misanthropic Anthropocene.

From 'Liberty' to Liberation – Beyond the *Anthropos* Scenario

In their historical and analytical deconstruction of the current Anthropocene meme Bonneuil and Fressoz reach the conclusion that it does not really represent as claimed a "transition from unawareness to awareness" on the part of a world system governed by "financialized capitalism." Far from being a sudden awakening to previous mistakes, they show that "our ancestors destabilized the Earth and its ecosystems despite knowing what they were doing."

While they admit that, at first glance, their historical narrative may seem depressing, they are instead heartened and encouraged by what it has to teach. "To abandon the official narrative of an awakening," they write, "permits a more lucid and fruitful dialogue with the warnings of the Earth system scientists."

"These histories," they continue, "invite us to take a political grip on the institutions and oligarchies, the powerful symbolic and material systems, that led us into the Anthropocene: military apparatuses, the system of consumerist desire and its infrastructure, the gaps of income and wealth, the energy majors and the financial interests of globalization, the techno-scientific apparatuses when these… silence criticisms and alternatives."

And, to understand and integrate into our analysis the insights of Lobaczewski and his Ponerology colleagues, and MacLean's deep history of radical right ideology and practice, also empowers us to deconstruct our denial of objectively defined societal and political evil and therefore to defend against it.

They suggest that, as journalist Chris Hedges puts it, "any accommodation with members of the capitalist class is futile and self-defeating. They are the enemy. They will degrade and destroy everything, including the ecosystem, to get richer. They are not capable of reform."

Bonneuil and Fressoz conclude, "To strive for decent lives in the Anthropocene therefore means freeing ourselves from repressive institutions, from alienating dominations and imaginaries. It can be an extraordinary emancipatory experience."

My favorite American philosopher put it succinctly: "There comes a time in human affairs," said W.C. Fields, "when we must seize the bull by the tail and stare the situation squarely in the face."

Surely the Electro-Magnetic, Thermonuclear Misanthropocene is such a time.